



2 Keys to Insuring Your Communication Is Culturally “Just Right” on the “Directometer”

Take a lesson from Goldilocks. You do not want your communication to be too direct (her porridge “too hot”), getting burned (losing business); or too indirect (“too cold”), also risking losing business. How do you discover what is the cultural “just right” level of Direct Communication with your clients, customers, stakeholders?

How one of my coaches almost lost my business: I felt myself squirming in my chair, feeling impatient, my attention drifting, watching the minutes tick away as I listened to my laid back, West Coast coach catch me up on his life and ask about mine in the opening 15 minutes of our coaching session (too “cold” for me!).

“While I care about you and wish you well, our time together is valuable to me, and I want to get right to my coaching goals at the beginning of our sessions,” I finally told him. We were on different points of the “directometer,” based on our cultures. I chose to speak up rather than fire him.

*Directometer: A term I invented in my Direct Communication class, (so far!) an imaginary device measuring how direct the communication is. This is not a good/bad, right/wrong meter, simply a cultural measurement.

What I learned from my Korean clients: The intent of the meeting is implied within a series of formal greetings, I noticed as I heard my Korean coaching students and mentees coach each other. To ask in an initial meeting, “What do you want from this meeting?” could be considered rude and offensive (too hot!). It can take several meetings of establishing trust to get to goals. This may vary based on generation, personality, seniority and how much they work with Westerners and can also apply within cultural groups in North America.

2 key points:

1. **Find out what your client/customer/stakeholder’s cultural preference is on the “directometer”:** how direct to be in your communication. How? Ask them as well as learn about their culture. Find out more in my [IMPACT blog](#) series, or [contact me](#) for a discovery session!

This is also true of corporate culture: check out the preferred “directometer” when you join a new team, organization, or begin working with a new client, or are designing a product or service for your market.

2. **Saving grace:** Besides my own cultural preference for directness, my West Coast coach had, in writing and verbally, invited me to speak up if something was bothering me, which I did. Again this prevented him from losing my business.

Will an indirect communicator speak up, even with this permission? Possibly not. The wise coach, leader, or business owner will initiate a conversation by asking, “How do you want to start our meetings? How do you establish trust? How will I know if I have crossed a communication line with you?”, etc.