



# Guide to Effective Communication

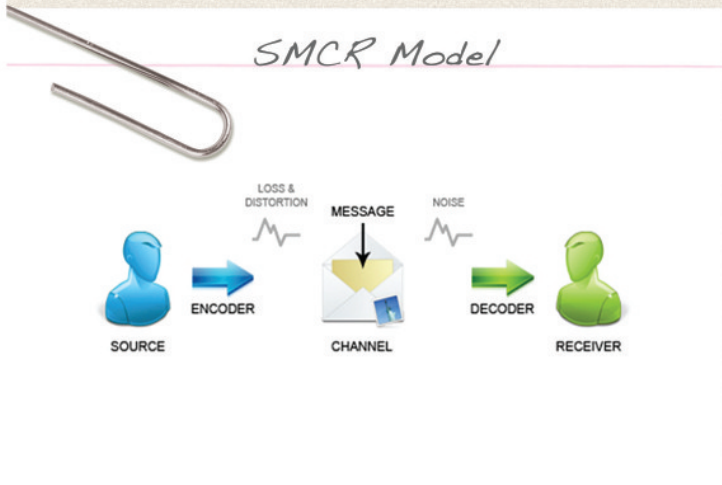


*Although most people are born with the ability to speak, effective communication is a skill we must learn. Communication includes verbal and nonverbal methods of getting an idea across. Effective communication allows for this information to be understood by our recipients and, sometimes, acted upon. This guide will offer an overview of effective methods and direction on where to find additional information.*



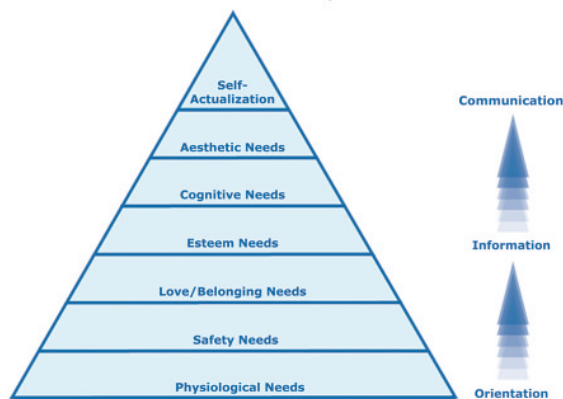
## Introduction

The SMCR Model is the main communication model that focuses on how information moves from the source to the receiver. It identifies points where communication may be lost or distorted, thus changing the original message. More on this topic can be found in Trainer Development Program: Communication course.



Abraham Maslow (1949) suggested that human needs can be placed in a hierarchy where basic needs must be met before a person can think about any other types of needs. Communication also applies to this concept in that people need to be oriented to important information first, other detailed information second, and directed to helpful resources to conclude their own interpretations of that information in order to act. More on this topic can be found in the IDP Informal Visitor Contacts e-course.

## *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*



## Engagement

In a heavily-communicative world, there is much to compete with any given message. Therefore, it is extremely important to engage the receiver to increase the likelihood of a message being received and interpreted correctly.

Receivers of information need to connect to a message with tangible and intangible qualities. A tangible quality invokes the five senses while an intangible quality is the feeling, relationship, value or belief. If a receiver hears a message (tangible) delivered with feeling (intangible) about a concept labeled with concise essential information necessary for the receiver to know and interprets this message accurately, then the source was successful in communicating.

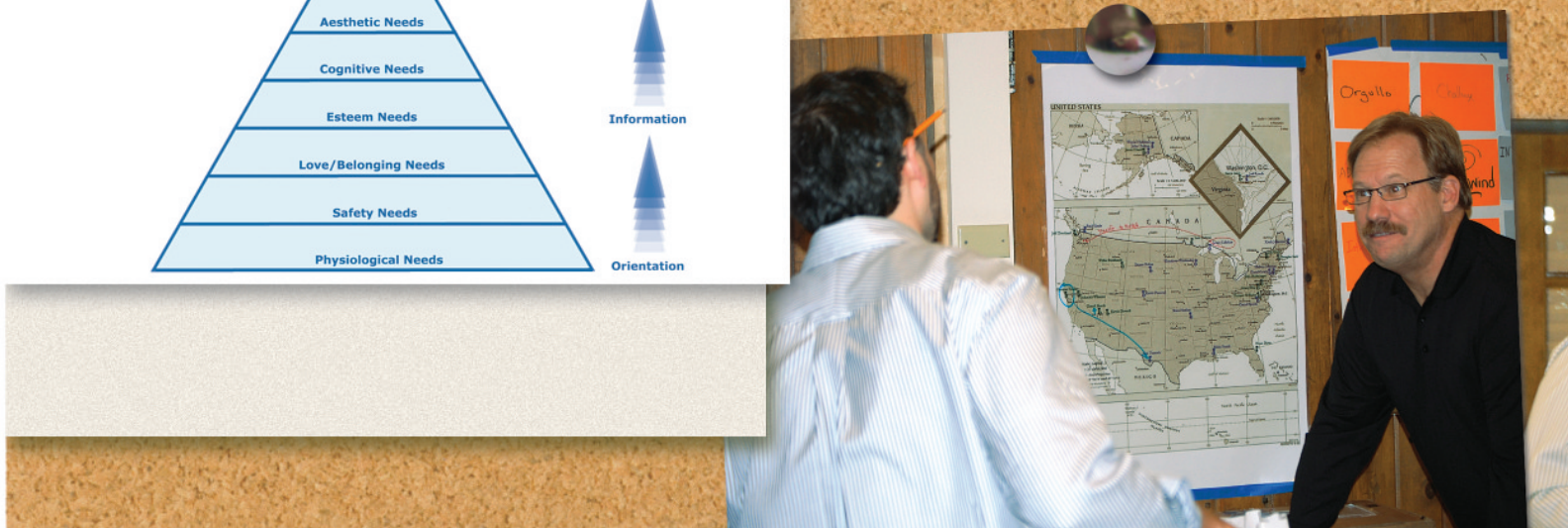
## Making the Connection

When sending a message, the initiator/sender needs to determine the personal relevance of the message to the receiver. When receivers find no personal relevance in a message they have little desire to react to the message. Interpretive techniques are a key

## Communicating Up

Communicating up to policymakers requires extremely concise messages; people are busy and are often subject to a multitude of incoming messages.

Make yours count by gathering as much information from other sources to create an easily interpreted message for policymakers receivers. More information on this topic can be found in Park Planning: Public Engagement.





piece of the interpretive equation. If a source does not use appropriate interpretive techniques, it is unlikely that opportunities will be provided for receivers to understand the personal relevance of the message. And without that understanding, receivers will have little desire to react to the message.

$$(KR + KA)AT = IO$$

The Interpretive Equation (IO) is equal to the combination of a source's knowledge of the resource (KR) and knowledge of the audience (KA) multiplied by appropriate technique (AT). More on this topic can be found in Interpretive Talk. Whether you are an interpreter or not, keeping in mind what you want the receiver to do with your message involves helping the receiver make that personal connection to your message. That's your job; not theirs.

## Speaking

Have you ever seen a speaker flub a really good message? Or read a brochure with beautiful images but find it littered with grammatical errors?

Good delivery skills are essential to providing opportunities for receivers to their own intellectual and emotional connections to the relevance and significance of your message.

In planning your presentation be sure to identify the **goals, objectives, and themes** to make an outstanding delivery that is coherent and persuasive.

## Speaking Tips

**Vocal Projection:** How do you sound when you make a presentation? Consider the following Elements to highlight key points in your speech:

**Pitch** - refers to highs/lows of voice

**Inflection** - use of emotion in words

**Emphasis** - which words are stressed

"What makes you say that?"

"What makes **you** say that?"

"What makes you **say** that?"

"What makes you say **that**?"

## Communicating Down

Communicating down often requires some form of feedback with assessment. Because of cultural misinterpretations, positive assessments are necessary. Think about how your message will be received. To encourage open communication, remember the strategies below.

### Essential Positive Assessment Strategies:

- Focus on what is in the message, not what is missing.
- Discuss the message and not the source.
- Be provisional instead of directive.
- Encourage the receiver to share what they think.
- Recognize and acknowledge improvement.

## Communicating Across

Effective communication with co-workers and the public is vital to successfully carrying out your duties.

Miscommunication can lead to morale problems with your colleagues or confusion for guests. The following list provides helpful tips that will help you improve your communication skills.

### Essential Communication Skills:

- Create Clear Messages of Relevance & Concision
- Maintain Professionalism
- Create Climate of Trust & Respect
- Be Able to Say "I Don't Know" and Follow-up Later
- Use Positing Responses
- Maintain Consistency between Verbal & Non-Verbal Communication
- Professionally Challenge Biases, Stereotypes, & Generalizations



The final step in the communication cycle is giving and receiving feedback. Feedback refers to messages or information that are sent back to the Source and may include additional information, a clarifying question, or a statement about how your message was interpreted. When you receive feedback, the following tips can help you get the most from the message.



### *Receiving Feedback: Are U Ready?*

- A*ccepts feedback without denial
- R*esponsive to what is being received without turning tables
- E*ngaged appropriately with source
- U*nguarded to message without interruptions
- R*espectful to the value of the message and the source's right to deliver
- E*arnestly wants to makes changes if appropriate
- A*ctive Listening to the meaning of the feedback
- D*etermined to understand the behavior leading to the feedback
- Y*ou understand that this process is to help, not criticize

This guide has been developed by the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands at Indiana University for the sole use of the National Park Service. For further information on these topics, please consider the following distance education courses:

- Foundations of Interpretation
- Informal Visitor Contacts
- Interpretive Talk
- Interpretive Writing
- Trainer Development Program: Communication
- Trainer Development Program: Ready, Set, Go

Check out Eppley's website for registration and other courses of interest at <http://www.eppley.org/elearning/> or visit the DOI Learn website at <http://www.doi.gov/doilearn/>



Eppley Institute for Parks & Public Lands  
Indiana University Research Park  
501 N. Morton Street, Suite 101  
Bloomington, IN 47404

Telephone: (812) 855-3095  
Fax: (812) 856-5600  
Email: [eppley@indiana.edu](mailto:eppley@indiana.edu)