

Effective Communications

You would use this approach to improve the effectiveness of your communications, with your colleagues and customers.

This fact sheet looks at:

- General approach to effective communications
- Active listening
- Public speaking
- Writing clear and concise requests for action.

Projected performance gain



Improved

- Productivity
- Working relationships
- Resolution of problems
- Elimination of barriers.

What investment is needed to understand the concept?

DIFFICULTY



Simple / Challenge

It is easy to make small steps. Sustaining growth over a longer period is more challenging, but worthwhile.

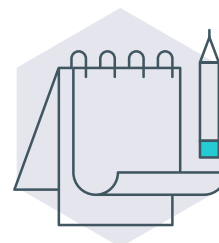
ACTIVITY



Team

Best results come from a team.

EQUIPMENT



None

No equipment is needed.

Explanation of the concept

The communication of information is an essential process for any business. Whether it is to instruct your teams on how to operate or letting your customers know about your business, crafting communication which effectively shares our message with our audience is one of the most important considerations for a business leader.

The array of channels available for us to communicate is vast, but some of the most common channels to communicate with your workforce include:

- Meetings, daily stand-ups, Gemba walks, internal presentations, performance reviews or informal conversations
- Visual management
- Email, Intranet, Website.

When considering any communication, it is helpful to consider the following points to help ensure that it is understood:

Provide context

- Why this is important?
- How does it fit into the bigger picture?
- Why it is important for them?

Consider the other person / audience

- What does the other person need to hear in order to receive your message?
- Focus on what you want the other person to hear, and not what you want to say.

Preparation

- Prepare thoroughly, pre-empt any questions and have the facts that you need
- Avoid talking about anything unnecessary.

Response

- Be clear about the response you are seeking
- Listen to their response.

Verbal Communications Tips

There are many techniques which can improve your communications and interactions, and help you to get your message across successfully.

Active Listening

- Be “in the moment”
- Make eye contact (but not a fixed stare!)
- Avoid distractions
- Avoid distracting mannerisms
- Give affirmative nods
- Demonstrate concern
- Paraphrase and ask questions to check understanding (“So what you are saying is...”)
- Ask open-ended questions to amplify understanding
- Ask closed questions to clarify
- Wait before you give your own views or perspective
- Build trust and rapport by acting on your conversations.

Public Speaking

- Start small – it doesn’t have to be a huge group
- Prepare thoroughly, rehearse timings and double check links to visuals or videos work correctly (if you are using them)
- Learn to speak from key points and notes, rather than reading or memorising
- If using visuals, don’t overdo the PowerPoint with too much detail or distracting animations. Instead, use pictures and impactful visuals so that you focus on telling the story
- In the last minute before starting, visualise successful outcomes and take deep breaths if you are feeling nervous
- Focus on what you have to say, and how important it is for the audience to hear
- Where possible, introduce yourself to audience members beforehand to establish rapport and a friendly face
- Seek to engage audiences.

Written Communications Tips

A simple but effective tool which can be used in written communications, is SBAR. This can be used to create focused messages which effectively communicate with your audience.

SBAR stands for Situation, Background, Assessment and Recommendation:

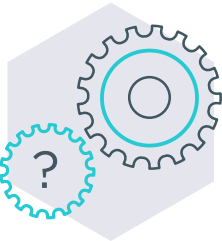
- **Situation** – Begin with a concise statement of the problem
- **Background** – Briefly provide the context, why this is important and provide any relevant background information
- **Assessment** – What is your analysis of this and what are the options
- **Recommendation** – Detail your recommendation and clearly state what is the required or requested action.


Non-Verbal Communications

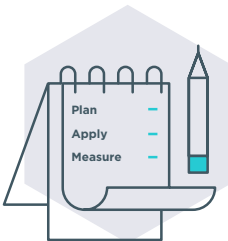
Don't forget that non-verbal communications are a huge proportion of what you communicate. Maya Angelou said: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."


Non-verbal communication includes gestures, posture, movement, facial expressions and eye contact. There are links in the recommended resources below which provide detail on this.

How to use this factsheet to make improvement?

1. 

Consider your own verbal, written and non-verbal communications styles.
2. 

Get feedback from trusted colleagues.
3. 

Identify what works well for you, what is more difficult and any changes could you practice?
4. 

Consider using specific training courses for any area where you feel you need development. It will be worth it, for you, your business and those who work in it.

Recommended reading



Bounds, A. (2007). The Jelly Effect – How to Make Your Communication Stick. Capstone. ISBN 978-1-84112-760-6



Ways to Improve Your Communication Skills at Work, The Balance:

<https://www.thebalance.com/improving-your-communication-skills-at-work-2275766>

7 Tips to Help You Overcome Your Fear of Public Speaking, The Balance:

<https://www.thebalance.com/overcome-fear-of-public-speaking-2951708>

5 Communication Skills Every Manager Should Master, The Grossman Group:

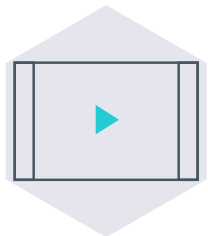
<http://www.yourthoughtpartner.com/blog/bid/73915/5-communication-skills-every-manager-should-master>

SBAR Tool, Institute for Healthcare Improvement:

<http://www.ihi.org/resources/Pages/Tools/SBARToolkit.aspx>

Learn About Active Listening Skills:

<https://www.thebalance.com/active-listening-skills-with-examples-2059684>



Take Control of Your POOPP: Purpose, Outcomes, Objectives, Practicalities and Preparation, Harvard Business Review:

<https://hbr.org/video/3541641444001/take-control-of-your-nonverbal-communication>

Non-verbal Communications, PwC:

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/powerpoint-presentations/lecture/liucn/non-verbal-communications>

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