

Direct and Indirect Communication Styles

Lionel Laroche, PhD, 2007

Direct Communicators	Indirect Communicators
First focuses on task accomplishment	First focuses on relationship
Message is few words	Message is in the context of the word usage, vocal variety, nonverbal clues, relationships, etc.
Explicit (clear, obvious) meaning	Implicit (implied, hidden) meaning
Communication tends to be Impersonal	Communication tends to be personal
"To the point," open	"Read between the lines," subtle language
Deal with conflict directly, head on	Deal with conflict indirectly, "Save face"
Go face to face with person to resolve conflict	Use a trusted third party to assist

How best to manage people who favor a direct communication style:

- If they are offending people in the department by their bluntness, you can help them see how they are being perceived and suggest a more subtle style for certain situations.
- Encourage them to pick up on the subtleties of communication. Non-verbal communication.

How best to manage people who favor an indirect communication style:

- Mirror back the more indirect style as much as possible. If meaning is unclear then be more direct
- Try to have them give more context or background to their communication, if this is required in your departmental culture.
- In meetings, allow time to build rapport before getting right to the task.

Source (with adaptations):

Laroche, L (2007). *Recruiting, Retailing and Promoting Culturally Different Employees*. San Francisco, CA: Butterworth Heinemann. 140,144-5,183-5.

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