

Employing Courtesy to Boost Effective Communication in Society

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Abstract

Courtesy is the use of very simple, brief and effortless actions or words that we could incorporate in our daily lives for the achievement of effective communication at home and in the work place, but it rather seems that courtesy is now mostly being thrown away everywhere. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to resound the clarion call of Ashkena (2013) to bring back courtesy to the workplace and home as well. Therefore, using the descriptive design, this paper engaged secondary data to expound on the concepts of Courtesy and effective communication as a prelude to listing of the benefits and characteristics of courtesy followed by the discussion of the importance of courtesy for effective communication alongside courtesy acts for effective communication at home and the workplace then with technology usage. The key finding is that courtesy is not being utilized during technology use by people at home and at the workplace because, although they are physically present, focusing more attention on technology creates a psychological distance which results to disrespect, stress creation, and consequently ineffective communication. The conclusion is that humanity has nothing to lose but everything to gain by imbibing courtesy while communicating particularly at home and at work. Some of the recommendations are that people should always consciously invest in the use of courtesy acts and words in order to consistently succeed in their communication and not allow the items of technology that they possess take the place of the people that they need to happily relate with.

1. Introduction

Courtesy generally implies the utilization of good manners, polite gestures or kind words. Courtesy acts are seemingly effortless, very little, simple things or brief expressions which have great impacts on humanity. They are the little things that count far more than we would expect. Courtesy is a gift of God to humanity.

On the other hand, communication, another gift of God to humanity, is any purposeful activity of exchange between participants in order to convey and receive the intended meaning through a shared system of sounds, gestures, signs and symbols by engaging some basic steps which include the intentional or unintentional decision to communicate, message encoding, transmission of signal, reception of signal, message decoding, interpretation of message and provision of a feedback by the recipient (Douglas, 2007). Communication involves more than just exchanging information; as an act, it is difficult to understand and execute because it is not usually played out in the same manner but is situational and all-inclusive of very many variables which interact to ensure its success or otherwise (Sinickas, 2004). Regardless of how difficult communication is, it is something that we do reflexively (Watson, n.d.)

Perceptibly, courtesy utilization is relevant for the achievement of effective communication being the level of communication which goes beyond the words we express (Onjewu, 2016) which combines a set of skills including nonverbal communication, engaged listening, managing stress in the moment, the ability to communicate assertively, and the capacity to recognize and understand one's own emotions and those of the person being communicated with (Baskin, 2015). Effective communication is an elaborate two-way process of how a message is generated, packaged and conveyed so that it is received and understood by someone in exactly the way it was intended as well as the provision of feedback by the receiver to the one who has sent the message.

However, these days, the tendency is for courtesy utilization to be written off as old fashion and unnecessary although it is still as efficacious as ever in creating happiness in the mind of the person who uses it and the one to whom it is used as well as increasing the tendency for the achievement of the communication act involved thereby ensuring effective communication.

2. The benefits of employing courtesy in communication

Whenever one uses courtesy in the process of communication with another, the tendency to succeed is higher and the following benefits could accrue:

- One satisfies oneself and gives pleasure to the other
- One attracts likeness to oneself
- One increases the chances of achieving one's goal

- One helps to display one's kind of person; that one has consideration for others
- One shows one's willingness to interact with others
- One improves one's relationships with others
- One projects oneself as cultured and civilized
- One easily gets noticed and appreciated
- One is able to ease the stress of others
- One is able to create a healthy environment
- One is able to infuse more energy in others

3. Characteristics of courtesy

- Courtesy is not limited to age, race, role or gender
- Courtesy is contagious
- Courtesy is reciprocal
- Courtesy is not time consuming
- Courtesy is effortless
- Courtesy is pleasurable
- Courtesy is rewarding

4. Importance of employing courtesy for effective communication

The importance of communication at every sphere of human existence cannot be overemphasized (Onjewu, 2011). Communication could be verbal, written and nonverbal but it is possible to be courteous in all the methods. For instance, Schatz (n.d) reports that a study conducted by the University of North Carolina found that 52 percent of people interviewed said they lost work time worrying about incidents of rudeness. The stress and decrease in productivity which could be the result of such is better imagined yet similar situations are not uncommon everywhere, at home and in the workplace, these days.

On the other hand, showing a little courtesy like making sure you pronounce or spell peoples' names correctly, saying "thank you", "please", "good morning", "goodbye", "Have a nice day", etc., as the occasion demands literary takes very little time and efforts but increases mutuality, respect and concern among people as well as the facilitation of the achievement of goals as a result of effective communication.

4.1 Employing courtesy acts for effective communication at home

Everyone should ideally have a home where they are happy, interact freely and easily get things done as a result of effective communication. However, this may often not be the case as the tendency is for familiarity to breed contempt among family members due to the feeling that certain things are their rights, the thinking that they will still be loved nonetheless or that others are not worth taking the trouble for. The development of such an attitude may result to overlooking courtesy acts which could lead to chaos, disrespect and ineffective communication among other consequences.

Booher (2012) reiterates that one of the most difficult places to demonstrate kindness and communication is at home among family members unless care is taken.

4.2 Employing courtesy acts for effective communication at work

There is a clarion call to bring back courtesy to the work place (Ashkena, 2013). Considering that although people at home are related but yet it is possible for the use of courtesy to elude them, how much more at the work place where people may assemble from diverse languages and nationalities just to mention a few of the differences? Preferably, there should be mutual respect at the workplace regardless of age, rank, role or reputation to enhance effective communication for the achievement of both individual and organisational goals but often times, due to stress or other distractors people easily allow courtesy and respect to fall by the way side (Page, n.d.). Managements of organisations should be conscious of the fact that the issues that distract people from practicing courtesy commonly exist with them and put the necessary structures on ground to minimize them. The following actions accordingly are among those which convey respect for colleagues and family members to ease stress and increase one's influence over others in order to achieve effective communication:

- Speaking to others when one enters a room
- Returning a greeting from someone
- Telling family members/colleagues where one is going and when one expects to return
- Managing to talk even when one is in a bad mood
- Always speaking in a low and friendly tone to others
- Always saying “please” and “thank you”.
- Exchange pleasantries and asking after people's health when they are sick.

- Do not speak to some people but not to others in a group
- Saying “hello”, “goodbye” from beginning to the end.
- Listening attentively to other colleagues
- Do not “dressing anyone down” in the presence of others in order to embarrass or harass them

4.3 Employing courtesy acts for effective communication with technology usage

People at home and in the workplace should be sensitive about their use of phones, tablets, laptops and similar communication gadgets. Most people own at least a cellphone these days. Technology tools are for good when one is mindful of not using them to the detriment of others or in ways that make one rather offensive. Apparently, the manner that majority of people engage technology nowadays creates more gap between them and the people who are physically present with them so that there is a high tendency for one to disconnect from family members and colleagues and as a result stand a higher chance of ineffective communication. For instance, a study undertaken by (Drago, 2015), found that 92% of respondents believed that technology negatively affects face to face communication and only 1% did not with the remaining 7% being undecided. The same study undertook an observation and recorded a student Face timing on her iPhone. When another student joined her physically, she ignored that student and continued her conversation on Face time. However, it is possible to profit from the use of technology and achieve effective communication at home and at the workplace by engaging the following courtesy acts:

- Turning off one's personal cell phone during any meeting or when at table.
- Putting one's cell phone ringer on vibration to limit distraction and noise pollution while with others
- Wearing headphones while listening to music or watching videos in the midst of people with attention to the fact that such activities are detrimental on their own as they cut people off psychologically even when they are physically present. Better still do not carry out such activities while in the company of others
- Do not ignore people who approach you while on the phone. Signal them to please wait or pulse your call to excuse yourself
- Speaking in low tones while on the phone or excusing ourselves to go

away when we must be very loud. Whenever possible, excuse yourself to make or take calls

- Obeying rules for the use of cellphones in places of worship particularly and wherever else such rules exist

Conclusion

It does not and may never profit humanity to throw courtesy away from anywhere that people coexist since things can only get better with it. Allowing courtesy to elude us is accepting to live with stress, disrespect and unproductivity as a result of ineffective communication at home and in the workplace. Utilizing courtesy on the other hand in communication is a demonstration of the principle of “doing unto others as you would like done to you”; a clear demonstration of fairness to humanity which could be very satisfying and rewarding. Also, the practice of allowing technology to take one's time to the detriment of family and colleagues leaves much to be desired.

Recommendations

- Considering the immense benefits accruable from engaging words of courtesy, one should always consciously invest in their use in order to consistently succeed in one's tasks in such a manner that makes one and others happy
- One should make conscious efforts to work on any observation raised by people in the spelling and pronunciation of their names or titles. Otherwise, from the very onset of communicating with them, one may become offensive to them with the result obviously being ineffective communication.
- One should not allow the items of technology one possesses to own one but the reverse should be the case to enable one remain within the closeness radius that one needs to be with other people in order to be happy and successful.

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