



Shaping up communication

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The Communication Triangle

A number of years ago I learned about the communication triangle. It helps you boil your story or message into three simple areas with a central focus on the purpose you're trying to get across.

Start with the outcome first

Get right to the point. In the center of the triangle, identify your key message or desired outcome and who you are presenting this to. In other words, what's the take-away?

If you don't fully understand what you're asking for, the person you're communicating with is likely to end up confused or — worse — receive a message you didn't intend.

Design your three messages around the outcome

Build your communication triangle as talking points around the three messages you need to get across.

- **Message 1** should focus on **why** you're communicating about this specific topic, what you are trying to inform on and any calls to action.
- **Message 2** discusses **how** you can achieve based on ideas you may have.
- **Message 3** focuses on the **what**. What refers to the points that make your message compelling and focuses on any type of information you may have to help back up your points.

For "high-stakes" discussions, rehearse ahead of time. Even for lower-risk discussions, know what you want to say. This is a tool you can pull together quickly when you're on the phone or preparing ahead of time for meetings.

When responding to questions, be sure to stay on point and look back to the triangle to keep the message consistent. Avoid the introduction of new information that may take the discussion off track.

Practice this approach for a while and keep track of your results. You can fine-tune as needed but I expect, like me, you'll find it helps you start on solid ground.

