

Victor Central School (VCS) Alumni Insights: Career Paths & Advice, Dana Abramson (VCS '81) - The Power of Developing Strong Communication Skills

By Keith Partington

Solid communication habits directly affect career opportunities, workplace success, and social satisfaction across an individual's network of family, friends, neighbors, and work and volunteer networks. While technology continues to evolve our communication tools, a person's reputation is built on key communication principles and skills that can be developed and improved over time.



I met with VCS alumna Dana Abramson to discuss the importance of developing strong communication skills, inspired by valuable insights from her LinkedIn thought leadership series, *Real-world Teachers of Effective Communication*. Dana, a leading expert in process development and training, has been quoted in national, regional, and local media, including For the Record, Boston Globe, Democrat and Chronicle, YNN, and the Rochester Business Journal. She is also recognized for developing processes that take complex concepts, simplify them, and deliver quantifiable results. Her signature Jump-start Executive Lead Generation System has been successfully applied across industries, including healthcare, manufacturing, management consulting, Energy & Utilities, and technology solutions, consistently producing high-response engagement that accelerates sales and marketing initiatives. She specializes in bridging the gap between marketing awareness initiatives and the deep expertise of subject matter experts — aligning strategic messaging with expert-driven insight to foster meaningful engagement, strengthen relationships on both sides of the conversation, and turn awareness into action and relationships into results.

When asked about a high school memory, Dana recalled an early soccer lesson from Marla McBride, a VCS Teacher and Coach for over 40 years and a 2010 inductee into the Athletic Hall of Fame. Coach McBride developed Dana as a bench player and a strategic corner-kick specialist, often featured in the newspaper for scoring goals off corner kicks. “That's what she brought me,” Dana said. “When we would need a corner kick, she would bring me in to do it because I think I was so focused that I felt like I could control it. And I think that goes back to my strategic communication. I only say what I need to say if I think it's going to make a difference. I'm only going to kick that ball if it's going to get a goal.”

Dana outlined her early career journey, emphasizing an intentional focus on innovation and technology, selling into the early personal computer and software market, with an

emphasis on Apple and desktop publishing, then into computer servers and networking. Those early technology skills helped her develop an active interest in emerging speech software, leading to an amazing 15-year run in training and support services for Dragon speech recognition software for the legal and healthcare industries. “People have described me as an abstract thinker,” Dana said. “I can take a very complicated concept, and then I can simplify it, extract what's relevant, and then I can communicate it in a way that's simple, very linear, and actually engaging to understand.” Using her strong communication skills, Dana developed a training method for Dragon speech recognition that could get a user up and running in an hour with a nearly 100% retention rate, much higher than the 10% industry average. This highlights an important lesson — while your work matters, your ability to communicate it leads to opportunities for people who can clearly explain ideas, ask thoughtful questions, and build relationships. Dana recently wrote in her LinkedIn series, *Real-world Teachers of Effective Communication*, “One of the hardest skills is learning how to continue communicating clearly without giving up when others cannot yet see what feels obvious to you. She also wrote, “Not all meaningful work is visible. And not all effective communication gets credited. Sometimes the reward is simply knowing you did your part well enough that the outcome had a chance to happen at all.”

Strong communication skills can be especially important during an unplanned career disruption. Dana’s 15-year success in speech recognition training services grew to 20 employees and included developing healthcare templates and training, including dictation into Microsoft Word documents. In 2011, her successful business model collided with the rise of electronic medical record technology. The shift ended her business within a year, and she faced a difficult challenge. “This is how I got into the communication part,” Dana said. “When I was all along the path, I had to sell my services. And when you're the entrepreneur or the business owner, you're the lead salesperson; it's just what it is. I got really good at cold calls and sales because it's survival to pay your staff, then crashing, everything was gone.”

Dana met with a friend, and they urgently brainstormed about her skills and experience portfolio. She developed a plan using her entrepreneurial skills and strong network in the medical practice sector, modeled her income requirements, and envisioned a service offering for policy engagement. She compiled a list of target customers and, within 24 hours, landed her first customer. “You have five to seven seconds to anchor someone so that they'll continue listening to you,” Dana said. “I've learned very early on in all my communications, you have to get directly to the point as quickly and efficiently as possible.” She met with five partners at a company she knew wanted to add scribe services. Dana communicated her value and listened to their conversation. Within 24

hours, she secured her first client. The five partners reported that, right after the call, they each agreed to contribute \$1,000 per month for Dana's services. "And then I had to figure out how to scale it, because I was just one person."

Dana targeted new clients and repeated her proven approach. She landed new customers, which led to the founding of her business, Strategic Calls, and the development of her Jump-start Lead Generation System. Jump-start is a complete, proven process that consists of a cadence, which Dana refers to as response-driven messaging. It allows her to get a yes, no, or maybe from someone within three days, which supports strategic outreach and time investment. Dana's successful transition that year serves as a guide, showing that your skills, experience, and network, when woven into a communication plan, can overcome even the most difficult career roadblocks.

My question about improving written communication led to her advice on a more important skill: follow-up, especially when dealing with unanswered letters, emails, text messages, or LinkedIn connection requests. Dana consistently models and executes an efficient follow-up approach. "Within 24 hours, I have reached back out to the contact, gotten a response, and got the follow-up meeting, where I think typically people think it takes weeks," she said. When coaching on follow-up skills, she often hears the objection that people no longer answer the phone or respond to email. "Who says people don't answer the phone? And if they don't answer, they'll call you back if it's compelling enough. And if they don't call you back, it just wasn't compelling enough; that's it, back on you," Dana said. "Familiarity isn't something you assume; it's something you establish. And until that relationship is solidified, it's your responsibility to make communication easy to receive. Even something as simple as, "Hey, this is [Dana]—we met at..." —changes everything."

To close our discussion, Dana drew on her experiences to highlight another important skill, noting that strong communicators are usually strong listeners. These skills include active listening, asking clarifying questions, avoiding interruptions, and paying attention to nonverbal cues, all of which help in understanding the problem before solving it. "People like to talk; they like to, and I appreciate that," Dana said. "They like to share their expertise and their experiences, especially when that's the topic of the discussion. But when you're talking, you're not learning. I want to listen, and when you listen, you hear things no one else hears. And it's such power." Dana, known for her leadership in effective lead generation, highlights the power of listening for teams, noting that she's not always the subject-matter expert in the room. In those discussions, Dana relies on the team's subject-matter expert to highlight compelling needs, and she identifies the people who need that solution, connecting those two sound bites. She also notes that listening yields valuable

insights for follow-up. “If I can glean pieces of information, it just makes the outreach easier,” she said.

I want to thank Dana for her time and insights on the importance of developing strong communication skills for this VCS Alumni Story Series. You can learn more about Dana and Strategic Calls, the company she founded, on their website at <https://strategiccalls.com>. You can also follow Dana on LinkedIn, where she regularly shares her expertise in process development, training, and communication, at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dana-abramson-1790274/>.