



Version 2.0

Effective Communication in the Workplace

Reference Guide



What is Workplace Communication?

Workplace communication is the process of exchanging information, both verbal and non-verbal, within an organization. There are many means of communication. To be an effective and valuable member of your workplace it is important that you become skilled in all the different methods of communication that are appropriate.

Effective workplace communication ensures that organizational objectives are achieved. Workplace communication is tremendously important to organizations because it increases productivity and efficiency. Ineffective workplace communication leads to communication gaps between employees, which causes confusion, wastes time, and reduces productivity. Misunderstandings that cause friction between people can be avoided by communicating effectively.

For communication to *occur* it must *pass from a sender to a receiver*. This must occur irrespective of the form of communication.

For communication to be effective it *must be understood by the receiver and can be responded to*. This means that communication involves speaking, reading, listening, and reasoning skills.

As communications pass from the source to the receiver there is plenty of opportunity for its original meaning to change. Therefore listening, reasoning and feedback is an important part of the process as it is an opportunity for the sender to make sure the receiver has understood the message.

The other consideration is the “noise” associated with the communication – what else is happening, what are the distractions, the baggage etc. Noise can have a big impact on the message the receiver decodes.

Why is Effective Communication Important?

1. Workplace communication improves productivity.
2. Workplace communication can increase employee job satisfaction.
3. Workplace communication can have a positive effect on absenteeism and turnover rates.

How to Communicate in the Workplace

Communication in the workplace should occur in a way that responds positively to individual differences. Consider the following:

- Value all individuals and treat them with respect, courtesy and sensitivity.
- Recognize cultural differences.
- Communicate in a way to develop and maintain positive relationships, trust and confidence.
- Make an effort to use basic strategies to overcome communication barriers.

The way that you communicate impacts your ability to get along with people and get the things that you want/need done. Communication, whether verbal, written or visual can be expressed in positive and negative ways. Individuals need to take feedback from how others interpret or perceive how they are communicating. Sometimes we can be perceived as aggressive even though it is not intended.

When verbally communicating:

- Speak clearly and listen carefully to ensure information is understood.
- Ask questions and confirm the meaning of information to avoid misunderstandings.
- Let others talk – a conversation is a two-way event at a minimum.
- Engage in difficult conversations when necessary – not saying something to avoid a difficult conversation usually makes things worse.
- Ensure the tone you use is open and non-confrontational and encourage feedback.

When communicating through email (or other written communication):

- Always read, then re-read an email before sending to check spelling, grammar and tone.
- Ensure that the content of the email is relevant and has an appropriate subject heading.
- Ensure that contact details are appended to the email, so that those reading it can contact the sender if required.
- Be polite, concise, use valid points and avoid lengthy ramblings.
- Don't cc the email to anyone to whom it is not relevant.
- Avoid using email to discuss confidential information.

The workplace is always a professional environment. This means that each type of written communication has an expected professional standard. Some of the basic expectations are that all written communication:

- Is simple and easy to understand.
- Is to the point and avoids unnecessary repetition or sentence "sprawl" (long rambling sentences).
- Avoids too many technical terms.
- Avoids slang, offensive language and discriminatory, racist or sexist language.

How to Communicate with Clients & Customers

A client or customer is someone you provide a service to, complete a task for, or sell a product to outside of your organization. It is important that you are polite and use verbal and non-verbal communication to respond to the client or customer requests in an appropriate manner.

Miscommunication can occur in many ways and create significant problems in the workplace. What your client or customer “hears” as they listen to you can become a miscommunication based on:

- The words you are speaking being misinterpreted.
- Your body language sending a message that is different from your words.
- They are not listening to you properly or you are not listening to them properly.

Here are some tips to help you communicate effectively with clients and customers:

- Speak clearly and accurately - speak at a rate your customer can understand you and provide correct information.
- Be open and non-judgmental - have an open posture; do not judge the way your customer is dressed or presents himself or herself.
- Be respectful of your customers' feelings - be professional and be aware of the words you use.
- Use the customer's name - this makes them feel special and valued.
- Unlearn your own bad habits - be aware of your own behaviour, always be self-assessing.
- Be aware of non-verbal messages - make sure you are displaying positive and appropriate body language at all times.
- Be interested in people - take a genuine interest in the customer's needs. This will build rapport and trust.
- Ask questions and be open to feedback – ask your customers open-ended questions (not yes/no questions) to find out what they are looking for.

References/Additional Information

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