

► **It's Not What You Say but How You Say It!**

It's hard enough to learn a new job but when you also have to deal with difficult co-workers or supervisors, the job is even tougher. Sometimes, we make the problem worse because our communications skills aren't getting our message across. Sharpening our skills of communicating and listening may be all the ammunition you need to deal with difficult people.

Good communication follows some basic rules of respect and understanding. Good communication:

- Has a purpose—know why you're speaking and what you want from the other person
- Is clear and understandable—make sure your words convey what you mean
- Respects the listener—consider how loud and how fast you speak
- Is open and allows responses—take a breath and let the listener have a chance to speak
- Seeks mutual understanding—there's been no communication if the listener doesn't understand your message. Check in periodically with the listener to see if he/she gets your meaning.
- Avoids assumptions—we spend an awful lot of time jumping to conclusions or making assumptions. Consider each conversation as a new opportunity to learn something.
- Uses "I" statements—describe how you feel when a certain situation occurs. Describe why the situation makes you feel that way. This keeps your listener from becoming defensive and shutting down the conversation.
- Means you have to stop talking sometimes—good communication involves listening as well as speaking. You can't listen if you do all the talking.