

How to Speak Up and Be Heard at Work

Carol looked at the small boxes filling the large video screen in front of her. The faces of nearly the whole company, save the owner and CEO, smiled and fussed with microphones and headphones. Carol looked at her own image, found the “mute” button and breathed a sigh of relief. Looking at her hair was the last thing she wanted as a distraction. This quarterly meeting was important.

Various presenters shared their screens, and problems were discussed. Carol noticed feeling uncomfortable when their vice president of marketing, Jason, chimed in. “That [expletive] project is six weeks from launch! Why don’t we have better numbers?” Explicative language peppered his speech, calling attention to his immense frustration.

At the end, Carol looked at her list of to-do’s and pondered the meeting. She felt grieved at Jason’s behavior. Not judgment, but she also knew he was a follower of Christ, and his word choices gave her pause. Should she say something? Silently, she asked the Lord about it, and a number of verses flooded her brain about revering God, not taking His name in vain and encouraging one another. The fact that Jason was several levels above her seemed irrelevant in the presence of the Spirit.

Prayerfully, she crafted an email:

Jason,

Thank you so much for your contributions today in the meeting. I learned a lot about several things that will help me do my job more effectively. I’m also eager to get the accurate numbers around the project, so it can launch properly.

Because I value our relationship, I wanted to let you know I was a bit grieved at the use of the your word choice. Using God's name the way you did hurts me as much as others are by other offensive words today. I hope you know I'm only letting you know this because I respect you so much.

Thanks again for the updates today and for listening.

Respectfully,

Carol

She sent it.

She didn't expect a response, but smiled when she heard back from him:

Carol,

Thanks for speaking up. I know better. It won't happen again.

Jason

Carol's attention to Jason's contribution demonstrated good people skills and leadership. Instead of condemning him, she began with appreciation. To do this, she had to be quick to listen, slow to speak and even slower to become angry. She also thought about how she would like to be treated if she were in the same situation; she would like to be respected, not criticized.

Dale Carnegie, the entrepreneur of the human development business in the 1930s, once said, "Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain – and most fools do. But it takes character and self-control to be understanding and forgiving." It takes a leader to call attention to mistakes in a grace-filled way. In doing so, we can call others to level-up to a higher state of being and behaving, all the while glorifying God, being the iron that sharpens iron.

What would she have done if he had responded defensively? She would have yet another opportunity to respond in love, without acting defensively back. A simple, "I appreciate your perspective, and I want to apologize for misperceiving our relationship. Thank you for letting me know," would be a calm response to an angry, "How dare you!" message. Even with a defensive response, she still adds value, and if he has any maturity at all, he will think twice before behaving similarly again—simply because he has been communicated with about his behavior. If he intentionally goes out of his way to be offensive, however, this is good information for her about how immature he is, and she can deal with him differently in the future. Regardless of the outcome, it is a beneficial experience for her, even if not for him (at that time), and it is good for the relationship as she has communicated in a way worthy of respect (whether it is given or not) and has a clearer picture of the reality of the relationship.

Her communication is also in alignment with her values, so she avoids betraying herself, which damages her relationship with herself. Note that she does these things in alignment with her relationship with God and at His direction.

Bottom Line?

Speak up with kind and respectful integrity, and you will have more influence with others.

Learn how to positively impact your relationships at work and home by listening to this week's episode of *What to Say & How to Say It* with Greater Impact Ministries leader and communication coach, Nina Roesner. {eo}

*Since 1991, **Nina Roesner** has been helping people solve their relationship and leadership challenges as a communication coach. She has a master's degree in communication, and she spent 15 years with Dale Carnegie Training, is a HarperCollins author and has led Greater Impact since 2005. She has been a*

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