



# COMMUNICATION, THE LOST ART?

BY TIM KELLY

I'm going to start this month with a few examples of typical enquiries I get through my website.

I have a query can you help? Or a rambling message with an incorrect email address and no phone number. A statement, rather than a question: I have made an insurance claim and my insurance company is not treating me fairly.

Or the worst, someone phoning me in the early hours on a Sunday morning (one came in at 4:30am), then leaving a message and insisting I speak with them urgently. They must have done their homework because my number isn't listed. They'd probably even visited my website where I clearly state that I am web-based only.

How many of the above have you had?

Some have been quite rude, bordering on aggressive: Ring me now! Catch me on a bad day and they might receive a pointed reply. Some of you might think that this that's an unprofessional approach but I see it as a matter of respect. If they can't be bothered to explain an issue that clearly bothers them, why should I care?

## REMOVING OBSTACLES

When communicating with people, certainly in a written format, whether it is seeking help or providing a response, you need to remove any barriers that stop the other person wanting to communicate with you. I would suggest reading that statement again.

Imagine that every communication you make has to derive a direct benefit? When all parties are clear on what is being communicated, pathways are forged and things happen.

When I left school, I left without a qualification in either English Literature or English Language. So, my apologies if you see any errors in my grammar here or on any digital platform that you happen to find something I've written. It drives both my dad and my lovely missus crackers (**me too, sometimes – ed**).

I wanted to take languages at school but was stopped due to an overlap in the

other subjects I chose, which I found very frustrating. But what drives that frustration now? It is the want and need to be understood and to understand those you are communicating with.

What about non-verbal ways of communicating? Beer and lots of arm waving go a long way on holiday, but the visual cues we provide with eye contact, body language and gestures can reinforce what we are saying verbally in business and in our relationships.

There are times they can be incongruous to what is actually being said. If you use images in your marketing, for example, make sure they align with the text. Here's how not to do it:

- “We carry out cheap, cost-effective repairs”, it says on your business card, alongside a picture of a Ferrari.
- “The future of cost-effective SMART repairs”, with a cartoon figure using equipment from the 1950s, no PPE and with paint blowing out into the street.

## COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

In a nutshell, be clear and concise, don't send mixed messages, make sure that in whichever means of communicating you use, the other party will want to communicate back.

Make sure you then give them the resources to be able to do so – identify yourself (name, signature, email address, business address, phone number), and let them know how you want them to reply.

Personally, I don't use

WhatsApp for business, and I don't present my phone number anywhere, as I am a web-based provider of services, right up to the point we start a conversation. This way, I control how and who I communicate with.

Put thought into your communications and chose your tools wisely – then learn how to use them effectively. But then what? Funny things happen when you interact with people, engage with them on your social media, speak with them at trade shows, speak with them on the phone – you move away from being only a business, you become a person they relate to and someone they want to do business with.

**IN A NUTSHELL, BE CLEAR AND CONCISE. MAKE SURE THAT IN WHICHEVER MEANS OF COMMUNICATING YOU USE, THE OTHER PARTY WILL WANT TO COMMUNICATE BACK**