

## **Useless Communication Techniques: Mental "Cheez Whiz"**

In an age where instant messaging, emails, and virtual meetings dominate the workplace, communication is one of the most critical tools we use to convey ideas, influence decisions, and build relationships. Yet, despite its importance, not all communication is created equal. Some forms of communication are so superficial, empty, and unproductive that they can be likened to mental "Cheez Whiz"—a processed, artificial product that offers little to no substance. In this metaphor, Cheez Whiz represents communication techniques that may seem appealing or easy at first but are ultimately hollow and offer no real nourishment for our thoughts or interactions. Let's explore these "useless" communication techniques, why they persist, and how we can replace them with more meaningful, effective alternatives.

### **1. Corporate Jargon Overload**

In many corporate environments, employees are inundated with buzzwords and phrases that sound important but mean very little. Phrases like "circle back," "synergy," "paradigm shift," and "low-hanging fruit" can often obscure the true message behind layers of jargon. The problem with this kind of communication is that it lacks precision and clarity. Instead of saying "Let's meet later to discuss," a person might say, "Let's circle back and touch base on our value-add initiatives." The result is a form of mental clutter that leaves both the speaker and listener no closer to understanding the issue at hand.

Using corporate jargon is akin to spreading a layer of processed mental "Cheez Whiz" over a conversation. It may sound impressive, but it does little to convey real meaning or foster deeper understanding. Worse, it can erode trust, as listeners may feel that the speaker is hiding behind vague language rather than addressing concerns head-on.

**The Fix:**

To avoid this, focus on plain, clear language. Replace jargon with direct statements that get to the point. Instead of saying "We need to leverage our core competencies," try "Let's use our strengths to achieve this goal."

### **2. Non-Committal Responses: Saying a Lot Without Saying Anything**

Another common but ineffective communication technique involves giving responses that sound substantial but ultimately lack commitment or depth. Statements like "I'll look into that," "That's something we can consider," or "Let's explore all our options" are often used to evade taking a stance. While these phrases are not entirely meaningless, they are designed to deflect responsibility or delay decision-making.

These types of responses can lull both the speaker and the listener into a false sense of progress when, in fact, no actionable steps have been taken. It's a way of filling the silence without moving the conversation forward—another form of mental Cheez Whiz that doesn't provide any real intellectual or emotional nourishment.

#### **The Fix:**

If you're not ready to commit to a decision, it's better to be transparent. Say, "I need more time to think about this," or "I'll have an answer by the end of the week." Providing a clear timeline or setting expectations shows respect for the other person's time and leaves less room for ambiguity.

### **3. Overuse of Emojis and Internet Slang in Professional Settings**

While emojis and internet slang can add personality to casual conversations, overusing them in professional environments can dilute the message and create confusion. For example, responding to a critical work email with a string of emojis or phrases like "LOL" or "TBH" may come off as unprofessional or careless, especially if the recipient is expecting a thoughtful response.

This type of communication is another form of mental "Cheez Whiz" because it offers an easy way out of providing meaningful feedback. Rather than taking the time to compose a well-thought-out message, the speaker relies on symbols and shorthand that may not fully convey the intended message.

#### **The Fix:**

In professional settings, it's important to maintain a balance between being personable and being clear. While an occasional emoji may be appropriate in certain contexts (e.g., when trying to express light-heartedness or friendliness), ensure that your core message is communicated through words and is easy to understand.

### **4. Endless Politeness: Hedging Statements into Oblivion**

While being polite is essential for maintaining respect and professionalism, excessive hedging can water down the effectiveness of communication. Phrases like "I was just thinking, maybe if it's not too much trouble, could we possibly consider..." can make the speaker sound unsure and even untrustworthy. The listener may be left wondering if the speaker has a solid opinion or if the idea is worth considering at all.

Excessive hedging is another form of mental Cheez Whiz because it masks the core message behind layers of uncertainty and deference. While the speaker may be trying to avoid sounding too direct or harsh, this approach can weaken their authority and make them seem indecisive.

#### **The Fix:**

Strike a balance between politeness and assertiveness. Instead of saying, "I was thinking maybe we could try this, but only if everyone is okay with it," say, "I believe this approach could work well, but I'm open to feedback." This conveys confidence without dismissing others' opinions.

## **5. Passive-Aggressive Emails: The Faux Politeness Trap**

Passive-aggressive communication often takes the form of emails or messages that are superficially polite but carry an underlying tone of frustration or annoyance. Phrases like “Per my last email...” or “Just checking in on this again...” can be thinly veiled attempts to express dissatisfaction without being overtly direct. While these messages might temporarily relieve the sender’s frustration, they rarely lead to productive outcomes.

This form of communication is another example of mental "Cheez Whiz." It appears polite on the surface, but beneath the façade, it is emotionally manipulative and unconstructive. It doesn’t resolve conflicts or clarify misunderstandings—it only perpetuates them.

### **The Fix:**

If you’re feeling frustrated or ignored, it’s better to address the issue directly but professionally. Instead of saying, “Per my last email...,” try, “I want to make sure we’re on the same page. Can you provide an update on this project?” Being clear and respectful shows that you’re interested in resolving the issue, not just venting your frustrations.

## **6. Overloading with Data and Information: Analysis Paralysis**

In some situations, people tend to overwhelm others with an excess of data, facts, and figures to appear knowledgeable or to support a position. However, too much information can create what’s known as “analysis paralysis,” where the sheer volume of data makes it difficult to draw any clear conclusions. This tactic often leaves the listener feeling mentally bogged down, unable to separate the relevant details from the noise.

Overloading someone with information is the communication equivalent of smothering a sandwich in Cheez Whiz—it may look like you’re providing a lot, but the substance is lost in the process.

### **The Fix:**

When presenting information, focus on clarity and relevance. Use supporting data to back up your points, but don’t overwhelm your audience. Offer summaries and clear action steps rather than drowning them in irrelevant details.

Mental "Cheez Whiz" communication is the product of shortcuts, superficiality, and a lack of intentionality. While these techniques may provide temporary relief by avoiding confrontation or making us feel more efficient, they ultimately diminish the quality of our interactions. Clear, honest, and thoughtful communication is key to building stronger relationships, solving problems, and achieving meaningful results.

**By stripping away the mental "Cheez Whiz" and adopting more direct and purposeful communication practices, we can ensure that our words nourish conversations rather than detract from them.**

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