

Transformational Communication Skills: A Perspective On The Role Of Communication In Achieving Peak Performance And How To Develop The Skills

**By
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There are certain moments during competition that carry great significance, when the momentum starts to shift in one direction or another. How you communicate with your players during those times can result in success or disaster.

We've all been there... it's a critical time and you can see the pressure's on, the guys are listening, the meeting is brief and to the point, but something got lost in the translation and things just aren't clicking into place. As you watch from the sidelines, you're frustrated as things fall apart into a total shambles. Instead of sweet success your mouth tastes bitter and the match ends with you being angry, disappointed, disillusioned and wondering, "Why didn't they do what I told them?"

This article briefly explores how communication impacts upon behaviour and the work that Clare Moore of Nurture is doing with the RFU to develop these skills.

The prime issue is getting your message across.

The effectiveness of the coaching relationship hinges upon the ability of the coach to make himself understood by his colleagues, support staff and players. The players rely upon the coach's expertise in what to do to help them to become peak rugby performers. Their access to this expertise depends upon how well the coach is able to get the message across, in other words his ability to package the information in a way that matches players' sorting and learning biases.

No matter how technically competent the coach may be, the fact is that sometimes the information given is distorted or ignored. This can be frustrating and stressful. We all know what it's like to know exactly what needs to be done, to really spell it out for the players, to see them nod their heads in agreement and then watch in disbelief as they go out and do something completely different.

How information is distorted or ignored.

We all take in information in the same way - by using our senses to assimilate what we see, hear, feel, smell taste and touch. As we grow and develop, we learn to attach more importance to certain types of information than others. These biases we develop are

completely outside conscious awareness and govern what information we pay attention to, act upon and learn from; we also learn what we ignore.

Simply put, unless information provided to us matches our personal processing and learning biases, then we either distort it into something which we can make sense of (which may not necessarily bear any resemblance to the original information), or ignore it. Either way, we are unable to act upon or learn from it effectively. Have *you* ever had the experience of repeatedly telling players to do something and they never do it? Or, do you remember giving instructions to your team only to watch them perform in a totally opposite manner on the pitch? *Your message is getting distorted or lost in the translation.*

What this means in coaching rugby.

In an average rugby team, although the team may share some common characteristics, every single one of those players pays attention to a different type and format of information and, therefore, learns in a different way. This means that, as a coach, unless you know your team's bias, a high proportion (at least 50%) of everything you are communicating is effectively useless to your team..

What do excellent coaches do?

Excellent coaches instinctively adapt *how* they communicate and *the format* they use to deliver information to suit the team or the individual they are instructing. The problem is, because this is an instinctive process and outside conscious awareness, it is usually inconsistent, difficult to replicate and works with some players and not with others. In addition, when successful, the coach has no real idea of what the specific difference is that made the difference.

What do I need to do to get it right? To develop these skills?

The good news is that this information is available all the time; *you just have to know how to discover it.* You can then use this information to adapt how you get your message across to ensure it is understood and acted upon.

There is a very specific set of indicators which can easily and quickly help you to identify the types and format of information a person or a group will pay attention to and act upon. These break down into:

- Language.
- Sentence structure.
- Physiology.
- Physical characteristics.
- A logical framework.

Clare Moore's role within the RFU.

Clare is working with the performance department, helping coaches to develop key core skills in transformational communications within the elite coaching development framework. She works specifically with the Club England coaches and their teams to identify immediate changes that can be made in how rugby is coached to improve the performance of the coaches *and* the players whose development they are responsible for.

If you want more information on the subject.

To find out more about transformational communications visit Clare Moore's website at www.nurture.uk.net.