



The Art of Effective Communication



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Introduction

Overview

Effective communication skills are critical in today's business environment. To improve your communication abilities, you must learn how to listen to ensure that you are receiving the intended message. This requires having the will to listen, not only to words but also to nonverbal messages – ignoring distractions, accepting information with an open mind, processing the information as you hear it, and making sure that you understood what you heard.

Effective communication is a two-way process. It can be made easier by encouraging others to express their ideas. This requires being and acting pleasant, asking questions, accepting questions, and respecting others. Understanding the importance of everything from voice tone, posture, and tactfulness in dealing with others is key to personal and professional success.

The purpose of this course is to provide you with basic skills and techniques for communicating effectively in the workplace. You learn that many problems of miscommunication in the workplace can be avoided when time is taken and effort is made to listen and apply proven principles of effective communication. The manner in which you communicate with others affects business relationships and results; therefore, it is important that you understand how to relate to others.

The course focuses on the fundamental elements of communication and listening which serve to create a positive environment for effective interactions with coworkers and other business associates. It includes these topics:

- A communication model
- Barriers to effective communication
- How perceptions are formed
- Listening for facts, beliefs, and feelings
- Effective communication behaviors
- Strategies for active listening
- Positive feedback and questioning techniques

Objectives

The information, activities, and practices provided in this course will enable you to:

1. Effectively guide and control conversations by listening attentively, responding appropriately, and acknowledging feelings making others feel unique and important.
2. Interpret verbal and nonverbal messages and provide feedback and reinforcement to ensure understanding and positive business results.
3. Leave a good lasting impression by using positive phrases and body language, along with a helpful tone, to build rapport and cooperation in the workplace.



The Communication Process

Communication Theory and Model

The essence of communication is that it is a process – a two-way activity that serves to connect people through space and time.

As human beings, we tend to be primarily interested in communication between those of the human species. However, communication is a fundamental, universal process that exists in all living things.

What is the definition of the word “communication?”

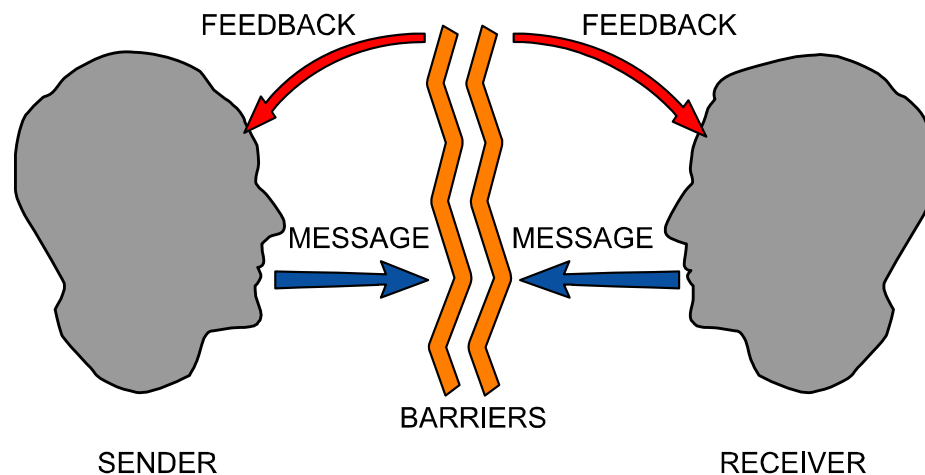
The Sender is the origin of communication, and dispatches or transmits a message.

The Receiver receives the incoming communication.

The wavy lines between the head on the left and the head on the right indicate the Message.

The curved line from the Receiver to the Sender represents Feedback or the response of the Receiver back to the Sender.

The wavy lines through the message represent Barriers to Communication.



Communication Model

The Communication Model represents a system that is dynamic and ever changing. When all parts are working well, there are no problems, but we know that often the system doesn't work the way it should.

Many of our everyday work problems are the result of faulty communication that could be avoided if we take the time and make the effort to apply the principles of effective communication.

What is effective communication?

Like many other skills, effective communication skills can be learned and improved upon with time and practice.

In this class, you will learn proven skills and techniques of effective communication. These skills will enable you to send messages that are understood by the receiver. And when you are the receiver, you will learn how to focus on the message being sent and ask appropriate questions to clarify your understanding of the message.



Benefits of Effective Communication

It is rare to have a day when we don't have to communicate with anyone. We even have a term for people who choose not to interact with others – hermits. On a day-to-day basis in our lives, communication skills often make the difference between “distress and defeat” or “satisfaction and success.”

What are some of the benefits of effective communication in our busy lives today?

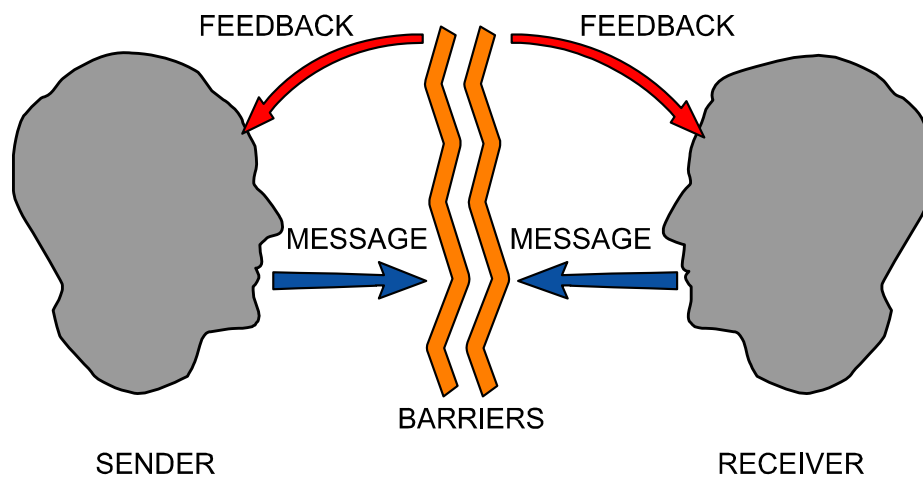
In this class, you will learn guidelines and techniques to improve your communication skills so that you can realize the benefits of effective communication.

Barriers to Communication

Even today, when mankind has developed highly technical and advanced means of communicating using satellites, the Internet, and high-speed connections, people still have difficulty communicating effectively. We can bounce messages off the moon, but we can't always relate well to each other on a day-to-day basis.

Ineffective communication creates problems and difficulties that affect productivity and cost us all in money and time.

Barriers to communication are those things going on in our own minds or around us that distract us from what someone is saying.



Communication Model

What are some examples of different things that can be characterized as “barriers to communication?”

It is important to be aware of the things within ourselves and in our environment that interfere with effective communication. This awareness enables us to overcome these barriers and give our full attention.



Activity: Round Robin Exercise

The purpose of the activity is to identify some of the communication barriers that occur when communicating a simple message. The exercise has three rounds. In each round the instructor whispers a message to a participant who in turn whispers the message to someone else until everyone has heard the message. The last person states to the class what he/she heard.

In **Round One**, the message can be stated only once. There can be no questions or conversation during this round; however, you may take notes while listening to the message.

In **Round Two**, you must bounce nerf balls (or similar) while listening to the message; therefore, no notes can be taken while listening to the message. Also, the message cannot be repeated, and no questions can be asked.

In **Round Three**, the message can be repeated and you can ask questions; however, no notes can be taken while listening to the message.

Record the *barriers to communication* that you observe and experience during the various rounds in the space provided.

Round One:

Round Two:

Round Three:

Things to do to eliminate barriers to communication:

Notes:



How People Communicate

Before we can effectively eliminate “barriers” to communication, it is important that we understand how we are perceived by others. Therefore, “being aware” or “self-awareness” is fundamental to improving communication.

Awareness involves recognizing what’s already there and discovering what you’ve never noticed before – in yourself and others.



How People Communicate

How Perceptions Are Formed

What we see and hear on television greatly influences our expectations and views.

Statistics indicate that approximately 75% of all Americans get about 90% of their information on news and current events from television.

The television “anchors” always appears flawless – delivering the messages without mistakes. We tend to feel that everyone should be able to communicate with ease and finesse.

We forget that television anchors have been trained to be effective communicators.

Good communication skills can be learned.

Words, Tone, and Body Language

The three elements of a message – words, tone, and body language – determine how people are perceived by others.

How Perceptions Are Formed – Face-to-Face Communication

When we form a perception or an understanding, we are using information we've received from one or more of these three "communication channels."

Body language accounts for over half of the information we use to form perceptions.



Eye Contact

A vital part of effective communication is good eye contact.

How do you feel when someone won't *'look you in the eye'*?

What are some of the advantages of good eye contact?

Eye contact is an excellent source of information. A steady gaze can indicate a calm demeanor and a sense of security and strength. Shifting gazes create feelings of uncertainty and insecurity. When someone avoids eye contact and perhaps looks over your head, they may be “saying” that they have other things to do or that they really don't want to talk to you.

It is important to maintain good eye contact with the listener, so that you can hold the person's attention and create a sense of confidence and trust in what you are saying.

Gestures/Body Movements

The movements of the head, arms, hands, legs, and feet can reveal a person's feelings, self-image, and energy level.

What are some gestures and body movements and the messages they convey?”

You can learn about a person's feelings by observing his/her gestures and body movements.

Facial Expressions

Your facial expression indicates your mood.

When trying to communicate effectively, you should maintain positive and upbeat facial expressions.

You should always be aware that your facial expressions indicate the mood you are in; therefore, when trying to communicate effectively, you need to maintain positive and upbeat facial expressions.

A deadpan look will not inspire interest or enthusiasm in the other person.

Facial expressions should be lively, varied, and appropriate to you and your message. Always think about how you appear to the other person so that you can make the desired impression.

Appearance

Think about how you appear to the other person so that you can make the desired impression.

Which would make the best impression? (Circle # 1 or 2)

1. Showing up in wrinkled clothing with uncombed hair.
2. Showing up well-groomed, wearing neat, comfortable clothing.

Why?

When body language is in sync with the words, it serves to strengthen and underscore meaning.

When body language and words are not in sync, the listener tends to focus on the “nonverbal” rather than the “verbal” message.



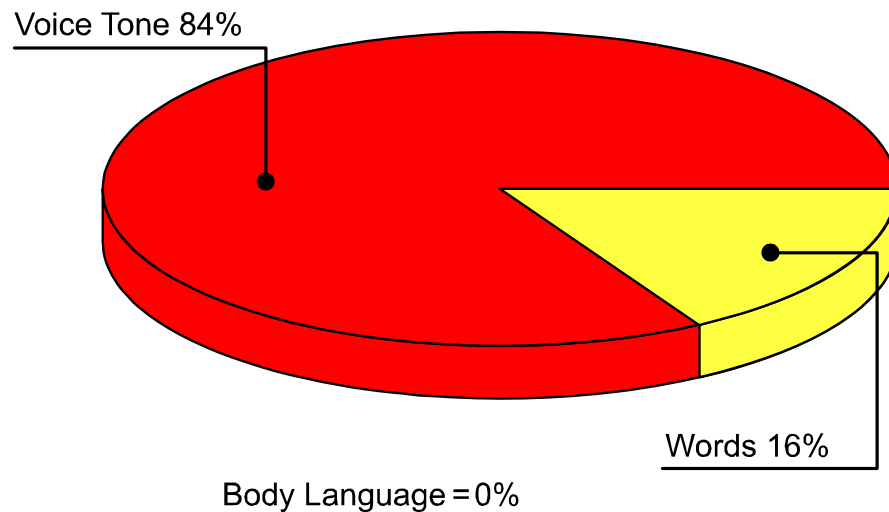
Telephone Communication

When body language is not a factor, for example when we are communicating over the telephone, we are faced with completely different issues and challenges.

What problems or barriers exist when communicating over the telephone instead of face-to-face?

How Perceptions Are Formed - Over the Telephone

When communicating by telephone, voice tone is extremely important.



Projecting a Positive P-I-C-T-U-R-E

The following techniques will enable you to project a positive P-I-C-T-U-R-E.

Posture	You can improve your voice tone and energy level when speaking in person and on the telephone by having good posture. Sit or stand up straight and look forward. Avoid slumping, leaning on one elbow, or looking down.
Interest	Listen carefully and give the other person your full attention. Tune out internal and external distractions. Provide verbal responses to show that you are listening (“Yes, I see,” etc.). Avoid sounding rushed or impatient.
Courtesy	It is important to use polite words and phrases such as “please,” “thank you,” and “you’re welcome,” especially when visual messages are absent. Using the other person’s name also demonstrates courtesy and respect. It is an important way to increase rapport.
Tone	Smile when you speak – whether on the telephone or in person. Your smile will be reflected in your voice tone. The tone of your voice should be natural and should vary in pitch and inflection to prevent it from being monotone. Also avoid speaking too softly or too loudly. Project energy and enthusiasm. Your voice tone should reflect sincerity, pleasantness, confidence, and interest.
Understanding	Clear enunciation and correct pronunciation enhance understanding. Build confidence and trust in your abilities by using correct grammar. Avoid slang or technical lingo when talking to nontechnical people. Ask questions to clarify situations. Repeat or summarize key facts and commitments to increase understanding.



Rate	Maintain a moderate rate of speech. Adapting your rate of speech to that of the other person's is a good way to enhance rapport. Be aware that speaking too quickly may cause confusion and misunderstanding, and speaking too slowly may provoke impatience or anger.
Emphasis	Emphasizing key words, phrases, and ideas is an effective way to bring expressiveness to your voice and reduce monotony. An unchanging monotone may be perceived as boredom or lack of interest. Vary pitch and inflection to make your voice interesting. The entire meaning of a sentence may change depending on the emphasis placed on key words.

“I told you to give the money to Jack.”

Listen as your instructor repeats this sentence several times. As he/she speaks, write the meaning of each statement.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Activity: Projecting a Positive P-I-C-T-U-R-E

In this activity, your personal vocal quality is evaluated in terms of how you are perceived in person and over the telephone.

Write a greeting and a short message in the space below.

The message should be something business related that you would communicate to someone in your job. The message should be brief - approximately 3-4 sentences, and it should be something that could be communicated in person or over the telephone.

Example greeting and message:

Hello, Jack. To answer your question from yesterday... Our team already has the technical skills necessary to achieve the quality standards. What we DON'T have are effective communication skills to work well together as a team. Why don't we set up a meeting with all team members to discuss techniques to improve communication and teamwork?

My greeting and message:

Working in pairs, each partner has the opportunity to be the speaker (sender) and the listener (receiver).

Record your greeting and message one time facing your partner and one time with your back to your partner, as if talking on the telephone.

Replay the messages and with the help of your partner, rate your own vocal quality by noting "positive" and "needs improvement" characteristics.

Switch roles and assist your partner in evaluating his/her personal vocal quality.

These "example" traits may be used, or you may note any other trait or characteristic that is applicable.



Some Positive Traits:

pleasant sounding
has pitch variations
has a normal rate
varies in volume
has distinct articulation
sounds like I am smiling
has ample force
has proper pausing
has energy and enthusiasm
good inflection

Needs Improvement:

sounds unpleasant or irritating
is a monotone
is too fast or too slow
is too loud or too soft
says some words unclearly
does not convey a smile
is too weak
has too many pauses
sounds bored or disinterested
no changes in inflection

My Vocal Quality when Communicating Face-to-Face:

Positive Traits

Needs Improvement

My Vocal Quality when Communicating On The Telephone:

Positive Traits

Needs Improvement



Positive versus Negative Phrases

Certain words or phrases have a positive impact, while other words and phrases produce negative reactions. Phrases that trigger negative feelings can cause or increase conflict; but by choosing positive phrases, you can generate positive feelings and even increase rapport.

Choosing positive over negative phrases is especially important when communicating on the telephone, because you do not have the benefit of body language in transmitting the message.

Negative Phrases

"I / We can't"

"That's impossible...."

"I'll try...."

"I don't know...."

"It's not my job...."

"You can't...."

"You have to...."

"It's company policy...."

"You should have...."

"...as soon as possible."

"Your complaint...."

"Your problem...."

"This is what we want...."

"The logical solution is...."

Positive Phrases

"I / We can...."

"Perhaps we can...."

"I will...."

"I will find out...."

"I will assist you...."

"You can...."

"If you will...."

"Normally we...."

"If you had...."

"...by 11:00 a.m. Monday."

"Your concern...."

"Your situation...."

"What would you say to....?"

"Does that make sense to you?"

Activity: How Would You Feel?

As the instructor reads each statement, write how each statement makes you feel: **Positive, Neutral, or Annoyed.**

1. I'll try to transfer you to someone who can help. _____
2. I don't know when your request will be handled. _____
3. You have to complete a work order before I can help you. _____
4. I can't call you back until late tomorrow. _____
5. That is not my job. Call Engineering to discuss this. _____
6. Your problem is you can't calm down long enough to discuss this. _____
7. You can't call us back on Sunday. We're closed then. _____
8. Your complaint was brought to my attention. _____
9. I will call you back as soon as possible. _____
10. What can I do about your problem? _____
11. Your position is ridiculous. _____
12. You should know better than to try something like that. _____



Rewrite each negative/neutral statements to a positive statement.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

[illegible]

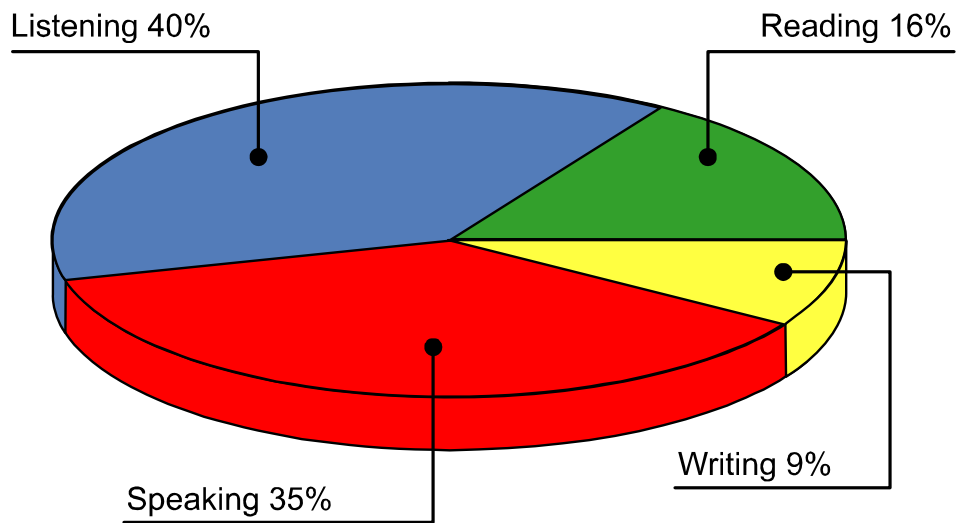


Active Listening

The Value of Listening

Listening is often called the most important communication skill because the average person spends more time listening than performing any other communication activity.

How much the average person spends in various communication activities each day:



Why do we listen at work?

Some of the reasons why we listen at work are practical. Other reasons why we listen at work are more personal.

Good listening skills are important at work. And good listening skills are important for practical and personal reasons in our lives away from work, too.

Listening – The Forgotten Skill

Research shows that most people are not as effective at listening as they would hope. One test of listening ability is recall, or how well we remember what has been said to us.

Listening Effectiveness

Immediately after listening, the average person remembers only 50% of what is said.

Within the next eight hours, the average person's recall drops to 25% of the original message.

“What might happen if today you receive operating and safety instructions for a new machine that you will be using everyday in your job and tomorrow you can only remember 25% or one-fourth of the instructions?”

If we are content to be “average” listeners, our ability to perform our jobs, improve product quality, and work in a safe environment will be severely reduced. If we are content to be “average” listeners, our ability to work together effectively will be limited, too.

Based upon what our teachers told us in school, we mistakenly learned that if we were quiet and still, we would automatically listen. But is this really true? Haven't we all experienced sitting or standing very quietly while someone talks and not listening at all?

Becoming a good listener requires training. We need to understand how people communicate and how to use listening skills and techniques. Most of us have had very little listening training. In this section, you will learn skills to improve your listening effectiveness.



Activity: How Well Do I Listen?

In this activity you have the opportunity to analyze your own personal listening ability and skills.

Ten key behaviors of effective listening are listed. Review each of these actions and think about your own behavior. When listening, how often do you take each of these actions?

Rate your own listening performance. Check the column that best corresponds to how often you take each action when listening.

Behavior	Never	Sometimes	Often
1. I give the speaker my full attention.	_____	_____	_____
2. I listen to the other person's viewpoint, even if it differs from mine.	_____	_____	_____
3. I don't assume I know what is being said and stop listening.	_____	_____	_____
4. I encourage the speaker to speak and to express his or her thoughts.	_____	_____	_____
5. I ask questions if I am uncertain about what the speaker is saying.	_____	_____	_____
6. I repeat in my own words what the speaker has said to check my understanding.	_____	_____	_____
7. I concentrate on what the speaker is saying, not how he or she looks.	_____	_____	_____
8. I recognize that words may have slightly different meanings to different people.	_____	_____	_____
9. I listen for feelings and meaning as well as facts.	_____	_____	_____
10. I take notes when necessary to help me remember.	_____	_____	_____

The behaviors listed contribute to effective listening but are not always easy to do. These ten actions may be considered the “one-minute listening course.” You can use these ten listening behaviors as a checklist for good listening.

Facts, Beliefs, and Feelings

When you send a message, you want to present an idea in such a way that it generates the same idea in the receiver. These ideas are composed of a mixture of different kinds of information. Most often this information is expressed as facts, beliefs, or feelings, or a combination of these three things.

Sometimes you need facts to be able to take decisive action. At other times, beliefs are essential when facts are not available. And often the feelings expressed provide important insight into the context of the message.

Facts

Answer the Questions:

Beliefs

Examples:

Answer the Questions:

Feelings

Examples:

Sources:



Identifying Facts: The Delivery Example

A team member says:

The new machines needed for the assembly process were finally delivered at 2 p.m. yesterday. The vendor promised to have them here by 9 a.m., so they were late. The deliveryman told me that the delay was beyond his control. His truck broke down on the interstate. He said that if the delay was more than just a minor inconvenience to us - if it caused us a major problem or something - we could ask the vendor to waive the shipping fee.

The central fact is: _____

Identifying Beliefs: Team Meeting Example

A team member says:

You asked me how we could improve our team meetings. I am not sure. I haven't thought about it much. I guess they're okay. I don't think they're too long or too short. Everyone gets to talk. We always have a topic to discuss or a problem to solve. I would like to continue our meetings just the way they are and I wouldn't suggest that we change how they're run.

The central belief is: _____

Identifying Feelings: The Routine Example

A team member says:

It's just the same thing every day. Come to work, get out product, and on and on. It's all the same, all the time, every single day. I wish something really exciting would happen to break the routine.

The central feeling is: _____

The source of the feeling is: _____

Activity: Identifying Facts, Beliefs and Feelings

In this activity you will practice identifying the central facts, beliefs, and feelings in each message. Working in small groups, a different member reads each situation. After each situation is read, the group identifies the facts, beliefs or feelings contained in the message. When there is a feeling, identify the source of the feeling.

Identifying Facts

Situation 1 – Inaccurate Readings

Fred says:

I talked to Janet at the beginning of the shift. She stayed over from her shift to talk to me, and wanted to be sure I let you know. Too many things were going wrong on her shift. Just lots of stuff, you know. She really let it all hang out. Anyway, she said that the program monitoring production problems is not giving accurate readings.

When she saw that the readings were outside reasonable allowances, she called technical support and talked to Jim. He has a way of testing the program to identify the source of illogical readings. He told Janet that as far as he could tell, the readings should be consistent with expected outcomes. Then she showed him the printout from her shift, which really showed some highs and lows. He was floored. He's never known this to happen before. Janet says he is working on the problem as a high priority. At this point, we don't know how soon we can rely on the readings again.

Central Fact: _____



Situation 2 –Larry & Millie

Sally says:

Well, I know there's a lot of talk going around about this, but I'll tell you what I know. I was walking by Larry's desk. You know Larry - he's the new Supervisor. He was on the phone telling someone that there is going to be a big announcement tomorrow. He waved at me as I passed by and didn't seem to try to hide what he was saying.

Of course, I couldn't help but think about all the changes that the company is planning to make. It could be that he is beginning to reorganize the departments, which could mean some changes in people's jobs. It really makes me nervous.

Larry seemed to be in a good mood – so I guess his job is secure. Millie works in the same area with Larry. Jane said she saw Millie crying in the restroom. I don't know what's going on! But something is and I don't like it.

Central Fact: _____

Identifying Beliefs

Situation 1 – Storage of Manuals

Billy says:

It seems to me we have a problem with the storage of our procedures manuals. We have more storage space than we need. With all of those shelves and all of that space, people just dump new manuals wherever they want. This creates confusion, because people just go in there and grab the first one they see. It is possible that we're not using the latest version. I'm not sure about this, but it may be happening. Marcie agrees with me and says it has caused her problems.

Central Belief: _____

Situation 2 – Product Processes

Jamie says:

As you know, the product moves through three processes in our section numbered 1, 2 and 3. There are two employees assigned to each phase. Phase 1 is the hardest job. It's more complex, has more steps to it, and it takes a little longer.

Although some people don't agree with me, I think that the job gets hung up in phase 1, because it's the longest. Others say that I'm wrong, because they never see the people responsible for phases 2 and 3 standing around with nothing to do. I'll admit that they always look busy, but I still think that they're slowing down because of the time needed in Phase 1.

I was going to suggest that a third person be assigned to Phase 1, but I really think we ought to get more facts before we change anything. What do you think we should do about it?

Central Belief: _____

Identifying Feelings

Situation 1 – Safety Concern

Toni says:

Do you remember the safety concern I told you about last week? Well, I've been thinking about it, turning it over in my mind, and suddenly the solution came to me - just like that! I was driving down the highway and it just popped into my mind.

I talked to Frank and Mildred about it and it sounded fine to them. So I tried my idea and it worked like a dream. I've been walking on air for the past few days. I think I'll tell the foreman about the solution in case any other units run into the same situation.

Central Feeling: _____

Source of Feeling: _____



Situation 2 – Task Force for New Operating Procedures

Bobbie says:

I don't like working on the task force for the new operating procedures. Every time I start to say something, someone interrupts. I don't know why. I think I have contributions to make, although I may not always say things forcefully. When I do get to speak, my suggestions are usually not written on the flip chart like everyone else's. Whoever is doing the writing just nods and goes on to the next idea. Do you know that there has not even been one time that a suggestion of mine was accepted or put into effect? From now on, I'm not going to open my mouth. What's the use?

Central Feeling: _____

Source of Feeling: _____

Identifying Facts, Beliefs, and Feelings

Situation 1 – Career Seminar

Dana says:

Eastland Community College advertised a class on career counseling that sounded like just what I need to decide what direction I want to take in my career with the company.

I took the class and found out that it deals with networking and interviewing techniques to get a *new* job – not on how to determine interests and options for advancing in a current job.

Can you believe that? It took a whole day of my time. What a waste! I think I should report them for “false advertising.”

Facts: _____

Beliefs: _____

Feelings: _____

Source of Feelings: _____

Situation 2 – Three More Days

Sydney says:

I need three more days to complete my part of the project because of all the problems I've had from the beginning.

No, I don't have all of the details on all of the problems, because Jim and Susan dealt with some of them. They told me that

Yes, I know this is not the first time I've needed extra time, but I can't help it. It's not my fault that things don't always go the way they should.

Well, I was going to say, before you interrupted me, that Jim and Susan said that they are also going to have to ask for more time and ...

How much time? I don't know. They have to speak for themselves. The main thing is that there have been so many problems on this project that everyone needs more time. I think

How much time? I said that I still need three days to complete everything, and it will still be hard to ...

Well, if you would just give me a chance to explain. I'll still have to work extra hours, but I think I can get it done in three more days.



Why do you keep asking about Jim and Susan? I've already told you that they will have to speak for themselves. Weren't you paying attention? What does that have to do with me needing more time?

Now I suppose you're going to want to know why I need three days and not five! Or two! Or seven! Yes, I thought so. You always assume that people aren't telling you the truth.

What's the truth, you ask? You see! I'm right! After all I've told you, you still don't get the point. What if I give you a blow-by-blow account of every little thing that has happened since the beginning? Would that change anything?

You don't think I have a right to get upset at you? How many times have you been under so much pressure that you can't think straight? Don't tell me. I don't want to know!

Facts: _____

Beliefs: _____

Feelings: _____

Source of Feelings: _____

[illegible]



Listening Skills

An old Turkish proverb that says: *“If speaking is silver; then listening is gold.”*

Everyone has a basic human need to be recognized and acknowledged by others. Listening is one of the most fundamental ways of doing this. When someone actively listens to you, he or she is letting you know that you and what you have to say are important.

To be a good listener, a person must actively participate, not be passive like when watching TV, a movie or listening to the radio.

On the average, people listen at a rate of 400 to 500 words per minute; however, we only speak at a rate of about 250 words per minute.

What do listeners do with the extra time?

These responses are typical and represent the way most people listen. They represent our “self-interest,” our perceptions – sometimes negative - of the speaker, and our reaction to the communication skills – or lack of communication skills – of the speaker.

Unfortunately few people are good listeners. How disheartening it is to convey something that you think is very interesting and find out the listener wasn’t listening at all.

Listening behavior is acquired over a long period of time. As adults we rarely think about the way we listen. We listen the way we do because we have always listened that way.

In today’s environment, our listening behavior, unfortunately, has been greatly influenced by television. News stories are short and time is compressed. The “talking heads” are given about 30 seconds to convey the message before we see pictures and videos of the action. We become accustomed to hearing only the essence – the bottom line. Television has taught us to listen with half an ear.

Five Strategies for Active Listening

1. Listen for Main Ideas and Key Points.

Listening for main ideas and key points is just as important when communicating face-to-face as it is when talking on the telephone. Avoid poor listening habits, such as tuning out dry subjects or faking attention. You may miss some vital information.

What is the main idea or key point of the newspaper paragraph?

2. Exhibit Active Interest and Body Position.

Norman Rockwell's experience while painting a portrait of President Eisenhower in the 1950's:

The general and I didn't discuss politics or the campaign. Mostly we talked about painting and fishing. But what I remember most about the hour and a half I spent with him was the way he gave me all of his attention. He was listening to me and talking to me, just as if he hadn't a care in the world, hadn't been through the trails of a political convention, wasn't on the brink of a presidential campaign.

Body Language is important in face-to-face communication in understanding the speaker's intention. Also, the body language of the listener indicates the level of attention and interest.

What are some of the ways you, as a listener, can exhibit active interest through body language or body position when communicating face-to-face?



3. Keep an Open Mind.

Wait for full understanding before making judgments. Don't make snap judgments. Be flexible and willing to make concessions when the message is different than you expected or presents new ideas and information.

Why is it sometimes difficult to keep an open mind when listening?

A valuable technique in keeping an open mind is "attentive silence." Most listeners talk too much. Being silent and listening attentively go hand-in-hand with keeping a mindset that is open to new ideas.

4. Listen for Facts, Beliefs, and Feelings.

You may feel that trying to analyze what someone is saying just takes up too much time. But in reality, especially in the business world, valuable time can be saved by trying to really understand the message.

By focusing on main ideas and the facts, beliefs, and feelings of a message, you will be able to provide appropriate feedback and responses.

5. Minimize Distractions and Interruptions.

You cannot listen effectively if you are preoccupied with something else or are trying to decide what you are going to say.

In your jobs, what are some of the things you can do to minimize distractions and interruptions when communicating in the workplace?

Sometimes finding or creating the right environment for a conversation is difficult, but in most cases, it is not impossible.

When you make the effort to minimize distractions and interruptions, you reap the benefits in more effective and productive listening and communicating.

Activity: Listen and I Will Tell You About My First Job!

Working in pairs, you will practice using effective communication skills as both the speaker and listener.

Each partner will tell about his/her first job (or current job).

When you are the listener, practice the Five Strategies for Active Listening:

1. Listen for Main Ideas and Key Points.
2. Exhibit Active Interest and Body Position.
3. Keep an Open Mind.
4. Listen for Facts, Beliefs, and Feelings.
5. Minimize Distractions and Interruptions.

What are some examples of how well your partner used the Five Strategies for Active Listening?

What are some examples of how your partner did not use the Five Strategies for Active Listening?

When you are actively listening to someone, completely and attentively, you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feelings behind what is being conveyed. An active listener listens to all of it, not just part of it.

It is important to use the Five Strategies for Active Listening so that you can communicate as effectively as possible in person and over the telephone.



Advancing, Repeating, and Effective Questioning

Using these important tools, in conjunction with the Five Strategies for Active Listening, will greatly improve your listening skills.

_____ is using a variety of verbal and nonverbal means to encourage others to continue talking.

Examples:

Jim says:

My team has been testing the new sorting equipment before it is installed in all areas. This way, we can discover any production problems early. Then if the equipment doesn't meet our standards, a lot of time and money hasn't been wasted.

What could you do and say to encourage Jim to continue speaking and direct the conversation toward "production problems?"

_____ is restating the message to allow the speaker to confirm your understanding of the message.

Examples:

When you use Repeating as a tool, it doesn't necessarily mean that you, the listener, agree with the sender's point of view.

_____ is used to obtain more information, to clarify meaning, or to establish a focus for further conversation.

Examples:

Jamie says:

I'm writing a short article on the new shipping procedures for the company newsletter. Last week I talked to several load planners about the new weight guidelines for outbound shipments. The comments were favorable, but I couldn't tell whether they find the new guidelines helpful in handling overweight containers.

What question would you ask to obtain more information?

What question would you ask to clarify meaning?

What question would you ask to establish a focus for further conversation?

A good listener listens actively and responds appropriately to what the speaker is saying. By using Advancing, Repeating, and Effective Questioning, you can communicate understanding, acceptance, and interest.



Two Types of Questions

Closed Questions are used to obtain a “yes” or “no” answer. Closed questions usually begin with “Did,” “Can,” “Do,” “Is” or “Will.”

Example: *Did you talk to a particular person about the problem?*

When would you most likely use closed questions?

Why wouldn't you want to always ask closed questions?

Open Questions are used to obtain a more lengthy response. Open questions usually begin with “Who,” “What,” “When,” “Where,” “Why” or “How.”

Example: *What is the nature of the problem you're experiencing?*

Asking “open” questions is a good way to get more information and keep the conversation going.

What are some examples of open questions that would encourage a speaker to continue talking?

Activity: Advancing, Repeating, and Effective Questioning

Working individually, you will practice identifying the best response and determine whether the response is an example of Advancing, Repeating, or Effective Questioning.

Circle the best response, and then circle Advancing, Repeating, or Effective Questioning.

1. "I sure hate the new training manual!"
 - a. (Smiling) "It's a good manual. Why do you always have trouble using new manuals?"
 - b. "I don't have time to talk now; just do the best you can."
 - c. "Oh really? Why is that?"

Advancing Repeating Effective Questioning
2. "I would have had the project completed, but Roger was late getting his stuff to me and that put me off schedule. So, I got on his case about playing around and wasting time."
 - a. "Do you often have trouble working with Roger?"
 - b. "What I hear you saying is that Roger had difficulty getting his work done for the project."
 - c. "Don't jump on his case unless you are sure that he is at fault."

Advancing Repeating Effective Questioning
3. "I have a great idea that will help reduce waste in the department!"
 - a. "Really. Sounds interesting, tell me more."
 - b. "Wouldn't you agree that reducing waste is not a big problem right now?"
 - c. "I hope this idea is better than the last one that you had."

Advancing Repeating Effective Questioning



4. “Communication has improved in the company and my job is a lot easier since the new e-mail system was installed in our area.”
- a. “It’s about time the systems group did something worthwhile.”
 - b. “It sounds like you are really pleased with the e-mail system.”
 - c. “I suppose, but isn’t it too early to really tell if there is an improvement?”

Advancing Repeating Effective Questioning

5. “I could do my job a lot better if I had more cooperation from the Receiving Department. I don’t seem to have the information I need when I need it.”
- a. “Be patient, things will get better.”
 - b. “I was wondering why your performance was falling off.”
 - c. “Do I understand you to say that Receiving is not giving you timely information to get your job done?”

Advancing Repeating Effective Questioning

6. “I’m having trouble with the new inventory backup system. I think the retractor assembly should be checked out by maintenance.”
- a. “John was running it earlier today with no trouble.”
 - b. “Oh really. How do you think the retractor assembly could be causing the problem?”
 - c. “Oh? I’ll have maintenance check it out later on today.”

Advancing Repeating Effective Questioning

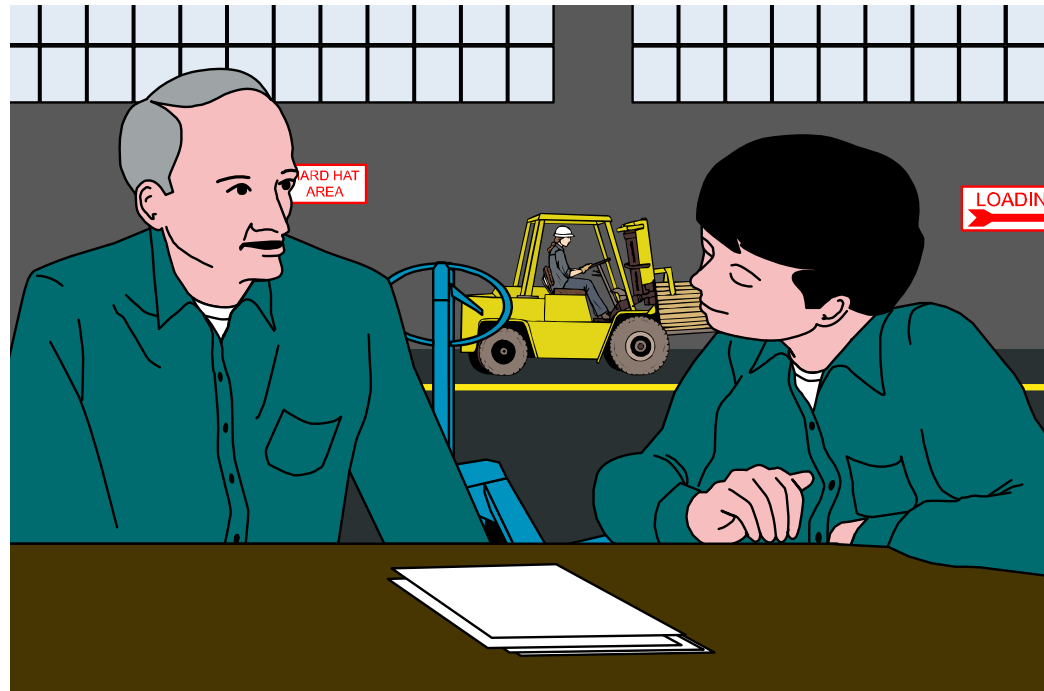
Notes:



Feedback

Most of us shy away from giving “feedback.” From an early age, we are taught, “If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all.” As adults we learn to be somewhat tactful in our comments, but often real candor is lost along the way. Unfortunately we rarely get lessons on how to effectively give feedback.

Since feedback is one of the best ways to measure whether the message received was the message sent, it is essential to the communication process. Without feedback, we cannot gauge the impact or effect of messages, making it very difficult to ensure positive outcomes.



Feedback

Nonverbal and Verbal Feedback

Nonverbal feedback consists of gestures, eye contact, or other forms of body language.

What are some examples of *nonverbal* feedback that we have discussed in previous sections?

Verbal feedback consists of the words spoken in response to the message.

What are some examples of verbal feedback that we have discussed in previous sections?

Constructive Feedback

What happens when people don't get feedback on the job – either positive or negative?

Feedback is very important in terms of performance, goals, morale, and overall productivity.

Definition of “Constructive Feedback”



This section expands upon the Advancing, Repeating, and Effective Questioning techniques previously discussed and focuses on promoting positive business communication using “constructive” feedback.

There are many benefits when the nature of the feedback is positive and constructive. It opens lines of communication for improved dialogue, enhanced performance, and better business outcomes.

Giving Constructive Feedback

Giving Constructive Feedback consists of:

1. feedback that creates a positive environment for communication.
2. feedback that does not attack or blame a person, even if the message may be interpreted as negative.
3. feedback that reinforces positive behavior and encourages a person

QUICKSTART®

The Principles of Giving Constructive Feedback

1. Introduce the situation, concern or area needing attention
2. Validate the situation using factual information
3. Explain how the situation impacts you, others or the company
4. Ask for ideas to improve the situation and offer suggestions
5. Review and ask for commitment. Thank them.

Using the principles of Constructive Feedback properly.

1. Introduce the situation, concern or area needing attention.

Introduce the situation or behavior. Let the other person know specifically what you want to discuss.

2. Validate the situation using factual information.

Use facts and/or personal observations to explain the current situation or issue.

3. Explain how the situation impacts you, others or the company.

Explain the effect or concerns caused by the current behavior or situation. Many times individuals may not understand the impact their actions have on others.

4. Ask for ideas to improve the situation and offer suggestions.

Ask the individual for ideas to improve or positively change the situation. Offer you own only after they have an opportunity to respond.

5. Review and ask for commitment. Thank them.

Review ideas or plans or for improvement and ask for their help or commitment. Let the individual know that you appreciate their consideration.

An example of using the five principles of constructive feedback properly.

1. David, I would like to discuss a concern I have with the shop tools.
2. This week I've had to search for several shop tools needed to do my work. It seems that each time I found them where you were working on your last project.
3. Having to look for the tools really takes extra time and makes it hard for me to complete my work on time.
4. Any ideas? Sometimes I forget but I try double check my work area for tools before I leave each project.



Thanks for understanding and agreeing to remember to put the tools back in the tool bin after you finish.

Use the Principles of Constructive Feedback to change the focus of this feedback message, stating it in a more constructive manner.

Tom and the Stocking Issue: Improper use of Feedback

“Tom, you have a bad habit of forgetting to stock the bins with parts for the next shift. This is making everyone angry on the evening shift. They think that you’re a dope.”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Activity: Giving Constructive Feedback

Situation 1. Jill, how do you expect me to finish my report on time when you are always late with the information? This is the third week in a row that you've made me wait and I'm upset!

Situation 2. Bob, the parts I received from you have not been checked for quality. What's going on? This happens everyday! Now I have to rework the transmissions with the bad parts! Can't you get it right?

Situation 3. Greg, I just found out that our customer phoned in a rush order yesterday to you. Why didn't you let me know as soon as you received it? Now look what you've done!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are some advantages to using the principles of constructive feedback as a tool?



Summary

If you truly want to improve your communication and listening skills, it will take commitment, practice, and continued effort.

A person who has mastered the skills of effective communication, but lacks commitment, will find little change in overall results and goals achieved.

As important as they are, the techniques of effective communication and active listening by themselves are not enough. There must be a commitment and dedication to use them.

It is strongly recommended that you make a commitment each week to use a specific number of these skills and techniques. The number is not so important as the commitment to use them.

It is also highly recommended and beneficial to tell the people with whom you work that you will be trying some new approaches to communication, why you are doing it, and what you hope to accomplish. These people can be a valuable source of constructive feedback.

Also, you shouldn't be discouraged by occasional failures. When a skill or technique doesn't work well at first, figure out what went wrong, and decide how it can be modified for a more positive result.

The benefits of effective communication are attainable only through applying the skills and techniques of effective communication and active listening.

Review of Objectives

Now that you have completed the course, you should be able to:

1. Effectively guide and control conversations by listening attentively, responding appropriately, and acknowledging feelings making others feel unique and important.
2. Interpret verbal and nonverbal messages and provide feedback and reinforcement to ensure understanding and positive business results.
3. Leave a good lasting impression by using positive phrases and body language, along with a helpful tone, to build rapport and cooperation in the workplace.

The benefits you reap from what you have learned will be governed by your attitude, because communicating effectively flows out of our attitudes as well as the specific techniques and methods used.