

# Communication: Friend or Foe?

---

*Jeff Schafer, LSW MSSA, Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services*

In case you didn't attend the PCSAO Conference Supervisor Pre-Conference let me begin by saying "YOU MISSED OUT!" Over the course of nine months, the Public Children's Association of Ohio (PCSAO) and the Supervisor Advisory Team developed a day that was dynamic, innovative, and, *most importantly*, just for supervisors. Besides the fact I was able to meet many supervisors from around Ohio, there were several great workshops.

The morning session, taught by Mindset Digital, Inc., made me think about communication in a different way. Our staff are constantly bombarded with information, so how do we "break through the noise" and make sure our messages are being heard? Mindset Digital answered that question.

## **First, take a moment and self-reflect.**

- Is my style of communication as effective as it can be?
- How much time do I spend reading email after email trying to decide what is important and what isn't?

Whether it's utilizing technology to conduct our work, or stepping away from the computer to conduct a face-to-face meeting, we need to communicate concise messages in a way that will help us complete tasks effectively. Our world has changed and we must change with it. The "millennials" we supervise have grown up communicating in a way that may not match our style of communication.

## **Tips to help your communications "break the noise"**

- *Get rid of the fluff!* Shorten your emails to include only pertinent information.
- *Step away from the computer!* If you email an important communication to your staff, follow-up with a face-to-face conversation to make sure they accurately received the message.
- *A picture is worth 1000 words!* Appeal to the learning styles of your workers and include visuals and images in your presentations to make the information stick.
- *Make it catchy!* Use "catch phrases" to draw attention to the critical messages.

The message was loud and clear! Your success as a supervisor may depend on how effective you are at communicating with others. The time you invest in thinking about your communication style and methods could go a long way to making your interactions with workers and families more powerful. So, when you develop your next meeting agenda or compose your next email or memorandum, spend some time thinking what is critical, what will get their attention, how does this project my professionalism, and was my time well spent on creating it.