

# Transceiver or Transmitter— Which One Are You?

By Rudy Karsan, Kenexa

Communicating effectively involves much more than using the correct words—it is affected by frame of reference, emotional state, context or situation, body language and communication style. Race, culture, religion, class and gender may also directly or indirectly play a role. The aim of communication is to transmit thoughts or information in a way that is clearly resulting in the recipient responding appropriately. However, it is not usually quite as simple as this. Although the process sounds simple, the interplay of the mentioned factors usually impacts the way in which a message is interpreted.

Communication is particularly significant in organizations, where many people need to coexist and work together. Effective communication is the organization's most important skill, as it is required in all aspects of organizational function. People require relevant information in order to carry out their responsibilities. At every organizational level, people seek information in order to identify, assess and respond to risk. Obstructions due to ineffective communication can prove costly for a company.

A truly effective communicator can gauge how his communication will be received and is able to tailor it in such a way that the other person is truly receptive to what he says. While conducting a conversation, he is able to accurately “read between the lines” and understand how the recipient is being affected. He then guides the conversation so that it has the precisely effect that he intends.

When you communicate, you can be like a radio transmitter, sending information in one direction toward the recipient. Or you could be like a transceiver, which is a device that both transmits and receives signals. In other words, when you ‘transceive’ you are transmitting with full knowledge of the listener’s frame of reference and mind, and how he will receive what you are saying. This entails talking with, rather than at a person, and is more a meeting of

minds an exchange of thoughts on the same plane. Otherwise, both sides will always be transmitting and may or may not connect. In other words, if you do not transceive, you are not on the same wavelength as your listener. If you transceive with an understanding of the recipient, you are effectively increasing engagement, as the other person can sense your insight and cannot fail to respond positively.

One of the obstacles to transceiving is the tendency to disregard the possibility that the recipient may not share the same thought processes and viewpoint. If his perceptions and expectations are not met, what should be a true dialog becomes merely two monologues. The recipient will be governed by his self-interest, by the identity of the speaker, and how the speaker is communicating. The communicator needs to develop the finesse to keep the recipient’s frame of reference in mind, so that his message is meaningful to the latter. It is immensely useful if there is some common area within the frame of reference that both can relate to. When you transmit in one direction, you are speaking at, rather than with—which is often ego-driven with no consideration of the recipient’s perspective.

Misunderstandings caused by misinterpretation or faulty assumptions about the words and actions of others can seriously damage work relationships. Effective communicators learn to validate any perceptions they have about others before they react.

Clear and direct communication, with few chances of being distorted along the way, is essential to convey what you really want to say. The children’s game ‘broken telephone’ (‘Whisper down the lane’) is an example of how things can go wrong, as the final message that emerges is usually unrecognizable, often gibberish. In the context of an organization, distortion of a message as it moves forward can be quite significant.

The following examples demonstrate how you might be transmitting when you should be transceiving.

### 1. Expressing anger

*Transmitting:* You will stay in your normal mode—shout and rant, or become deadly quiet—you are primarily venting your anger. This can cause feelings of fear in your recipient, or lead to resentment if he feels that you are being unfair or excessive. In any case, it is unlikely that you will achieve the result you are looking for.

*Transceiving:* You will probably choose to do neither of these things, but more likely use coaching words and actions to ensure that the cause of your anger does not repeat itself. This will be more positive, and is likely to bring about a change, while the former will not.

### 2. Sales presentation to prospective buyer

*Transmitting:* You will enumerate the features and benefits of the up sell your solution/service/product you are selling. Tools that you might use include demos, PowerPoint presentations and prototypes.

*Transceiving:* You understand what makes the buyer tick and what his mental state is during the buying process, and you tap into it. For example, his motivation for buying the product might be that the right selection will result in a promotion for him. In such a case, the price might not be as much of a consideration as the quality or timing of the solution. If you fail to try and understand his motivation and build your sales pitch around it—for example, if you transmit a value proposition around the cost of the solution—you guarantee a non-sale.

### 3. Trying to impress your boss

*Transmitting:* You reel off a list of accomplishments, closures, major projects you've netted, expenses you've saved during your watch, etc.—in short, bragging.

*Transceiving:* You address your achievements to your boss's specific agenda and needs, and maintaining the level of priority on the right points—in short, bragging to an interested listener.

### 4. Company meeting

*Transmitting:* You announce in a major company meeting that the terrible results of the last quarter could result in the stock price of your company going down disproportionately the next day.

*Transceiving:* You present the information by focusing on the changes that are going to take place rather than harping on past mistakes. This might result in a better outcome.

### 5. Negotiating with a vendor

*Transmitting:* You say to a prospective vendor, "You have three competitors whose product is not much different from yours, so tell me the best price you can give." Your transmission might have a different outcome than you expect. For example, the bidder may decide that he cannot lower his price further and decide to drop out, which is not what you really want. Or he may feel that you are bluffing and stand by his price.

*Transceiving:* This situation could require an unusual form of transceiving because you might need to deliberately send a "wrong" message to ensure a favorable outcome for yourself. Here, transceiving to swing the deal your way could involve "accidentally" forwarding an email that shows your analysis of competitive bids and this would likely result in a different type of outcome.

While I do not recommend duplicity, I am trying to point out that experimenting with it could possibly result in a different outcome.

### 6. Expressing your appreciation

*Transmitting:* Expressing your love to your partner or spouse is primarily a transceiving act, but just automatically or mindlessly saying "I love you" 10 times a day becomes meaningless. If you extend this to the workplace, how much real value does the 10th "good job" really have?

*Transceiving:* In both of the above situations, transceiving would involve customizing your body language and words appropriately to suit the situation.

### 7. Interviews

*Transmitting:* While attending a job interview, you simply recite a list of your academic qualification and achievements.

*Transceiving:* You have taken the time to thoroughly study the company that you are applying to and know what the requirements are. You tailor your list of accomplishments to showcase your ability to meet those requirements.

Ultimately, transceiving rather than transmitting can help you expand your sphere of influence and make an impact, whether you are a leader or an employee. You will be combining excellent communication skills with a finely tuned intuition about the situation and your recipient's frame of reference. If by doing this you can take communication from the level of "good" (which does involve transmission to some extent) to the better level of transceiving, then the sky is the limit in terms of success. So, would you like to go on transmitting, or do you think you ought to begin transceiving? ■

## About the Author

### Nooruddin (Rudy) Karsan

Nooruddin (Rudy) Karsan is the chief executive officer of Kenexa. He has also served as the Chairman of the Board of Directors since 1997. Before co-founding Kenexa's predecessor company in 1987, Mr. Karsan had extensive experience leading Marketing Actuarial for the Mercantile & General Insurance Company in Toronto. Mr. Karsan is a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries and holds a Bachelor of Mathematics degree in actuarial science from the University of Waterloo.

[www.kenexa.com](http://www.kenexa.com)  
866.391.9557