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Rhetoric

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- **Sample Company Corporation**
- Sample Street 1
- 12345 Sampletown

- **Call:** +49 123 123456
- **Fax:** +49 123 123457

- **http://www.trainplan.de**
- **E-Mail:** mail@trainplan.de

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WHAT IS RHETORIC?

Rhetoric originates from ancient Greece and is generally considered "the art of speech". Nowadays, the term "rhetoric" designates the skill of stating one's views and intentions – thus influencing others in their thinking and acting – as well as the theory and the science of said art.

Besides an actual skill for talking, rhetoric encompasses several other disciplines such as dialectics (the art of persuasion) or the art of interpreting and appropriately using body language. All these skills are vital for a talented orator.

In the following, you will learn a lot about these skills. This module is intended to assist you in using and incorporating into everyday life the insights we have gained over years of experience. Enjoy!

Rhetoric: "The Art of Speech"

BASICS OF COMMUNICATION

Since interpersonal communication will retain its significant importance over years to come, it is vital to ascertain individual factors relevant for communication and to know which effects these factors have upon humans.

Science has established for human memory to retain auditive (acoustic), optical (visual), and kinesthetic (palpable) signals in the following order of priority:

- reading   ca. 10%

- hearing   ca. 20%

- seeing   ca. 30%

- feeling   ca. 70% - 90%

There are individual divergencies as for the perception of these signals. *Perception is what we perceive to be "true".* This quotation from Reinhard K. Sprenger illustrates that a dialog with a partner must be the stepping stone for any conversation. It is required to first identify the preferred channel of communication. Generally, there are the categories of acoustically, visually, and kinesthetically oriented types of perception. This distinction is important because persuasion cannot be successful until the interlocutor's primary channel of communication is identified and addressed.

Different types of perception require a different channel of communication

Consequently, interlocutors must adapt to one another using all means of communication (speech, gestures, facial expression).

The following chapters will outline basics of communication. These will help you to communicate more precisely and to identify and eliminate difficulties when communicating.

A starting point, among others, is the idea of Neuro-Linguistic Programming. It is the aim of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) to analyze subconscious signals as well as the influence of communication on human behavior and learning ability. NLP allows for identifying and avoiding psychological inhibitions with communication. Conscious and subconscious actions can be structured; this, in turn, enables an individual to communicate better and less ambiguously.

Logic, psychology, dialectics, and rhetoric are the instruments that enable us to make use of insights gained through NLP. An optimal combination makes it possible to correctly interpret an interlocutor's imaginations and emotions. In order to adapt to an interlocutor and to communicate effectively, balancing the following aspects is paramount:

- language, vocabulary, and syntax

- voice and articulation

- body language and appearance

"Words do not represent reality"

This quotation from Korzybski illustrates the basic idea of Neuro-Linguistic Programming. The following parts will deal with the factors determining verbal and nonverbal communication.

NLP = Neuro- Linguistic Programming: Analyzing Subconscious Signals

Levels of Communication

Generally, communication occurs in several steps, with subsequent steps building upon previous ones.

The first step in communication begins with the utterance of a message. It is to be observed that our interlocutor actually hears what we are trying to convey. Graphically illustrated, this means:

said	**does not yet mean** →	**heard**
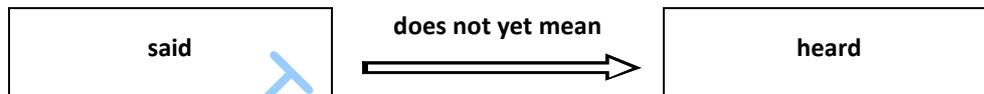
The second step in communication begins with our interlocutor's auditive reception of what we want to convey. This does not necessarily mean, however, that our utterance has been understood. There might have been a misunderstanding, or our interlocutor might have been elsewhere with his thoughts.

Usually, an interlocutor will give a form of feedback to indicate whether the message has been understood or not. Feedback can consist, for example, of a nod or a question. Graphically illustrated, this means:

heard	**does not yet mean** →	**understood**

The third step is to follow. Our interlocutor has heard and understood what we were trying to convey. This does not necessarily mean, however, that he or she agrees with our message. This means:

understood	**does not yet mean** →	**agreement**

If the recipient cannot hear the message, the message cannot be understood

Hearing and understanding does not mean agreement

Communication Occurs on TWO Levels

Context between Psychology and Communication

"Communication" is a widely used catch phrase in our society; only seldomly, however, is it employed to designate dialog, or actually talking to or with each other.

It has been established by learning theories that all information is stored and influences conscious and subconscious behavior. Genuine, open dialog depends on human behavior and on conceptions and opinions individuals hold about each other or *think* to hold about each other.

There are two levels on which individuals interact with each other during a first encounter or a conversation. While a pure exchange of rational information takes place on the level of reason, feelings emerge on the level of emotion that can lead to an interlocutor's positive or negative reactions.

This verbal and nonverbal communication determines the emotional mood and creates a foundation for trust and liking.

Insights from transaction analysis – which researches communication between individuals – can yield valuable hints because "what is said and how it is said determines actions". This is illustrated in the following communication system.
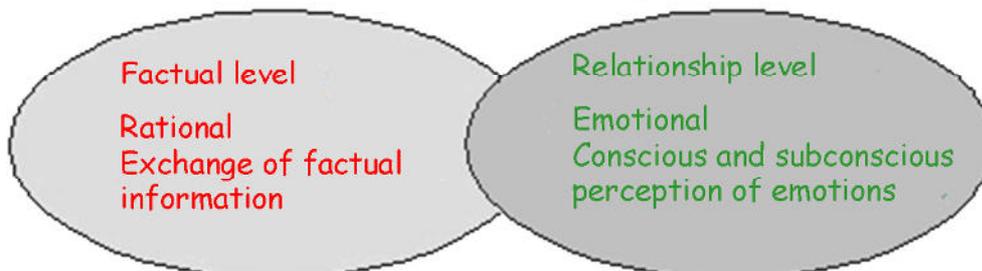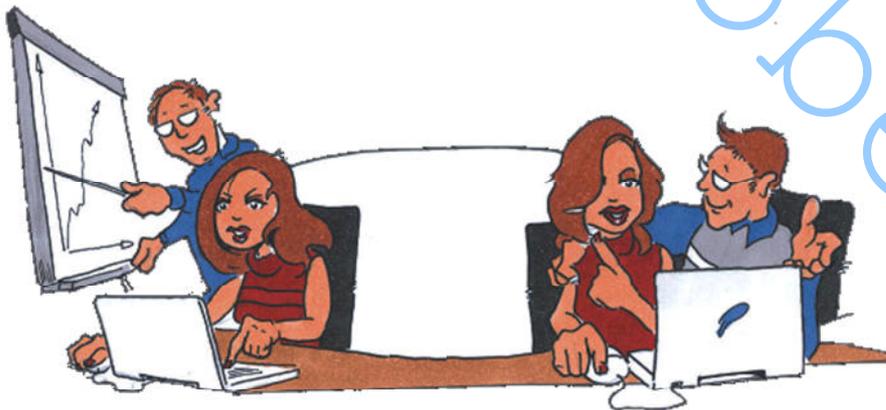
Communication takes place on two levels: content and relationship

Factual level
Rational
Exchange of factual information

Relationship level
Emotional
Conscious and subconscious perception of emotions

Different Manners of Communication

Language as a Means of Communication

There is hardly another area with as many misunderstandings as the area of language. Generally, we assume that we know the meaning of each and every single word for each and every single person. We neglect to consider that there are hundreds of words that have ambiguous meanings and that certain words can have a specific, personal meaning.

Useful examples are words like "money", "power", and "trust". Their meaning varies according to whether they refer to a specific situation or to the general meaning established in our society.

Some areas require a generalization in order to be understood by an interlocutor. This holds especially true for scientific or technical topics that require detailed background knowledge.

However, conscious or subconscious generalization can lead to a loss or a distortion of information, consequently leading to a loss of communication. A loss of communication can also be effected if content is distorted by inaccurate language.