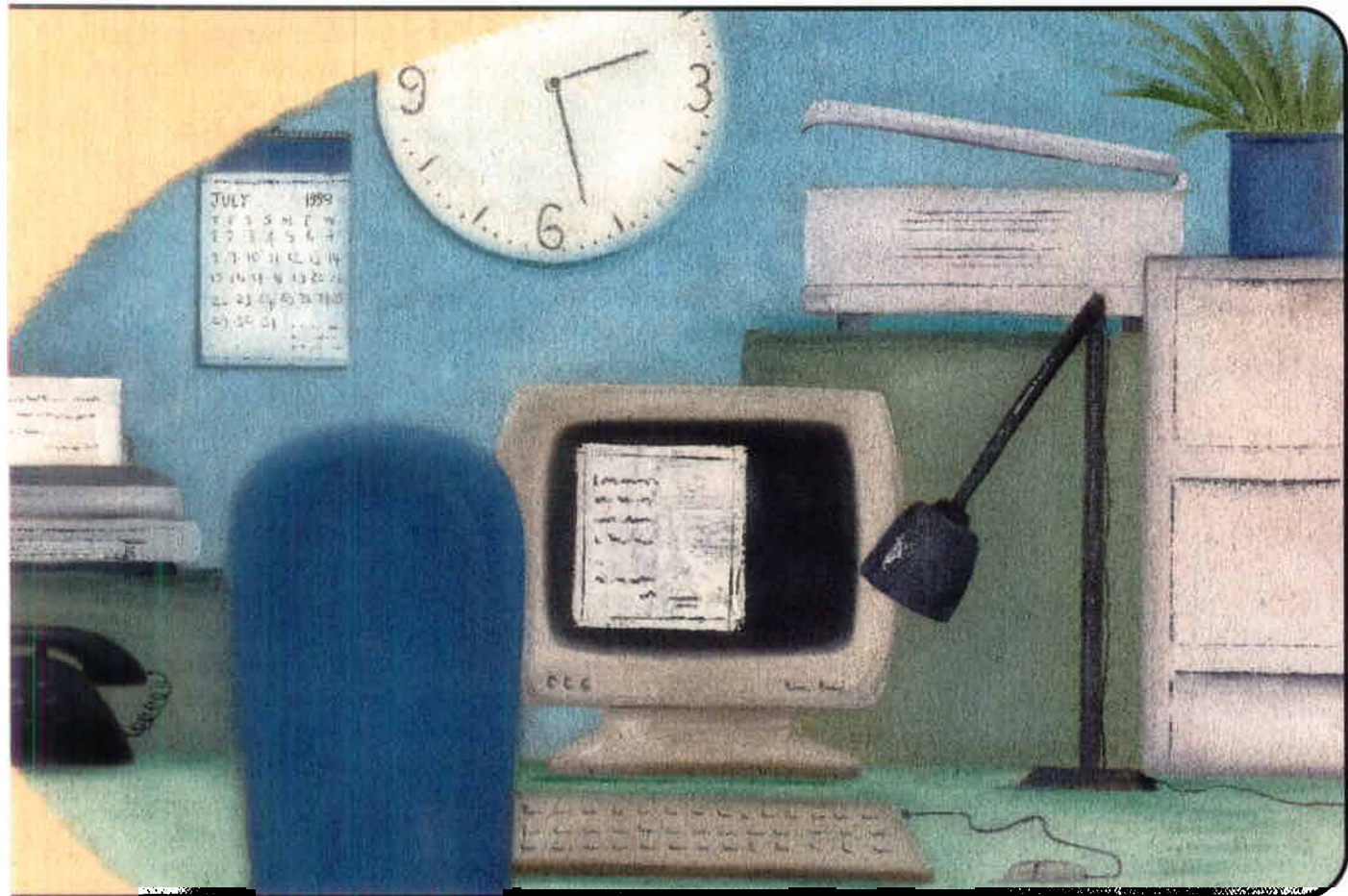


# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Think about the 'signal' we want those around us to receive.



Seeing a person eye-to-eye is the most beneficial communication environment.

*With the telephone, fax machines and internet, our forms of communicating have improved; but are we really communicating better?*

The Crow tribe of Native American Indians, encumbered by the long distances of the Great Plains, used smoke signals to communicate with each other. The smoke would signal the sighting of buffalo or other game or warn of an approaching enemy. Unlike Morse code, the smoke signals were rudimentary – and necessitated using a signal which had been previously agreed upon by both the signaler and receiver.

Does everybody know the signal? Have you been in the common interest development industry so long that you're using acronyms or terminology that could be misconstrued or misunderstood by the recipient?

On June 23, 2005, the Los Angeles Times reported that acronyms are being banned by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors in their meetings and written materials. Not only did the five-member panel give the policy decision unanimous approval, but also violators will be fined \$1 every time they use an acronym! They've come to the conclusion that acronyms are not a helpful shortcut, but can actually be destructive to healthy communications.

The language in the common interest development community is replete with acronyms such as CC&Rs, ADR, CID, PSC, even CACM. However, someone new to this form of real estate ownership will be wary of our special shorthand vocabulary. For example, does your board even understand the value of the certification initials after your name? When the board minutes refer to CD, does that mean a Certificate of Deposit or a Construction Defect? Well meaning timesaving acronyms require time for the novice to figure out.

Is your message blowing in the wind? When a windstorm picks up, does the accompanying stress load cause your communication to lose its meaning?

Tools that are intended to improve productivity can elevate workplace stress. Computer accessory maker Kensington Technology Group of San Mateo, California, said forty six percent of their employees felt that the level of work-related stress had increased from the previous year with an identical percentage saying that technology — such as the demands of voice and email — were directly responsible for their level of stress.

Unless they are retired, board members are probably unable to leave their work-related stress at the office. The result? The governing bodies of the communities you manage are most likely made up of overworked and overstressed individuals. Stress certainly will have an impact on how messages are communicated as well as the tone in which the information is delivered. As the stress level increases, our ability to

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## TOP EIGHT TIPS FOR E-MAIL COMMUNICATION

*According to David Friedman, Vice President and General Manager of Telephone Doctor, these tips below will enhance the effectiveness of your email communication.*

**Practice being clear and concise with your message.**

**Before sending, ALWAYS reread your message and double check for grammar and misused words.**

**Copy back salient points when replying to an earlier message.**

**Use specific subject line descriptions.**

**Realize that once your message is sent, there is no getting it back.**

**Practice the 24-hour rule when you're upset.**

**Avoid sh-cuts and abbr. in biz email msgs.**

**Don't forward viral messages.**

## Effective Communication

*Continued from page 33*

take a deep breath and respond professionally may decrease because our emotional response mechanism is high and our rational response system is lower under those circumstances.

When is it time to douse the fire and use another form of communication? When is "face to face" communication really the best way to get your message delivered?

There is no substitution for face-to-face meetings. By far, seeing a person eye-to-eye offers the most beneficial communication environment. And research has shown that words alone don't have the value we might suspect. A Harvard Business Review article titled "Listening to People" reported that of all the factors that contribute to our understanding of a message, only seven percent of that meaning is the spoken word. The highest contributor to meaning was "appearance, posture, gestures, clothing, and surroundings" (55%), followed by "intonation, inflection, volume, speed, and vocabulary" (38%). So much of the data we process is filtered through factors other than what is actually spoken. A simple email may not fully carry your message.

When is "too much" too much? Don't let the blanket get in the fire. Long, complex messages rarely make it to their intended recipient. Keeping the message simple and straightforward is always best.

Intel, the successful semi-conductor company, reportedly receives a mind-boggling 3,000,000 emails a day according to an article in March 2001 issue of Fast Company. With 10,000 employees, the average employee receives a numbing 300 messages in one 24-hour period.

The article reported the average worker at Intel spends up to 2.5 hours a day reading and responding to emails. If your email recipients are on electronic mail overload, how is your message going to swim to the top of the email pile? How can you be assured your content is read and your intent understood? Keep it simple – and use the subject line strategically to get your message through. If you are including a large attachment, but only certain pages pertain to the recipient, tell them the information is contained on pages 2 and 15.

Every day we send "smoke signals" to our colleagues, board members, family, business partners, and friends. These signals are sent in a variety of ways such as the internet, telephone, in person, and community meetings. The key thing to remember before any fire is started, think about the signal we want those around us to receive.

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