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Once we bring two human beings together, whether at home or at work, we have set the stage for communication breakdown! In this article Brin Bendon investigates aspects of verbal and non-verbal communication which can prevent such breakdowns through the use of assertive communication.

Assertive

Firstly, we need to define our terms in order to discriminate between assertive and non-assertive behaviours such as aggression and passiveness.

Are you the kind of person who finds it difficult to say something critical or negative to someone because you feel that they might take it in the wrong way? You may be afraid that they will react negatively by becoming aggressive or defensive if you confront them with how you think or feel about a situation. Or, you might be concerned that they will be hurt or offended by any criticism. On the other hand, you may be the kind of person who has no difficulty in telling others precisely what you think about them and in no uncertain terms! Either way, if your hat fits any of the

descriptions outlined above, then you can profit from assertiveness.

Using assertion skills, you need feel none of these things. Assertive behaviour can help us when dealing with tricky situations. Assertive people are able to express how they think and feel openly with no embarrassment and without causing offence to others. They are able to say what they mean, mean what they say, in the right way, at the right time. Assertiveness enables people to feel OK about themselves and about others and helps others to feel positive about you.

Assertive communication enables us to ask for what we want without embarrassment, or to say 'NO' to unreasonable demands or requests without feeling guilty, to express how we think or feel openly and honestly and to ask questions when we don't

understand. It enables us to confront difficult situations and to challenge unacceptable behaviours when dealing with difficult people. It also helps us to negotiate acceptable agreements by seeking to gain win / win outcomes through workable compromise and to give and receive constructive feedback.

Non-verbal communication

Research carried out by Mehrabian at the University of California Los Angeles in 1971 revealed that Body Language accounts for 55% of the message, while vocal elements such as tone of voice account for 38% of the message with words only contributing 7% of the message. In other words, as Marshal McLuhan once put it, "It's not what you say but the way you say it." So what does assertive body language look like and how does it differ from aggressive or passive body language?

Hostile aggression is often associated with postures and gestures that we all recognise; pointing fingers, clenching fists, shoulders back with chin forward, and aggressive eye contact such as staring and sometimes accompanied by an invasion of our personal space. Hostile aggression can also be recognised by vocal and tonal qualities such as the raised voice or shouting with a harsh edge to the voice.

Not all aggression is hostile however. Manipulative aggression may look and sound quite different since it relies on other 'weapons' such as sarcastic digs, jokes at others expense, barbed comments or sulks and silence. A refusal to acknowledge someone by greeting them with silence and turning one's back on them when they are trying to speak can be just as aggressive as someone who shouts at them with a fixed stare. Why? Because both strategies are designed to



communication

achieve the same end. To win at others expense.

Passive behaviour can be recognised by quite different non-verbal and vocal behaviours. The body language of the passive person is non-threatening. The arms may be folded into a defensive posture. The eyes may be averted towards the ground, and the voice is down, with the mouth sometimes shielded by a 'protective' hand when they speak. Passive strategies are designed not to 'rock the boat' in order perhaps to avoid trouble and have an easy life. This they achieve by denying their personal rights. They allow others to win at their expense.

By contrast assertive behaviour looks quite different to either aggression or passivity.

Assertive body language looks positive because when people behave assertively they stand or sit with an upright posture while the shoulders are relaxed. They can hold relaxed eye contact. In place of the closed hand gestures of 'aggressives' and 'passives', we see open palm gestures. The voice tone is relaxed and level.

Assertive strategies result in quite different outcomes. Assertive people respect their own rights and the rights of others. They can stand up for themselves without infringing the rights of others. They have self respect and respect for others. They search for win/win outcomes.

However, being assertive does not only require skills. To be assertive we need to embrace a philosophy or a way of thinking about ourselves and others. At the heart of assertiveness is the issue of rights. They acknowledge that they have rights and so does everyone else in this world. They are prepared to compromise and seek win/win outcomes, where I win and you win. Unless we adopt these basic principles, we will not be seen as assertive by others, no matter how adept we are at using our skills. Instead we will be viewed by others as phoney, and the skills will appear as a set of 'tricks'.

Verbal communication

If, as Mehrabian argues, words only account for 7%, need we bother about them? The answer of course is yes. The point about Mehrabian's research is really that words only have real power when they are matched by a congruent body language and voice tone. If there is a mis-match between body language and the words, we tend to believe what we see before we believe what we hear. The same is true of voice tone. Unless the tone of voice matches the words we use, others may distrust what you say. To avoid being misunderstood we need to be sincere and speak truthfully. Only then will the words carry conviction.

The language we use does play a part in communicating whether we are behaving assertively or not. Certain phrases like 'you must', 'you have to', 'you should' can sound aggressive to the recipient since they appear to deny them choice. The same is true of phrases such as 'I can't' which can sound passive. Assertive people prefer the use of phrases such as 'I chose to' instead of 'have to', or 'I don't want to' in place of 'I can't'.

Assertion also involves a set of communication skills. What follows is a flexible framework built around a set of principles. To be effective you need to make it your own by using your own words and making your own style work for you.

There are four key steps to follow when communicating assertively.

Firstly, It is important to listen actively to what is being said, and then to acknowledge what you have heard to show the other person that you both hear and understand them. If we fail to acknowledge, then we often find ourselves frustrated by a circular argument in which neither person appears to hear or understand the other.

Secondly, having acknowledged what the other person has just said, use a transition or linking word before going on to say what you wish to say. Linking words like 'however', 'even

so', 'nonetheless', 'nevertheless', 'alternatively', 'on the other hand', 'be that as it may' have the effect of allowing you to state your opinions or feelings after acknowledging theirs without discounting the other person's views or feelings. Avoid the word 'but' because it is a 'blocking word' which can the unfortunate effect of negating what you have just said in the previous sentence.

Next, say what you think, feel or believe and own your statement by using the word 'I'. It is important to state your views and beliefs and to identify any emotions or feelings associated with them. You can strengthen the convictions of your statement by using the pronoun 'I'. Owning your statements in this way lets the other person know that you take responsibility for the way you think and feel.

In many situations, the Royal 'we' and 'one' can sound like a 'cop out'. Although there are situation when the words 'we' and 'one' may be appropriate, they often suggest that you are failing to take ownership and responsibility for what you say.

Finally, state what you want to happen by expressing a clear outcome. This moves the conversation towards a positive outcome or solution and prevents the conversation from becoming bogged down in a circular argument. It indicates openly what your intentions are without denying that the other person may want something different. Although there are occasions, such as when part of a joint negotiating team, when it may be appropriate to use the word 'we', it is generally better to own your statements by using the word 'I'.

Broken record

If having worked through the four steps, you find that you cannot resolve the conversation, then try the 'broken record' or 'tape recorder' technique. Children are experts at this and often 'win' by wearing their parents down. To do this you repeat

the four key steps again making sure that you acknowledge the other person's thoughts and feeling at key step one at each cycle. It is important to vary your sentences by changing some of the words each time. If not you will sound like a parrot?

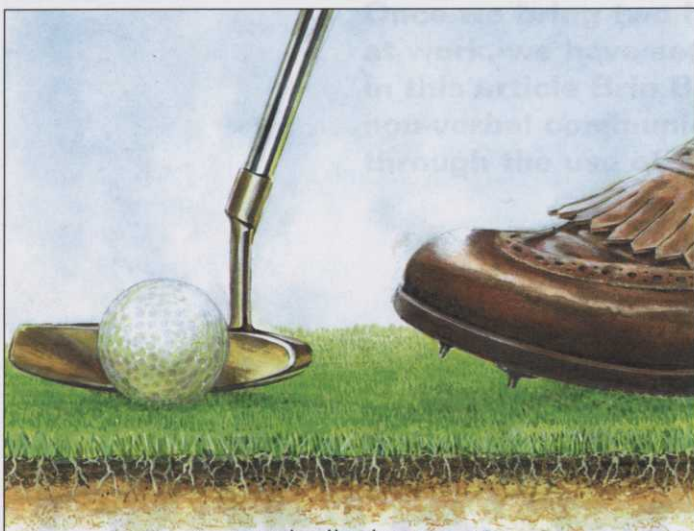
Workable Compromise

Finally we should be prepared to accept workable compromise. This means giving each person room to manoeuvre in order to work out a solution that will be amenable to all parties. It means each person giving up a bit of what they want in order to move from their position to a shared one. It really means looking for an alternative way forward.

Remember. There can be: your solution, my solution and our solution



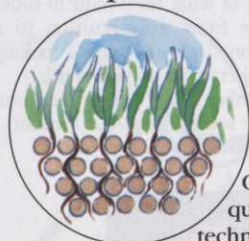
Brin Bendon is the Managing Director of Vector Training Ltd., an approved training provider for BIGGA and many other corporate and public sector clients. Brin is well known to many Greenkeepers in his role as one of the lead tutors on the BIGGA's Management Development Programmes. Vector Training can be contacted via telephone on 01904 642462 or by email: enquiries@vector-training.demon.co.uk.



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Bill Farnham, Course Manager at London Beach Golf Club, gives some advice on charting your golf course

MAP IT OUT



Above: Tools of the trade

GPS, Global Positioning System, was first developed for military use in guidance and navigation. It now has a wide range of applications, being most widely used in recent years for marine navigation. Early systems offered accuracy to around one metre; today's state of the art equipment is capable of sub centimetre accuracy.

I was first introduced to the benefits of GPS during my time in golf course design. We had previously been using conventional surveying techniques in the form of Total Stations with Data Loggers. The time and manpower savings that can be realised with GPS are quite remarkable. Time taken to complete a typical survey can be reduced by as much as 50%. GPS requires only one-man operation, compared to two for conventional methods. Other benefits are that there is no need to set of a number of stations over a survey site to achieve a line of site between instrument and target. Also the range of GPS is much greater, up to 10km from a base station.

GPS works by way of a network of ground control stations, a radio link with an operator controlled rover and a system of satellites, 24 in number at this time, orbiting the Earth in eight orbital planes, some 20,000km above the Earth's surface.

Varying degrees of accuracy are obtainable depending on the GPS sys-

Right: The view from the back of the 3rd green at London Beach



Above: Bill Farnham

tem and processing mode used. We use RTK (Real Time Kinetic) processing. This is the most accurate method available, producing sub centimetre accuracy.

The survey is conducted over the required area; the operator on the system controller records points. This is a hand held PC. The system controller can be customised by the operator, and programmed with a user-specified menu. A point can be recorded, processed and stored in less than one second. The method of recording point data can be manual or automatic.

We found automatic mode most useful when surveying the London Golf Club. With its extensive network of cart paths, some 16.4km. Survey time for this element was greatly reduced by mounting the rover on the front of a golf buggy, with the mode of record set to automatic and configured to record points at 3.00 metre intervals. It was simply a case of the operator driving along the perimeters of the cart paths.

GPS however is not the only accurate means of producing accurate surveys. In fact in some cases GPS will not be an option, because the system needs to be in communication with a minimum of five satellites to function to the required accuracy.

Some sites may not be suitable for GPS equipment. If the site is heavily wooded for example, and the necessary satellite signals cannot be received an alternative must be used.

The solution would be in the form of a Total Station and Data Logger. This method is more time consuming and requires two operatives, as opposed to GPS being a one-man operation.

For a course like Royal St. George's, Sandwich, Kent, where I produced a survey to assist with the planning of the proposed new irrigation system and set-up for the forthcoming Open Championship, GPS was the perfect choice. With only a handful of trees on the entire site; there was no problem with receiving signals. On the other hand a course such as, say Wentworth,

may require a different approach using a combination of GPS and Total Stations. Whichever system is used, the end product will be the same.

The survey of the London Golf Club is, I believe, one of the most extensive carried out to date of a golf complex. Anyone familiar with the LGC site will appreciate the amount of legwork involved in such a task. During the survey over 53,000 individual points were recorded, taking some two weeks. To say I now know every inch, or should I say centimetre of the site, is somewhat of an understatement. Every detail has been accurately recorded, golf course features, trees, irrigation system, including every individual head and valve.

Having recorded all this survey data, what do we do with it? Upon completion, the data stored in the system controller is downloaded to a desktop PC. This may be done on final completion of complete survey, or as I personally prefer, at the end of each days surveying. Mainly as a safety precaution to avoid loss of data, should



a problem occur with the system controller, not that it ever has in my experience, but better safe than sorry!

Another reason for daily down loads, one is able to print out a map of the day's survey to monitor progress.

Downloaded data files are transferred to the CAD (Computer Aided Design) programme.

It is here the final maps are produced in hard copy, as well as stored for easy access.

A full range of maps are produced from the co-ordinate data, including generating a full topographic contour map of the site.

This is where what I set-up at The London Club takes the process further. By customising the CAD software installed in the Golf Course Superintendents office, to provide a data bank of maps and calculations that will allow an operative to access any given entity of the golf course, and determine location size, exact area, length and three dimensional co-ordinates, at the click of a mouse button.

Why do you need such a survey?

When I first began to consider the possibilities of carrying out such an extensive project. We first looked at what the club could get out of it and how it would benefit. What we could foresee were enormous possibilities and as time goes by the benefits are becoming increasingly evident.

In the majority of cases, Course Managers have to guesstimate, to a degree, the measurements of their golf course. This was highlighted recently when I took up the position of Course Manager at London Beach Golf Club & Hotel, at Tenterden, in Kent. It had been my intention to produce accurate mapping of the course, at my earliest opportunity, having carried out the survey during the winter. I had been informed upon taking over at the club, that when the course was constructed, three years ago, surveys, and I use the term survey loosely, had been carried out and areas of greens, tees, etc had been calculated. Taking the greens as an example, these totalled 5500m², and were supposedly accurate to within plus or minus

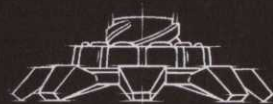
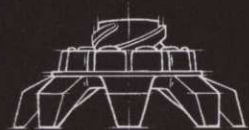


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Above: The view from fifth tee at London Beach

10%. My survey revealed that they actually total 3549m², considerably less than the figure originally suggested.

From this we can see that since the course's completion, if application rates have been calculated based on the original figures then the greens have received excessively high rates of application, poor, not only from an agronomic point of view, but also from a financial one.

Conversely, the opposite could be the case and the original areas had been under calculated, resulting in under dosing on applications.

Assuming that calculations for other areas such as tees, approaches, etc, are equally wrong, one can see the overall effect this could have.

There are numerous other benefits of having accurate mapping of our golf courses. For example; any future construction works can be accurately planned and costed from accurate plans with contours and levels. Because these surveys are three

dimensional, we can ask the programme to give us volumetric calculation for earthworks, etc, or maybe you want to calculate the amount of sand required for filling bunkers. Also yardage marker placement can be done with accuracy, and guesswork eliminated.

Another is the linking of the data with other software, such as Trims - or Epani - Spreadsheets and Databases, irrigation controllers, etc. In fact the London Golf Club has recently installed a 'Rainbird' Nimbus 2 control system, utilising my survey data.

Any future alterations or modifications to the golf course can readily be incorporated into the system. The system also allows for archiving historic data of the golf course. Of course, not every club will necessarily want, or need to, go to the same degree as the London Club. GPS and the system are so versatile it can be tailored to the individual club's requirements and budgets.

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tion of golf course elements, we can be more cost effective and efficient in our use of resources and in purchasing, thus providing a valuable management tool.

OK, you're saying, but what is it going to cost? Well I am sure it will be a lot less than I am going to save, by confidently knowing exact measurements for my golf course, and the associated saving that can be made.

I am currently in the process of setting up a computer application at London Beach, similar to the one at the London Club. I believe it to be an essential tool in the Course Managers armoury. Although some clubs on the other side of the pond in the USA are switched on to the possibilities of GPS as a tool for golf course management, in Europe it is still very much in its infancy. I feel sure as the greenkeeping industry becomes more switched on to the benefits of GPS & Mapping of our golf courses, we will see more and more clubs taking advantage of the technology now available to us.

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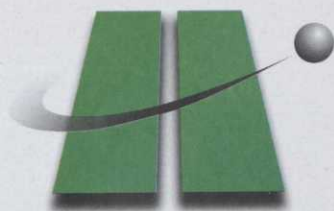
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