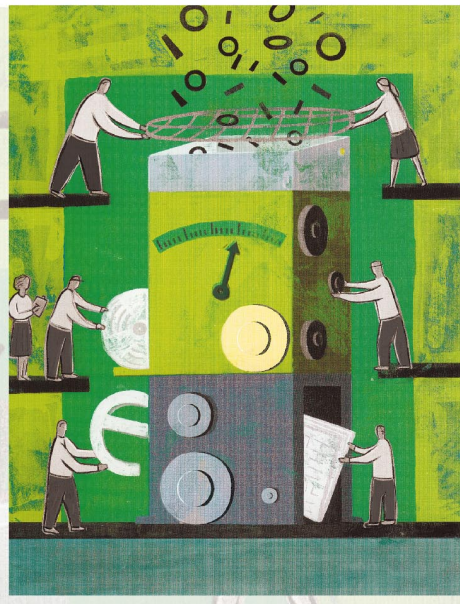
SOFT SKILLS FOR PUBLIC MANAGERS



Handbook on Communication Skills

CENTRE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE
Knowledge • Technology • People



Handbook on Communication Skills for Public Managers

About CGG

The Centre for Good Governance (CGG) was established by the Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) in October 2001 to help it achieve the goal of 'Transforming Governance'. CGG supports the design and implementation of GoAP's Governance Reform Programme. CGG undertakes action research, renders professional advice to, and conducts Change Management and Management Development Programmes for Government Departments and public agencies to help them implement their reform agenda successfully.

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Handbook on Communicaiton Skills



CENTRE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Knowledge ● Technology ● People

Purpose of this Handbook

The handbooks on Soft Skills developed by Centre for Good Governance are intended primarily for personnel in public administration. They offer an overview of some of the principal skills that are essential for effective performance competence.

They draw heavily upon existing literature and current practices in public and private organizations around the world and include numerous references and links to useful web resources.

They are not comprehensive ‘guides’ or ‘how to’ booklets. Rather, they incorporate the perspectives of experts in the specific domains whose knowledge, insights, advice and experiences prove handy in honing skills essential for strengthening the capacity for effectiveness of public service at all levels of government.

This handbook, *Communication Skills,* focuses on how personnel in the public administration can develop approaches and strategies that will enable them to deal with communication problems in a variety of contexts.

	TABLE OF CONTENTS	Page No
1.	Understanding Communication	1
2.	Workplace Communication Relationships	3
3.	Types of Communication	7
4.	Methods of Communication	10
5.	Communication Styles	18
6.	Common Roadblocks to Communication	21
7.	Criteria for Assessing Communication Competence	35
8.	Seven Actions for Effective Communication	41
9.	Some DOs of Effective Communication	45
10.	Some DONTs of Effective Communication	48

1 Understanding Communication

> "Emperor Frederick - the 13th century ruler of the Holy Roman Empire - wanted to know what language had been spoken at the birth of mankind in the Garden of Eden. Was it Hebrew, Greek or Latin? He ordered an experiment in which the original circumstances would be recreated as closely as possible. A group of infants were to be isolated from hearing human speech from the moment of birth until they spoke their language. The babies were to be raised by nurses who were strictly charged to maintain complete silence when with the babies. The result? Every one of the babies died. The lack of communication can be lethal."
>
> Robert Bolton, People Skills

In the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, the people of the world come together to build a tower that would reach heaven. In a single stroke, their efforts came to naught because they were besieged by befuddled communication, resulting in breakdown of coordination. Intended message is frequently mis-communicated, misunderstood, mis-quoted or even missed altogether because of ineffective interpersonal communication skills.

The ability to effectively communicate with other people is an important skill. Through communication, people reach some understanding of each other, learn to like each other, influence one another, build trust, and learn more about themselves and how people perceive them. People who communicate effectively know how to interact with others flexibly, skillfully, and responsibly, but without sacrificing their own needs and integrity.

Communication is a significant part of a manager's job. In today's team-oriented workplace, the development of good interpersonal communication skills is an important key to success. To build the competence and commitment of employees, a manager has to communicate effectively. Through effective communication, a manager can mobilize the employees behind an organization's vision and inspire a conscious and concerted team effort to attain the vision. The pay-off of effective communication are:

- A more professional image
- Improved self-confidence
- Improved relationships
- Less stress
- Greater acceptance by others

Communication is Transactional

Each person is both sending and receiving simultaneously.

Parties communicating have an impact on each other

Communication is a Process

Changes in events and relationships are part of a continuous flow. Every communication experience is the result of the accumulation of experiences preceding the present one. The new experience affects the future ones.

Communication is Sharing Meaning with Others

A rubber in England is an Erasure but it is a condom in America

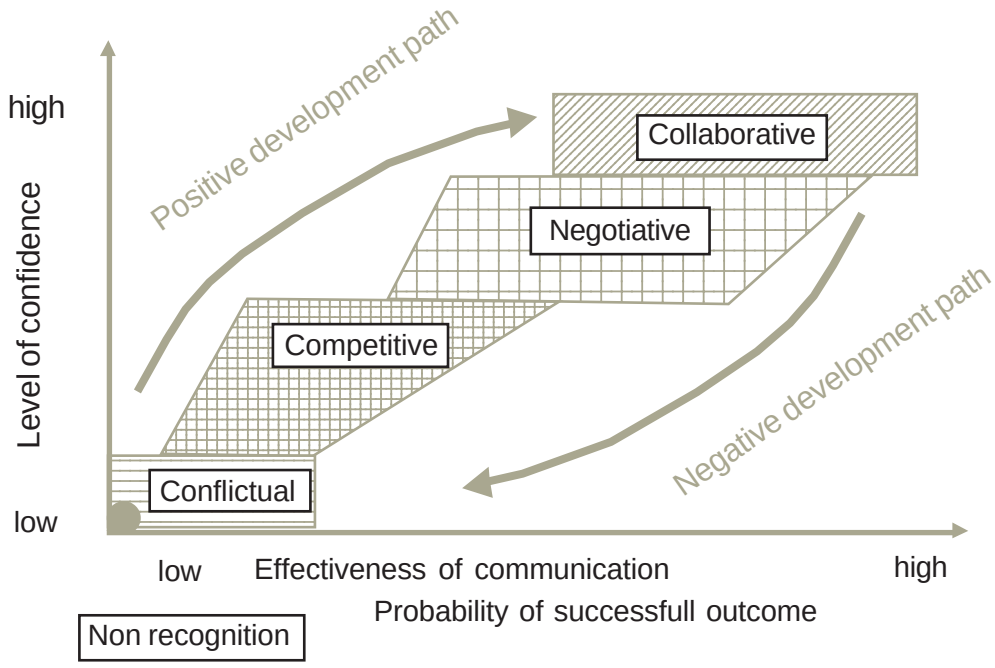
Communication Rights and Responsibilities

Rights	Responsibilities
1. You have the right to be treated with respect.	1. You have the responsiblity to treat others with respect.
2. You have the right to have and express your own opinions	2. You have the responsibility to listen to the opinions of others.
3. You have the right to ask for what you need and want in order to be effective	3. You have the responsibility to acknowledge and address the needs of others.
4. You have the right to set reasonable limits.	4. You have the responsility to respect the limits and boundaries of thers.

2 Workplace Communication Relationships

Effective communication demands that the parties involved in communication have a shared and clear appreciation of the various definitions and parameters about which information is being exchanged. According to Stefano Baldi and Ed Gelbstein ("Jargon, Protocols and Uniforms as barriers to effective communication"): Workplaces are witness to generally five types of communication relationships: Collaborative, Negotiative, Competitive, Conflictive and Non-recognition.

The diagram below illustrates how these are connected to each other and how these relationships are potentially unstable and as a result of which a relationship can develop from one type to another either to improve the effectiveness of communication (the positive development path) or slide into a complete collapse of communication (the negative development path).



Non-recognition relationship blocks any meaningful exchange by refusing to acknowledge that one or more of the players in the desired exchange has no rights whatsoever.

Conflictual relationship is a situation in which the parties recognize each other but are no longer able to work towards a win-win result and resort to verbal abuse and physical violence instead.

These types of relationships present a fundamental obstacle to effective communication. The other three relationships are often of an unstable nature, in the sense that a change in the relationship can be triggered by a relatively minor event – even just one word that is inappropriate at the time - and this can happen very quickly.

In the **collaborative relationship** the needs and positions of all the parties are clearly defined and understood and everyone involved shares the will to succeed, as well as information, equipment, accommodation and logistic arrangements, for example.

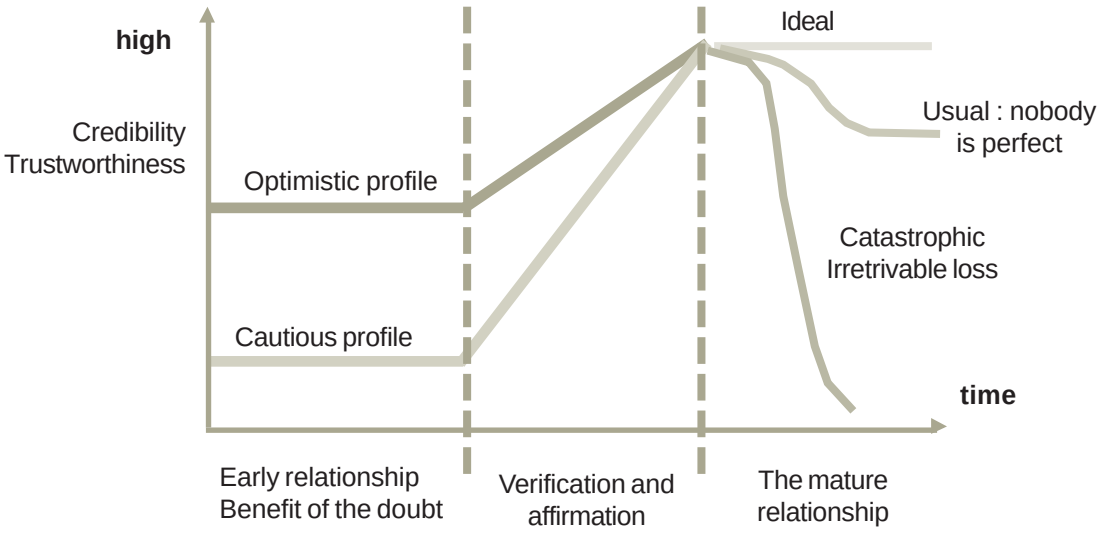
The **negotiative relationship** has much in common with the collaborative scenario except that some needs and positions may not have been defined clearly enough and require discussion and trading to reach a mutually acceptable outcome.

Collaborative and negotiative relationships can quickly become **competitive relationships** when one of the players needs to (or decides to) play a role different from that which was originally agreed upon. This new role could also result in some form of overlap with the responsibilities of others. Another kind of competitive relationship occurs when a “new player” joins an established effort and expects to obtain rights, privileges and concessions from other players. Competitive relationships can, if not properly managed, quickly deteriorate into non-recognition, conflict and exclusion.

At this point, the concepts of credibility and trust become important. Without either of these, effective communication is simply not possible. Neither credibility nor trust is automatically and instantly given – they need to be earned.

The diagram below attempts to show how credibility and trust develop over time. At the early stages of a relationship one's own character will determine that whether s/he assigns the person s/he is dealing with an optimistic profile of credibility and trustworthiness or a cautious profile.

As the relationship develops over time it can follow many different paths – the diagram pictures a happy situation where the credibility and trustworthiness of the person in question actually increases after the early relationship (if only this were the case all the time!) until it reaches a high level denoting a mature and stable relationship.



The one curve that matters in this diagram is the one showing the catastrophic loss of credibility or trust, which is usually irrecoverable, as this implies the end of any meaningful and effective communication.

Four responses or roles that often cause difficulty in communications, as well as in relationships and task activities, are the:

1. **Placater:** The Placater always talks in an ingratiating way, trying to please, apologizing and never disagreeing, no matter what.
    - WITH WORDS the placater always agrees. For example: "Whatever you want is okay. I am just here to make you happy."
    - WITH BODY the placater indicates a sense of helplessness.
    - WHILE ON THE INSIDE the placater feels: "I feel like nothing: without him or her, I am dead. I am worthless."

2. **Blamer:** The Blamer is a fault-finder, a dictator, a boss and always acts superior.
    - WITH WORDS the blamer always disagrees, and says (or seems to say): “You never do anything right. What is the matter with you?” Or, “If it weren’t for you, everything would be all right.”
    - WITH BODY the blamer indicates: “I am the boss around here.”
    - WHILE INSIDE the feeling is: “I am lonely and unsuccessful.”
3. **Computer:** The Computer is very correct, very reasonable with no semblance of any feeling showing. He or she is calm, cool and collected, and is almost totally disinterested and tries to sound intellectual. The computer uses big words.
    - WITH WORDS the computer is ultra-reasonable. For example: “If one were to observe carefully, one might notice the work-worn hands of someone present here.”
    - WITH BODY the computer is stoic like a machine and seems to be saying: “I’m calm, cool and collected.”
    - WHILE ON THE INSIDE the computer may really be saying:“I feel vulnerable.”
4. **Distracter:** The Distracter never makes a direct response to anything. Anything he or she says is totally irrelevant to what anyone else is saying or doing.
    - WITH WORDS the distracter makes no sense and is totally irrelevant.
    - WITH BODY the distracter is angular and off somewhere else.
    - WHILE ON THE INSIDE the distracter may be saying:“Nobody cares. There is no place for me.”

Mutual trust and respect are the foundation for effective communications. When both of these exist, goals can be developed to which all individuals and groups are committed. Communication systems and procedures based on shared goals and developed cooperatively are those most supported, most adhered to, and consequently most efficient.

3 Types of Communication

People in managerial roles have many opportunities to communicate with others. Communication can be classified in the following different ways.

- **Intrapersonal Communication:** When people talk to themselves, communication takes place within the brain. It embraces their thoughts, experiences and perceptions during a communication event. Behavior responses on all other levels of communication essentially begin on intrapersonal level. On this level, the individual forms personal rules and patterns of communication. Intrapersonal communication encompasses:
    - Sense-making e.g. interpreting maps, texts, signs, and symbols
    - Interpreting non-verbal communication e.g. gestures, eye contact
    - Communication between body parts; e.g. “My stomach is telling me it’s time for lunch.”
    - Day-dreaming
    - Nocturnal dreaming and
    - Many others...
- **Interpersonal Communication:** Interpersonal communication is also referred to as *dyadic communication*, or communication between two individuals. This type of communication can occur in both a one-on-one and a group setting. This also means being able to handle different people in different situations and making people feel at ease. Gestures such as eye contact, body movement, and hand gestures are also part of interpersonal communication. The most common functions of interpersonal communication are listening, talking and conflict resolution. Types of interpersonal communication vary from verbal to non-verbal and from situation to situation. Interpersonal communication involves face-to-face communication in a way that accomplishes the purpose and is appropriate.
- **Small Group Communication:** Small group communication is an interaction process that occurs among three or more people interacting in an attempt to achieve

commonly recognized goals either face-to-face or through mediated forms. This is sometimes included in the interpersonal level — the most obvious difference is the number of persons involved in the process. The small group may be a family of three talking at supper, or a meeting of an organization with just a few members.

- **Public Communication or Public Speaking:** The speaker sends messages to an audience, which is not identified as individuals. Unlike the previous levels, the speaker is doing most, if not all, of the talking.
- **Mass Communication:** Mass communication occurs when a small number of people send messages to a large anonymous and usually heterogeneous audience using specialized communication media. It represents the creation and sending of a homogeneous message to a large heterogeneous audience through the media.
- **Non-Verbal Communication:** In non-verbal communication, people send messages to each other without talking. They communicate through facial expressions, head positions, arm and hand movements, body posture, and positioning of legs and feet. How people use “space” also transmits a message. By being aware of non-verbal communication, one can interpret the signals of others, or send signals to others. Awareness of non-verbal communication helps people:
    - Project an image of confidence and knowledge.
    - Demonstrate power or influence
    - Express sincerity, interest and cooperativeness.
    - Create trust.
    - Recognize personal tension in self and others.
    - Identify discrepancies between what people are saying and what they are actually thinking.
    - Change behavior and environment to encourage productive discussion.

Three Myths about Communication

- Myth One: Communication is the magical cure for all our woes - a Panacea
- Myth Two: Communication Can Break Down (here can be a difference of opinion
- but communication cannot break down, machines break down)
- Myth Three: Communication is Merely Skill Building. Communication is a complex process that must be taken and understood as a whole

4 Methods of Communication

Communication occurs in an organization in the context of people trying to fulfill one or several of the following six needs:

- To feel respected
- To give or get information
- To be empathically understood and respected
- To cause change of action
- To create excitement and reduce boredom
- To avoid something unpleasant, like silence or confrontation

The methods used by them to fulfill those needs include listening, speaking, reading and writing.

1. Listening: Various studies stress the importance of listening as a communication skill. They point out that many of us spend 70 to 80 percent of our waking hours in some form of communication. Of that time, we spend about 9 percent writing, 16 percent reading, 30 percent speaking, and 45 percent listening. Studies also confirm that most of us are poor and inefficient listeners. Most people listen at an efficiency level of less than about 25 percent. Studies also show that, immediately after listening to a 10-minute oral presentation, the average listener has heard, understood, properly evaluated, and retained only half of what was said.

People generally remember

- 10 % of what they read
- 20 % of what they hear
- 30 % of what they see
- 50 % of what they hear and see
- 70 % of what they say and write
- 90 % of what they say as they do something

Management guru Stephen Covey differentiates listeners as those listening with the intent to reply, and those listening with the intent to understand. Because listening is so vital to workplace success, it is important to take note of the seven “sins” that get in the way of good verbal communication (Dan Bobinski: The Seven Deadly Sins of (Not) Listening):

Sin #1: Filtering

- This is when a person’s mind is sifting through another’s words and tuning in only when he or she hears agreement. Commonly, a Filterer replies to someone else’s statements with “yeah, but….”

Sin #2: Second Guessing

- Someone who is second-guessing usually misses important details because they are too busy (a) imagining someone has hidden motives for saying what they’re saying, and (b) trying to figure out what those hidden motives might be.

Sin #3: Discounting

- This sin occurs when a listener lacks respect for a speaker. What the speaker is saying could be 100% dead on correct, but a Discounter will either internally or publicly scoff at what’s being said, for any number of reasons. The sad thing about Discounters is that they often miss the solutions to the problems before them, simply because they don’t like the source. A milder form of discounting occurs when content is brushed off just because the person speaking is not a good speaker.

Sin #4: Relating

- A Relater is someone who continually finds references from his or her own background and compares them to what the speaker is saying. Relaters often appear self-centered, as everything they hear is publicly compared or contrasted to his or her own experiences.

Sin #5: Rehearsing

- This sin blocks much listening as it is simply waiting for the other speaker to finish what he or she is saying so the rehearser can start talking again. While someone else is talking, the rehearser is thinking about how to say the next sentence.

Sin #6: Forecasting

- Someone who takes an idea from the speaker and runs light years ahead of the topic at hand is forecasting. Forecasting can stem from being bored with the subject matter, or simply because one's mind automatically thinks ahead.

Sin #7: Placating

- Worst of all listening sins, placating agrees with everything anyone else says, just to avoid conflict.

There are a few but effective techniques used in being an active listener. These include verbal and non-verbal techniques. These techniques show others that people are paying attention to them and are interested in what they are saying.

Non-verbal techniques include:

- good eye contact
- facial expressions
- body language
- silence
- touching

Verbal techniques include:

- I'm "listening" cues
- disclosures
- validating statements
- statements of support
- reflection/ mirroring statements

It is very important to use **"I-Messages"** in a support group to convey one's feelings to the entire group. If feelings are not expressed, they are often disguised behind the group. "I-Messages" also provide a preventative focus in that they keep undesirable behaviors in check or they can insure that some things don't happen or get carried away. The use of "I-Messages" may also provide a soft mechanism for confrontation and correction in that "I" is perceived as being softer than "you".

Most of the messages sent to people about their behavior are "you" messages — messages that are directed at the person. These have a high probability of putting people down, making them feel guilty, and making them resistant to change. An "I-Message" allows a person who is affected by another's behavior to express the impact it is having on him or her. This leaves the responsibility for modifying the behavior with the person who demonstrated the behavior.

Active Listening

1. Setting the stage
   - Chosse an appropriate physical environment
   - Remove distractions
   - Be open and accessible
   - Listen with empathy
2. Insuring mutual understanding
   - Reflect feelings
   - Paraphrase main ideas
   - Interrupt to clarify
   - Corfirm next steps
3. Understanding body language
   - Observe position and posturing
   - Make eye contact
   - Consider expression and gestures
4. Suspending judgment
   - Concentrate
   - Keep an open mind
   - Hear the person out

“I-Messages” build relationships and do not place the sender in the position of enforcing a new behavior. Many people have been taught to avoid “I” (as in I want or I would like), so it is often difficult to use this method.

- Four Parts of an “I-Message”
- Specific behavior (“When you . . .”)
- Resulting feeling (“It . . .”)
- Effect (“I feel . . .”)
- Resolution (“So, would you . . .”)

Examples :

- Part 1: “When you cut me off . . .”
- Part 2: “It hurts my feelings . . .”
- Part 3: “I feel as though you don’t value my opinion,”
- Part 4: “So, would you please hear me out.” Since communication is the exchange of ideas or feelings from one person to another, it implies that the message has been heard.

Exercise - Listerning

1. Who are the people it’s easlest to listen to ?

2. What is it about these peope that makes it easler to listen to them ?

3. Who are the people you listen to least ?

4. What is about them that makes if difficult to listen to them ?

2. Speaking: By age sixteen, Washington had copied out by hand, 110 *Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation*. They are based on a set of rules composed by French Jesuits in 1595. They all have in common a focus on other people rather than the narrow focus of our own self-interests that we find so prevalent today. Fussy or not, they represent more than just manners. These rules proclaim respect for others and in turn give people the gift of self-respect and heightened self-esteem. When it concerns the manners of speaking, the relevant rules of civility that can be drawn from Washington's book are:

- Be considerate of others. Do not embarrass others.
- Don't draw attention to yourself.
- When you speak, be concise.
- When a person tries his/ her best and fails, do not criticize him/ her.
- When you must give advice or criticism, consider the timing, whether it should be given in public or private, the manner and above all be gentle.
- Do not make fun of anything important to others.
- If you criticize someone else of something, make sure you are not guilty of it yourself. Actions speak louder than words.
- Do not detract from others nor be overbearing in giving orders.
- Do not go where you are not wanted. Do not give unasked-for advice.
- Do not be quick to talk about something when you don't have all the facts.
- Do not speak badly of those who are not present.
- Show interest in others conversation, but don't talk with your mouth full.

While manners of speech matters a great deal in defining the workplace relationships, it is also essential that managers keep in mind that the following ground rules while speaking to their colleagues or subordinates.

- Keep the message clear
- Be prepared
- Keep the message simple
- Be vivid when delivering the message

- Be natural
- Keep the message concise

3. Reading: Good reading habits and strategies help managers handle their tasks more efficiently. Kellie Fowler (Reading Strategies – Mind Tools) offers the following six reading strategies to managers for optimal results:

- Knowing what is needed to be known, and reading appropriately
- Knowing how deeply to read the document: skimming, scanning or studying
- Using active reading techniques to pick out key points and keeping the mind focused on the material
- Using the table of contents for reading magazines and newspapers, and clipping useful articles
- Understanding how to extract information from different article types
- Creating a table of contents for reviewing material
- Using indexes, tables of contents and glossaries to help assimilate technical information

4. Writing: Crisp and correct writing is essential to successful leadership communication. When a letter, report, or program handout includes an error, readers are likely to remember the error rather than the message. The following are some of the principles managers must bear in mind while setting out to write.

- Proof-read aloud *everything*. By reading aloud, your ear will catch mistakes your eye misses.
- Make no assumptions. The ideas you are presenting must be explained in full to be understood. People read only what is on the page.
- Do not lecture. Write only what must be understood to make the proper decision or choice.
- Rough draft all important letters and reports. Check them for content, sequential development of ideas, and conciseness.

- Always put yourself in the “other person’s shoes” and ask yourself, “Would I want to read this letter or report? Why? Does it say something of value and real importance to me?”
- Many people are too busy to read carefully. Be sure your ideas are clear and easy to follow. As a general rule, the most effective manner in which to develop an idea is:

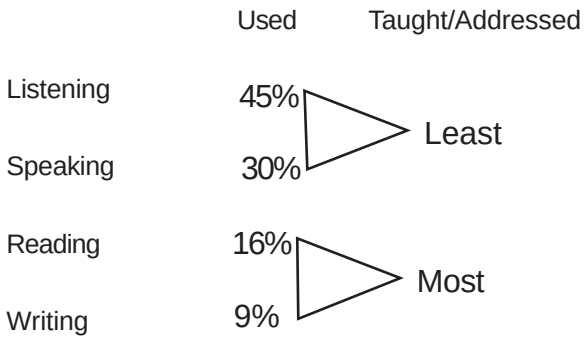
  Concept ☞ Benefit Example ☞ Data

  This method leads your reader to the conclusion you want because the conclusion is already clearly stated as the concept (hypothesis). Your examples and data should support the conclusion you make.

- Define all “terms” and eliminate vague pronouns. These two traps cause more problems in writing than any other set of conditions.
- Grammar, punctuation, and spelling should be perfect. Use a dictionary - either a good unabridged volume or the “spelling checker” version on your computer.
- Plan your time to allow for proofreading and correcting. When your success depends upon the quality of your letters and reports, there are no excuses for ineptitude.

Methods of Communication

80% of working day involves communication



Listening :

45% of Communication
25% Efficiency

5 Communication Styles

Every time a manager speaks, s/he chooses and uses one of four basic communication styles: assertive, aggressive, passive and passive-aggressive. .

1.Passive Style: Passive communication is based on compliance and hopes to avoid confrontation at all costs. In this mode, people do not talk much, question even less, and actually do very little. They usually have a low sense of self-esteem, and have a difficult time recognizing their own needs and knowing how to meet them more appropriately. They internalize discomfort rather than risk, upsetting others. This style tends to result in a lose-win situation, and results in feelings of victimization, resentment, and a loss of a sense of control.

2. Aggressive Style: Aggressive communication always involves manipulation. Managers adopting the aggressive style create a win-lose situation. They use intimidation and control to get their needs met, and they are disrespectful and hurtful to others in communications. They have the underlying beliefs that power and control are the only way to get needs met. They operate from a real sense of inadequacy and may have a lack of empathy for others.

3. Passive-aggressive Style: Aggressive communication always involves manipulation. A combination of styles, passive-aggressive avoids direct confrontation (passive), but attempts to get even through manipulation (aggressive). The passive-aggressive people incorporate elements of both of the previous styles. They try to use procrastination, forgetfulness, and intentional inefficiency rather that being direct in their communications with others. This style of communication often leads to office politics and rumour-mongering.

4. Assertive Style: The most effective and healthiest form of communication is the assertive style. It's how people naturally express themselves when their self-esteem is intact, giving them the confidence to communicate without games and manipulation.

The assertive people are direct with the goal of creating a win-win situation. They operate from the belief that each person is responsible for solving his or her own problems, and neither party in communication has to justify themselves to each other. They take responsibility for their own decisions and actions.

Understanding the four basic types of communication will help managers learn how to react most effectively when confronted with a difficult person. It will also help them recognize when they are using manipulative behavior to get their own needs met. They should remember that they always have a choice as to which communication style to use. If they are serious about taking control of their life, they should practice being more assertive. It will help them diffuse anger, reduce guilt and build relationships - both personally and professionally.

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Watch your body posture – practice using an open, assertive body language and voice.
- Think before you speak. Take a few seconds to make sure you are conveying the right message, and in the way you want to convey it.
- Don’t apologize if it’s not warranted.
- Remember it is ok to say “no”.
- Remember everyone is entitled to an opinion, and don’t try to convince others that

Interpersonal Communication Styles

ISSUE	PASSIVE	AGGRESSIVE	PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE	ASSERTIVE
Self Esteem	Low	Self-centered	Low	High
Impact	Cares more about others	Cares only for self	Avoids consequences; wants approval through minimal effort	Cares about self and others
Consequences & Approval	Predicts disaproval and will not risk it	Not concerned with approval or consequences	Doesn't care about anybody	Predicts approval and positive outcomes; risks disapproval
Meet needs	Own needs not met	Own needs met at cost of others	Needs of neither met	Own needs met but not at cost to others
Mistakes	Blames self	Blames others	Blames external forces; defends self	Owns them non-defensively
Goal Accomplishment	Martyr, self-denying	Uses others	Depreciates self/ others; phony efforts	Self-enhancing; supportive of others
Self Awareness	Sees only weaknesses	Sees only strengths	Sees fate as responsible; no need to change	Accepts strengths and weakness
Trust/Control	Lets others control; distrusts self	Controls others; distrusts others	Distrusts everyone	Trusts
Feelings	Depressed and unexpressed	Explosive and hostile	Expressed indirectly and slyly	Expressed authentically and calmly
Reactions of Others	Pity, irritation or disgust	Anger or fear	Confuses others; generates frustration, anger, distrust	Respect or annoyance

6 Common Roadblocks to Communication

Communication roadblocks are an inevitable aspect of every workplace. These roadblocks distort the normal flow of communication. The factors distorting the clarity of a communication are called ‘noise’. Noise can occur at any stage in the communication process. Managers should realize the importance of understanding the interpersonal communication process at the workplace, focusing on:

- Communication Roadblocks
    - The way minds work
    - Sender’s behavior
    - Receiver’s behavior
- How to overcome Communication Roadblocks by
    - Listening
    - Reading body language
    - Speaking
    - Skill Training

1. The Ways Minds Work

• Perceptions of the reality

Perceptions are the way we interpret and understand reality. Perceptions form one’s reality through the following steps:

People collect information, But:

- They collect only a small amount – they cannot register all the data that their senses can bring them
- They collect selectively – they see what they want to see, they look for data to support their initial assumptions and neglect or donot notice contradictory evidence
- They collect in a certain order

People arrange the information into categories, but:

Categorizing is dangerous, for with categories go a certain set of assumptions or predictions: “Brown-skinned men are violent” “Old people are less ready to change”. These are the stereotypes.

People form our reality, but:

Each of them may have their own reality, very different perceptions and very different realities. These differences often cause misunderstandings and conflicts.

- **Stereotypes and Prejudices**

Stereotyping is a natural function of the human mind, aimed to simplify the complex reality and make our body and mind develop automatic responses to similar stimuli. Stereo means “set image”. When applied to people, stereotyping refers to forming an instant or fixed picture of a group of people, usually based on limited or incomplete information. Stereotypes frequently result from or lead to prejudices, negative opinions about others. Stereotypes and prejudices are sources of communication failures, and more than that, of bad actions and ugly emotions. Prejudices based on oversimplification of people into narrow, negative stereotypes can have tragic consequences such as discrimination and violence.

Often, people are stereotyped around characteristics of:

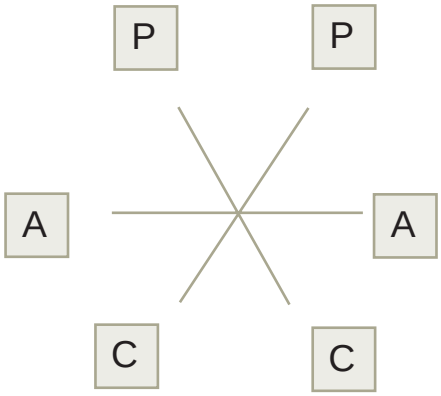
- Age: all teenagers love rock and roll and do not respect elders
- Sex: men want just one thing from a woman
- Race: all Chinese people look alike
- Religion: all those belonging to Islam are terrorists
- Vocation: all lawyers are greedy
- Nationality: all Somalians are poverty-stricken
- Places: all people living in a certain city are lazy
- Things: all Swiss watches are perfect

Stereotypes have four main characteristics:

- They are simpler than the reality
- They are acquired from “cultural mediators” rather than own experience
- They are erroneous by their very nature
- They are resistant to change when absorbed in childhood, stubbornly colouring our perceptions and behavior.

- **Perceptions of relationships**

People can perceive relationships with others based on three metaphorical roles: parent, adult, and child.



If one individual intends to relate to another as Adult to Adult, but is heard as Parent speaking to a Child, the interaction will result in misunderstanding and resentment.

- **Perspective and meta-perspective two are mentioned here**

There are three levels of thinking that complicate Interpersonal Communication:

Direct Perspective

John does not like Mary — Mary does not like John

Metaperspective

John thinks Mary likes him — Mary thinks John likes her

Metametaperspective

John thinks that Mary thinks he likes her — Mary thinks that John thinks he likes her

Neither wants to hurt the other; rather than communicate openly and resolve the misunderstanding.

- **Gender differences**

Allan and Barbara Pease describe, in their book “Why men don’t listen and women can’t read maps”, in a very funny way a very serious fact: the differences between men and women in the way they communicate. They demonstrate that the differences were forged by the functions men and women had for ages in their effort to survive: men were hunters, focused on their task; women were raising children focused on building and keeping relationships. As a result of these different functions their minds also specialized along those lines and researches demonstrate:

Men’s minds have less speaking centres than women’s

Mothers, daughters and sisters will often speak on behalf of the men from their family: Try to ask a small five year old boy “How are you” and his mother or sister will immediately answer on his behalf “Very well, thank you!”

For the same reason women talk more than men.

“Once I did not talk to my wife for six months – tells a man. I did not want to interrupt her”

A man speaks an average of 2000 to 4000 words/day, a third of the quantity spoken by a woman. This difference becomes visible at the end of the day, when man and woman eat together at home. He finished his words reserve; she still has a lot more. Listen to them, does it sound familiar?

Men interrupt each other when speaking only as a sign of rivalry or aggressiveness. “Do not interrupt me” shout men to women, all over the world in all the languages.

Men’s statements always include solutions to the problems they are speaking about so they feel they have to speak without being interrupted. For a woman this is strange, because her main intention when speaking is to build relationships and less to solve problems.

2. Sender's Behaviour

- **Different meanings of the words**

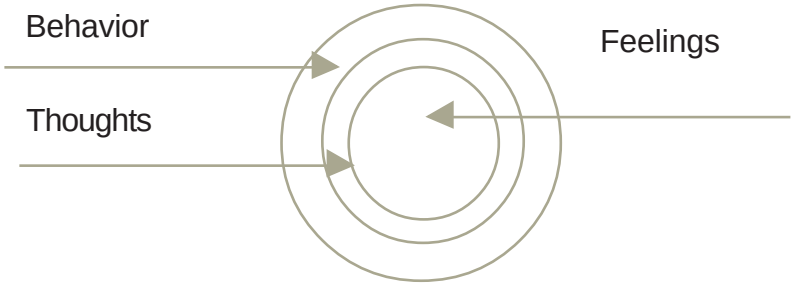
Often people are not able to choose the right word to say precisely what they mean. The same word may have different meanings to different people

- **Hiding Thoughts and Feelings**

Just as military code messages for national security purposes, people may choose to code their messages for personal security purposes; Or because they have been trained from early childhood to express themselves indirectly on many topics and feelings.

One of the basic reasons for miscommunication is that decoding is always guesswork. One can easily observe a person's behavior, hear words and see actions, but:

One can only imagine what the words and actions mean.



A person's thoughts and feelings (emotions) are often concealed very carefully and are not directly observable as behaviors are.

- **The Sender may be blind to other's emotions or blinded by them**

Emotions help shape values. They are a fundamental part of one's motivation and help to determine one's direction and purpose in life. Emotions provide one with needed clues to solve problems.

It is important not be blind and to be able to recognize one's feelings, to be aware of one's rich inner world of emotions. This skill may overcome many communication failures.

3. Receiver's Behavior

- **Hearing through own filters**

i) People have many filters that distort what they hear.

ii) People have attention filters that keep them from being overwhelmed by the increasing amount of sounds and information.

iii) People have emotional filters that block or distort their understanding.

iv) People have their expectations of others that distort their behavior

- **Receivers are easily distracted**

Many receivers are easily distracted and slip off dreaming while the sender is talking. One of the reasons for poor listening is that people can think much faster than they can talk. While people listen, they have a lot of spare time for thinking. The average rate for speech is 125-150 words per minute. This rate is slow for the ear and the brain, which can process about four times more and faster.

- **Reactions that block communication**

Often receivers have ways of responding that are considered by researchers as high–risk responses that are likely to block communication, increase the emotional distance between people and decrease the other person's problem-solving efficiency.

These responses have been divided into three major categories:

- **Criticizing**

Many people feel that they ought to be critical or the other person will never improve. They feel that it is their responsibility to make a negative evaluation of the other person's actions or attitudes.

- **Name Calling**

Labelling, putting down the other person, prevents people from getting to really know the other

- **Diagnosing**

One person informs the other that he is being defensive, or he is acting out of guilt or fear or some other unconscious motives. “I can read you like a book.....” Communication is blocked.

Sending Solutions

- **Ordering**

An order is a solution sent coercively and backed by force. People become defensive and resentful. Ordering might eventually lead to sabotage. Orders imply that the other’s judgment is unsound and thus tend to undermine self-esteem.

- **Threatening**

A threat is a solution sent with an emphasis on punishment that will be forthcoming if the solution is not implemented. Threats produce the same kind of negative feelings to the results produced by orders ‘You will do it or else...”

- **Moralizing**

Many people like to back their solutions with the force of moral or theological authority. “It’s the right thing to do” “You ought to tell him you are sorry” Moralizing fosters anxiety, arouses resentment and blocks honest self-expression.

- **Advising**

The advice-giving trap is a constant temptation when someone talks to you about her problems. What’s wrong with the advice? Often it is seen by the other as a basic insult to his/ her intelligence. It implies a lack of confidence in the capacity of the other person to cope with her problems. And the advisor seldom understands the full implications of the problem. The advisor may be unaware of the complexities, feelings, and many other factors that lie hidden beneath the surface.

Avoiding the other's concerns

- **Diverting**

One of the most frequent ways of switching a conversation from the other person's concern to one's own topic is called "diverting".

Diverting appears when people lack the awareness and skills to listen effectively. At other times diversion appears when people are uncomfortable with the emotions stimulated by the conversation.

- **Logical argument**

When persons are under stress or when there is conflict between people, providing logical solutions can be frustrating. Logic focuses on facts and typically avoids feelings. However, feelings may be the main issues. Using logic, even if really needed, may be a high-risk response-blocking communication.

Overcoming Roadblocks

1. Listening

Since people have two ears and only one mouth, listening might be the most important communication skill. Unfortunately few people are good listeners. Listening is more than merely hearing with our ears. Listening is a combination of what another person says and involvement with the other person who is talking.

Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding, overcoming communication roadblocks. There are five levels of active listening*:*

Basic Acknowledgments: Basic acknowledgements include verbal, visual - non-verbal signs and vocal sounds that let the speaker know how the audience is listening with interest and respect, such as: head-nodding, leaning forward or backward, making eye contacts, "uh-huh", "oh really", "no-kidding", 'tell me more", "I hear you", "so..", "I see", "yes".

Questions: The idea of asking questions may seem contradictory to the idea of listening. But an active listener is asking questions in order to show the speaker his/ her interest (a) in what is being said (b) in knowing more to gain a better understanding of the speaker's point of view. Open-ended questions are preferable to close-ended questions, because they are providing opportunities for the speaker to open up, to explore his/ her thoughts and feelings. It is also important to ask one question at a time.

Paraphrasing: Paraphrasing focuses on the speaker's content, and summarizing what was said in order to clarify and confirm correct understanding. The steps of the paraphrasing process are:

(a) Let the speaker finish what he/she wanted to say.
(b) Restate with your own words what you think the speaker has said
(c) If the speaker confirms your understanding continue the conversation
(d) If the speaker indicates you misunderstood ask the speaker to repeat. "I do not understand. Could you say it again?"

Mirroring feelings

Mirroring involves reflecting back to the speaker the emotions s/he is communicating. Do not miss the emotional dimension of a conversation, by focusing exclusively on the content. Encourage the speaker to disclose feelings – may be joy, sorrow, frustration, anger or grief. The reflection of feelings will help the speaker understand his/ her own emotions and move toward a solution of the problem. In order to understand and mirror feelings:

(a) Observe the feeling words the speaker uses.

(b) The speaker may not use feeling words at all because suppression of feelings is so widespread in our culture. Then, focus on the content and ask yourself: If I were having that experience, if I were saying and doing those things what would I be feeling?

(c) Observe the body language, facial expressions, the tone of the voice, gestures and posture.

Reflecting meanings

Once a person knows how to reflect feeling and content separately it is relatively easy to put the two together into a reflection of meaning. It would be useful to use the formula: “You feel (insert the feeling word) because (insert the event or other content associated with the feeling)”

- **Summative Reflections**

A summative reflection is a brief restatement of the main themes and feelings the speaker expressed over a longer period of discussions.

A good summarization may help the speaker have a greater coherence, a better understanding of the situation and draw conclusions.

Effective Listening

Behaviors that support effective listening

- Maintaining relaxed body posture
- Leaning slightly forward if sitting
- Facing person squarely at eye level
- Maintaining an open posture
- Maintaining appropriate distance
- Offering simple acknowledgements
- Reflecting meaning (paraphrase)
- Reflecting emotions
- Using eye contact
- Providing non-distracting environment

Behaviors that hinder effective listening

- Acting distracted
- Telling your own story without acknowledging theirs first
- No response
- Invalidating response, put downs
- Interrupting
- Criticizing
- Judging
- Diagnosing
- Giving advice/solutions
- Changing the subject
- Reassuring without acknowledgment

2. Reading, Body Language

From the very beginning of the human race, non-verbal communication, e.g., body language, has been a means of interpersonal communication and was used long before language appeared. But only in the recent past behavioral scientists started to make systematic observations of what non-verbal signs mean.

In a message, words are effective carriers of factual information. The content of the conversation can be important. But when emotions are engaged they should receive primary attention and they are mostly carried by non-verbal elements. Understanding, being able to read body language is one of the most important skills for effective communication. In order to do it:

Focus attention on the important clues:

The facial expression – especially eyes and vocal expression are eloquent

The tone of the voice gives information about speaker's feelings, anger, boredom, depression, enthusiasm or disbelief

The posture and gestures – movements of the head, legs, and hands reveal the levels of self-esteem and inner energy

The clothing and environment style give clues about personal characteristics

Note discrepancies

When there is a discrepancy between words and body language, both messages are important. Search for the meanings.

Be aware of own feelings and bodily reactions

Non-verbal communications can by-pass the conscious mind and trigger responses. By becoming aware of what ones body is experiencing one becomes more sensitive to what other people are feeling.

Reflect the feelings back to the sender

Read non-verbal signs in the context. Sometimes body language is very clear and unambiguous, but at other times it can be difficult to decipher. But mastering the art and science of decoding the non-verbal signs can improve communication dramatically and overcome many obstacles.

3. Speaking

When sending a message as speakers, people should:

- Know what they mean and express it clearly, with respect and sensitivity.
- Check or build the common understanding of the words they use, because words can have different meanings for different people, especially if coming from different cultures and educational backgrounds
- Use de-escalatory language, resist the temptation to make personal attacks and accuse, by replacing accusatory “you” statements with less provocative “I” statements.

4. Skill Training

Skill-building training can improve communication abilities. Reading this handout may improve your understanding and knowledge of the main concepts. But only reading will not improve your communication skills. A high level of communication effectiveness can be reached only through intensive and well-designed training programs.

Verbal Faux Pas – The Words You Use Can Empower or Confuse

The following is a list of the most common verbal faux pas to banish from your vocabulary:

1. **"Let me be honest with you"**

   (Common variations include "To tell you the truth," and "To be frank with you.")

   Translation: Dishonest Communication. This phrase implies that, up to now, you've been deceitful or haven't been completely honest-that, in some way, you've been holding back.

   "Kinda," "Sorta," "Wanta"

   (Example- "It's kinda hard to share my feelings with her."

   Translation: Uncertainty. These words express your uncertainty and inability to communicate your thoughts. ("I know what I want to say, I just don't know how to express it.") When we communicate, we need to always ensure that we convey a clear message-don't waste words.

   Powerful Choice: Communicate clearly by not using these words. A stronger message is, "It is difficult for me to express my feelings to her because she interrupts me often." This clearer message clearly and accurately conveys your thought.

3. **"I'll try."**

   Translation: Non-commitment. How often have your heard someone say, "I'll try to give you a call next week." Nine times out of ten this will never happen. Why? Because the word try offers you an out which says you're not committed to doing or seeing an action through. So when we say we'll try, what we are really saying is, "Maybe I will – maybe I won't. I'll give it a shot, maybe, and if I don't follow through or fail, don't hold me to it." In life you don't try–either you do or you don't.

4. **"I have to…"**

   Translation: Powerlessness. It's been said that the only thing we have to do in life is die and pay taxes. Well, this is only partly true, because there are many people who choose not to do the latter. In life, we always have a choice – there is nothing we have to do. We may feel compelled to do something because of our values, sense of obligation or duty. Ultimately, choice is in your hands and saying "I have to…" implies that you have turned complete control of your life over to others. You are dependent upon others to make choices for you. And should those choices fail to turn out well, you have a built in excuse to say, "See what she did to me!"

"You know" or "You know what I mean"

Translation: Confusion

This phase seems common by even the most seasoned speakers, TV personalities, and celebrities. The phrase implies, "It's obvious what I'm trying to say. I shouldn't have to say any more-you know what I mean. Can't you read my mind?" For many, the first thought is, "No I don't know what you mean, please tell me." "You know" is a speech filler which gives the speaker time to think about what to say next.

Source: **Joy Fisher-Sykes, www.thesykesgrp.com.**

7 Criteria for Assessing Communication Competence

Communication competence is the ability to relate to others with accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness and appropriateness. It is a measure of determining to what extent the goals of interaction are achieved. However, communicative competence is contingent upon the context in which the interaction takes place. Communication which is successful with one group in one situation may not be perceived as competent with a different group in another situation. McCroskey ("Self-report as an approach to measuring") clarifies that: "The domain of communicative competence includes learning what the available means are, how they have been employed in various situations in the past, and being able to determine the ones that have the highest probability of success in a given situation.

Canary and Cody (Interpersonal Communication) provide six criteria for assessing competence. The criteria include - adaptability, conversational-involvement, conversational-management, empathy, effectiveness, and appropriateness. They are explained in greater detail below:

1. Adaptability: Adaptability is the ability to assess situations and when necessary change behaviors and goals to meet the needs of interaction. It signals awareness of the other person's perspectives, interests, goals, and communication approach, plus the willingness to modify ones own behaviors and goals to adapt to the interaction situation. By mindfully tracking what is going on in the intercultural situation, both parties may modify their nonverbal and verbal behavior to achieve a more synchronized communication process. In modifying their behavioral styles, polarized views on the problem may also be depolarized or "softened." It consists of six factors:

1. Social experience - participation in various social interactions
2. Social composure - refers to keeping calm through accurate perception
3. Social confirmation - refers to acknowledgment of partner's goals
4. Appropriate disclosure - being sensitive to amount and type of info
5. Articulation - ability to express ideas through language
6. Wit - ability to use humour in adapting to social situations; ease tensions

2. Conversational Involvement: Conversational interaction is a factor that determines the degree to which individuals participate in conversation with others. Specifically, receivers of communication differ in terms of their attentiveness and perceptiveness. These parameters influence how information and cues are received from others.

In a study involving 1000 self-assessment reports, Cegala D J ("Interaction involvement: A cognitive dimension of communicative competence. Communication Education") found that approximately 48% of individuals are not generally highly involved in their conversations. He describes perceptiveness as, "the ability to assign appropriate meanings to others' behavior as well as the ability to understand what meanings others have assigned to one's own behavior". Attentiveness is cognizance of another's communicative behavior. Responsiveness is "a tendency to mentally react in a given situation or circumstance and adapt by knowing what to say and when to say."

Highly involved persons are predicted to be more issue-oriented and attentive to the underlying message in the conversation. On the other hand, less involved persons are expected to concentrate on events or surface of the conversation.

3. Conversational Management: Conversation-management is essentially the way the communicators regulate their interactions. It is a matter of knowing the rules of interpersonal communication exchanges and following them. Communication rules are just like other socially conditioned behaviors and are acquired in the same way. What are the rules that an astute and observant communicator knows about to manage interaction?

Wiemann J (Explication and Test of a Model of Communicative Competence: Human communication") mentions the five most common communicative competencies:

1. First, one cannot interrupt the speaker.
2. Second, only one person may talk at a time.
3. Third, speakers' turns must alternate or interchange.

4. Fourth, frequent or long pauses are inappropriate.
5. Fifth, both parties should be assured that the other is devoting his or her undivided attention.

4. Empathy: Empathy, in its broadest usage, is considered a fundamental dimension of interpersonal and communication competence. Empathy is the ability to demonstrate understanding and sharing reactions in any given situation. It is an innate human capacity that gives the ability to understand the unique experiences of another person.

- It connects people with one another on a meaningful and fulfilling level.
- It demonstrates a person's caring attitude toward others
- It helps understand the people better.
- It usually leads conversation towards emotional issues.
- It lets one build a personal rapport with others
- It helps reduce ones irritation with others attitude or behaviour.
- It helps reduce ones prejudice or negative assumptions about others
- It fosters more meaningful, more helpful, closer friendships.

5. Effectiveness: Effectiveness refers to the degree to which communicators achieve mutually shared meaning and integrative goal-related outcomes. Effective encoding and decoding processes lead to mutually shared meanings. Mutually shared meanings lead to perceived intercultural understanding. Interaction effectiveness has been achieved when multiple meanings are attended to with accuracy and when mutually desired interaction goals have been reached. Interaction ineffectiveness occurs when content or relational meanings are mismatched and intercultural noises and clashes jam the communication channels. Communication effectiveness can improve task productivity.

6. Appropriateness: A fundamental criterion for determining communication competence, appropriateness is the ability to uphold the expectations of a given situation. Individuals typically use their own expectations and scripts to approach an

interaction scene. They also formulate their impressions of a competent communicator on the basis of their perceptions of the other's verbal and nonverbal behaviors in the particular interaction setting. To understand whether appropriate communication has been perceived, it is vital to obtain competence evaluations from the standpoint of both communicators and interested observers. It is also critical to obtain both self-perception and other-perception data. Appropriate communication behaviors can be assessed through understanding the underlying values, norms, social roles, expectations, and scripts that govern the interaction episode.

Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC)

The self-perceived communication competence scale was developed to obtain information concerning how competent people feel they are in a variety of communication contexts and with a variety of types of receivers. Early self-report measures of competence were structured to represent what the creators of the measures felt were the components of communication competence. This scale is intended to let the respondent define communication competence. Since people make decisions with regard to communication (for example, whether they will even do it), it is their perception that is important, not that of an outside observer. It is important that users of this measure recognize that this is NOT a measure of actual communication competence; it is a measure of PERCEIVED competence. While these two different types of measures may be substantially correlated, they are not the same thing. This measure has generated good alpha reliability estimates (above .85) and has strong face validity. It also has been found to have substantial predictive validity.

Directions: Below are twelve situations in which you might need to communicate. People's abilities to communicate effectively vary a lot, and sometimes the same person is more competent to communicate in one situation than in another. Please indicate how competent you believe you are to communicate in each of the situations described below. Indicate in the space provided at the left of each item your estimate of your competence.

Presume 0 = completely incompetent and 100 = competent.

_____1. Present a talk to a group of strangers.

_____2. Talk with an acquaintance.

_____3. Talk in a large meeting of friends.

_____4. Talk in a small group of strangers.

_____5. Talk with a friend.

_____6. Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.

_____7. Talk with a stranger.

_____8. Present a talk to a group of friends.

_____9. Talk in a small group of acquaintances.

_____10. Talk in a large meeting of strangers.

_____11. Talk in a small group of friends.

_____12. Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.

Scoring: To compute the sub-scores, add the percentages for the items indicated and divide the total by the number indicated below.

Public	1 + 8 + 12; divide by 3.
Meeting	3 + 6 + 10; divide by 3.
Group	4 + 9 + 11; divide by 3.
Dyad	2 + 5 + 7; divide by 3.
Stranger	1 + 4 + 7 + 10; divide by 4.
Acquaintance	2 + 6 + 9 + 12; divide by 4.
Friend	3 + 5 + 8 + 11; divide by 4.

To compute the total SPCC score, add the sub-scores for Stranger, Acquaintance, and Friend. Then, divide that total by 3.

	Reliability	*Mean*	S.D.
Public	.72	68.8	17.8
Meeting	.68	68.8	17.1
Group	.67	76.1	14.6
Dyad	.44	81.1	12.4
Stranger	.87	55.5	23.6
Acquaintance	.84	77.4	15.3
Friend	.78	88.2	11.3
Total	.92	73.7	13.8

Public	> 86 High SPCC	< 51 Low SPCC
Meeting	> 85 High SPCC	< 51 Low SPCC
Group	> 90 High SPCC	< 61 Low SPCC
Dyad	> 93 High SPCC	< 68 Low SPCC
Stranger	> 79 High SPCC	< 31 Low SPCC
Acquaintance	> 92 High SPCC	< 62 Low SPCC
Friend	> 99 High SPCC	< 76 Low SPCC
Total	> 87 High SPCC	< 59 Low SPCC

Higher SPCC scores indicate higher self-perceived communication competence with basic communication contexts (public, meeting, group, dyad) and receivers (strangers, acquaintance, friend).

Source: McCroskey, J. C., & McCroskey, L. L. (1988). Self-report as an approach to measuring communication competence.

8 Seven Actions for Effective Communication

Communication skills expert Dennis Rivers – author of the popular "The Seven Challenges - A Workbook and Reader About Communicating More Cooperatively" - proposes the seven following actions as essential for effective interpersonal skills.

Action1. Listen more carefully and responsively. Listen first and acknowledge what you hear, even if you don't agree with it, before expressing your experience or point of view. In order to get more of your conversation partner's attention in tense situations, pay attention first; listen and give a brief restatement of what you have heard (especially feelings) before you express your own needs or position. The kind of listening recommended here separates acknowledging from approving or agreeing. Acknowledging another person's thoughts and feelings **does not have to mean** that you **approve of** or **agree with** that person's actions or way of experiencing, or that you will do whatever someone asks.

Action2. Explain your conversational intent and invite consent. You can help your conversation partners cooperate with you and reduce possible misunderstandings by starting important conversations with a stated invitation to join you in the specific kind of conversation you want to have. The more the conversation is going to mean to you, the more important it is for your conversation partner to understand the big picture. Most conversations express one or another of about thirty basic intentions, which imply different kinds of cooperation from your conversation partners. They can play their role in specific conversations much better if you clarify for yourself, and then identify for them, the role you are asking for, rather than leaving them to guess what you want.

When you need to have a long, complex, or emotion-laden conversation with someone, it can make a GIANT difference if you briefly explain your conversational intention first and then invite their consent. Many successful communicators begin special conversations with a preface that goes something like: *"I would like to talk with you for a few minutes about [subject matter]. When would it be a good time?"* The exercise for this step will encourage you to expand your list of possible conversations and to practice starting a wide variety of them.

Action3. Express yourself more clearly and completely. Slow down and give your listeners more information about what you are experiencing by using a wide range of "I-statements." One way to help get more of your listener's empathy is to express more of the five basic dimensions of your experience: Here is an example using the five main "I-messages" identified by various researchers over the past half century: (Please read down the columns.)

The Five I-Messages = Five dimensions of experience	Example of a "Five I-Message" communication
1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing?	"When I saw the dishes in the sink...
2. What emotions are you feeling?	...I felt irritated and impatient...
3. What interpretations or wants of yours support those feelings?	"...because I want to start cooking dinner right away..."
4. What action, information or commitment you want to request now?	...and I want to ask you to help me do the dishes right now...
5. What positive results will receiving that action, information or commitment lead to in the future?	...so that dinner will be ready by the time Mike and Joe get here."

At anytime when one person sincerely listens to another, a very creative process starts on in which the listener mentally reconstructs the speaker's experience. The more facets or dimensions of your experience you share with easy-to-grasp "I statements," the easier it will be for your conversation partner to reconstruct your experience accurately and understand what you are feeling. This is equally worthwhile whether you are trying to solve a problem with someone or trying to express appreciation for him/ her. Expressing yourself this carefully might appear to take longer than your usual quick style of communication. But if you include all the time it takes to unscramble everyday misunderstandings, and to work through the feelings that usually accompany not being understood, expressing yourself more completely can actually take a lot less time.

Action 4. Translate your (and other people's) complaints and criticisms into specific requests, and explain your requests. In order to get more cooperation from others, whenever possible ask for what you want by using specific, action-oriented, positive language rather than by using generalizations, "why's," "don'ts" or "somebody should's." Help your listeners comply by explaining your requests with a "so that...", "it would help me to... if you would..." or "in order to... ." Also, when you are receiving criticism and complaints from others, translate and restate the complaints as action requests. ....").

Action 5. Ask questions more "open-endedly" and more creatively. ***"Open-endedly...":*** In order to coordinate our life and work with the lives and work of other people, we all need to know more of what other people are feeling and thinking, wanting and planning. But our usual "yes/ no" questions actually tend to shut people up rather than opening them up. In order to encourage your conversation partners to share more of their thoughts and feelings, ask "open-ended" rather than "yes/ no" questions. Open-ended questions allow for a wide range of responses. For example, asking "How did you like that food/ movie/ speech/ doctor etc.?" will evoke a more detailed response than "Did you like it?" which could be answered with a simple "yes" or "no".

Action 6. Express more appreciation. To build more satisfying relationships with the people around you, express more appreciation, delight, affirmation, encouragement and gratitude. Because life continually requires us to attend to problems and breakdowns, it gets very easy to see in life only what is broken and needs fixing. But satisfying relationships (and a happy life) require us to notice and respond to what is delightful, excellent, and enjoyable, to work well done, to food well cooked, etc. It is appreciation that makes a relationship strong enough to accommodate differences and disagreements. Thinkers and researchers in several different fields have reached similar conclusions about this: healthy relationships need a core of mutual appreciation.

Action 7. Make better communication an important part of your everyday life. In order to have your new communication skills available in a wide variety of situations, you will need to practice them in as wide a variety of situations as possible, until, like driving or bicycling,

they become “second nature.” The seventh action is to practice your evolving communication skills in everyday life, solving problems together, giving emotional support to the important people in your life, and enjoying how you are becoming a positive influence in your world. This action includes learning to see each conversation as an opportunity to grow in skill and awareness, each encounter as an opportunity to express more appreciation, each argument as an opportunity to translate your complaints into requests, and so on.

One deeper level of this seventh step concerns learning to separate yourself from the current culture of hatred, animosity and violence, and learning how to create little islands of cooperation and mutuality.

Some DOs of Effective Communication

1. Analyze the issue at hand thoroughly before developing a plan: Find answers to the following questions (within constraints of planning & budget):

- What is the character and extent of the issue?
- What are the causes of the issue? Try to distinguish technical from human factors.
- What are the targets of the policy?
- What are the possible solutions?

2. Identify the role of communication in an early stage: In many cases this role is regarded after plans are made, thereby, reducing the potential benefits of communication greatly. Even though often communication alone cannot solve the problem, it can be a supporting instrument in most situations when integrated in the strategy during initial planning.

3. Know the target groups and stakeholders: Effective communication requires knowledge of the parties involved. Find out the target groups and stakeholders and study their knowledge, attitude, behavior and interests in the issue at hand. Experience shows that if you don't know the ones you want to reach, chances are high that communication will fail to have the desired effects.

4. Define communication targets: Targets should make clear which results one wants to achieve. It is essential that communication targets are SMART: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**cceptable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime related. Communication targets can range from involvement in problem-solving, to attention, knowledge, awareness, motivation, behavior and skills. In most cases, communication will be used in combination with other instruments to achieve the desired results.

5. Identify partners and intermediaries: In many cases it is costly, complex and time consuming to communicate directly with the target group, especially when a large audience has to be reached and when many different target groups are involved.

Communication in co-operation with partner organizations and through intermediaries can have the following advantages:

- It can be more economical.
- Intermediaries/ partners can have databases with addresses and figures of the target group so they can be reached effectively.
- Intermediaries can have support from a large audience or can have grass root support.
- Intermediaries can have a reliable, solid image for the target group and authority based on expertise.

6. Always pre-test: Ensure that the target group understands the messages and detect unexpected interpretations of your message by pre-testing it. If there is no time, personnel or budget available for a pre-test, conduct at least a 'disaster-check': confronting a small number of people who were not involved in the development of the communication plan.

7. Evaluate results: Evaluation is aimed at assessing the effects of your communication efforts. Furthermore, evaluation can also be aimed at judging the processes during the preparation and execution phase. After evaluation it becomes clear which methods are most effective and most efficient. Furthermore, you learn how you can organize and manage the communication process more effectively in the future. Justification of communication efforts for the leaders of your organization and its' stakeholders is another reason to evaluate. The results of an evaluation will point out which future steps are necessary to be initiated.

8. Define the medium for the message: Since each medium has its own advantages and disadvantages, one should define which medium can most effectively relay messages. For example, the Internet may reach a worldwide audience and therefore may seem to be the perfect medium to reach audience around the world, but the Internet penetration in some countries is low. People who do not have access to the Internet

will not be able to receive the message. TV has a higher degree of household penetration, but most TV broadcasts are local; in this case, TV may be a good medium to reach a wide range of audience within a country, but not worldwide.

9. Establish a budget: Almost everything takes money or staff or support resources.

10. Think creatively: It is a sad truth that while conservation is important, it isn't always interesting. Communicators need to add sparkle dust to bring issues alive.

Source - http://www.iucn.org/themes/cec/principles/donts.htm

Some DONTs of Effective Communication

1. Don’t only send, listen!

When the changing of knowledge, attitudes and behavior is the aim of communication, the ‘sending’ of messages is often the main concern of the communicators. In most cases, listening to the people involved is more important than the sending of messages. One must know the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of the target groups, the language they use and the way they can be reached. This implies that a great deal of listening is an integral part of effective communication.

2. Don’t jump to means

A potential pitfall - which happens frequently - is starting to invest in means before essential questions concerning the strategy have been answered. When this happens, it is very likely that communication efforts will not be effective. There is a high risk that either the wrong people are addressed with the right message or the right people are reached with the wrong message.

3. But don’t over focus on strategies either

Another potential pitfall is the opposite of all that has been just mentioned above, that is, to spend much energy and time on developing a communication strategy, then quickly producing the communication means. This can result in a sound strategy implemented with means which do not appeal or lack the necessary quality to be credible for the target group.

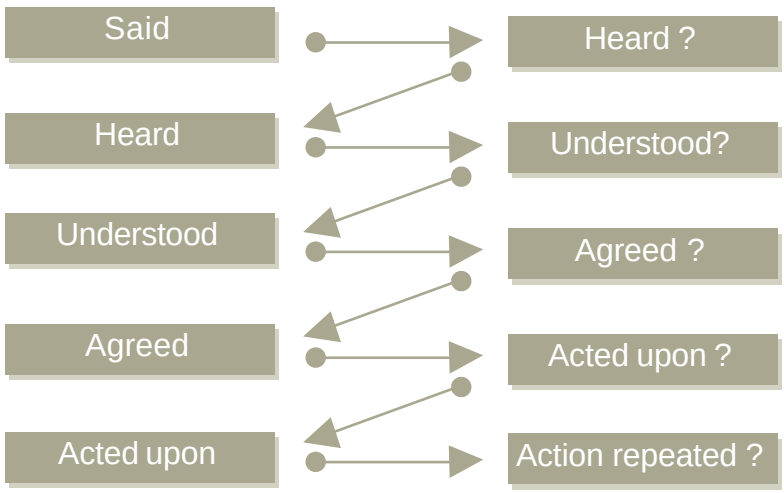
4. Do not disregard communication barriers

Communication seems easy, but experience shows it is actually hard to communicate effectively. Often, ambitions of communication are not met. Even worse, communication can have negative side effects when used in the wrong way.

Why communication does seem so easy? It is our second nature. But often the person or organization that communicates does not realize how the message will be interpreted

by the people for whom it is meant. Even worse, the message often does not even reach the people concerned. There are many potential obstacles in the communication process. Taking these obstacles into consideration, the effectiveness of communication can be increased. The following barriers should be considered when one wants to communicate:

- Said is not necessarily heard
- Heard is not necessarily understood
- Understood is not necessarily agreed upon
- Agreed is not necessarily acted upon
- Action is not necessarily repeated



5. Do not overestimate the potential of communication

Research has shown that the way people perceive situations and problems, strongly depends on their perspective, values and previous experiences. It is also clear that it is often very difficult to change people's perception and that it can be a long term process. It is more effective to regard other points of view as valuable instead of 'untrue'. Communicators should realize that in some situations the changing of perceptions is unrealistic or may have negative side effects. If this is the case, the perception of the people involved should be regarded as 'reality'.

6. Do not underestimate the potential of communication

It is impossible to ‘not communicate’. If for instance a new industrial plant is installed without communication with people living in the area, the message they will get might be: ‘we are ignored, they don’t value our opinions, they just do as they like’.

Source - http://www.iucn.org/themes/cec/principles/donts.htm

Building Effective Interpersonal Communication

Skills: Self-Assessment Exercise

In today's team-oriented workplace, the development of good interpersonal communication skills is an important key to success.

The following self-assessment exercise is designed to help you evaluate your own interpersonal communication skills and style, and provide you with helpful tips for becoming a good communicator - and team player!

(Source: Building Effective Interpersonal Communication Skills –Robin Jacobs – Guide for Job Seekers & Employees)

Communication Skills Self-Assessment Exercise

In each of the following, read items A, B, and C, then mark the one that best describes your communication style. (24 total)

1. _____ A. When conversing with others, I usually do most of the talking.

_____ B. When conversing with others, I usually let the other person do most of the talking

_____ C. When conversing with others, I try to equalize my participation in the conversation.

Best answer: c. Conversations should be a balanced two-way flow of dialogue.

2. _____ A. When I first meet someone, I wait for the other person to make the introduction first.

_____ B. When I first meet someone, I introduce myself with a smile and offer a handshake.

_____ C. When I first meet someone, I greet the person.

Best answer: b. It's good to initiate the conversation by introducing yourself with a

handshake and smile. If shaking hands is difficult, a quick head nod is a good substitute. Initiating the introduction with a smile and handshake (or head nod) helps build rapport.

3. _____ A. I usually "warm-up" new conversations with small talk

_____ B. I usually avoid small talk and jump into more important matters.

_____ C. I usually avoid starting conversations.

Best answer: a. It's good to initiate conversations with small talk. Topics to warm-up the conversation might include a chat about the weather, news of interest, or impressions about the current activity (if you're at a meeting, staff party, or other gathering, for example).

Examples of conversation starters might be:

"It's sure warm today, isn't it?"

"Did you hear about the big accident on the freeway? Traffic's backed-up for miles."

"What did you think about the Blazers game last night?"

"This is a nice party, isn't it?"

"Could I get you something to drink?"

4. _____ A. I make an effort to remember and use peoples' names.

_____ B. I don't pay attention to names as I tend to forget them.

_____ C. I only learn the names of important people.

Best answer: a. It's good to call people by name whenever possible. It makes a good, lasting impression, and it makes the other person feel important and special. To help remember names, try these techniques:

Repeat: After the person tells you his or her name, immediately use it several times in the conversation.

"It's nice to meet you, Bob."

"I agree with you, Bob."

"That was a great joke, Bob!"

Associate: Associate the person's name to something unique and special. You might:

Associate the person's name with a **unique feature** about

the person. For example:

Think - "Jack tells funny jokes."

Think - "JJ" - Joking Jack

Associate the name with a **visual picture**. For example:

"Sandy" - visualize a sandy beach.

"Glenn" - visualize John Glenn launching into space.

Associate the name with a **personal connection**.

For example:

"Brian" - My uncle's name is Brian.

"Lucy" - I had a turtle named Lucy.

Jot: Jot the person's name down with an identifying description that will help jog your memory later. For example:

"Chuck" - tall; glasses; works in Accounting; has twin sister; runs marathons; new to Portland.

5. _____ A. I frequently use courtesy words and phrases - "Please," "Thank you," "You're welcome," "I'm sorry."

_____ B. I occasionally use these courtesy words and phrases.

_____ C. I never use these courtesy words and phrases.

Best answer: a. Regular use of these courtesy words and phrases is important to show politeness and build rapport.

6. _____ A. I tend to be serious and don't smile often while conversing.

_____ B. I smile all the time while conversing.

_____ C. I smile at appropriate times while conversing.

Best answer: c. Smiling when greeting people and at appropriate times greatly helps build rapport.

7. _____ A. I make eye contact while conversing.

_____ B. I sometimes make eye contact while conversing.

_____ C. I never make eye contact while conversing.

Best answer: a. Making eye contact is important for building rapport. It gives the impression you're interested and engaged in the conversation, and you have good self-confidence.

Eye contact should include frequent breaks to avoid staring (this can make the other person uncomfortable). Break eye contact frequently - glance down to the side, then quickly make eye contact again. Glancing down to the side is important. If you instead glance to the side (as if looking out the window, for example) or look up, it gives the person the impression you're distracted and not paying attention to what's being said. This quickly breaks down rapport.

8. _____ A. While conversing, I hold my head still at all times.

_____ B. While conversing, I nod my head at appropriate times.

_____ C. While conversing, I nod my head constantly.

Best answer: b. Occasionally nodding your head to indicate you agree or understand helps build rapport. Again, it shows you are interested and engaged in the conversation.

9. _____ A. While conversing, I stand one-foot away from the person.

_____ B. While conversing, I stand two- to three-feet away from the person.

_____ C. While conversing, I stand five- to six-feet away from the person

Best answer: b. Your arm's length is the appropriate distance (between two- to three-feet). Standing closer than arm-length makes the other person feel uncomfortable (or

feel threatened) but standing further away from the other person breaks down rapport.

10. _____ A. I often stand while talking to a person who is sitting.
_____ B. I often sit while talking to a person who is sitting.
_____ C. I often lean down while talking to a person who is sitting.

Best answer: b. Communicating at eye level helps build rapport. So, if the person is sitting and a chair is available, take a seat! There's one exception - If you walk into your supervisor's office or co-worker's office, it's best to ask the supervisor or co-worker if you can sit down first. Even better, wait for an invitation to sit. The person may not have time to talk at that moment.

11. _____ A. To end a conversation, I often just leave.
_____ B. To end a conversation, I begin to look impatient hoping the person will get the hint.
_____ C. To end a conversation, I wrap up with a closing statement.

Best answer: c. It's best to bring the conversation to an end by making a polite closing comment or gesture. Good closing (wrap-up) comments might be:

"I've enjoyed talking with you."
"Let me give you my business card."
"Well, I need to go speak with...."
"Do you know a person I can contact?"

12. _____ A. If a colleague has put on weight, I say nothing about it.
_____ B. If a colleague has put on weight, I tell the person that he or she has changed in appearance.
_____ C. If a colleague co-worker has put on weight, I honestly tell the person that he or she looks fat.

Best answer: a. It's best to say nothing. Never say anything that might hurt or offend the person. It's called being tactful. It's always best to give compliments only, and only say things that will make the person feel good.

"I like your dress."

"That's a nice shirt."

13. _____ A. When I'm listening to the speaker, I often cross my arms over my chest.

_____ B. When I'm listening to the speaker, I often lean back and turn my body away from the speaker.

_____ C. When I'm listening to the speaker, I often lean slightly forward and face my body toward the speaker.

Best answer: c. Leaning slightly forward and facing the speaker shows you're interested, and it helps build rapport. Sitting with your arms crossed over your chest gives the message you are defensive. Leaning back with your body or turning your body away from the speaker gives the message that you are bored, disinterested, or feel in charge. Such body language breaks down rapport.

14. _____ A. When I cross my leg, I cross my leg facing the speaker.
_____ B. When I cross my leg, I cross my leg away from the speaker.
_____ C. When I cross my leg, I bob my foot.

Best answer: a. Crossing your leg toward the speaker shows you're interested, and it builds rapport. Crossing your leg away from the speaker gives the message that you are defensive, disinterested, or feel in charge. In essence, you are putting up a subtle barrier. And if you bob or swing your foot, you're sending the message that you're anxious or nervous!

15. _____ A. While listening, I tend to be distracted by things going on around me.

_____ B. While listening, I listen for meaning and ask questions.

_____ C. While listening, I watch the person speak, but I don't "hear" a word.

Best answer: b. If you're a good listener, you keep mentally busy searching for meaning in the message, and you ask questions. This mental "search for meaning" helps keep you focused, attentive, and engaged. If you get easily distracted, try taking notes if the setting is appropriate. Note-taking helps draw and focus your attention as you must mentally "search for meaning" and listen for information in order to take notes. This might be helpful in meetings, for example.

If you watch someone speak but you don't "hear" a word, gauge if you are bored, tired, might have a gap between your speaking and listening rates, or are experiencing "emotional deafness." We all experience emotional deafness on occasion, especially when we're feeling overwhelmed, upset, or nervous.

You hear people ask - "I'm sorry, what did you say?" or make the comment - "I have a lot on my mind right now. Could you repeat what you said?" If it's a frequent problem, gauge the source and seek help if needed.

16. _____ A. When someone talks about an unfortunate or sad experience, I don't comment about it.

_____ B. When someone talks about an unfortunate or sad experience, I try to change the subject.

_____ C. When someone talks about an unfortunate or sad experience, I try to relate to the person's feelings and show sensitivity to his or her misfortune.

Best answer: c. Showing empathy (sensitivity) to another person's feelings helps build rapport. It's called "reaching out to people." Empathy can be shown by making comments, such as:

"That must have been a scary (or upsetting) experience for you."

"I felt the same way when that happened to me."

"I know (understand) how you feel."

"I can imagine how you feel."

"I would feel that way too in your situation."

17. _____ A. When I discuss a topic, I tend to talk about and focus on positive (good) aspects.

_____ B. When I discuss a topic, I tend to talk about and focus on the negative (bad) aspects.

_____ C. When I discuss a topic, I tend to complain.

Best answer: a. Focusing on the positive (good) aspects draws people's attention in a favorable way, and people enjoy the conversation more. People are generally more attracted to a person who has a "positive outlook on life." And when it comes to work evaluations, positive-minded people generally do better. Consider the following examples:

Positive: "The plan has some good ideas."
Negative: "The plan has some serious problems."
Complaint: "No one ever listens to my ideas."

Positive: "These changes might have some benefits."
Negative: "These changes would be awful."
Complaint: "I always have to rel-earn and re-do everything around here."

18. _____ A. When I have a negative opinion or comment, I just say it.

_____ B. When I have a negative opinion or comment, I lead in with a positive comment first.

_____ C. When I have a negative opinion or comment, I say nothing.

Best answer: b. It's best to say something positive first, and then express a negative opinion or comment in a tactful way. Consider these examples:

Positive lead:

"I like many aspects of your idea *(positive lead)*, but it may not work well for this department." *(tactfully stated)*

Interpretation: The idea won't work.

Positive lead:

"You did a nice job setting the bread plates and glasses *(positive lead),* but the forks need to be placed to the left." *(tactfully stated)*

Interpretation: The forks are in the wrong place.

Positive lead (with empathy):

"I know you worked a long time on this *(positive lead),* but it would look better retyped." *(tactfully stated)*

Interpretation: It needs to be retyped.

19. _____ A. When I receive unfavorable feedback, I note where I need to improve.

_____ B. When I receive unfavorable feedback, I get angry and defensive.

_____ C. When I receive unfavorable feedback, I deny the problem, make excuses, or plead ignorance.

Best answer: a. When you receive feedback, it's important to know what you do well, but it's equally important to know where improvements can be made to increase your chances for success. Few people do everything well, and you've undoubtedly heard the saying - "No one is perfect." Simply make note of "weak" areas (we all have them!)

and make changes needed. Receiving honest feedback is truly "a gift." It usually means someone cares and wishes to see you succeed.

20. _____ A. When I give a person negative feedback, I focus on the person's observable work or behavior and offer suggestions.

_____ B. When I give a person negative feedback, I focus on what I don't like about the person.

_____ C. When I give a person negative feedback, I simply tell the person what to do right.

Best answer: a. When you give negative feedback, you should focus on and communicate your observations of the person's work or behavior, not focus on nor judge the person. Focus on performance, not personality (or personal traits). After sharing your observation about the person's work or behavior, offer a suggestion in a tactful way. Consider these examples:

Example 1:

"The forms you completed were thoroughly done *(positive lead),* but I notice *(observation)* there are a few spelling errors *(work feedback).* Perhaps they can be corrected with correction fluid *(suggestion)."*

Important: Notice it says - "...there are a few spelling errors" instead of - "<u>you</u> made a few spelling errors." Leave out "you" whenever possible.

Example 2:

"Your presentation covered the main points very well *(positive lead),* but I noticed *(observation)* contact information was left out *(work feedback).* I wonder if it might be good to include a contact name and phone number *(suggestion).*"

Notice it says - "...contact information was left out" instead of - "<u>you</u> left out contact information." It avoids using "you."

Example 3:

“I like your ideas *(positive lead),* but it appears *(observation)* the delivery (communication style or behavior) weakens them. Perhaps they could be written down and handed out to everyone to review *(suggestion).*

Notice it says - “...the delivery weakens them” instead of - “you weaken them.” It avoids using “you.”

21. _____ A. When I give a person negative feedback, I do it around others so everyone can hear.

_____ B. When I give a person negative feedback, I do it in front of the supervisor.

_____ C. When I give a person negative feedback, I talk with the person alone in a private place.

Best answer: c. It’s always best to meet the person privately and away from other people so others can’t hear.

22. _____ A. When I disagree with a person, I listen first, ask questions for clarification, then disagree non- judgmentally.

_____ B. When I disagree with a person, I quickly point out the person is wrong and why.

_____ C. When I disagree with a person, I say little or nothing.

Best answer: a. It’s fine to disagree, but it’s important to disagree agreeably. This means you should:

1) show respect for the other person’s ideas,
2) listen attentively until the person is done,
3) ask questions if needed,
4) disagree non-judgmentally, and, if possible,
5) offer an alternative solution.

Consider these examples:

"I respect your view, John, *(shows respect)* but I think the problem is due to a lack of time *(point of disagreement).* One way to solve the problem might be to computerize repair reports *(offered solution).*"

"I hear what you're saying *(shows respect),* but it seems the staff would do better, not worse, with flextime schedules *(point of disagreement).* I would suggest we try it for six months *(offered solution).*"

23. _____ A. When I'm in a group, I tend to frown a lot.
_____ B. When I'm in a group, I tend to smile and use humor at appropriate times.
_____ C. When I'm in a group I tend to be serious.

Best answer: b. At appropriate times, it's always good to smile. And when used at appropriate times and in appropriate ways, humor is beneficial for group dynamics. Humor helps "break the ice" when people first meet. Humor helps relieve stress and tension. A humorous observation and comment helps lower the heat when a heated discussion gets too "hot." And most importantly, humor helps build team cohesiveness.

If you observe people at a gathering, you'll notice people naturally gravitate toward people considered "approachable." Approachable people are the ones who smile; they are the ones who add humor and lightness to conversations; and they are the ones who make fun of themselves in a self-deprecating and humorous way. In any group setting, smiles attract, and humor bonds people together. Do you know a good joke?

Idea: If you're like many people who have difficulty remembering humorous lines, puns, anecdotal stories, or jokes, consider creating a *humor file.* Clip and save humorous jokes, stories, and puns from the newspaper. Write down and save jokes and funny stories you hear. Your file will be a good resource to draw from for upcoming social events and gatherings.

This last item has four choices (A, B, C or D). Which one best describes you?

24. _____

_____A. I'm a "hands-on" person. I tend to:

- prefer hands-on experiences and activities;
- focus on tasks to be done;
- refrain from discussions;
- think in a logical and organized way;
- do things in an orderly way;
- have difficulty adjusting to change.

___ B. I'm a "thinker." I tend to:

- enjoy listening to a logical presentation of ideas;
- enjoy analyzing problems and finding systematic ways to solve problems;
- enjoy creating models based on theory and information;
- like structure and organization;
- act slowly in making decisions;
- show more interest in ideas than people.

_____ C. I'm an "explorer." I tend to:

- try things by trial and error;
- explore practical uses for ideas and theories;
- make decisions that provide quick solutions;
- decide quickly;
- take risks;
- enjoy change;

_____ D. I'm a "free thinker." I tend to:

- base views and opinions on feelings;
- enjoy tossing around ideas (brainstorming);
- approach and view problems and experiences from different perspectives;
- rely on intuition, not logic, for making decisions;
- dislike structure.

Best answer: The one that fits you! The four choices above describe and identify four communication (and *learning*) styles, and no one style is better than the other. This part of the exercise merely serves to illustrate how people can (and do) think, act, learn, and communicate differently. Each person in a group may have a different style.

How well you are able to recognize, respect, and adjust to other people's way of communicating and "doing things" is a key to success when working with a supervisor, group of people, or class instructor.

For example, if you are a "free thinker" - you like to brainstorm ideas and do what "feels right" - you might find it frustrating working with (or learning from) "thinker" - a person who focuses on and approaches tasks and ideas based n logic, reasoning, and organized structure. The "thinker" would be equally frustrated working with a person or group that loosely brainstorms ideas all afternoon.

How successfully "opposites" work together largely depends on how willing and well each person is able to adjust to the other's style. Flexibility and compromise are key. If you find yourself working with a supervisor, co-worker, team player, or instructor who has a style that differs from your own, recognize and respect the other person's individual style, and learn to accommodate the person's style as much as possible.

How to accommodate a “hands-on” style

- arrive promptly;
- pay very close attention to deadlines;
- don’t procrastinate or made excuses;
- be organized;
- accept structure;
- try to do things in an exact and precise way;
- make brief and “to-the-point” comments (don’t ramble);
- minimize discussion - get to the task;
- ask questions in a brief, concise way;
- use concrete terms and explanations (not abstract);
- do things in sequential and orderly steps;
- discuss and show practical applications;
- demonstrate to illustrate an idea or point;
- allow for “hands-on” project-type tasks

How to accommodate a “thinker” style

- arrive promptly;
- pay very close attention to deadlines;
- don’t procrastinate or make excuses;
- be organized;
- use outlines, charts, graphs, and spatial mapping to show information and the relationship of ideas;
- provide data;
- provide documentation;
- be open to the use of abstract explanations and terms;
- support information with facts (proof);
- support views and opinions with logic and evidence;
- focus on main ideas, related details, and logical conclusions;
- be open to topics that allow for debate;
- be patient with quick and sudden moves from idea to idea; allow for re-search-type tasks.

How to accommodate an “explorer” style

be open to new ideas;

be open to change;

allow room for creative innovation;

be open-minded to opinions and views;

be attentive;

show interest;

relate ideas to the real world (use real world examples);

focus on processes and applications rather than facts;

be willing to take a risk or investigate;

be be patient with disorganization;

share humor and laugh at jokes;

be patient when jumps from one idea to another;

be willing to discuss ideas;

allow for innovative- and creative-type tasks.

How to accommodate a “free thinker” style

smile and be friendly;

be willing to chat and visit;

share personal experiences;

participate in discussions and activities;

lean forward - be attentive and show interest;

use gestures and positive body language;

use humor;

be sincere;

use images, pictures, and color;

apply personal meaning to ideas;

show how ideas and details apply to life;

show interest and concern for people;

be patient if describes extensively;

avoid questioning or challenging the person’s insight or logic;

be patient with interruptions;

be open to use of metaphoric language and expression;

don’t force structure - allow room for flexibility;

allow for interactive-type tasks.

Suggested Readings

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