

Communication
in State Forest Organizations
Experience from Germany

Gerhard Oesten

One of the objects of dispute between A and B: a 160 year old beech stand

- 3 ha - excellent site – beech optimum
- natural regeneration since 30 years
- stock volume 330 m³
- 70 % regenerated, groups of planted Douglas fir on 10 %
- old trees: bad quality because of WorldWar II shrapnels
- high nature conservation value
- owner: community X

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- since 25 years head of the forestry office - responsible for approx. 20.000 ha;
- management of the community forest is official duties;
- understanding of sustainability:
 - *continue harvest and regeneration;*
 - *ensure valuable timber production for future generations;*
 - *continue to add Douglas fir*

Information about B

- 27 years old;
- since 2 years forest ranger, employed by the community (about 1.300 ha forests)
- by law complex assignment with two “bosses” –
A is B's supervisor in forestry matters; mayor in disciplinary matters.
- understanding of sustainability:
 - *stop harvest*
 - *justify a nature conservation reserve,*
- lives in the village, is networked there and very much appreciated.
- involved with "Friend of the Earth" and "FSC".

Conclusion

The goal of their communication **should** actually be

- bindingly agree further treatment of the stand
- occur with the same words and arguments in the community
- maintain a trusting, open, respectful relationship

Instead,

- problematic emotionally charged communication
- A's mistrust that B speaks "differently" in the village than in staff meetings,
- in this way he, A, could get into difficult situations with the mayor and the community representatives.

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- Communication problems in the organization often also concern problems of the organization with the social environment - **policy dimension**
- Possibilities and limits to systematic changes of communication - **management dimension**

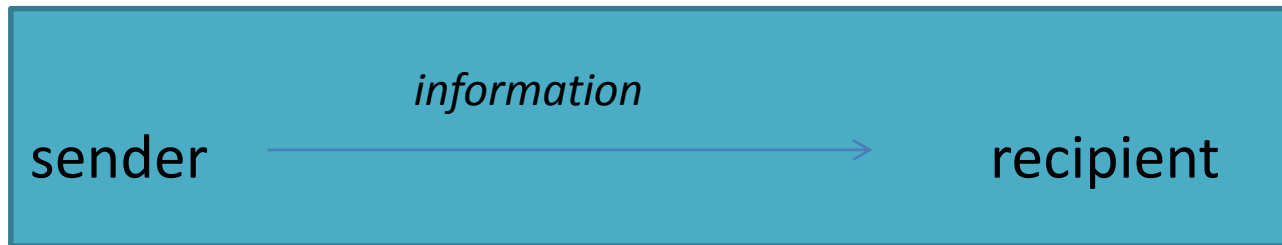
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one-way communication



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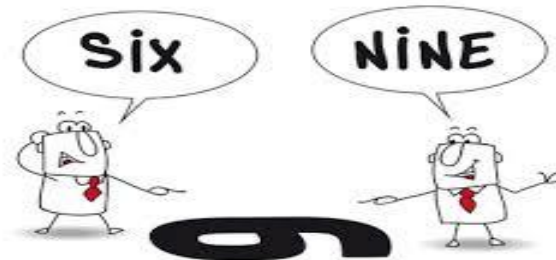
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- **Basics of successful communication are credibility and willingness for understanding**

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asymmetry of loss or gain of credibility

Willingness for "Understanding"

Three requirements:

- *partners come to a consensus on the content of the exchanged message or fact*
- *partners understand the position of each other*
- *partners accept an action based on the submitted facts*

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- Communication means a dialogical process with reciprocal behavior.
- Communication is more than just information - every communication has a content and relationship aspect.
- Basics of successful communication: credibility and willingness for understanding
- **Difficulties in understanding with potential for conflict can be traced back to three causes:**

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- (2) Difficulties in understanding can be an expression of *different interests*.
- (3) Difficulties in understanding are based on different "*worldviews*", different normative basic assumptions and problem perceptions

Improve communication skills -

possible on the level of

- individuals?**
- teams?**
- overall organization?**

Improve communication skills - possible? on the level of individuals and teams

- analyze communication problems systematically

- train communication

Improve communication skills - possible? on the level of overall organization

- *develop a system of systematic engagement with communication issues at all levels and between levels of organization*
- *offer training in communication and conflict management and*
- *present their normative foundations - the „management philosophy“ - in written form of a mission statement.*

Thank you very much for your attention

Dziękuję bardzo za Państwa uwagę

Gerhard Oesten

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