



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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**Preferred Vendors Services Expanding!**

If you haven't checked the Entrepreneurial Actuaries' (EA) Preferred Vendors site lately, now would be a great time to do so! Several new vendors have been added over the last month or so. These vendors can serve the interest of small business people and entrepreneurs. Some offer discounts to EA section members. To view a listing of vendors with a brief description of the services they offer, [click here](#).

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**The Art of Communication: Eight Steps to Getting It Right***by Suzanne Bates*

The art of everyday communications should be every professional's number one priority. Every statement and every communication must contain the elements connected to your practice's success, including its values, motivation, goals and objectives.

However, successful communication is not just about an idea, it's also about how it is articulated. These eight steps will get you there:

**Step 1: Constantly keep communication lines open** from within and outside your company—whether clients, employees, colleagues or vendors. Quick and responsive replies to all queries ensure that everyone is apprised of what's going on.

**Step 2: Become your staff's most valuable resource.** An open door or open phone line (or open e-mail box!) should be maintained so that staff or subcontractors can feel comfortable asking for help and sharing issues and problems. This second step is about responding to all communications without interfering in others' daily responsibilities, and prioritizing situations expressed in communications so that each communication can be handled as soon as possible based on its individual merits.

**Step 3: Enforce acceptable behaviors.** This powerful behavior insures that the value of communication will be recognized as well as the person doing the communicating. It also serves to express both appreciation and confidence in staff, subcontractors, business partners and other stakeholders in the life of your business.

**Step 4: Remain focused on client communications** through the feedback loop by maintaining constant and open communications with each and every client. This level of communication should be customized according to the individual differences among your clients. Such a personalized nature improves retention, sustaining your company's advantage over your competitors.

**Step 5: Support your staff and/or partners** in learning to communicate effectively. Not every professional enjoys finely-tuned communication skills. Some need a coach or specialized training while others may not feel comfortable making presentations, therefore requiring help in overcoming stage fright. However, if not given the support they need, messages from you may be lost or

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*Visit our [Web page](#) for more information, or view past articles at our [Resource Center](#).*

*And review special offers for our members at our [Member Benefits](#) page, from vendors recommended by other EA Section members.*

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not communicated clearly by others in your sphere.

**Step 6: Overcome resistance to communications improvement.** It's fundamental that everyone should be willing to hone his/her skills in effective communications. Failure to do so will result in miscommunications, missed opportunities, customer/client/staff dissatisfaction and failure to meet objectives. If a staffer, subcontractor or partner refuses to cooperate, it may become necessary to find a new one.

**Step 7: Provide communications training for staff or partners.** Varied levels can be made available beyond the basics. This can include motivational speaking, public speaking, media relations and effective listening/persuasion /influence. It may also be necessary to hire a communications specialist who will evaluate presentations and all other types of communications to see where the strengths and weaknesses lie. In turn, this person can advise, mentor and propose both changes and needed training.

**Step 8: If your firm is large enough, organize a team of communicators** that can represent the company. They should be actively involved within the company and visible to others at all times.

Successful communications cannot be achieved simply by expressing an idea. How ideas are communicated can make or break your practice. Open lines of communications must exist between all your stakeholders and colleagues so that success and communications become permanently and irrevocably linked.



Suzanne Bates is author of "Motivate Like a CEO: Communicate your Strategic Vision and Inspire People to Act!" (McGraw Hill 2009) and the best-seller *Speak Like a CEO: Secrets for Commanding Attention and Getting Results*. President and CEO of Bates Communications, [www.bates-communications.com](http://www.bates-communications.com), she also writes The Power Speaker Blog [www.thepowerspeakerblog.com](http://www.thepowerspeakerblog.com).

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