



# Person-to-Person Communications For Project Managers

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A workshop by Rick Brenner  
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## Core message

- Person-to-person communications are complex
- Problems that do arise are difficult to fix
- Preventing problems is easier than repairing them
- We have little control over what others do
- For best results, prevent problems by changing our inner processes

## Synopsis

When we talk to each other, when we listen, when we send or read emails, when we read or write memos, or when we talk by telephone, we're communicating person-to-person. Misunderstandings, confusion, and unintended offenses are just some of the ways interpersonal communication can go wrong. They're examples of defects in the communication system, and they can be very expensive, both personally and organizationally.

If everyone in an organization has a deep understanding of how this system can fail, they can frame their communications to minimize the occurrence of expensive failures. By analyzing information flow using the Satir Interaction Model, we gain insight into the elements of the communications process and how it can go

## About Rick Brenner

Rick Brenner is principal of Chaco Canyon Consulting. He works with people in problem-solving organizations that are making products so novel or complex that they need state-of-the-art teamwork and stronger relationships between their people. In his 20 years as a software developer, software development manager, entrepreneur and consultant, he has developed valuable insights into the interactions between people in a technical environment, and between people and the technological media in which they work.



Mr. Brenner has held positions at Symbolics, Inc., and at Draper Laboratory, both of Cambridge, Massachusetts. At Symbolics, he led development of products based on

## Brief outline

- Introductions
- Examples of problem communications
- What do we mean by communications?
- A model of interpersonal communications
- Using the model to avoid communications traps
- Demonstrating these techniques in real-life situations
- Managing group temperature

wrong. And this gives us the tools we need to communicate more effectively.

The tools, though, are not enough. We must have access to them when we need them — *in the moment*, when we're stressed out and deeply involved in problematic communication. The experiential format of this program provides that access.

In this fun and interactive workshop, we explore how our person-to-person communication system works, with special emphasis on its failure modes. We emphasize communication under stress, where the most expensive failures occur. And we might just change how some of us send and receive interpersonal communications.

Macsyma, a computer algebra system. At Draper, he was a principal investigator in a DARPA program, the Evolutionary Design of Complex Software, where he conducted research into advanced concepts for software development environments based on dynamic object-oriented programming languages. Since 1993, he has taught a course in business modeling at the Harvard University Extension School.

Mr. Brenner holds a Masters Degree in Electrical Engineering from MIT. His current interests focus on improving personal and organizational effectiveness in abnormal situations, such as dramatic change, technical emergencies, and high-pressure project situations. He has written a number of essays on these subjects, available at his Web site, [www.ChacoCanyon.com](http://www.ChacoCanyon.com), and writes and edits a weekly email newsletter, *Point Lookout*.

