

Hartford Actuaries Club Beyond the Numbers-The Interpersonal Side of Actuarial Work

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Technical Skills are Easier to Learn than People Skills

- Have you ever known:
 - the arrogant brainiac?
 - the stubborn genius?
 - the “rocket scientist” with “sharp elbows”?
 - the immature intelligent person? (low EQ-
Emotional Quotient, high IQ)
 - the “know it all” whom no one wants to be
around?

People Skills Are Often Under-Rated by Actuaries

- Are an important addition to technical skills
- Are often more difficult to learn
- Incorporate dynamic and non-verbal elements
- Involve knowing the importance of picking up on cues
- Benefits family, work, friends and community
- Are a competitive advantage in a tight job market
- Involve a lifelong learning process
- Have many layers of depth and subtleties

Levels of Technical Communication

- Concept: Slope
 - Level 1-steepness (eg black diamond ski trail)
 - Level 2-rise over run (eg pitch of a roof)
 - Level 3- $(Y_2 - Y_1) / (X_2 - X_1)$ (eg class homework)
 - Level 4-derivative (2D calculus) (eg limit)
 - Level 5-directional derivative (3D calculus)
- Key: The appropriate level varies with the audience, context and purpose of the communication

Levels of Interpersonal Communication

- Level 1-Person is a Member of Not-for-Profit Board of Directors
- Level 2-They won a distinguished citizen award
- Level 3-It made the person happy when they won the award
- Level 4-The person wore a tuxedo for the first time at the award ceremony
- Level 5-The “Are You the Bell Man?” hotel story
- Key: When to go to what level and with whom?

Awareness of Corporate Culture

- Corporate history (people, products and profits)
- Corporate brand or identity
- Corporate values/mission/vision (varies widely)
- Corporate target markets
- Corporate stories
- Corporate self image
- Corporate inclination to M&A or international
- Corporate reputation
- Excellent sources: Web, word of mouth, customers, producers, current and past employees

Awareness of an Individual

- Individual reputation and background
- Individual stories and adversities overcome
- Individual brand or “buzz”
- Individual track record
- Individual management style
- Individual philosophy and values
- Individual interests and motivators
- Individual goals and dreams

Seek Out Mentors

- Ask if they could share advice/lessons learned (e.g. the importance of the meeting before the meeting)
- People almost always say “yes”
- Follow up with a specific appointment/meeting
- Options include:
 - experts in the field
 - senior people with broad experience
 - relatives
 - teachers
 - friends
 - alumni

Small Things Mean A Lot

- Be cautious about or avoid correction
- Note nuances regarding “turf”
- Forgetting to include people can lead to resistance
- Learn the “10 second hook”-people are busy
- Be high productivity/low maintenance
- Grow from feedback and adversity
- Learn to embrace change
- Ask a best friend/trusted person what’s working and what’s not working

Areas to Avoid

- Manipulation
- Interrupting, pretending to listen
- Forcing the direction of the conversation
- Being too precise or using too many numbers
- Over-quoting memorized lines from books
- Poor table manners
- Sloppy dress

Takeaway: Be who your mother or grandmother would approve. Be authentic and be aware that other people are watching.

Summary

- Integrity-Helps you to look in the mirror and acknowledge gaps to work on
- Humility-Helps you keep growing for a lifetime instead of thinking you've arrived
- Other-focused approach-Makes the other person feel special and valued
- Perseverance/Resilience-Allows you to get back up when you fall down
- Sense of humor-Allows you to keep it all in perspective-learn to laugh at yourself
- Passion-Fuels your efforts and will be contagious to other people