

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Perfect Communications

Andrew Leigh & Michael Maynard

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About the Authors

Andrew Leigh is the author of several successful books on decision making, management techniques and effective change, all published by the Institute of Personnel Management. He trained as an economist at the LSE, has an MA in Manpower Studies from London University and is a Fellow of the IPM. He started his career in marketing, and was for several years a business writer including three years on the business section of *The Observer*. He was a practising senior manager in the public services for many years.

Michael Maynard has led business and management workshops across the UK and in Europe, specializing in creativity, self-expression and communication skills. After receiving an honours degree in sociology from London University he had a successful career as an actor and presenter, and was a familiar face on TV. He has written for theatre, radio and TV and created many training videos. He has been a pioneer in using theatre techniques in education and business.

Andrew Leigh and Michael Maynard have together written *The Perfect Presentation*, another in this series of management guides, and *ACE Teams - creating star performance in business*, a book about team development. They run MAYNARD LEIGH ASSOCIATES the management development and consultancy service which works with many major British companies.

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PERFECT COMMUNICATIONS

All you need to get it right first time

Andrew Leigh and
Michael Maynard



To our families, associates and clients – keep talking!

Acknowledgement

Our special thanks to Adrienne Burgess for her assistance in the writing of this book.

Introduction - Getting Started

This is a book to use, not just to read. No need to plough on from here to the end. Just dip in and out, hunting for what seems usable, grabbing bits to try out.

We'll start with our final message from the end of *Perfect Communications*: practise. We are assuming you really want to improve your communications. If not, now's the time to close the book or give it to someone who needs it more.

Why does communication interest you right now? Have you felt for some time you could do better? Do you want some tips to use at work? Has someone suggested it would be a good idea to look at the topic?

Whatever your reasons, we offer you this written guarantee:

- You can improve your communication skills

We can say this, because over the years we have helped hundreds of people develop their communication abilities. In scores of workshops for both large and small organizations, we've never met anyone who couldn't improve it if they were committed to doing so. This book distils many of the key ideas they have also found useful.

Scope

First, let's separate communication from a formal presentation. If the latter is your main concern you may wish to look at our *Perfect Presentation* book in this same series.

Perfect Communications goes far wider than presentations. 'Communications' is so broad a term it's easy to be confused by its scope. It potentially covers

everything from conducting interviews to how the mail room works, from holding meetings to computer networks.

We've therefore narrowed it down to three broad areas: communicating face to face; dealing with what we've called 'the technology', which includes writing, phoning and handling the media; and finally the interpersonal areas of relationship building, handling conflict, and feedback.

At its core, communications is all about relating to other people. Its importance is hardly in doubt these days. If you're a manager, for example, you spend around half your time generating information and most of the remaining time using or dispensing it. In one form or another you speak, write, send information or just relate to other people. In fact your working day is probably spent mainly dealing with people.

Even if you are not a manager, communication plays an important part in your life. It's something everybody does. But communication is also about getting results. Results with other people. Since people are complicated beings, we can hardly expect communications to be any different.

You're an expert

Secondly, you are already an expert in communications. You already know an enormous amount about it because you've been doing it since birth.

So you also know there's a great difference between good and bad communications. You've certainly experienced both at some time. Let's jog your memory.

Exercise

Who have you met in recent years who seemed to have a problem with communications in some way? What was it?

Name: Type of problem

.....
.....
.....

Now what about some good communicators you've met personally? Who are they? Can you sum up what impressed you?

Name: Ability to:

.....
.....
.....

We asked you to do these two simple tasks because improving your communications abilities is partly about raising your awareness of what is happening around you. So we had a look at your existing awareness.

Much of the rest of this book will be helping you develop this awareness about what is happening, what does and doesn't work in communications.

Now consider the 24 hours before you picked up this book. Unless you were being a hermit, sitting alone at a computer screen or lost in the desert, you had many different communication experiences. What were they?

Exercise

Choose five communication events from the last 24 hours. It could have been a discussion with someone, a brief meeting, a phone call, talk and so on.

Now try reviewing them in terms of who was involved, the medium, the purpose and finally the result. What did you want or expect from the situation?

We've given an example to get you started: