Focusing on Effective Communication

As I pulled out my iPhone 6 to answer a text I received during a meeting, it gave me pause to think.

Less than 20 years ago, cell phones were certainly not widespread and they were just that, phones. We still wrote letters and most times were out of reach from phones.

This might seem counterintuitive, but it seems to me that communication skills in our profession are deteriorating because of better technology. I see it across all constituents from our student-athletes to our fellow administrators.

A student-athlete who has an issue with a coach will immediately call a parent who, depending on their proximity might leave work and come to campus to see the coach. Student-athletes and co-workers text each other even if they are in the same room. People sit at meetings and “multi-task” reading and returning e-mails. Sending an Instagram of the meal you are eating has become commonplace. We are becoming, perhaps, too quick to react because we feel compelled to do so.

What is being lost is the ability to process completely, verbalize, listen and connect with others. This trend has forced me to develop some practices that I impose on myself and share with our student-athletes and my co-workers.

I tell the student-athletes that if they have a problem with a coach, resist the urge to call home immediately, calm down, talk to teammates, and, if still deemed necessary, seek a meeting with the coach and talk it out. I also tell staff to refrain from e-mailing in situations that are not routine and can escalate. Either walk down the hallway to see the person involved or at the least pick up the phone and call them.

It’s amazing how many e-mails it takes to solve an issue that could have easily been done with a face-to-face encounter or a phone call. An e-mail or a text can do so much damage when the meaning is misinterpreted. And, since we respond so quickly, they are usually not well thought out.

Modern technology has sped up the work place. But, I think we all need to force ourselves to go back to the basic skills of listening, processing, speaking and connecting personally. Texting and e-mailing have good uses, but should never replace personal connections.

Most of us in I-AAA are fortunate enough to be at institutions that should allow us to hold to such standards.

Gene Doris is the director of athletics at Fairfield and the 2015-16 I-AAA ADA President.

Music Licensing Uses

Music licensing is something that may or may not hit the radar of licensing directors. But it should. A catchy tune used in a TV spot can become as much a part of your brand as your school colors and mascot, and at the very least as relevant as a current advertising slogan.

At the last Fiesta Bowl, it was really fun to see our university advertisement up on the giant screens and watch all the Boise State fans in the stadium wave their arms and sing along.

The soundtrack to our latest TV spot is a catchy, happy song by Ben Cocks aptly called, “Big Blue Sky.” The song was so well received, that we now use it for our music on hold on the phones; for internal presentations and for individual department fundraising videos. The song sounds like it could be a Billboard hit. But it’s not.

We would not be able to justify the license fees. We licensed the song from a production music house, which specializes in providing pre-cleared production music at affordable rates.

Because of my background in music licensing, I am often asked to explain to a department or student group why they may not use the latest Taylor Swift song or the theme tune to Star Wars for their video, even though if you go onto YouTube there seems to be many videos that do. Put simply, the copyright owners in the music require a license just as we require a license for a third party to use our university logos.

There are two copyrights in a piece of music: (i) the sound recording and (ii) the underlying composition. If you want to create a video with music in it, you need to apply for what is called a “synchronization license,” i.e. a license to synchronize their music to your images in the video, through both the record company, who owns the sound recording, and the music publisher(s), who own or control the underlying composition.

For example, EMI/Universal Records owns the sound recording for The Beatles, but Sony ATV controls the rights of Lennon and McCartney in the written composition. These licenses can take months to clear and are at minimum $500 for each, $10,000s if you want a popular song. Alternatively, you may use royalty-free music or work with a production house.

It is a misnomer that because we work for an educational institution we can rely on the “fair dealing” defense. This only applies to the right to use music in the course of teaching activities, and then there are restrictions on the amount that may be used.

Check with your legal department, but it is also an oft-cited mistruth that the university has a license that covers videos. For Boise State, we have some licenses through ASCAP, BMI and SESAC, the publishing collection agents that cover the public performance of music in the stadium, but this does not cover video use nor does it cover the use of the sound recording.

Good luck!

Rachael Bickerton is the director of trademark licensing and enforcement at Boise State.