

Alice in CubicleLand:

Assignment:

Read the posted case "Alice in 'CubicleLand'." Then draft out your communication strategy, using the following worksheet. Be prepared to role-play your part with this strategy as well as discuss the strategies of your classmates.

What are the issues?

Several issues exist in the "Alice in 'CubicleLand'" case.

- (1) Alice's work environment is very distracting.
- (2) Alice's environment lacks professionalism and guidance.
- (3) Alice and her co-workers are too close together.
- (4) Alice has to make daily telephone contacts with customers while her coworkers use email.
- (5) Coworkers use social email daily.
- (6) Alice finds the chatter while trying to talk with her clients over the telephone very distracting. Even though she is the most productive employee, she could improve if the environment was less noisy.
- (7) Alice's commute to work is long, and she does not have a reliable car.
- (8) Clients are becoming annoyed with the background noise; thinks it's unprofessional and may consider taking their business elsewhere.
- (9) Employees are complaining about the amount of time Alice spends with clients in the computer room,
- (10) Alice's Boss seems insensitive to Alice's needs and that of the company. [He may have legal issues as well to deal with](#)

What's your interest? Why do you want what you want?

My interest is in projecting a professional image at all times, I want to be more productive and work to my fullest potential. I do not want to lose the clients I currently have to other companies because of the image we present. I would like to work from home one day per week so that I could serve my neediest clients in a quiet environment. This would save the company and me some money. If this is not a choice, I would like to work 4 ten hour days, this way when my coworkers leave, and it is quiet I can talk with my clients in a quiet environment. I would commute to the office less which would help me to save on gas and would help me to save money towards buying a new car. In turn, the company would save money, as I would be more productive, and less distracted. In addition, if the current environment continues, the company may lose me to their competitors as I will start looking for another job. I truly love my job, and don't want to leave, but I don't feel that I am being heard.

"BATNA"

(Do you have any other alternatives? If so, what are they?):

I have several alternatives that we can consider if the ones stated above are not an option.

- (1) Stagger everyone's work hours. If each employee comes in at a different time, then the environment will be less crowded, it will be quieter and less distracting.
- (2) Ask my boss for another cubicle that is quieter if one exists or ask that the cubicles be separated.
- (3) I will talk to distracting coworkers; If that is not successful I will have my boss talk to them.
- (4) Ask HR department to talk to coworkers about professional etiquette and the use of social media at work.
- (5) Ask her boss to come unannounced to the cubicle and spend a day in the life of Alice in "CubicleLand" so he can experience what I am experiencing.
- (6) Share the telephone clients with the other employees so that they can appreciate how important it is to have a quiet environment when talking to clients.

Good. You have lots of options if the telecommuting doesn't work

Audience analysis

(Who are my constituents? In what social context are they? (Do a field analysis; who is on your team, who can affect the play, who can participate, who can make the final decision? What's going on in the broader environment in which the negotiation is taking place? Is there a time limit? Rules? History of relationship with the other party? Outside influences? Common practices?)

Audience analysis will be very important in reaching my goal. I will need to define my audience. Several questions I will ask in defining my audience are.

- (1) Who are my audiences?
- (2) What is my relationship with my audiences?
- (3) What will move them to support me?
- (4) What are their likely attitudes toward my proposal?
- (5) Is my audience's attitude toward my proposal positive, neutral or negative?
- (6) How is my audience likely to perceive me?
- (7) How much does my audience already know?
- (8) Is my proposal in my audiences best interests?

- (9) Do I face one key audience or several key members?
- (10) Are their secondary audiences who will be affected by the success or failure of my proposal?
- (11) Are their hidden audiences I haven't considered?

My constituents will be my boss, my coworkers, my clients and the company. These are divided into different audiences. My Primary audience is my key decision makers, this would include my boss.

My Secondary audiences are those that will be affected by the decision, these include my coworkers and my clients.

My hidden audiences are not in the group I am addressing, but who will have influence over whether or not the course of action I am recommending is accepted. These include my boss's boss, HR, and the environment surrounding the company.

Sometimes external audiences such as the media and people in the larger community such as pastors, trustees may also have an impact. So they must be considered.

The social context involves the physical and social aspects of my constituents at ABC Company. ABC Company provides accounting and payroll for a variety of clients. The work environment is a large room with six cubicles pushed together with 6 people working together from 8-5.

It will be very important to understand the social context of my constituents as people who are in a social environment often have group solidarity. They tend to trust each other, help each other and sometimes have group think. So it will be important to know who is on my team. Since there is a coworker who already works from home, she may be someone I can get her on my team to understand my point of view. The people that can affect my play are my coworkers, as well as my boss, my boss' boss, and HR. So it will be very important how I handle these audience members. These are also people who can participate in the decision making. However, the final decision rests with my boss, my boss' boss and HR.

The broader environment needs to be considered in the decision making process and analyzing the audience. Is there a time limit? In this situation, there are time limits as if we don't act fast, our clients may take their business elsewhere and the work environment could become a hostile place to work based on the incivility being experienced. Are there rules that must be followed? Rules are important in any environment; the chain of command is often a way to start. I can then take it to my boss, then my boss' boss and so on up the chain of command. I will also need to look into the policy and procedure for working from home, extending my work day and other proposals I am making. What is the history of the relationship with the other parties such as the clients we have, are they good customers, and are they worth keeping? I will also need to look into the relationships of the coworkers I have so I will know the ones who are more hostile and the ones with whom I can easily build a rapport. I will need to look at my relationship with my other coworkers. The people I am closest to at work may be easier to persuade to my point of view, and easier to convince them to support me. Other questions I may want to address as I analyze my audience include: What outside influences will affect the decision making process in reaching my goal to work from home? Is there a board or trustee that has an interest in the company?

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Comment [1]: Excellent point

What are the common practices of the company? Is there a policy for social media in the workplace?
What is the image ABC wants to project to the outside environment?

Tone

Tone is very crucial in communicating with audiences effectively. I must adapt my tone to the different audiences that will receive my message. I do not want to come across as authoritarian and a “know it all,” as I will lose my audience. I want to avoid sounding condescending and accusatory. I want to avoid language that attacks and avoid exclusive language. In addition, I want to avoid flattery; instead I need to be honest and specific. I can use humor only when appropriate such as breaking the ice. I also need to be empathetic towards my coworkers and my boss. I need to make sure my body language and my words are saying the same thing. This will include the nonverbal behaviors such as the gestures I make, making eye contact, how close I stand, how fast or loud I speak. I must keep in mind that these send strong messages. I want my tone to be professional and direct, yet natural and unforced. I want to convey to my coworkers and my boss that I have given thoughtful consideration to the subject matter. I also want the tone to be conveyed as open and welcoming of further comments and responses from my colleagues. I will avoid slang words. I also want my tone to be clear, warm, upbeat yet under control.

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Comment [2]: Good specifics

Point of view

I need to have a clear point of view, a perspective from which I assess the situation and present my findings and recommendations. I need to review the available information, different and conflicting value and interests. Then I need to be explicit about my position. A clear view point aids in the decision making process. I will need to defend my view point vigorously. In this case, my view point is that there is a lot of distraction with the present work arrangement. It is causing the company to lose money due to decreased productivity. Potentially we could lose our most serious clients who consider the noise they hear in the background unprofessional behavior. Working from home even one day per week as one of my coworkers do now will not only save the company money but also, it will project a professional image to our clients who are currently dissatisfied. I can be more productive, and we will have less disgruntled employees as I won't be tying up the conference room when they need it.

[You may also want to probe to see why he has the point of view he has. Perhaps he has had legal issues or productivity issues before; imagine what your co-workers would do at home if they troll social media now!](#)

Persuasion topics

My persuasion topics will include the benefits to the company as well as my coworkers. I will include how working from home will benefit them and the greater good of the company and the environment around it.

Topic/purpose

- I. If we don't change our practices, ABC Company will lose customers to our competitors and, we will continue to be unproductive. (Introduction)

Given

- II. ABC company will lose customers for the following reasons:
 - A. ABC customers can hear the noise and distraction when they are doing business on the telephone. (Body)
 - B. We will lose our more serious clients to our competitors if the current arrangement continues with the noisy background when speaking to clients and the personal conversations being conducted in the clients hearing. (Body)

Since

- III. Working from home one day per week will mean I won't be in the office all the time, however, the benefits will pay off in the long run. (Body)
 - A. Reduce Costs
 - B. Benefits: increase productivity, keep a professional image, prevent clients from going elsewhere

Therefore

- IV. We should give me the opportunity to work from home one day per week so that I can take care of our serious customers in a quieter environment.

good

Resistance point for you

My resistance point will be determined by the limits I set. My resistance point is close to the limit I set but leaves enough room to close the deal without crossing my limit. At the resistance point, I will let my boss know that he is getting close to my limit, and we are reaching a stale mate. My resistance point will be the solution that is the least I am willing to accept and still reach agreement. It will be my BATNA. My BATNA will be to work 4 ten hour days.

good

Resistance point for them

The resistance point for them maybe rearranging the cubicles so that I can be visible in the office since I am their most productive member.

Referent Power and Legitimate Power: *(What supporting facts do I have? (What information do I have to support my view? How can I validate that information? Have these issues been negotiated before by others? Can I consult those others for information as to what arguments they used? How can I present the facts to be most convincing? Do I have visual aids that will help?)*

Referent power is achieved when an individual receives approval, allegiance and emulation to the extent that the person gains the power to influence others. Charismatic leaders have referent power. They have a vision for the organization that they lead, strong convictions about the correctness of the vision, and great confidence in their ability to realize the vision, and are perceived by their followers as agents of change.

I think in this situation I have referent power since I am the most productive and my clients like what I do for them. The supporting facts I have are derived from conversations I have with my clients that are recorded, telling me that the unprofessional behavior is a distraction. I will bring data to show how staying at home one day per week will make me more productive, save the company money and free up the conference room so employees will be happy. I will bring research as evidence to what I am presenting. The issues have been negotiated before by one of our coworkers and other companies that allow their workers to work from home. I will consult with my coworker to see the arguments she presented that convinced her boss to let her work from home. I will present the facts in a convincing way by showing a skit of what it sounds like in the cubicle when I am on the telephone with a client and others are being distracting. I will also have a power point with visual aids.

Legitimate power is that which is derived from the person's position in the organization. It exists because organizations find it advantageous to assign certain powers to individuals so that they can do their jobs effectively. All managers have some degree of legitimate power. My boss and his boss have legitimate power.

[good](#)

Created value

When we create strong values it brings about positive tangible change. The value that is created for a company is its profit margin. The more value an organization creates, the more the organization will be profitable and, the more the company will be successful. When you provide more value to your customers, you build competitive advantage. So, what I will do to create value is to show how the noise at work is presenting an unprofessional image and may cause us to lose our most valued customers resulting in loss of revenues.

Protocol assessment:

- 1) **Where's the best place for the negotiation to take place?**
- 2) **When is the best time for it to take place?**

The best place for the negotiation to take place is in the conference room where the room is larger, and seats are available for all the members of the team. Also, I will have room for my skit and power point presentation. The best time for it to take place is in the morning before my boss is bogged down with problems for the day and before my headache comes on from listening to my coworkers.[yes](#)

Script for beginning the conversation

ABC Company has been in existence for over 20 years, it has been in the family that long. Customers and clients have enjoyed the friendly, family yet professional image we project. Over the last couple of months, customers have voiced concerns that this professional image is eroding. This is mainly due to the chatter and distraction they hear from other employees when they are conducting business. The conversations they overhear are often personal in nature. Clients have voiced concerns that if it does not stop they will take their business elsewhere.

I would hate to lose our valued customers. Not only will they leave, but they will spread the word that ABC Company is very unprofessional. Soon, we will be losing lots of potential customers. Currently, I have been using the conference room three hours per day to talk to my most serious clients. This has been creating difficulty as I tie up the conference room when others may need it and it is creating unnecessary conflicts.

We have one employee who works from home, and it has shown that it saves the company money, reduces the chatter and distraction in the work place and projects a sincere and professional image. I am proposing that I work one day per week from home to prevent us from losing customers, and to make me even more productive. [Good approach. You aren't hitting your own needs yet.](#)