Communication and Conflict Resolution go hand in hand. Being able to listen to another and speak to another in civil terms leads to the building of complex teams, organizations, and institutions. Communication and conflict resolution tactics encourage us to see beyond our immediate needs and to see the needs of others. The following **14 areas of consideration** shine a spotlight on some foundational aspects of effective communication and conflict resolution.

1. **The first**, and most important, step is creating **a rock-solid communications plan**.

Who, what, when, where, why, how.

Who is your audience? Who do they report to? Who do they influence?

What are you trying to tell your audience? What vocabulary/language/visual representation is needed?

When will you and your audience meet? When is the next meeting?

Where will you and your audience meet? Where will future meetings occur? Is the space neutral ground?

Why has the meeting been established?

How will you listen? How will you speak to your audience? How will you use media and body language to convey/”hear” messages?

How will your message be presented? By phone? By text? By email? By billboard? By film? Etc.

1. **Next**, think about what you want to say. Think about delivering your message in a short sentence or two. You can always elaborate, but if the core of the message is murky to you, then it must be even more clouded to your audience. Proofreading your work and using standard language is a must. These help eliminate potential miscommunications.
2. **Third**, tell a story. All stories have a beginning middle end. Some are longer; some are shorter. For example,

“Our expenses exceed our profits. New sales targets must be put in place. We will meet again tomorrow.”

OR

“Jackson is a new manager in a difficult region. She is having trouble connecting with her clients. Lisa, you should assist her by coaching her on relationship building and introduce her to some of our larger clients. Let’s meet tomorrow at 10:00 to review this strategy.”

**Your idea or organization has a relevant, timely story.** It is probably about your goal. You might as well tell it. Then, figure it in what manner you want to tell your story – online, in-person, with a drawing, and/or with a street sign.

1. **Also**, consider crafting that story for your audience. Using the example above, Susan is very busy and is rushing to a meeting. Give her the short version. On the other hand, Veronica wants to hear more detail and has time. Tell Veronica the longer story.
2. **Next**, show your audience that you care. **Be mindful of their schedules, timelines, deadlines.** Try keeping a calendar of frequent contacts’ events, schedules, and/or meetings. Your audience will appreciate your attention.
3. **Consistency**. Our time is important. We have schedules. Say what you can when you can. Listen fully. Make time for communication/conflict resolution.
4. **Ask for help**. Again, using the second story as an example, if you cannot make in-roads to some individuals, ask for help. No one gets it right all by themselves all the time. Asking for help is a wise thing to do. Yes, struggle on your own, but know when to say, “Help!”
5. Your audience will give you advice either actively or passively. **Point your ears in their direction. They may be saying that you need to do something.**
6. **Document your communications** by saving emails, journal entries, calendars, and/or media/mediums created during the meeting.
7. Recognize that there is a possibility that your message will change during the meeting. The other person/group may turn adversarial or enter the meeting in opposition with you. **Have your ears open. This may not be the time to get your multi-point message across.** Instead, this may be the time to hear from the other person/group and take into consideration the other viewpoint. This may be the time to reschedule the meeting for a time when the other person/group is able to hear you.
8. **Design a conflict resolution plan.** If there is a barrier to communication, you could try using other scenarios as an example and/or using tools to draw your concept. Recognize that there are valid reasons for conflict. Reasons include a view that one is being treated unfairly, that one is part of a group that historically is against your group, and the view that some items are negotiable/nonnegotiable. At these times, **one needs to be aware of these subtle issues and refrain from provoking the other person.**
9. This is a good time to remind you about **preparation**. Have multiple examples ready. Have enough pens, markers, and paper ready to sketch your concept and have enough for everyone in the meeting. Maybe you cannot manage extra tools but having one extra tool is better than nothing.
10. **Remain calm**. Calm implies that you are secure in your message, and that you are able to listen. Calm is a sign of strength. **Calm helps ensure message delivery, attainment of goals, and the building of relationships.**
11. **Design a relationship plan.** How will you keep the conversation going? How will you continue speaking to the audience? Will you contact your audience after so many days? Will you remember their important events? **How much time do you have to devote to this relationship?**