

The Happy Engineer Podcast,

Hosted by Zach White

Summary of Episode 194: Communication Skills Masterclass
LIVE with Brenden Kumarasamy | Founder of MasterTalk

Introduction to Communication

- Communication is often viewed negatively, especially in technical fields like engineering. Many professionals see it as a chore rather than an opportunity for growth .

Brendan's Background

- Brendan's journey began in Montreal, where he faced challenges learning French at a young age. This experience shaped his understanding of communication and public speaking .

Key Lessons from Early Experiences

- Early struggles with language and a physical disability led to insecurities in presenting. However, these challenges fostered resilience and a unique perspective on communication .

The Importance of Communication

- Effective communication is essential for solving "people problems" in any career. Engineers often face challenges that stem from communication barriers rather than technical issues .

Mindset Shift

- A crucial mindset shift is to view communication as a skill to be developed rather than a burden. This perspective encourages a more positive relationship with public speaking .

Gamifying Communication

- To improve communication skills, one can approach it like a game. For example, using exercises like the "random word exercise" can make practice enjoyable and less intimidating .

Building Confidence

- Confidence in communication can be built through systematic practice and positive reinforcement. Celebrating small victories helps maintain motivation .

Advanced Communication Skills

- Advanced skills, like "communication agility," involve anticipating communication challenges and preparing for them effectively. This proactive approach can significantly reduce anxiety .

Conclusion

- Mastering communication is not just about technical delivery; it's about connecting with people and achieving desired outcomes. Embracing communication as a vital skill can lead to personal and professional growth .

Key Concepts in Effective Communication

1. The Power of Presence

- Being fully present in conversations is crucial for effective communication. Overthinking or formulating responses while the other person is speaking can derail the conversation and reduce its quality .

2. Levels of Listening

- Level 0: Not listening at all; distracted by other thoughts or devices.
- Level 1: Listening to respond; focused on what to say next rather than understanding the speaker.
- Level 2: Listening to understand; genuinely focused on the speaker's message and needs .
- Level 3: Deep listening; perceiving not just the words but also the emotions and body language, allowing for a more intuitive understanding of the speaker's needs .

3. The ACE Framework for Meetings

- Acknowledge: Start by recognizing the participants to build rapport.
- Count: Clearly state how many updates or points you will cover to manage expectations.
- Evaluate: Conclude with a strong closing statement, inviting feedback and further discussion .

4. The Goals Call Technique

- A structured conversation focused on the other person's goals. It involves:
- Sharing goals and their importance.
- The listener must repeat back what they heard to ensure understanding.
- The listener can only ask clarifying questions, promoting deeper reflection and understanding .

5. Importance of Feedback

- Regularly asking for feedback fosters a culture of improvement and can lead to mentorship opportunities. This practice enhances relationships and visibility within a professional setting .

6. The Role of Listening in Leadership

- Effective leaders prioritize listening as a means to understand their team better, which in turn helps in guiding and supporting them effectively .

7. Continuous Improvement in Listening Skills

- Practicing listening skills in low-stakes environments can enhance overall effectiveness in high-stakes situations. This includes separating planning from presence to focus on the conversation at hand .

8. The Importance of Compassion in Listening

- Level three listening requires a genuine concern for the speaker's feelings and needs, which can be developed through practice and intentionality .

By focusing on these key concepts and frameworks, individuals can enhance their communication skills and foster more meaningful interactions in both personal and professional contexts.

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