**Human Communication Model**

This model depicts five levels of communication, starting with the lowest at the bottom and the highest at the top. Each level has its respective values and uses. Obviously the higher up the model one travels, the greater the openness and honesty. However, this brings ever-increasing pressure on the degree of risk and trust each person is prepared to take.

In order to work, two-way communication has to be just that – a two-way effort where people are prepared to be equally honest with each other, to dive to the same depths together at the same time. This may take some time to achieve.

So let us start at the bottom of the communication pyramid.



**Level 5 – Ritual and Cliché .** This is the lowest level of communication. Its purpose is to give friendly acknowledgement ‘en passant’ to another human being. ‘Good Morning’, ‘How are you?’ These are shorts greetings of recognition, their underlying message being ‘Hi!’ I’m a friendly person and no threat to you.’ There is little one gives away or receives. This level is safe and uncompromising.

The next level up is: **Level 4 – Gossip and Facts**

Here one communicates on safe ground, talking about events, gossip and facts without offering one’s opinions on them; it takes inter-communication up the scale a little. A person discloses his knowledge and interests. A good listener will pick up where the other person is coming from.

**Level 3 – Ideas and Judgements**

Moving to Level 3 is a major step upwards. Here, people are prepared to expose and disclose themselves much more, to discuss and debate ideas and judgements with one another. This is, however, at a rational, intellectual level so that only their *thoughts* are transparent, not the force and degree of feeling behind them.

**Level 2 – Feelings**

Level 2 is reached when you are prepared to express your inner feelings on any or all subjects. A high degree of trust must be established for Level 2 to work. Expressing our feelings may result in verbal ‘fisticuffs’ if we have not established a mature adult relationship, so we have to be able to agree to disagree, to accept and allow other people to have different feelings and thoughts from our own for this to work well.

**Level 1 – Peak**

Peak communication occurs when we are totally on song with one another. It is attained when we have gone above the need to verbalise our thoughts and feelings, since at this level, we know exactly what the other is thinking and feeling. I often find my wife and I communicate at this level, even though we might be out of sight and sound of each other. I have sometimes been in the kitchen when I have felt the overwhelming power of her yearning for a bar of Cadburys fruit and nut chocolate. When returning to the sitting room, I will say, ‘I know exactly what you were thinking about a moment ago.’ ‘Oh,’ she will say, ‘and what was that?’ ‘I could not only feel your desire for a bar of fruit and nut, but I could touch the very depth of your yearning.’ ‘Good heavens,’ she will say, ‘you’re dead right!’

**Use of model – How to move communication up and down.**

The best use of the model is perhaps to use it as a verbal gearbox, so that one can change gear according to need. It’s easier if all the communicators are aware of the model and are prepared to use it. Thus one can say: ‘We’ve been into gossip and fact for some time now, how about moving up to Level 3 or even to Level 2?’ If the communicators are unfamiliar with the model then the leader can easily identify the level of communication and take the initiative himself to move it up.

There are also occasions when I have seen it moved down very effectively, such as when sensitivity and feelings are becoming a bit raw! Each Level has its own need.