

January 7, 2019
By Rick Boxx

PERILS OF MISCOMMUNICATION

There is a simple principle that underscores a common pitfall in communications: “It is not what you say – it is EXACTLY what you say.” Failing to observe this can cause significant, even disastrous problems in business, as well as for relationships, as I learned all too clearly at an event I was overseeing.

It was a major business luncheon for our organization, and the event had gotten off to a good start. But as the guests began to finish their salads, I noticed that no lunches were being served. Even though our program was about to start, there were no meals in sight!

Our guests were eventually served, and the presentation went on as planned, but the delay caused considerable anxiety for our team, as well as for the hotel’s staff. Only later did I learn that I had signed contracts that clearly stated that our event was to be held from noon to 2 p.m., instead of our accustomed 11a.m-1 p.m.

Because of my error, failing to carefully read the documents for the events and not being able to correct the time difference, the hotel was understandably not prepared at our normal lunch time. We might regard this as a small miscommunication, but it proved extremely disconcerting to our meeting planners and could have disrupted an otherwise great event. Everything else on the contract was accurate – seating arrangement, number of guests expected, the menu, and other details. But a small miscommunication could have ruined everything.

Article from CBMC International

Distributed to and For Use by Members of **CBMC Hong Kong Ltd:**

Room 905, Nathan Center, 580G-K, Nathan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong
TEL.: (852) 2805 1923 Fax (852)3747 6218 ▪ E-MAIL: enquiry@CBMC.org.hk

To support CBMC HK Vision, please download Offering Form <http://www.cbmc.org.hk/images/download/online-offer.pdf>

When we talk about communications, we typically focus on what is being said or written, along with how it is expressed. However, what is not said – in this case, confusion over the expected schedule for our event – can be as critical for determining success or failure. I have found the Bible offers excellent insight into the perils of miscommunication.

Realizing that what we say or don't say can lead to wrongdoing. In *Ecclesiastes 5:6* we read, *"Do not let your speech cause you to sin..."* Paying attention to details, and having people check your work can help prevent painful miscommunications, whether they are spoken or in written form. My intent was definitely not to delay the meal service, but lack of intent can still lead to unintended consequences.

Responding to potential mistakes. If I had determined to be more diligent to check and even recheck important details, such as the obvious one about when we and the hotel agreed the meeting would be held, unnecessary inconvenience could have been avoided. *"The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out"* (Proverbs 18:15).

Recognizing that even small details can lead to failure. In a beautiful Old Testament book we read an appropriate warning: *"Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom"* (Song of Solomon 2:15). The context of this admonition is not the marketplace, but the idea still applies. The "little foxes" we encounter during the course of any workday may seem inconsequential, but if not attended to properly, they can create more disruption than we could ever imagine.

As it turned out, despite the delay in serving our guests, our event proceeded pretty much as planned. However, the outcome of my miscommunication could have been very different, a lesson I never forgot.

Article from CBMC International

Distributed to and For Use by Members of CBMC Hong Kong Ltd:

Room 905, Nathan Center, 580G-K, Nathan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

TEL.: (852) 2805 1923 Fax (852)3747 6218 ▪ E-MAIL: enquiry@CBMC.org.hk

To support CBMC HK Vision, please download Offering Form <http://www.cbmc.org.hk/images/download/online-offer.pdf>

Copyright 2019, Unconventional Business Network Adapted with permission from "Integrity Moments with Rick Boxx," a commentary on issues of integrity in the workplace from a Christian perspective. To learn more, visit www.unconventionalbusiness.org. His latest book, *Unconventional Business*, provides "Five Keys to Growing a Business God's Way."

Reflection/Discussion Question

1. When you hear, "It's not what you say – it's EXACTLY what you say," what does that mean to you?
2. Can you think of a miscommunication you experienced similar to the one described here? What were the consequences of that – was the impact very serious? How was it resolved?
3. How can we be proactive in ensuring that such miscommunications are avoided? Of course, mistakes will inevitably occur at times. When they do, what is the best way for us to respond?
4. What other "little foxes" can you think of, relating to communications whether individually or corporately, that can create considerable problems?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 10:4, 14:23, 16:21, 19:11, 21:5, 22:3, 27:23-27

Article from CBMC International

Distributed to and For Use by Members of **CBMC Hong Kong Ltd:**

Room 905, Nathan Center, 580G-K, Nathan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

TEL.: (852) 2805 1923 Fax (852)3747 6218 ▪ E-MAIL: enquiry@CBMC.org.hk

To support CBMC HK Vision, please download Offering Form <http://www.cbmc.org.hk/images/download/online-offer.pdf>