

# FIVE STEPS TO ACHIEVE REMARKABLE COMMUNICATION RESULTS

Guy Harris



# Five Steps to Achieve Remarkable Communication Results

Compliments of



Guy Harris  
Co-author of *From Bud to Boss*  
Master Trainer and Coach  
The Kevin Eikenberry Group  
[KevinEikenberry.com](http://KevinEikenberry.com)  
[UltimateCommunicatorWorkshop.com](http://UltimateCommunicatorWorkshop.com)

# Introduction

Communication is a funny thing. We do it all the time, and yet we often do it poorly.

As the Irish playwright, George Bernard Shaw, said:

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

Have you noticed that communication seldom breaks down in normal everyday situations and that it often breaks down in high-stress, high-stakes situations? The situations with the greatest impact on long-term business and personal relationship success are the very situations most likely to create friction between people.

When the stakes are high, so are the emotions. Emotionally charged situations seldom lead to clear and effective communication unless at least one of the parties works diligently to *make* it happen. *Clear, effective communication will not happen by accident.*

Communication happens in many contexts. Some communications are spoken. Some are written. Some are simply hand-gestures. For the purposes of this article, I am focusing on spoken (generally face-to-face) communication situations.

I hope that the five step communication model in this tip sheet helps you to create truly remarkable results in all of your personal and professional relationships.

Yours in Learning,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Guy Harris'.

Guy Harris  
Co-author of *From Bud to Boss*  
Master Trainer and Coach  
The Kevin Eikenberry Group

# Five Steps to Achieve Remarkable Communication Results

These five high level steps will help you communicate more effectively.

And who doesn't want that?

More specifically, they will help you work through the misinterpretations and emotions that generally accompany communication challenges *so that you can achieve remarkable results* as you live and work with others.

These five steps will be easy to remember when you remember the word **SOLAR** – the five steps start with those five letters.

## *S*<sub>top</sub>

The first action I recommend for achieving remarkable communication results looks more like a non-action. The goal of this step is to slow down so that you *respond* to what you hear and see rather than *react* to it. In most cases, a quick reaction will disrupt communication (and perhaps cause all manner of unintended consequences) and a thoughtful response will strengthen it.

All of us have ideas and filters that color how we see the world. When you speak from your first thought or impression, you will likely rely on these pre-conceived thoughts rather than actively process what is actually happening in the moment.

If you want to communicate more effectively, stop and act with intention.

## *O*<sub>bserve</sub>

After you stop your initial reaction, collect more information. You can think through the following questions to help you form a more complete picture of what is happening in the specific communication situation rather than generalizing your response from past history.

Ask yourself questions like:

- What are the facts?

This question starts the process of separating your emotional response from the facts. The other person's word choice is a fact. What they *mean* by their words and what you *hear* in their words could be two entirely different things.

- What is objective?

This question helps you to look at the situation from a third-party, objective observer vantage point. Since all of us have “filters” on our thinking and perceptions, none of us can be completely objective about what we see and hear. And still, making the effort to take an “un-filtered” look at the situation can help you gain clarity for a better communication response.

- What is observable?

This question complements the questions above. It helps you to focus on what you can actually see and hear in the person you are communicating with or in the situation in general. Focus on what is truly observable, not just your interpretation of it. For example, “rolling of the eyes” is observable while “having a bad attitude” is an interpretation.

## ***L**isten*

While (and after) you notice the factual, objective, and observable events in the situation, you listen.

You listen – fully – to what the other person is saying. As you listen, the questions in your mind might sound like this:

- What are they *really* saying?
- What *emotions* are they expressing?

The idea is to notice both the spoken and the unspoken messages. While you want to be careful that you do not over-interpret, you still need to notice what their body language and tone contributes to the message you are receiving. As you attempt to understand the other person’s full message, work to interpret their tone and body language from their perspective rather than from its impact on you.

To complete this step, also listen to the voice in your head. Consider these questions:

- What is your story?
- What are you telling yourself?
- What is your perception?
- What emotions are you feeling?

The idea behind this quick personal reflection is to separate your observations from your interpretations and emotions. Your observations should be objective and factual. Your interpretations are the part of your internal dialogue that assigns meaning and attaches emotions to what you have observed. By briefly reflecting, you prepare yourself to more objectively receive what the other person has said.

## ***A**adjust/ reframe*

This step creates the foundation for your response. Based on everything you have observed to this point, look for and assume benign intent. In other words, look for a way to interpret the other person’s words, tone, and body language in a positive way that does not assume they intend to harm you. Consider questions like:

- Is your perception accurate?
- Can you explain their words and actions assuming they had a positive intent?

- Do you see the other person clearly and objectively?
- Do you really understand their perspective?
- How can you respond in a way that builds a connection?

As you adjust and reframe your perceptions, you also adjust and reframe your words *before* you speak them. You think of ways to phrase your response so that the other person hears it the way you intend for it to be heard. You consider your words and what they mean to the other person. You evaluate your body language and tone so that you pick a non-threatening approach.

## *Respond*

Now, you respond thoughtfully and carefully. You have considered your words, your body language and your tone. You have made a conscious choice to present your message so that the other person can receive it in the spirit that you mean it. You are fully present in the moment, and you are ready to repeat the five steps when the other person responds to you.

Sometimes people object that these five steps take too long. They argue that they do not have time to do what I propose. In my experience though, I have noticed that, with practice and focus, I can run through the five steps very quickly. The steps only take a moment to complete. Awareness of the five steps is often enough to create the pause for me that allows me to respond more appropriately.

Hopefully, the acronym **SOLAR** – **S**top **O**bserve **L**isten **A**djust **R**espond – will be easy for you to remember because, like light from the sun, the steps shine light on any situation so that you communicate more effectively.

As you think through the five steps, notice that four of them happen internally and that only one of them is about what and how you say things. Remember this key point:

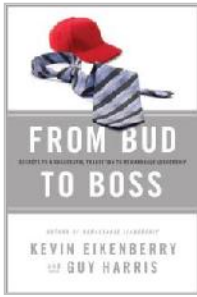
Effective communication begins in your thinking and preparation for the communication. Speaking the words is just the delivery.

When you remember and apply the **SOLAR** model in situations where a communication starts to go astray, you can take the intentional actions necessary to drive it back to a high-impact communication that achieves remarkable results.

This article was written by [Guy Harris](#), Master Trainer and Coach with [The Kevin Eikenberry Group](#).

## **Resources for Your Communication and Leadership Development**

We're coming to a city near you with [The Ultimate Communicator Training Camp](#), a two day workshop jam-packed with ideas and skills to make you more confident in your communication strategies, more effective with others in your life, and more successful in your career!



Kevin Eikenberry and Guy Harris' latest release, **From Bud to Boss** is an excellent resource for new leaders. It is a practical handbook with tips and suggestions that you can apply immediately. This book will help you to become a better communicator and a better leader. [Learn more](#) or [buy one today!](#)

If you want to contact Guy or Kevin send an email to [info@KevinEikenberry.com](mailto:info@KevinEikenberry.com).

You can follow us on twitter: Guy is [@recovengineer](#) , Kevin is [@KevinEikenberry](#), and we have a communication stream [@ultcommunicator](#).

Both Guy and Kevin write blogs. Guy is at [www.RecoveringEngineer.com](http://www.RecoveringEngineer.com) and Kevin is at [blog.KevinEikenberry.com](http://blog.KevinEikenberry.com).

To learn more about the variety of products and services of the Kevin Eikenberry Group, go to [www.KevinEikenberry.com](http://www.KevinEikenberry.com).