

Sunday Times  
**Business Times**  
**Careers**

**JUNE 23 2002**

**The Sunday Times**  
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**W**e communicate every day it's the way we express who we are to those around us - but few of us have learned how to do it effectively. And poor communication does not go well with good management and leadership.

Jill Hamlyn, an Executive Personal Coach and pioneer in the human resources industry, has distilled some 20 years' experience into a template for communication.

Now she is ready to share the approach that she calls four-way management. It's "stupidly simple", she says "and yet when understood and implemented within organizations it has had a profound effect on personal effectiveness and productivity.

Hamlyn, who is MD of The People Business, sees her role, and that of her fellow professionals, as "uplifting communication to increase understanding" throughout an organisation.

"Among other things, good communication stops that 'huddle' effect you know, when people who have not been well-informed huddle in corners and create their own realities from their own perceptions."

Hamlyn believes discord, or misunderstanding of messages, will never be entirely erased, but it can be dramatically improved.

"The old adage is that what you can't measure, you can't manage. I would say that what you can't understand, you can't manage," she says. As understanding people is the key to effective leadership and management, communication is therefore the critical enabler.

"Cleaning up communication from the top levels downwards so staff have a reasonable understanding of what is happening takes away the pressure points. It's not the job that gives you pressure; it is the people behind the job that give you pressure."

She points out that the business context in which we work - one that is continually being speeded up radically due to technological developments gives us very little time to think about how we are doing that most basic thing, communication.

People have been seen as commodities, but there has been a notable swing in recent years towards people being seen as making an imperative contribution towards business success.

The role of managers, she adds, is essentially to get the most out of the people he or she

# Getting your message across is a hard job

Communication is essential to good management, writes JANETTE BENNETT. A new theory places emphasis on the multidirectional nature of effective communication

is responsible for although not all managers, particularly those hankering after power or a handy addition to their CVs, acknowledge that role.

The context today, however, is characterised by, among other things, a talent war. Many people are realising they have the freedom to choose not to work for a manager who does not have their interests at heart. That demands a change, a reassessment of where we are, but you can't change anything, she says, without getting to the core.

That core is communication the make or break of relationships in the workplace and it's about ensuring that what you are saying and what your listener is hearing are reasonably close.

Four-way management works like this: imagine a wheel with four spokes. You are at the centre of the wheel - the crux of effective leadership and management lies in knowledge of oneself. "If you can't understand and manage yourself, you can't understand and manage others," Hamlyn says.

The individual at the centre of the wheel is a complex mixture of value systems, experiences, various drivers and intent. These are combined into what is recognised as personality - discernable through your interaction with the world. You express that personality through communication, which flows along the four spokes: outwards and upwards, sideways and downwards.

The first three "spokes" indicate outwards and sideways communication, referring to peers, downwards to communication with those in lower positions on the ladder, and upwards to communication with people in higher positions.

Communication with peers is probably mostly crucial, partly because the rules of hierarchies perceived power over each other don't exist at this level. However: "We're conditioned to charge ahead, stepping on people's shoulders to get to the top." We've been taught that only one can win and the other must lose.



**STRAIGHT TALK: Jill Hamlyn designed the four-way management concept**

Peers could, instead, be drawing strength from each other, sharing avenues for growth, and cross-pollinating ideas a kind of "collaborative" management.

In terms of downward communication, Hamlyn points out that the person most likely to have an influence on people in the workplace is their manager, who has two ways to motivate staff: pushing them down and telling them what to do, or (clearly the better route) creating a vacuum in which they can grow.

A problem here, though, is that while people go through induction programmes when they enter a company, they are given very little support when they move up in an organisation. It's not really surprising that after being promoted to management, most individuals leave within 18 months.

"I think that is because they feel they can start elsewhere with a slate clean of errors. If they are mentored into their new job, the retention rate

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becomes far higher." This is what tends to happen: you learn on the job and someone comes to help you out of your problems. "It creates a legacy of ineffectiveness."

In terms of upward communication, Hamlyn says we are "so conditioned to hierarchies" which, she adds, exist in our minds that we don't send messages upwards, but rather just take what is sent from higher levels. "The person is not the job. We tend to forget that a manager is not better than us, but just holds more responsibility."

The top can be exceedingly lonely. Hamlyn says the majority of her work as an executive coach is enabling excellence in communication, keeping the channels with others open and clear.

The final spoke on the wheel is the source of excellence in all interaction within the workplace and that is knowledge of self. "Good communication starts from having a thorough knowledge of who you are and how you express and present yourself to other people. This is the very first step towards improving your communication," Hamlyn says.

"We define ourselves in relation to the people around us, and create ourselves through the words we use. There is a grand narrative that runs through all our lives.

"We communicate through what we say and, sometimes, through what we do not say. It is to our advantage to be able to communicate ourselves authentically in situations, to say what we mean and mean what we say."

In this wired world, Hamlyn points out we now have more ways to communicate than ever before. More is not necessarily better. "In fact, unless the parameters of communication are clearly defined, more can be significantly worse. There is a vast difference between communicating at people and communicating with them."