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Effective Communication

GUIDEBOOK

for Legislators

"Strengthening the capacity of the National Assembly in strategic political debate and communication" project

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**Effective Communication
GUIDEBOOK for Legislators**

This Guidebook has been developed within the framework of “Strengthening the capacity of the National Assembly in strategic political debate and communication” project. The project is implemented by the International Center for Human Development non-governmental organization within the framework of UK’s Good Governance Fund, with support of the British people.

The opinions expressed in this Guidebook are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the UK Government.

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Introduction

Dynamics of the public communication becomes increasingly significant in the establishment of modern politics. Therefore, the success of the authorities largely depends on the ability to effectively communicate with wide strata of society. This Guidebook will help the deputies establish better communication with the state and non-public bodies, non-governmental organizations, think tanks and their voters in order to achieve the set goals and increase the efficiency of the parliament's work. So, a guide to effective communication needs to be developed to support organizational capacity-building of the parliament through interaction with citizens and civil society. This Guidebook will also boost the quality of legislative

mandates and exercise of electoral representation.

Political communication is a wide concept. This Guidebook seeks to examine the aspects of effective political communication which are particularly important in terms of developing communication skills. The guide is based on the following structural logic: **1)** message formulation and framing **2)** choice of ways to convey the message, **3)** development of strategies to effectively convey the message in order to reach the desirable outcome. The Guidebook also contains practical communication tools (Proper Study and Ladder of Inference) and the cornerstone of effective communication, the five elements of emotional intelligence.

Effective political communication

The parliament exercises three major functions: legislative, representation and oversight, and in order to ensure efficient work of the parliament open communication between the legislative bodies and the citizens needs to be established. Such communi-

cation supports several goals, including education, consultancy, establishment of solidarity, conflict settlement, representation and thorough oversight. All this promotes public education which is also based on mass media's ability to

present, interpret and criticize the work of the parliament.

Deputies and political figures in general should promptly respond to the issue

of providing information on voter involvement policies and decisions. They should develop effective and efficient communication and management systems.

South Africa

According to the Article 59 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the National Assembly must “facilitate public involvement in legislative and other processes of the Assembly and its committees”. To put this into practice, the Public Participation Framework established in 2013 recognized the hierarchy of public involvement based on the four levels below: Level 1. Inform the citizens about the work of the parliament and the government, Level 2. Seek advice from the public and get useful information, Level 3. Involve the public through establishment of dialogue, Level 4. Cooperate with the public by providing an opportunity to establish partnership.

In order to mitigate the consequences of political alienation, particularly among the youth, countries relying on the world’s best practice have introduced a web-based technologies interface (interaction tool). It enabled the citizens to get information and use services, as well as voice their views on political platforms

and public policy. Deputies avoiding to respond to questions may particularly stir anger among the voters.

Mutual communication reinforced by the feedback system provides an opportunity to evade restrictions of the mass media.

United Kingdom

Within the MySociety project framework the TheyWorkForYou website was developed in UK; this is a very valuable tool for supervising the work of MPs.

TheyWorkForYou scrapes open data on UK's parliament and presents it to the public in a more accessible way¹.

In accordance with the item 6 of the Article 4 of the General Provisions section of the Rules of Procedure of the RA National Assembly, a deputy shall organize the reception of citizens, as well as within their powers answer the citizens' written inquiries (questions) in the order specified by the law (RA NA). Expansion of the scopes of communication and dialogue may transform the democratic representation model in Armenia enhancing the opportunities of deputies to clarify their political stances and decisions.

Citizens are not the only ones responsible for citizen involvement; in order to promote the involvement a democratic system should be in place. Given the recent political changes in the country, the political figures can now communicate more freely, and they should use this opportunity. Therefore, they need to develop some skills, which they very often lack. It is crucial to help them develop the necessary skills to use the new communication tools.

Communication strategy

In order to expand the scope of the effective spoken, written, visual and interactive communication skills, in other words, to boost the level of communication literacy the deputies should develop skills not only with regard to their activities as representatives selected by the people, but it terms of institutional practice as well. This means that the deputies should be familiar with the basics of strategic communication programme development, which will enable them to perform their obligation to involve the public into the democratic

process. The strategy is a process requiring thinking in a certain sequence. It is vital to have a clear idea on the current situation, the set goal and the means to achieve this goal. The strategic, operational and tactical tiers are arranged by priority; the most priority one is the strategic tier.

The practical, strategic, expanded and updated communication tools should be based on a properly formulated and structured programme. Through development of a long-term strategy, the

¹ Source: University of Manchester, 2017.

deputies get wider opportunities for being pro-active, and not just respond to the current external conditions. The strategic communication programme will promote cost-efficient involvement of resources and cooperation of groups within the organization, thus reinforcing the institutional power and capacity. The strategy will help shape a clearer perception of the parliament, as to who the deputies are and what they do, along with the importance of the parliament. The communication events of the parliament are implemented in compliance with the key priorities of the representation development. In this context, special communication events and methods targeted at specific audience can be devised. A properly formulated programme is presented below in brief:

- **Background and goal:** A communication programme should start with the background and goal, presenting the institutional context within which the programme is developed, as well as the main purposes. First of all, one should clarify why efforts are made to establish communication.
- **Communication setting:** the strategic programme should take into consideration the communication environment where the communication is established, including the current urgent public issues which

may directly or indirectly impact the message.

- **Communication objectives:** it is extremely important that an effective communication programme clearly presents the communication goals and targeted responses. All communication events define the policy goal, and the communication objectives aimed at its implementation are developed (for instance, a campaign may aim to raise public awareness about the parliament and expand the support framework).
- **Key messages:** key messages should be clear, brief and direct.
- **Strategic options/approaches:** also, it is very important to develop a properly formulated approach to communication which will be in accord with the organizational values: For instance, audio and video means may aim to tell the personal story of the speaker involved in the communication process, to individualize their message and make it more comprehensible for people.
- **New mass media strategies:** the communication programme should take into consideration a number of new media which are currently available for an open dialogue; such

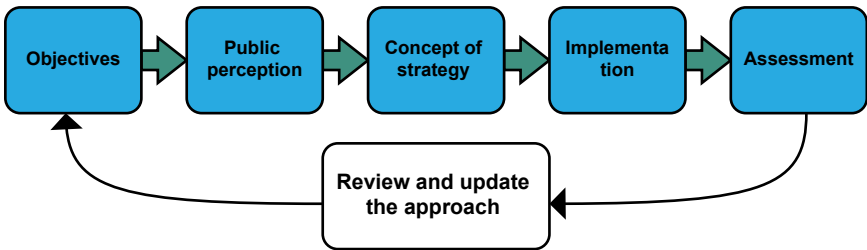
media should be taken into account on a permanent basis.

- **Implementation:** once the approach is defined, the tactic will be presented.
- **Budget:** obviously, the communication programme should be based on a realistic budget.
- **Evaluation:** The progress and quality assessment milestones and the method of assessment should be specified in order to ensure account-

ability. Then the monitoring of the final results and outcomes of the assessment campaign should be carried out (for instance, implementation of an annual survey and analysis among people influenced by the campaign).

- **Sustainability:** How can the organization continue the follow-up actions of the programme at the same pace? How can the long-term involvement of the public be ensured?

Implementation of the strategic communication programme



Paths of communication

The parliament and the people communicate through different ways and paths. These paths are the tools that help convey the message. The message may be presented as a

speech, story, image, or a motion picture. Social media providing a number of online tools for compiling and disseminating materials offer new opportunities to legislators and MPs. Information and

communications technologies (ICT) provide new means of communication with and involvement of the public, to discuss legislative issues with the people, offer educational resources and enhance work transparency.

Deputies should respond to the public more promptly, ensuring accountability through adopting new communication approaches. Traditionally, the work of the parliament has been covered by

mass media reports, while now the MPs post comments on social media networks while debating in the chambers and committee sessions. The people can directly see the numerous opinions and different political views expressed in the debates. Public expectations of such more direct ways of communication are increasingly growing, as is the role of parliamentarians in making the parliament more accessible through a number of digital channels.

Ghana

Establishment of contact between the citizens and the parliament and adoption of sustainable development goals: in 2015, Ghana's parliamentary Government Assurance Committee, with support of the foreign partners, launched a web-portal enabling the citizens respond to the current work of the Committee and voice their concerns with regard to the government's activities in their communities.

Citizens actively engaged in the new format of online and offline tools. As a result, a committee was formed which works more efficiently and effectively. Such a change of situation allows the committees to get the concerns of the local population immediately and ensure that their voices are heard during discussions.

Social media platforms are a perfect place for establishing contact and communication with people who would never think even to talk with their MPs or submit a legislative proposal. Social media provide interactive and bilateral experience.

Since the social media imply involvement and conversation, it is important to specify the frequency, time and circumstances of response. Please see the following response checklist.

Type of post	Addressed question	Action taken
Positive opinion	Is the comment useful for others? :	Respond /Share
	Other	Respond
Disagreement	Is the comment useful for others?	Respond /Share
	Other	Ignore

The public is involved in the following: communication, conversation, stories, leisure and, first of all, the personal aspect: your interaction with other people affects their perception of you, your popularity, and trust. Also, one should take into consideration that the users of the

media are aware it is used as a powerful political marketing tool.

Therefore, the usage of electronic, digital and social media should be based on reliability, honesty, transparency and accountability.

Other means to improve communication with deputies

1. Parliament's website: here information should be placed and shared; this website should provide valuable feedback and ongoing dialogue.
2. Reports addressed directly to the citizens: online news reports are not costly, and it's easy to control them.
3. Blogging: blogs by members of committees may help reduce the distrust among the citizens, also raise awareness and educate the public and inform about the ongoing discussions; it can also enable the political influencers to participate in ongoing discussions.
4. Links in the blog posts can lead the people to a target website and primary source of information.
5. Wikipedia is one of the most powerful tools for sharing and providing information.
6. Email addresses – for sending updated data, providing information, establishing contact and dialogue.

7. Life experience: podcasts, webcasts and Youtube.

- Chile and Brazil have created online platforms enabling the citizens to participate directly in the discussions related to current and proposed legislation.
- Speaker of the Parliament of Singapore Tan Chuan-Jin officially launched a blog where he said he hopes to shed light on important parliamentary processes and cut through the jargon, so as to build a bridge between policymaking and the public.
- Ed Miliband is Labour MP and the former leader of the Labour party. He co-hosts the Reasons to Be Cheerful podcast with broadcaster Geoff Lloyd, who he met when the latter interviewed him during the election. They record it in Geoff's loft, attracting about 70,000 listeners a week.

Though the websites and email may be quite successful, establishment of effective network communication requires a certain degree of interpersonal understanding and trust. To achieve this, regular immediate personal contact is needed, e.g. talk to people through both private conversations and public forums format, deliver speeches and presentations. Public parliamentary hearings also support the development of effi-

cient relations between the parliament and the civil society organizations.

The hearings should regularly allocate time for discussions during which CSO representatives both address and receive questions from MPs, thus encouraging the dialogue and conveying the subtext message to the public that their voice is heard, and opinion is taken into account.

Georgia

The Agrarian Issues Committee involves the farmers in the improvement of cooperatives. Following the development of the long-term multilateral capacity-building action plan (with support of the UNDP), in 2014 Georgia's parliamentary Agrarian Issues Committee launched field visits and public hearings outside the

parliament premises. Through involvement of the local farmers and agricultural workers, the committee members got numerous proposals on the settlement of current problems; also, issues that seemed to be ignored by the government were voiced. Each of 200 gatherings held across the country brought together at least 200 farmers. Many of them expressed concerns over the cooperatives which are the main form of agriculture development in Georgia. Based on the received feedback, the committee initiated and passed amendments to the Law on Cooperative to favour the farmers. (Medium-term review 2016 of UNDP's "Strengthening the system of parliamentary democracy in Georgia" project (January 2016)).

Message formulation

The authority of a political figure depends on their ability to maintain open communication even in cases when the conveyed message raises concerns among the public and civil society actors. Active campaign and political career go hand in hand with harmonious, stable and consistent messages in line with the "practice what you preach" principle, i.e. there should be no discrepancy between the statements and actions on policy-making level. Deputies of Armenia's NA should also appreciate this skill and recognize its importance, particularly amid political crisis.

In order to establish effective communication it is very important to treat the audience seriously; this requires purposefulness, compassion and sometimes even bravery.

Many MPs often tend to view the world from the angle of their activities. They become the prisoners of their own knowledge; being so well aware of issues related to themselves, they even have no idea there might be people unaware of what they are talking about. However, the public does not perceive the world the way the authorities do. The public is not interested in parliament's backstage, and there is no need for it with regard to establishing communication with the deputies.

Still, what does interest the public is what's the positive or negative impact of the parliament's activity on the people. The leadership subject of taking the public seriously implies an interaction that stirs response among people. To

this end, the interaction should be based on the following:

Logos: reasoning	Facts, grounding, arguments and data
Ethos: feature	Some elements of personal character or experience, which help build rapport between the speaker and the audience.
Pathos: enthusiasm	First, the passion of the speaker, but actually stirring emotional response of the audience. In case of failure, enthusiasm may have negative effects – anger, mistrust, a feeling of betrayal, which eventually results in alienating the audience.

However tempting it might be, the deputies should refrain from delivering momentary pleasing statements. Deputies are judged by how the expectations are met. Especially in cases when something goes wrong, deputies feel on their back they cannot find a way out. When actions don't match words, they find it difficult to settle the problem they have encountered by their own initiative. A deputy should inspire trust and faith by keeping their promises, predicting things that become reality, and acting in compliance with declared values. Communication entails expectations; actions either put these expectations into practice or fail to do so. If a deputy comes to the conclusion that they cannot meet these expectations they should try to transform these expectations as soon as possible.

In controversial situations, a deputy should demonstrate determination and

supervise the communication agenda, thus taking control over their fate. The consistent ability to act promptly in dangerous situations, i.e. the capability to make smart decisions and efficiently involve stakeholders provides a powerful competitive advantage. The longer the time required for implementation of the expectations of relevant voters is, the more complex their implementation becomes. Delay of a proper response has a negative impact on the electorate. Delay ruins the trust, the precious burden deputies should bear during their tenure.

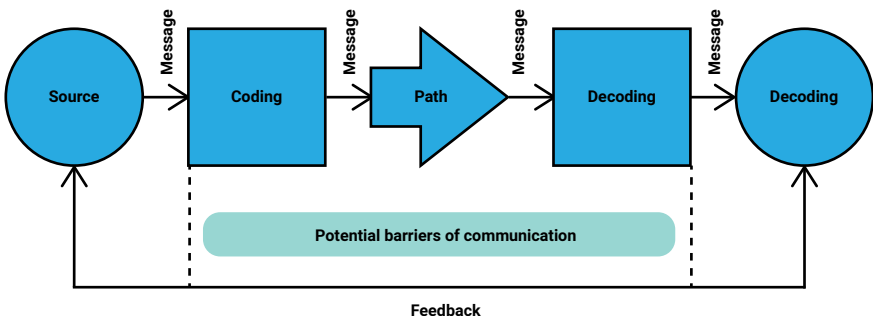
Supervision of the communication agenda requires both control over the situation and dexterity. In theory, a deputy may use the benefit of the first move which is a form of a maneuver; it allows them to effectively impact the public before it appears under the influence of some other viewpoints. However, in many cases the deputies lose the abil-

ity to control the situation even for a very short time. Such cases pose serious threat for losing the advantage and even handing it over to others. A deputy losing the advantage of the first move may pay the price of losing the meaningful parts of the legislative agenda. Particularly in controversial situations, there is constant interaction between control over

the communication agenda and compulsion to respond to others who try to take control over it.

When planning the communication it is crucial to pay attention to the following questions:

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE ESSENCE	HOW TO FORMULATE IT?	HOW TO CONVEY IT?	WILL THE MESSAGE BE UNDERSTOOD?	TO WHOM IS THE MESSAGE CONVEYED?
RA NA deputy	Production	Means/media	Easy perception	Audience



Messages cannot be formulated apart from the context. The whole tactic of communication (special interaction with voters) should directly promote the implementation of communication goals (the outcome we strive to achieve). Meanwhile, the communication goals should, in their turn, encourage the implementation of legislative goals (for instance, enhancement of public accountability and fight against corruption, or a goal may be proposed to convince

the community that their well-being is in the focus of the authorities' attention). Any communication goal or tactic proposed or implemented without clearly formulated legislative purposes is perhaps doomed to failure. The legislative purposes present changes or outcomes related to the current conditions or competitive positions of a fraction or party – adoption of a decision, getting the support of the coalition, receiving official permission of the regulatory bodies, etc.

For communication purposes, changes of attitude, feelings, perception, knowledge or conduct among the voters are presented. Each of the mentioned purposes should be visibly formulated, so

that the communication purposes conform and serve the legislative purposes. Despite other ways to reach these goals, the communication will promote and facilitate their implementation

Message framing

Frame is the concept structure involved in the process of thinking¹ (George Lakoff, 2004). Framing the topic of a conversation means to demonstrate preference to a specific meaning or several meanings to other or others. Sharing our frames with other participants of the conversation (the process of framing), we formulate the sense of our statements, since we insist that our interpretation should be considered more realistic than other potential interpretations. The framing impacts

the grounding of a statement, or, in other words, the frequency and form of a statement are much more important than the mere essence of the statement. First of all, framing may refer to all the words, images, expressions and ways of presentation that the speaker uses to convey the information. These are called frames used in communication.

Here is a Simple Framing Checklist, drawn from the work of George Lakoff

1 George Lakoff (2004), «Don't think of an elephant» 1920769455.



which can be very useful for deputies in addressing the public with a message:

1. Be clear on your own values.
2. Use the language of values, not of facts or statistics.
3. Think strategically in terms of large moral goals.
4. Unite and cooperate with other kinds of issue-based progressives whose values you share.
5. Be proactive.
6. A good example of framing through pictures can be the photographs

posted on a deputy's Facebook page. It is very important to assess the potential of pictures in conveying meaning and persuasion (*see the picture*).

Obama's decision to hold a press conference announcing his determination to close Guantanamo prison in the shadow of a portrait of Theodore Roosevelt was hardly accidental. Teddy Roosevelt, who led a legendary cavalry to victory against Spanish overlords in Cuba, helped establish US control over Guantanamo Bay in the first place. By placing himself visually alongside a heroic portrait of the galloping leader, Obama hoped to bask in the reflected testosterone of America's most macho president.

Historic example of framing

Theodore Roosevelt, nearing the end of a hard-fought presidential election campaign in 1912, scheduled a final whistle-stop journey through the heartland of America. At each stop, Roosevelt planned to inspire the citizens with oratory, and leach each with a small pamphlet, three million of which had been printed. On the cover was a stern presidential portrait; inside was a stirring speech, "Confession of Faith". The final push was about to start when a campaign worker discovered a small line on each photograph that read "Moffett Studios-Chicago".

Since Moffett held the copyright, unauthorized use of each photo could cost the campaign a dollar. The three million dollar price for distributing all the pamphlets greatly exceeded their resources. The campaign workers were in a tizzy. Not using the pamphlets would badly damage Roosevelt's reelection prospects. Yet if they

went ahead without Moffett's authorization and were found out, they'd branded lawbreakers and would be liable for an unaffordable amount. Dispirited, they approached George Perkins, noted financier, a partner of J.P. Morgan and Roosevelt's campaign manager. Perkins lost no time summoning his stenographer to dispatch the following cable to Moffett Studios: "We are planning to distribute millions of pamphlets with Roosevelt's picture on the cover. It will be great publicity for the studio whose photograph we use. How much will you pay us to use yours? Respond immediately." Shortly, Moffett replied: "We've never done this before, but under the circumstances we'd be pleased to offer you \$250." Reportedly, Perkins accepted – without dickering for more.

The frame should also reflect the deputy's notions on the given situation. Political figures usually try to frame the issues in an advantageous way because they understand that the public opinion influences the public policy. This approach is more applicable and expedient in democratic countries.

Deputies should familiarize themselves with the message framing practice and, if necessary, participate in relevant trainings, since framing is very important. Also, it is crucial to utilize appropriate means to publish these statements. Irrespective of the degree of opposition by public and criticism by the mass media, the deputy should continue to communicate and get the relevant response.

Following any incident, offering one's apologies during the first day may suffice to prevent outrage manifestations, while apologizing on the tenth day of on-

going anger would not be enough. The advantage of the first move would not allow the critics and opponents to frame the situation at their discretion. First, the deputy should be consistent and unwavering in describing the crisis, their motives and actions. Deputies' regrets voiced by their subordinates are not the same as those voiced by the deputies themselves. The consistent ability to respond promptly is as important as the capacity to focus attention, i.e. the ability to concentrate on the proper issue and communicate with multiple parties. A deputy should come up with an initiative when doing this would help them reach the maximum result.

Response to a crisis situation should come within 15 minutes

Checklist: things to do and things not to do



THINGS TO DO

Enjoy public trust during a crisis situation

Focus on the crisis situation

Employ your anticrisis programme

Decide what you can do by yourself, and what can be delegated to others

Find out the facts and contact the authorities

Carry out detailed monitoring of social and traditional media

Clarify the scope of issue and assess the key decisions

Deliver a preliminary statement as soon as possible

Weigh every word

Give priority attention to protection of people's interests

Fix all actual faults known to public

Contact your major audience (workers, council members, stockholders)



THINGS NOT TO DO

Lie

Disappear

Disseminate a rebuttal without examining all facts

Understate the significance of the situation

Make jokes on the crisis situation

Say: "We take the situation seriously"

Reiterate the problem or accusation in your statement

Let your fear for responsibility prevail over your human essence

Make conclusions without understanding the facts

Focus only on the internal aspect of the issue

Feedback

Key components of effective communication include attentive listening and exchange of views. The responses should be well-considered and thoroughly formulated. In many cases immediate reply via email or messages is not expedient. In order to enhance the probability of securing positive result the deputies, like other political figures, should carefully watch their language when responding to statements addressed to them. If one is told they are not important enough to meet them, such statement would sound insulting. Even in case a deputy believes the statement is true, voicing it would hinder the peaceful settlement of the issue. Written statement may imply much more connotations and potential misinterpretations than the oral speech. In order to attain the goals of the effective communication, one should avoid unnecessary grandiloquence, instead focusing on the information a deputy wants to convey to the person who had raised the issue, and ensuring the integrity of the information. This would also be a good way to reduce mistakes in communication.

The primary objective of assessing the feedback is to find out the estimation the deputy gets. Overall, the opinion is expressed in three forms: gratitude (thankfulness), admonition (this is a

more proper way to do it) and assessment (this is what you have achieved). In many cases the one who gets the feedback wants to receive or hear a different opinion than the one provided.

There are three types of emotional incentive factors that form the feedback.

- Factors encouraging the discovery of truth;
- Incentive factors stipulated by mutual relations;
- Incentive factors stipulated by the personal identity.

Each of the mentioned factors originates for different reasons and entails a number of various reactions and responses.

Factors encouraging the discovery of truth derive from the mere essence of feedback: it is somewhat detached, not useful or simply unreal. As a result, those receiving the feedback are indignant, hurt and discontented.

Incentive factors stipulated by mutual relations are determined by the person providing the feedback. The whole feedback assumes the touch of the relations between those receiving and providing the feedback, and it may be based on the

opinion of the feedback receiver about the feedback provider (e.g., they should not be trusted on this matter) or the attitude of the feedback provider (e.g., after all I've done for you, you criticize me cowardly?). We move our focus from the feedback itself to the impudence of the feedback provider (Are they malevolent or simply ignorant?).

Unlike the mentioned cases, incentive factors stipulated by personal identity focus neither on feedback nor the feedback provider. These factors are

related to our personality only. Whether the feedback is true or not, it discovers our identity one way or another, i.e. our self-awareness. As a result, we feel depressed, exposed, ashamed, or off-balance. We suddenly realize that we are not sure about our own opinion on ourselves, and start to question the ideas we cherish. In order to avoid negative emotional responses and strains, when mastering the skills of giving and receiving feedback the deputies should pay particular attention to the three types of factors mentioned above.

Five elements of emotional intelligence as a cornerstone of effective communication

These is a specific reason why the emotional intelligence is a key component of effective communication methodology, ranking among the most multifaceted and important skills for deputies.

Emotional intelligence is guiding us through processing of what we say and what we hear. Instead of ordinary automated reactions, our words turn into conscious responses, firmly based on the recognition of our perceptions, feelings and desires. As a result, we express ourselves frankly and clearly, at the same time demonstrating respectful and compassionate attitude to oth-

ers. Every time we exchange views, we hear the deeper needs of ourselves and others. Emotional intelligence teaches us to be more careful, also clarify and distinctly formulate what we want in the given situation. Mastering the emotional intelligence elements requires consistent practice, and still, it is a powerful transformer and an important factor of effective communication. Since the elements of the emotional intelligence help us replace our previous practice of protection or denial of judgements and criticism, or aggressive behaviour, we start to perceive ourselves and others, as well as our intentions and relations in a different light. Now the resistance,

defensive behavior and aggressive responses are reduced to a minimum or are even eliminated. When we focus our attention not on identifying the problem and making judgements, but rather try to explore what we notice or feel, or need, we discover the depth of compassion. By underlining the need to listen to ourselves and others carefully, the emotional intelligence reinforces respect, attention and empathy, and triggers mutual desire of sincere communication.

1. Self-awareness

Though this word can sound quite ordinary, self-awareness requires self-consciousness and constant efforts. On average, a person feels emotions 90 per cent of time daily. We are emotional, indeed, though many of us never try to bring emotional experience to the level of consciousness.

Regardless of whether we are aware of our emotions or not, they dictate the rules of the game. Emotions often influence our conduct, restrict our capacities, prevent us from perceiving the situation correctly and weaken our decision-making abilities, in many cases – regardless of our consciousness. This does not mean our emotions are bad or should be ignored. On the contrary, emotions are like superpowers; if deputies learn to utilize their emotions efficiently, they can

become a valuable source of shrewdness and power.

Emotions and perceptions are much easier to describe in retrospection. Real self-awareness implies that emotions should be revealed at the given moment in order to understand their impact on people.

In this regard, self-awareness precedes the tactical empathy.

By revealing the negative thoughts in mind during the communication, the deputies are able to minimize their impact and rearrange their thoughts. If deputies understand their own feelings it is easier for them to understand how others perceive them, and they are able to regulate the communication style correspondingly.

2. Self-regulation

Following the improvement of self-awareness, a deputy's next step towards advancing one's emotional intelligence and establishing more effective communication should be the development of their self-regulation skills. Deputies might realize that they are angry, but if they don't use this awareness to oversee their conduct, this awareness will be useless. Self-regulation during the communication process means to control one's emotions consciously, resist the

impulses and responses driven by emotions, and shift the focus of attention frequently in order to concentrate on the ways to achieve the goals.

During the self-awareness and self-regulation it is essential for the deputy to maintain open and neutral attitude. Self-regulation cannot justify a mob law. During the communication a deputy should strive to accept the current position and try to shift the focus in order to understand the interlocutors. Has one's aggressive tone caused indignation? Or rather, has a deputy mistakenly interpreted their own voice tone as a personal slap while in fact the anger was caused by the given situation? If deputies focus their attention on identifying the cause of the emotions, their emotions will never tie their hands again.

3. Internal motivation

Among the five elements of the emotional intelligence, the internal motivation is perhaps the least intuitive one. We often talk about motivation with regard to work and sports, while the internal motivation is quite a different thing. Unlike the external motivation which focuses on awards, e.g. recognition, money and growth, the internal motivation is based on the values and aspirations that push us towards self-improvement.

People with internal motivation pursue opportunities of personal growth and are more apt to feel the "flow of powers", the blissful condition of being entirely absorbed in something and easily employing all skills.

Though in many cases the effective communication aims to get certain behavioural response from the listeners, one should first of all have internal motivation to improve the effective communication. A deputy should set small goals and train in a less stressful situation until they learn to demonstrate good conduct under pressure. Apparently, developing one's effective communication skills and leaving one's comfort zone is uneasy; the only option in these conditions is to choose one's own way.

Deputies with internal motivation are inclined to perceive their failures as an opportunity to learn and try to improve their skills by learning something new each time. Also, this increases the probability that they would "ripe what they sow" in the long-term perspective of the external communication.

4. Empathy

Empathy implies an ability to perceive the views and emotions of another person and demonstrate this perception. A demonstration of being aware of the interlocutor's emotions and views is the

basis of the effective communication, as well as a prerequisite for trust, rapport and a chance for success. Empathy also has a consolidation effect. If deputies understand the emotions and perceptions that guide the actions of another person, they will be more prepared to have harmonious and lasting influence on their behavior. Combining the empathy with self-awareness and self-regulation, a deputy acquires the necessary components for empathy in terms of tactic, which is one of the most powerful tools of communication. However, there is one important note here; understanding does not mean agreement; in order to persuade someone a deputy should first of all understand this person.

5. Social skills

The ability to communicate and get in contact with other people largely depends on the other four components of the list above. To ensure fluent communication with the public a deputy should understand other people's emotions and views and use the information gained through this perception to control own emotions and conduct. Communica-

tion skills may also be affected by the culture and environment; one should understand how the Armenian setting influences the perceptions and actions. Communication skills may help the deputy establish rapport with the audience, be perceived within their environment, alleviate the stress, notice other non-verbal impulses and add humour to their speech. A deputy who strives to improve the emotional intelligence should remember that training practice in a relatively relaxed environment brings great success. Trying something for the first time in a stressful situation will only increase the tension and hamper the urge to try again.

In their daily life, deputies have numerous opportunities to refine their emotional intelligence skills and boost the efficiency of communication; mastering the basics always ensures successful progress.

Regular training through non-formal simulation in a safe setting would enable the deputies develop automated skills in an environment where blundering poses no risk.

Practical tools

“Ladder of Inference” tool

Brief description

The Ladder of Inference tool is useful in cases when the conversation appears in a deadlock, and no mutual understanding is reached; when people debate on different conclusions and almost no steps are taken to develop a single uniform viewpoint. This tool clarifies how people can perceive the same situation in a very different way, and how the viewpoints of all parties can be “correct” or at least partly valid.

In any situation the involved parties familiarize themselves and pay attention to different facts. Which specific facts would appear in the focus of each of these people’s attention depends on their previous experience, their notions about the key factors, professional qualification and even their personality. In view of such disparities, people interpret the information differently; each fills the gap in their own specific way, making assumptions or conclusions based on at least somewhat incomplete information.

When you comprehend the possibility of coexistence of such diverse views, someone’s disagreement with your opinion would no longer seem dangerous. You don’t have to drop your own views in order to understand and perceive others’ opinions at all. The Ladder of Inference tool teaches to learn other people’s opinion and at the same time share your own viewpoint more effectively. It lays the basis for effective regulation of problems. This tool may prove useful in finding out the reason of failure, for instance, during a tough conversation or in cases when you feel you fail to persuade the interlocutor but do not understand the reason. Also, you may use this tool to prepare for difficult conversations. The instructions of the Ladder of Inference will help you analyze the current (or future) discussion in a structured way, understand the grounds of yourself and your interlocutor, and plan a constructive conversation.

Purposes of using the Ladder of Inference tool

- + Find out how and why the parties can perceive the same situation differently.

**Share your
"ladder"**

**See the
"ladder" of the
other party**

**My conclusions
based on my
interpretations**

**Their conclusions
based on their
interpretations**

share

ask

**How do I interpret the
significance of
information which is
important to me**

**How do they
interpret the
significance of
information which is
important to them**

share

ask

**Information I believe
is important**

**Information they
believe is important**

share

ask

**Information
available to me**

**Information
available to them**

share

ask

Pool of available data

- + Overcome the communication barriers that cause conflicts.

How to use the Ladder of Inference tool

If the two parties differently perceive the same situation or disagree over the actions to be taken, the Ladder of Inference tool comes to help. According to this tool, instead of arguing about conclusions (who is right), it would be much more productive for the parties to examine and try to perceive the information and substantiations the conclusions of each of them are based upon. Clarifying your “ladder”, namely the data, interpretations and substantiation your views are based on, helps you get prepared for the conversation, at the same time trying to understand the grounds of the other person using the same technique. Using the instructions of the Ladder of Inference tool, you can plan the presentation and testing of these ideas during the next conversation.

Explore the data

- + State the facts, figures, actions and conversations on which you base your conclusions. Request the other party to ask questions about the data you presented.

- + Ask the other party to state the facts, figures, actions and conversations on which they base their conclusions. Ask them questions about their data.

Explore the ways of substantiation

- + Share your interpretations and the arguments they are based on deriving from the data (and, if necessary, the data of the other party) you have at your disposal. Request the other party to ask questions about your interpretations.
- + Ask the other party to share their interpretations and the arguments they are based on deriving from the data available to them (and, if necessary, the data available to you). Ask the other party questions about their interpretations.

Explore the conclusions

- + Share your conclusions, explaining how they derive from your interpretations. Encourage the other party to ask questions about your conclusions and how you arrived at them.
- + Ask the other party to share their conclusions. Ask questions to understand their conclusions and the process of arriving at them. Be careful not to veil a biased attitude between the lines when asking a question. For

instance, a question like “How could it ever occur to you that such an unfeasible project would yield results?” does not contribute to shedding light on the differing views or promotion of a quality conversation.

Contemplate and ask questions

- + Raise any judgement you believe is important which the other party has not addressed, and ask how they imagine or assess it. You should assume that the other party has thought about these factors, and not on the contrary.
- + Ask the other party what the main gaps of your reasoning are, or what

was not so convincing. Encourage them to share their doubts. Do not ask whether they agree with you, or whether your viewpoint is intelligible or not. The obvious call to express alternative opinions will help present and clarify the disparities; thus they would be expressed and would not hinder the establishment of an effective dialogue and settlement of the issue.

- + Depending on the situation, you may follow these steps in succession, or focus first on the reasoning of one party, and then move on to exploring the reasoning of the other party.

When should you ask questions and listen?

We aim to listen and perceive and get the result of this perception.

When should you ask questions, listen attentively, and learn?

- when the other party does not hear us;
- when our communication appears in a deadlock;
- when the communication is getting more complex;
- in stressful situations;
- when we are not sure we understand what the other party is saying;
- when we are sure we understand what the other party is saying.

Get ready to listen attentively

- Be attentive and gradually silence your inner voice: making judgements, defending yourself, plotting and testing plans in mind (all this can be done later once you understand the situation better).
- Suppose the other party is “reasonable” - from their standpoint, of course.
- Show interest in the views and opinions of the other party.
- Listen strategically to collect data on interest, communication and other issues.
- Listen “between the lines” to find out the real aspiration of the other party, and not just the mere words.
- Check your conclusions with the help of the other party.
- Remember that understanding does not mean agreeing.
- Remember that understanding the other party’s viewpoint and demonstrating its perception is an advantage, especially in case you disagree with it.

Key listening techniques

Minor encouraging techniques: “Fine”, “Indeed”, “Yes”, “I see”, nod to show agreement.

Imitation: Repeat a word or two the other party articulated.

Paraphrase: Repeat the statement of the other party in your words.

Exposure of emotions: State the emotions the other party may experience.

Open-ended questions (questions implying extensive answers):

Request to quote examples, ask to present reasoning.

Ask effective questions

Show curiosity about them

- Ask questions like “Why?”, “What’s the matter?”, “Will you elaborate more?”
- The less you share the other party’s opinion, the better you should understand it.
- Show respect to others even if you do not respect their arguments.

Employ the strategic listening technique

- Concentrate your inner voice.
- Listen very attentively.
- Listen to find out more.

Earn your right to ask a question

- Express and test your perception.
- Copy the speech of the other party and try to formulate your next questions in this manner.
- Be ready to do what you require the other party to do.

Key emotional incentive factors of the effective communication

Independence: “What can I control or decide?”

Engagement: "Am I in the game or out of the game? Am I taken into account or not?"

Assessment: "Do people appreciate all I'm doing?"

Role-playing: "Do I enjoy my role? Am I doing great? Do people appreciate it?"

Status: "Do people respect and honour me enough?"

Things not to say in cases when one of the parties is very emotional

"As to the other issue..." **avoid or ignore the topic.**

"Calm down!" **instruct the person how they should feel.**

"Everything is not so bad" **underestimate the gravity of the situation.**

"It's awful" **overestimate the significance of the situation.**

"And what did you expect?" **depreciate the situation.**

"You should understand that..." **moralize.**

"Why don't you just..." **show the way to solve the problem.**

Conclusion

In democratic countries, parliaments are obliged to encourage and protect the engagement of citizens as a guarantee of democracy. Open communication is a prerequisite for such involvement. Effective communication through promotion of open dialogue, involvement of citizens and the authorities' ability to respond facilitates the strengthening of democratic institutes and is a fundamental requirement of efficient administration. The parliament's goals to engage the citizens may be classified into two groups: hold discussions with the public and involve people in the parliament's activities, and willingness to provide information about the work and achievements of the parliament and improve the public perception.

The prospect of deputies employing new communication tools to ensure comprehensive contact with the voters on the path to democracy establishment is, indeed, encouraging.

In addition to the circumstance that decisions related to bills and policy-making will be taken collectively and reflect the

voters' will, such approach would mean that the deputies wish to involve the voters from their constituencies, and not just appear in public once in every four years to collect votes. This would mean that the parliament is interested in the voters' opinion. The parliament and other bodies of the democratic state should develop communication strategies to facilitate, encourage and protect the citizen participation. By encouraging open communication and dialogue with the public, the deputies reinforce public trust towards the integrity of the political system and the importance of democratic governance and civil engagement in their life.

Deputies and their public outreach assistants should take special training courses in this sphere and get support for developing separate websites in the above-mentioned forms. In addition, the training of deputies and support staff should aim to teach the practical basics of communication, in order to eliminate the trend to isolate themselves from the public.

List of used literature

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Notes



British Embassy
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National Assembly of the
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International Center for
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Good Governance Fund

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This Guidebook will help the deputies establish better communication with the state and non-public bodies, non-governmental organizations, think tanks and their voters in order to achieve the set goals and increase the efficiency of the parliament's work. This Guidebook will also boost the quality of legislative mandates and exercise of electoral representation.

This Guidebook has been developed within the framework of "Strengthening the capacity of the National Assembly in strategic political debate and communication" project.

The project is implemented by the International Center for Human Development non-governmental organization.