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IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

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Accomplishing Worthy Goals: Being Smart Is not Enough!

“He has lots of brilliant ideas. And I know he wants the best for our church. But so many of our people just don’t like him!” she said.

Someone in another congregation, commenting about their interim pastor, said, “We’ve had stronger preachers and better administrators. But he’s so likable that our attendance has picked up since he arrived.”

Question: How does the following logic apply to pastors and people in congregations? (a) Life is about connecting with other people. (b) If people like you, they see the best in you. (c) The better people like you, and the better your rapport with them, the more likely they are to give you their support and cooperation.¹

Answer: The better people in congregations like you, the more likely they are to support and cooperate with you in accomplishing worthy goals.

But what causes people to like you?

Three action-principles play influential roles.

1. Create Positive First Impressions: Within ninety seconds of meeting you for the first time, people decide whether you seem likable. (And if they already know you, people make similar judgments each time they talk with you.) They base that judgment on (a) your projection of a positive presence, (b) your attitude, and (c) how you make them feel. Your body language from the neck up, plus a cheery and interested attitude, causes people to like you.

Research at Brigham Young University confirms that observation. When you communicate with other people, three components influence their perception of your likability:

- 55 percent of your communication impact is *visual* (how you look, your body language)
- 38 percent of your communication impact is *auditory* (how you sound, tone of voice, etc.)
- 7 percent of your communication impact is *content* (the meaning of the words you say)

All three communication components have value. But how you look and sound more powerfully influences how you make people feel than does the content of what you say—and thus, whether they support and cooperate with you in accomplishing worthy goals.

2. Build Conversational Rapport: A few people seem born with this knack. All effective talk-show hosts have it. But most of us must learn how to ask the kinds of open-ended questions that encourage others to talk:

- Open-ended questions do not have yes or no answers.
- Open-ended questions invite people to explain something.
- Open-ended questions begin with words such as How...? When...? Where...? Who...? What...? Which...?

■ Open-ended questions use “to be” verbs such as Are you...? Will you...? Do you...?

If you listen attentively to how people answer an open-ended question, you get the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. If you fail to express an interest in learning additional details, the conversation often dead-ends into an uncomfortable silence.

Conversational rapport powerfully influences how you make people feel—and thus, whether they support and cooperate with you in accomplishing worthy goals.



CONGRATULATIONS, PASTOR!
OUR PEOPLE LIKE YOU SO MUCH THAT,
EVEN WHEN YOU SAY SOMETHING DUMB, WE DISREGARD IT.

3. Project Enthusiasm: Meaningful ideas spoken listlessly often seem irrelevant to people. Communicating those same ideas with enthusiasm often sparks insight and commitment.

To obtain a self-portrait of the enthusiasm level you project to people, check the *one* sentence in each of the ten categories below that in your opinion most often describes your behavior.²

1. Eyes:

- Often stares blankly in an unfocused way; avoids eye contact in conversation
- Maintains some eye contact in conversations but often glances elsewhere; sometimes seems preoccupied with other thoughts, especially when listening
- Excellent, appropriate eye contact when talking and listening

2. Face:

- Serious look, little expressiveness, rarely smiles, closed lips
- Pleased look, occasionally smiles, seems agreeable and cooperative
- Often smiles; frequent demonstration of a broad smile related to subject under discussion

3. Gestures:

- Usually keeps arms at sides or folded; seldom moves arms or hands when speaking
- Occasionally gestures when speaking
- Frequent demonstrative use of hands, arms, and head when speaking

4. Body Language:

- Stands or sits rigidly, seldom moving—or slumps, showing poor posture and presenting a depressed appearance
- Moves occasionally, in concert with the emotion of the subject under discussion; posture generally appropriate
- Quick, demonstrative body movement that adds a sense of energy to the vocal delivery of ideas; posture always erect and presents “involved” appearance

5. Word Usage:

- Few descriptive adjectives; infrequent use of picture language such as metaphor or simile
- Occasional use of descriptive language such as metaphor or simile
- A variety of descriptive language, with frequent use of metaphor, simile, and other picture language

6. Auditory Delivery:

- Usually speaks in a monotone, with few changes in pitch, volume, and speed
- Some variation in pitch, volume, and speed
- Great variation in pitch, volume, and speed—including a range from rapid, loud articulation to a whisper

7. Public Speaking:

- Relies totally on reading from notes
- Effectively integrates notes and conversational instruction
- Rarely refers to notes

8. Behavior in Meetings:

- Silent, often appears preoccupied and disinterested
- Listens intently and occasionally speaks
- Seems totally in tune with the flow of the meeting; interjects appropriate remarks, without dominating the conversation

9. Personal Appearance:

- Dresses inappropriately for some situations; shoes shabby and un-shined and/or hair poorly cared for
- Usually dresses appropriately for the occasion; presents an acceptable but average appearance in items such as shoes and/or hair care
- Always dresses to fit the occasion; shoes brightly polished and hair-care immaculate

10. Projected Energy Level:

- Often appears tired, sleepy, or bored
- Exhibits high vitality levels on all occasions, influencing others to feel upbeat and positive

The enthusiasm you project powerfully influences how you make people feel—and thus, whether they support and cooperate with you in accomplishing worthy goals.

Practical Application: Distribute copies of this essay to your colleagues, personnel committee, or governing board. Ask them—without discussion and without signing their names—to assist you in the following ways: (a) Underline the phrases in the first two action-principles in which they feel you excel and circle the phrases in which they feel you need to grow. (b) Check the one sentence in each of the ten enthusiasm categories that they feel most often describes your behavior.

Collect the sheets. Total the circled and underlined phrases and the checked items. Write them on a clean copy of this essay. Compare your self-portrait with the tabulated opinions from others.

Fine-tune the way your connections with people make them feel—and thus, whether they support and cooperate with you in accomplishing worthy goals.

¹Nicholas Boothman, *How to Make People Like You* (New York: Workman Publishing Company, 2000).

²Adapted from an idea by Patricia Sanders, *Training and Development Journal*, American Society for Training and Development.