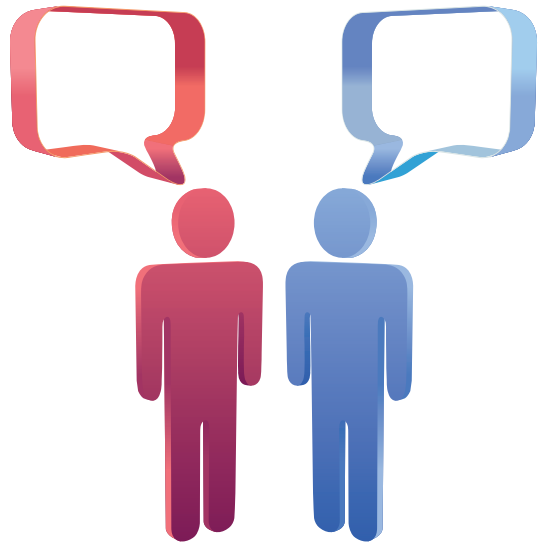


Communication Techniques

“COMMUNICATION” comes from the Latin word “communis,” which means to share. Effective communication is the sharing and exchange of information and thoughts between people. However, effective communication takes practice. Communication requires a sender, a message, and a recipient. Yet effective communication requires you to choose the right words and to listen to interpret messages accurately.



Objectives:



1. Explain the importance and benefits of effective communication in the workplace.
2. Identify effective interpersonal and corporate communication techniques.
3. Identify techniques for effective communication during difficult situations.

Key Terms:



assertiveness
clarity
corporate
communication

etiquette
irrelevance
jargon

sarcasm
succinctness

Effective Workplace Communication

Effective communication is more than exchanging information and ideas. Understanding people’s messages in the workplace will improve teamwork, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. Effective communication includes nonverbal communication, attentive listening, stress management, and recognition of your own emotions as well as those of the people with whom you work.

Effective communication eliminates barriers and helps solve problems. In addition, it improves your overall workplace culture and builds stronger relationships to help increase pro-

ductivity. Many professions need effective communication to deliver their services. Doctors, for instance, must be able to explain treatment to their patients. Also, teachers need to encourage and explore knowledge with students; salespeople must be able to explain and sell their products.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL BENEFITS

Effective communication has internal and external benefits for a company. Surveys and studies have found that discontent in workplaces is provoked when employees do not feel they are important to their employers. The solution is to supply employees with information to make them feel they are in the communication loop. Effective internal communication helps improve an organization's work performance and improves the workday for employees. Relationships are healthier, more open, and trusting among coworkers and leadership when effective communication channels are open. As a result, there is less employee turnover.

Productivity

Productivity improves because of effective communication, as conflicts are readily resolved. In addition, problem-solving skills are enhanced. Work processes, policies, and procedures are more certain to be understood and followed. Also, people are better able to change or adapt when required. Time and resources are used more effectively, thereby improving job satisfaction and morale.

Higher Quality

External benefits include higher quality sales and marketing materials, which provide a more positive company image. Also, salespeople work better with prospective customers, and customer service people are more effective with the public. Typically, public relations releases reflect an image of a company that effectively communicates its purposes and benefits.

Interpersonal and Corporate Communication

Depending on the level at which the individual is communicating, different techniques are deemed effective. One-on-one interpersonal communication techniques are different from techniques used in corporate mass communication. For example, fundamental techniques used in face-to-face interpersonal verbal communication include maintaining appropriate eye contact and respecting personal space. It is important to use the person's name (but not too much) while conversing. The easiest way to remember the name of the person with whom you are speaking is to look him or her in the eye and repeat the name to yourself when you are introduced. If you are communicating effectively, you will pay attention to the name rather than thinking about what you will say next.

TONE AND JARGON

Always keep a level and professional tone. Avoid **sarcasm**—the act of saying one thing when you mean the opposite. Remember that sarcasm is inappropriate in the workplace. Listening when it is the other person’s turn to talk and not interrupting are features of effective professional communication. Also, avoid **irrelevance**—the quality of speaking about content that does not pertain to the main subject of the conversation. When talking with customers, avoid using **jargon**, which is terminology related to a field of knowledge or business that only insiders or experts understand.



FIGURE 1. Face-to-face communication allows participants to share nonverbal and verbal repartee.

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Corporate communication is communicating with large numbers of people, including customers, employees, and the general public, who are dispersed over a wide area. Many variables and techniques must be considered when delivering corporate communication.

Succinctness

Written communication in the form of memos and company reports should be succinct and have good clarity. **Succinctness** is the quality of being short and to the point. In contrast, **clarity** is the quality of being clear and easy to understand.

Necessary Adjustments

When memos and other communications are released, outgoing communications must be adapted to address worldwide company operating schedules. For instance, the release time of a memo must be adapted to account for different time zones, and the memo may need to be written in different languages for various countries.

Protocol

The appropriate protocol must be followed in communicating on behalf of the corporation. Formal lines of hierarchical communication, or the approval process from higher levels of the company, must be observed before sending emails and other forms of communication to large numbers of people.



ON THE JOB...

CAREER CONNECTION: Modes of Business Communication

In your personal life, there is face-to-face communication as well as communication by email, letters, and telephone. You choose your method by how well you know someone, the kind of information to be communicated, and the media to which you have access.

In the workplace, much communication is sent to large numbers of people and is conducted in a conference format. Email is convenient to reach one person or many. In addition, documents and images can be attached. Meanwhile, instant messaging (IM) is a near real-time exchange of text messages between two or more people. But the intimacy of a real-time chat session is not appropriate for all subjects and among all relationships.

Audio conferencing uses the telephone to provide a more sociable format. Tone of voice and inflection enhance the conversation and encourage an exchange of ideas and opinions. Web conferencing with audio allows visual elements to be added to a verbal exchange. This inexpensive mode of communication enhances group collaboration, has an agenda, and provides a list of attendees. In contrast, streaming or webcasting delivers high-impact messages to PCs and Web browsers in live real-time presentations. Specific software is required to receive the video and audio presentation. Videoconferencing enables live conferencing, acting like a face-to-face meeting between multiple participants at different sites. Computer networks transmit audio and video data.



This is the setting for video conferencing where computer networks transmit audio and video communication to large groups of people in different locations.

Information Technology

Email, instant messaging, teleconferencing, and Web conferencing are used to communicate corporate business to distant locations. In all formats, etiquette must be observed. **Etiquette** is a set of accepted rules or manners for communicating.

Email and Instant Messaging

Email and instant messaging provide some advantages. The sender's message can be analyzed more objectively, with less judgment and prejudice than face-to-face contacts may foster. Yet corporate tone and guidelines must be observed in electronic communication. For instance, email etiquette discourages messages written more strongly or coarsely than you would speak in person.

Teleconferencing and Web Conferencing

Certain techniques and guidelines are appropriate for teleconferencing or Web conferencing. People should start on time and in the beginning of the conference. If the group is not too large, the presence of each participant should be recognized through verbal or chat response. If the group is large, the magnitude of the whole group should be acknowledged. You can establish etiquette by having people give their names before they speak.

During periods when the leader or participants are just listening, their mute buttons should be used to eliminate background noise. Occasionally check with individuals to make sure they are still connected to the call, especially if they have not spoken in a while. In addition, active listening responses (e.g., “yes” and “I hear you”) should be used when appropriate. Wording must be chosen carefully because people cannot see body language for communication cues. Another good practice is to take notes during the call to help stay focused on the content. The conference should end on time. After the call is completed, via email, it is good corporate policy to provide meeting minutes or a summary to all participants.

Communication in Difficult Situations

Fundamental techniques should be used to execute effective interpersonal verbal communication in difficult situations, such as when the other person is raising his or her voice or is trying to change the subject.

METHOD #1

Method #1 is assertiveness and “I feel” statements. **Assertiveness** is communicating in a way that respects one’s self and the other person or people involved. Assertiveness avoids being too passive or too aggressive and maintains respect. “I feel” statements are effective techniques for being assertive because they explain how you are feeling, and feelings are not generally disputable. Yet it is important to give people feedback on their communication. If you are talking to someone who is being aggressive and raising his or her voice, you might calm the situation by saying, “Perhaps there will be a better time when we can talk about this more reasonably.”

METHOD #2

Method #2 is dialogue using “Yes, and” statements. These words can be employed when you want to disagree or reframe something another person has said, while minimizing the conflict. A “yes, and” statement is one in which you validate what the person has said by using the word “yes,” and then reframing the conversation. Other alternatives may be to say “yes, but” or “no, I do not agree with that.” These responses, however, may trigger a defensive reaction from the other person. A “yes, and” statement is meant to encourage the dialogue without triggering a defensive or confrontational reaction.

METHOD #3

Method #3 is dialogue using positive feedback statements. This technique is similar to the “yes, and” technique. When communicating with someone, you should pick some part of what the other person has said to agree with before moving on to the area of disagreement. This validates and establishes an area of agreement before addressing disagreement. It is a more friendly and respectful approach to communication. The alternative is to focus on areas of disagreement without acknowledging areas of agreement, thereby creating a debate or a contest atmosphere.

METHOD #4

Method #4 is the “broken record” technique. This technique helps keep the person on track with the message instead of being led into irrelevant or disruptive conversation that moves the focus away from the topic. The broken record technique is used to repeat the conversation’s purpose, redirecting the conversation back to the topic. “Broken record” refers to a record that keeps playing the same line over again. Hence, during a discussion that has a tendency to wander from the main point, you continue repeating the subject line to keep the discussion on the topic.

Summary:



Effective communication in the workplace improves teamwork, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. Effective communication includes nonverbal communication, attentive listening, and stress management. Many professions are dependent on effective communication techniques to deliver their services. Effective internal communication helps improve an organization’s work performance and improves the workday for employees. Relationships are healthier, more open, and trusting among coworkers and leadership when effective communication channels are open. As a result, there is less employee turnover.

One-on-one interpersonal communication techniques are different from techniques used in corporate mass communication that reaches large numbers of people, including customers, employees, and the general public, who are dispersed over a wide area. Email, instant messaging, teleconferencing, and Web conferencing are formats of electronic media often used to effectively communicate with large audiences.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What are some impacts of effective communication in the workplace?
2. Why is it necessary to be kept in the “loop” in a workplace?

3. List some external benefits that companies exhibit when employees communicate effectively.
4. What are important communication techniques to observe in one-on-one conversation?
5. What are some methods corporations use to communicate with large numbers of employees, clients, and the public?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



With several of your classmates, use effective communication to discuss a topic of interest that may stir controversial opinions. Some potential topics are cell phone brands and features, a political discussion, global warming issues, and holiday celebrations. You can communicate negative or controversial messages without creating conflict or destroying trust. Practice the four methods of controlling difficult situations.

Web Links:



Effective Communication

<http://www.umext.maine.edu/onlinepubs/pdfpubs/6103.pdf>

Advantages of Effective Communication

<http://www.maximumadvantage.com/advantages-of-effective-communication.html>

Interpersonal Communication Skills

http://spot.pcc.edu/~rjacobs/career/effective_communication_skills.htm