



February 2018

## *Self-Employment & the Value of Good Communication Skills*

Good communication skills are at the heart of many successful outcomes, particularly in business. Here are 6 tips to supporting win/win outcomes.

**1. Listen** | The quickest way to end all chances of productive two-way communications is to start by arguing your point of view. Instead, start by listening. When you do, you will not only better understand the other person's point of view, but they will also typically reveal what it is they want. Mutual outcomes are all about mutual benefits for both parties.

**2. Don't Get Personal** | In self-employment situations, the communication exchange is about an equation – not about you personally. The equation includes at least two elements: satisfying the customer's wants and needs and doing so at a profit. Remaining focused on achieving these elements will help you to remain objective in ways that lead to a win/win for both parties.

**3. Validate** | By listening to what your customer wants and focusing on the win/win (instead of who's right or wrong), the next step is to find a way to acknowledge the other person's point of view in a positive way. You might respond with "that's a valid point," or "thank you for taking the time to explain what you're looking for." You could also introduce what it is that you understood them to say in your own words and then ask them if this is correct. Validating what they say in these ways demonstrates that you are listening and that you care. As a result, they will be more open to what you have to say in return.

**4. Engage** | By establishing a foundation where your customer feels listened to, understood and validated for their views, you now have an opportunity to engage them in a solution. This can be a key element to a win/win outcome because you both now have an opportunity to participate in a solution instead of arguing whose view is more relevant. The process of engaging facilitates an active two-way exchange where both parties introduce and build upon solutions for achieving the win/win outcome.

**5. Act** | Having invested the time and energy in developing two-way rapport – and a better business relationship – you are now ready to implement the agreed upon solution. Depending upon the nature of your business and the complexity of what you offer, this may include writing up a contract or simply delivering the finished goods. Either way, be sure to follow through promptly and fully.

**6. Add Value** | This last step is an option and depends on the complexity of the business situation and desired outcome. It is an option to add a little something extra that the customer may not be expecting. This further conveys that you value their point of view and their business. It may be as simple as a hand-written thank you note or something more tangible. Either way, the goal remains satisfying and retaining customers, and maintaining profitability in the process.

For more information, visit: <http://www.buzvr.org/>

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