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MAY 7, 2018 @ 03:37 PM 72 👁

# Syncing Your Communication Style With Your Boss's Preferences

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“Set your preferences” for how your boss likes to receive communication: Immediately? Daily? Weekly? From the admin only?

By Dianna Booher

Have you slipped into the habit of Sonic-style communication with your boss—much like you drive by for an Orange Slush? “Drive-by” interactions sound like this: “I need to talk to you sometime before we make final plans for the tradeshow.” Or: “Can we talk about a few things before you leave on vacation next week?”



Use these 7 strategies for better

[+]

For better results, consider the choices offered on social media settings. “Set your preferences” for how your boss likes to receive communication: Immediately? Daily? Weekly? From the admin only? 🐦 From everyone in the group? As a first step, observe how your boss interacts with others:

- What’s the preferred communication method? Text, IM, Email? Phone? Face to face?
- What’s their typical response time? (They’ll expect the same response time from you.)
- What’s the typical length of their emails? (Cryptic? Comprehensive?)



Work within this framework to communicate on broader issues and situations.

### **Project Updates: Ask About Frequency**

Find out how often and when your boss wants status updates: Better to know preferences rather than to “check in” weekly, thinking you’re pleasing your boss while she considers listening a waste of time, done simply because you need hand-holding.

### **Delegated Authority: Confirm Check-Back Points**

When delegated a project, a key question to ask upfront is what authority you have at specific decision points. For example, you may have authority to purchase items up to \$10,000 or \$2 million, but beyond that X limit, you have to get approval.

On other matters, the authority level may be unclear. Can you release sensitive information outside the department during a crisis? Can you remove a supplier from the bidder list? Can you offer a bigger commission to a distributor for moving a large volume, or should you check back before making that decision?



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Continued from page 1

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## Work Problems: Bring Potential Solutions

When a problem develops, never take it to the boss without bringing at least one potential solution. Otherwise, your discussions themselves will come to be dreaded.

## Disagreements: Speak Up

Successful bosses want and need candid input. They're not looking for “yes” people, per se. So learn to disagree without being disagreeable or disrespectful. Examples: “The way I see it is .....” Or: “My experience has been different. My approach would be to ....” “I hear what you're saying. That's how many people look at the situation. I come at this a little differently. I suggest that we ....”

## Tension in the Relationship: Surface to Release

Remember that if things deteriorate further in the relationship, you have more to lose than your boss does. Here are several ways to unclog the communication channel:



--*Comment on body language:* "I've noticed a frown the last few times I've handed you these reports. Is this information no longer helpful?"

--*Comment on lack of information:* "You used to mention what happened in HQ meetings. I haven't heard you say much about those lately. Something wrong?"



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Continued from page 2

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—*Comment on a “teasing” remark:* “I’d like to ask you about a comment you made in staff meeting earlier. I know it was said in a teasing way. But I sense there was a little more to it. I definitely want and need feedback about how I do X. What would you like to see me change in that regard?”

Quite often bosses dread giving any negative feedback because they fear it will dampen your overall good performance. So they let that “one little pet peeve” go until it becomes a big irritant. Your altering that “one little thing” to their preference can make a dramatic difference in the relationship.

## Peak Overloads: Re-Prioritize Projects

Rather than telling your boss “no” when assigned a new task or a short deadline when you’re already overwhelmed, rephrase: “Sure, I can do that. Here’s what I’m working on now. Is this the top priority now? How would you like me to re-prioritize these other projects and deadlines?”

## Loyalty: Demonstrate It



Take every opportunity to let your boss know that you “have her back.” Never bad-mouth or gossip about her behind her back. And never “upstage” or embarrass her in meetings.

Just as the accomplished soloist expands her vocal range and the marathoner builds her endurance, the accomplished leader expands her range of communication skills to accommodate interactions with all types of personalities and communication styles.

*Dianna Booher is the bestselling author of 47 books. Her newest is [Communicate Like a Leader](#). She helps organizations communicate clearly. Follow her at [BooherResearch.com](#) and [@DiannaBooher](#).*

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