



In Interpersonal Communications, Quality Really Pays Off

A presentation by Rick Brenner
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Core message

- Person-to-person communications are complex
- Problems that do arise are difficult to fix
- Prevention is easier than repair
- We have little control over what others do
- For best results, prevent problems by changing our inner processes

Brief outline

- Introduction
- Examples of problem communications
- What do we mean by communications?
- A model of interpersonal communications
- Using the model in real time

Synopsis

Misunderstandings, confusion, and unintended offenses are just some of the ways interpersonal communication can go wrong. They are examples of defects in the communication system, and they can be very expensive, both personally and organizationally. When we talk to each other, when we listen, when we send or read emails, when we read or write memos, or when we leave voice mail messages, we're communicating person-to-person. If everyone in an organization has a deep understanding of how this system can fail, they can frame their communications to minimize the occurrence of expensive failures.

Analyzing information flow using the Satir Interaction Model, we gain insight into the elements of the communications process, and we come to a new understanding of how it can go wrong. Understanding, though, is not enough. We must have access to what we know *in the moment*, when we are deeply involved in problematic communication.

In this fun and interactive presentation, we'll explore how our person-to-person communication system works, with special emphasis on its failure modes. We'll emphasize communication under stress, where the most expensive failures occur. And we might just change how some of us send and receive interpersonal communications.

Bio

Rick Brenner is principal of Chaco Canyon Consulting. He works with people in problem-solving organizations that are making products so novel or complex that they need state-of-the-art teamwork and stronger relationships between their people. In his 20 years as a software developer, software development manager, entrepreneur and consultant, he has developed valuable insights into the interactions between people in a technical environment, and between people and the technological media in which they work.

Mr. Brenner has held positions at Symbolics, Inc., and at Draper Laboratory, both of Cambridge, Massachusetts. At Symbolics, he was responsible for development of products based on Macsyma, a computer algebra system. At Draper, he was a principal investigator in a DARPA program, the Evolutionary Design of Complex Software, where he conducted research into advanced concepts for software develop-

ment environments based on dynamic object-oriented programming languages. Since 1993, he has taught a course in business modeling at the Harvard University Extension School.

Mr. Brenner holds a Masters Degree in Electrical Engineering from MIT. His current interests focus on improving personal and organizational effectiveness in abnormal situations, such as dramatic change, technical emergencies, and high-pressure project situations. He has written a number of essays on these subjects, available at his Web site, www.ChacoCanyon.com, and writes and edits a weekly email newsletter, *Point Lookout*.

