



Positive Principles Newsletter



By Guy Harris
Chief Relationship Officer
Principle Driven Consulting

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Welcome to our new **Positive Principles** subscribers.

This month's tip addresses an issue I see in many communication challenges. Several of my coaching and consulting discussions in the last month have been on this very topic – learning to speak to people the way that they listen.



For more complimentary information on how to do what I recommend in this tip, take our "[Better Relationships E-course](#)" and use the "[Personality Lab](#)."

For more specific information, send me an e-mail or give me a call. I would be happy to help.

Here are some articles on related topics:

[Learn to think "I'm Responsible"](#)
[Solving People Puzzles](#)

Thanks for subscribing to **Positive Principles**. I hope this newsletter continues to provide positive and thought provoking content to help you in your efforts to become a better leader and communicator.

Have a great day,
Guy Harris
The Recovering Engineer

Key Quotes:

"Think like a wise man but communicate in the language of the people."

- William Butler Yeats

"Communicate downward to subordinates with at least the same care and attention as you communicate upward to superiors."

- L.B. Belker (*The First Time Manager*)

This month's tip – **Speak their "language."**

Imagine that you are an American on a business trip to Germany. You have learned to speak enough German to order meals, buy train tickets, and do some shopping. You are at the "survival" level of language mastery. You do not speak the language well, but you can survive in the country.

On your first night in Germany, you dine alone at a restaurant near your hotel. You can read enough German to understand the menu. When the waiter comes to the table, you should:

- Attempt to speak German to make things easier for the waiter
- Point to the menu, say nothing, and hope that the waiter understands
- Speak English loudly so that the waiter can hear you more clearly
- Ask the waiter if he speaks English and expect him to adjust to you

In this scenario, most people recognize that “a” is the most correct answer. You each speak a different native language. Since you are in the waiter’s country, and you understand at least some of his native language, it seems fitting for you to make the effort to connect with him in his language. Maybe he speaks some English so that you can both adapt a little to make the connection, but you are the visitor so you make the first move.

Now consider a different scenario. You are the leader of an organization. You like to move fast and get results. You naturally speak directly, quickly and with a focus on the bottom line. One of the people who reports to you is quiet and soft-spoken. They do good work, so you are willing to delegate responsibility to them. You always let them know **what** you want done, but they keep asking **how** you want things done. When you enter their office to speak to them, you should:

- a) Speak softly and slowly with a focus on how things should proceed
- b) Drop a stack of papers on their desk, point to it, and hope that they understand
- c) Raise your voice volume, speak faster, and talk about the results you want
- d) Ask them to “pick-up the pace” and “get with you on this”

Again, the correct answer is “a.” As in the first example, you speak a different native “language” than your team mate. You both speak English, but you speak it differently. The “language” difference between you and your team mate lies primarily in the difference between your personality styles. When you enter their space, you are the visitor so you make the first move.

Opportunities for miscommunication and misunderstanding abound. They happen everywhere people come together. The second example above illustrates one potential interaction that can lead to miscommunication. Other combinations also exist between people. The number of possible combinations exceeds the scope of this article, but the following examples illustrate some of these other possibilities:

One person says...

- “we need to confront the issue”
- “show some enthusiasm”
- “we should be compassionate”
- “let’s check our facts”

Someone else hears...

- “he’s angry”
- “act like an idiot”
- “we should be wimps”
- “I don’t like you”

In order to achieve success, leaders and communicators must work through these points of misunderstanding. It will not happen by accident. Breaking through these barriers takes effort and focus. Most people start at the “survival” level. With practice you can move to “fluency.”

Everyone works with people in some part of their lives. Whether you are a business leader, teacher, sales professional, pastor, or parent; success calls for connecting and effectively communicating with other people.

So for now, I encourage you to remember this month's tip . . .

Speak their “language.”

If you know someone who could benefit from this newsletter, please forward a copy to them.
Send questions, comments, or suggestions for future topics to Guy.Harris@PrincipleDriven.com

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other organizational leaders build trust, reduce conflict, and improve team performance. Learn more about Guy at www.PrincipleDriven.com"

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