

Communication Skills for Success

Student Success Workshop
Sauk Valley Community College

Goals of Communication

- To inform – you are providing information for use in decision making
- To persuade – to reinforce or change a belief about a topic
- To build relationships – some messages that you send may have the goal of building good will between you and the other person.

Barriers to Communication

- One person has no interest in the conversation.
- You are not able to participate in the discussion due to lack of knowledge on the subject.
- Jumping to conclusions without waiting for the whole message.
- Fear of offending the other person by expressing your opinions.
- You not feel comfortable sharing your feelings with the other person.

Barriers to Communication

- Messages do not come across to the listener in the way you intended.
- Not listening to the other person by allowing thoughts to wander, listening only to what you have to, filtering out what is not important to you, planning a response before the other person has finished speaking.
- Spending more time arguing or debating along with put-downs and sarcasm.

Ways to Improve Communication

- Encourage feedback - Listen to what others have to say, good or bad
- Listen - Make an effort to listen to what the other person is saying
- Reduce misunderstandings - Meanings are not in words, but in people – consider the message in relation to its source. Different words mean different things to people. Keep this in mind when communicating with others.

Ways to Improve Communication

**Understanding is the KEY
to communication.**

**Understanding requires
active listening.**

Active Listening Skills

- Concentrate on what is being said, not the delivery of the message.
- Be open to whatever is being said, without judgment - don't form an opinion, just listen.
- Restate what has been said helps the speaker know that you understand.
- Summarize the important messages so that you and the speaker recognize what was important during the conversation.

Active Listening Skills

- Avoiding distractions that pull your attention away from the speaker.
- Make sure you understand what the speaker means:
 - I think what you said was ...,
 - What I hear you saying is ...,
 - What did you mean when you said/talked about ...,
 - Are you saying ...

Increase Understanding

Be Specific

- Useful – “I think it is good because ...”
- Not useful – “That is good.”

Focus on Behavior NOT the Person

- Useful – “I think this report needs to focus more on ...”
- Not useful – “You really have done a poor job.”

Focus on the Timeliness of the Feedback

- Only give feedback when the person is receptive to hearing it, or is seeking feedback.

Increase Understanding

Share Information / Experience

- Share what, not only why something could have been done differently.

Do Not Overload

- Too much information, especially negative, can be overwhelming

Check that the Person Does Understand

- Ask...“What did you understand from what was said?”

Remember, Feedback is Given to Help, not Hurt

- Balance positive to negative feedback by giving 2 positive comments for 1 negative comment

Increase Understanding

Open and Closed Questions - In order to gain more information, ask questions that require more than a one word answer.

- *A closed question allows a single word answer, for example YES, NO or OK*
- *An open question keeps the communication going.*

Open and Closed Questions - Examples:

Closed Question - Did you enjoy the dinner?

Open Question - What did you enjoy about the meal?

Closed Questions – Are you feeling okay?

Open Questions - You seem a bit tired, what's up?

Thank you for attending!

Information retrieved from:

- *Improving Your Interpersonal Skills, Effective Communication - The Art, Science, and Practice*
- <http://new.slpl.org/slpl/interests/article240078069.asp>.
- http://online.nmit.vic.edu.au/police/comms/ohs/1_15.htm
- http://www.mhca.org.au/Resources/CommunityDevelopment/documents/CDEPMod1-EffectiveCommunication_Overheads.pdf
- <http://matrix.scranton.edu/humanresources/communication-styles-handout-leadership.pdf>