



*Next Third Thursday Webinar  
February 16, 2017*

## Update Your Writing Skills

Join us for a great refresher session that can help you project the professional image you want in all your written communications.

With email, memos, and letters, chances are you connect more often in writing than you do face-to-face. How does your writing represent you and your agency? Does it follow the ABCs of accuracy, brevity, and clarity? This session will refresh some of those skills we've forgotten since our classroom days and will even update you on grammar rules that have changed in the last few years.

**MARCH 16: Dealing with Irate Customers** - It's going to happen. No matter how wonderful you are, you're going to have unhappy customers. How do you handle it when those customers "blow up"? What phrases help? What words make things even worse? Let's share our best ideas to get through these situations with grace, style, and an absence of curse words.

**APRIL 20: Get Your MOJO Back!** - It's time to remember the things that motivate you and bring them back into your everyday life. What's your passion? What are you good at? What do you want to be when you grow up? We'll ask some of those questions and help you find ways to bring that excitement into your workplace.



We often avoid difficult discussions because we're worried that they're going to be unpleasant. But putting off these events has negative repercussions. It can raise anxiety, lower cooperation, affect morale, and allow a bad situation to become even worse.

Whether our difficult discussion is with a peer, a supervisor, a person who reports to us, or even a family member or friend, there are certain actions we can take to help ensure that we have more positive outcomes from our difficult discussions.

This handout, together with the Success Series Webinar and suggested resources, is your first step to making your difficult discussions more productive and positive.

Watch for the videos of our latest series of webinars coming soon to the CPTP YouTube Channel. <https://goo.gl/iSOiJP>



## PLAN

- The PLAN System helps you walk through the steps of a difficult discussion by addressing each step of the Prepare-Listen-Act-Note.
- PREPARE** for the discussion by doing homework and practicing the discussion.
- LISTEN** to the other person first and allow him/her to vent. Getting the emotions out can help you get past them and move on to the solution.
- ACT: Acknowledge, Communicate, and then Try Again** until both of you understand the position of the other person.
- NOTE:** Take notes to establish actions and agree upon deadlines. This helps ensure follow up.
- Effective planning can reduce anxiety, help develop assertiveness, and set the stage for a positive outcome.

## PREPARE

- Prepare for the discussion by thinking about the details.
- Determine participants. Who needs to be included? Narrow the list down to the fewest possible people who need to be present.
- Focus on a single purpose.

*These next bullet points were adapted from JudyRinger.com. Full text available at <https://goo.gl/bB07qS>*

- Before going into the conversation, ask yourself some questions: What is your purpose for having the conversation? Work on yourself so that you enter the conversation with a supportive purpose.
- What assumptions are you making about this person's intentions? Be cautious about this.
- What "buttons" of yours are being pushed? Are you more emotional than the situation warrants?
- How is your attitude toward the conversation influencing your perception of it?
- Who is the other person? Is he aware of the problem? Begin to reframe the opponent as a partner.

- What are your needs and fears? Are there any common concerns? Could there be?
- How have you contributed to the problem? How has the other person?

- Write bullet points to ensure that you cover all the topics you need to discuss.
- Practice in front of a mirror to help with confidence and assertiveness.
- Hold the discussion in a neutral location. Try sitting next to the person instead of across a desk. Ensure privacy.

## LISTEN

- Practice listening behaviors such as eye contact, body language, summarizing their statements, and giving total attention to the other person.
- Allow the person to vent on the topic up to two times to get as much emotion out as possible.

## ACT

- Acknowledge that you've heard their message.

- Communicate your message in a clear, concise manner.
- Don't go longer than 60 seconds without allowing the other person an opportunity to speak.
- Use the language of teamwork, such as "How can we solve this?" or "What can we do to make this better?"
- Try again by being flexible and using as many methods as possible to ensure understanding, increase opportunities to find a win-win, and ensure a positive outcome.

*Three sample opening statements from JudyRinger.com:*

- I have something I'd like to discuss with you that I think will help us work together more effectively.
- I'd like to talk about \_\_\_\_\_ with you, but first I'd like to get your point of view.
- I need your help with what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk?

- Be willing to trade places and stand in the other person's shoes.
- Find an objective party to help as mediator.
- Take a break; step away.
- Change your conflict resolution style as needed.
- Use guiding statements to get back on track such as: I see what you mean. How about if we brainstorm on some potential solutions?

## NOTE

- Make sure that before you leave the conversation, you've made note of who will do what by when.
- And be sure that you follow up so that the situation is resolved for good!
- Leave the meeting on a positive note. You took a negative situation and faced it. Congratulations!

## RESOURCES:

*JudyRinger.com*  
<https://goo.gl/bB07qS>

*BusinessInsider.com*  
<https://goo.gl/JjITzD>

*HBR.org How to Handle Difficult Conversations at Work:*  
<https://goo.gl/w89z9m>

*CrucialConversations.com*