

Lessening Repressed Communication

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Repressed communication is the bane of most organizations. It is the cause of the “silo effect”—very little, if any, real communication between groups in the same organization. To the degree present it limits creativity, innovation, organizational adaptability, productivity, efficiency, effectiveness, customer relations, and profitability. To the degree communication is repressed is the degree to which co-creation, real cooperation, and true teamwork is limited. This is *true* regardless of personal charisma, management styles, incentive programs, technical expertise, and/or product uniqueness. These can be valuable, sometimes vital, but will not be capitalized on to the extent possible if repressed communication—of any nature—is extant.

Lessening, if not eliminating, repressed communication is a crucial and vital aspect of creating true teams and the synergy they have the potential to manifest. The process of clearing interpersonal communications often has an important added benefit of clarifying and focusing personal values which until elucidated, can confuse or run counter to organizational values.

When repressed communication is released and cleared, an amazing phenomenon occurs. A seemingly disproportionate amount of positive

energy is released and individuals become more allowing, tolerate, open to new viewpoints, rapport increases along with a willingness to trust and to share thoughts and ideas even if “far out.” With this release of repressed communication a willingness to be open and vulnerable spontaneously occurs. The willingness to express and share thoughts, feelings, and ideas is one of the two key fundamental elements of a true team. The other element that brings a potential team into an actual team is a mutual *focus* that each member feels ownership in. Without ownership and mutual focus, there is no true team only a group of individuals.

Handling the repressed communication also generates a significantly greater willingness to look at and own previously unconscious, but nonetheless, self-imposed and thus, self-limiting considerations.

The higher the level of emotional maturity, the more elegantly this works. People with a high level of emotional maturity are more secure and are more open with their communication. They tend to honestly confront any dysfunctional behavior quickly. The higher the emotional level there is simply less repressed communication present and a high confront in dealing with whatever is there. The lower the level of emotional maturity the

opposite is true. Immature individuals are usually too defensive to listen and learn.

A good quick measure of how actually mature an individual is how automatically defensive they are to any kind of critique or legitimate criticism. The degree to which they are willing to listen, own, and learn from valid, constructive criticism is a very strong indication of emotional maturity. In many cultures, indirectness and social “politeness” is an expected norm of “proper” behavior. In those cultures, candor is often resisted—sometimes strongly and always rationalized. These norms should not be arrogantly ignored, but rather appreciated for their original intention of respecting individual human dignity. However, far too often this original intention has been lost and has deteriorated into little more than a “justification” for lack of honesty, candor, and authenticity. The balance between what is respect and consideration and what is fear of honest expression must be carefully and conscientiously weighed. Social norms should be considered, and as appropriate, appreciated and honored, but *never* at the expense of honesty. Ultimately, lack of honesty is *always* based in fear no matter how rationalized. It is *always* damaging and hurtful to all parties.

Process of lifting repressed communication:

1. *Require* candor and honesty as a fundamental condition of continued employment.
2. Provide competent, personalized, one-on-one coaching to help the individual uncover and/or express what has been repressed. This is highly personal and tailored to the individual. The higher the emotional maturity of the individual and the organization, the easier this process is. The lower the level, the less likely if not unlikely that this will ever occur.
3. Outside of the coaching session(s) the individual clears the repressed communication or upset, one-on-one privately with the appropriate individual(s). Then, with the group, if helpful and appropriate. The following simple clearing process can provide a safe and elegant means to handle upsets and repressed “communication.”

Clearing Process

The person who is upset usually initiates this, but it can also be used simply to initiate a dialogue to gain more clarity on a topic.

Dialogue Format: Only one person speaking at a time and the other person listening per the following sequence:

0. Be as present as possible.
1. State the facts only. (Tell the sequential story as you perceived it to be.)
 - 1a. The other person states what they heard you say without evaluation or discussion. If needed, clarify anything they missed or misunderstood. If appropriate ask them to repeat the clarification back to you.
2. State the conclusions or judgments you may have reached.
 - 2a. Same as 1a.
3. State your feelings (the emotional impact your perception of the facts had on you). Use “I” statements only—“I felt . . .” Do not use “You” statements—“You made me feel . . . , You did . . .”
 - 3a. Same as 1a.
4. State your request of what you would like, if anything, from the other person.
5. Ask them if they would care to respond. If they do, listen and acknowledge.
6. If appropriate, the other person may now give their interpretation/perception of the event/situation per the same sequence.

It is amazing how much this simple process can do to dissipate upsets and conflicts in addition to adding clarity, allowance, understanding, appreciation, and mutual respect. ♦