



Successful Teams Need Leaders to Step Up

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Communication is an art, not an exact science. Even if we try our best we sometimes confuse others.

If you believe studies that show how one's ability to communicate directly relates to success, it is an art worth mastering.

In team sports, verbal and non-verbal communication is vital to success. Not only does this apply between a coach and players, but between players themselves.

How many times have you seen two volleyball players helplessly stand and look at each other because they thought the other was going to bump the ball? What about two outfielders in baseball, even at the major league level, colliding because they failed to call for a fly ball?

"What we've got here is a failure to communicate," is a famous line first heard in the movie "Cool Hand Luke".

When teams or players fail to communicate, it can cost them the opportunity to win.

Good teams have take-charge leaders who make sure the rest of the team knows what's going on.

In baseball or softball, the catcher plays a very important role in communicating to the rest of the players on the team. Being the only player with a view of the entire playing field, it is natural for the catcher to be the leader.

Quite often in football, we hear a coach rave about how a quarterback takes charge in a huddle. If a quarterback fails to properly communicate a play, several teammates can be lined up in the wrong place, and the results are doomed from the start.

Basketball defenders in transition are taught to stop the ball as soon as they can to prevent fast-break lay-ups. Failure to do so can provide some highlight-reel material for the other team.

Nonverbal communication takes place all the time in sports, too. Aside from the obvious hand signals by the third-base coach in baseball, a wink or a nod can provide a very successful play.

How many times did we see Brett Favre execute some kind of silly hand gesture to his receivers just before a touchdown pass?

What about the head fake that leads to an uncontested goal?

As we can see, effective communication leads directly to individual and team success, keeping stress in check and sportsmanship at its finest.

No, communication isn't a fine art like playing an instrument, singing or the theater. But when it comes to sports, it sure is worth mastering.

According to the website psychologycampus.com the purposes of communication are persuasion, evaluation, information, motivation and problem solving. Here are its keys to effective communication:

1. Be direct.
2. Be complete and specific.
3. Be clear and consistent.
4. State your needs and feelings clearly.
5. Separate fact from opinion.
6. Focus on one thing at a time.
7. Deliver messages immediately.
8. Avoid hidden agendas.
9. Be consistent with nonverbal messages.
10. Reinforce with repetition.
11. Deliver the message to your audience's level.
12. Make sure they got what you were delivering.