

Rate Your Communication Skills

Communication Skills	Need to do less	Doing Alright	Need to do More
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Be brief and concise, get to the point

Use body language, gestures and stance to support my words

Use words that accurately describe what I want to say

Ask others to repeat (playback) what I have said to them



Communication Skills	Need to do less	Doing Alright	Need to do More
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Let others know when I don't understand something they've said

Listen to understand rather than preparing my next remarks

Before I agree or disagree or say anything, check to make sure I understand

Check out with others what I think they are feeling rather than assuming I know

Observe non verbal messages

Share good feelings (praise, happiness, appreciation)

Skills I want to practice:

References: Behavior Styles 1988. (Agdex 1834-8)



AVOID CONVERSATION CATASTROPHES

Sure it's a nice idea to be polite to people, even when they're wrong, or screaming at you or obviously picking a fight. The reality is that it's not always easy to be "the bigger person" and walk away from someone who has deliberately put you in an embarrassing or difficult situation. First and foremost it's important that you see it coming. For example, you know that someone may be trying to get a rise out of you when and if they start a conversation with statements like those listed below. How could you respond to each politely?

With all due respect

Polite response _____

This might be out of line

Polite response _____

May I ask a personal question?

Polite response _____

I hope you don't mind but

Polite response _____

If I can offer you some advice

Polite response _____

If you want my opinion

Polite response _____

Fortunately, with a little practice you can watch for these troublesome lines and resist taking the bait. Instead turn the tables on the "instigator". The most effective thing to do in this situation is answer an uncomfortable question with a question.

****Tip: A simple question that seems to fit almost any awkward situation is "that's a strange question, could you be more specific?" or "I'm not sure I understand the question, would you rephrase it?" At least, you'll buy a little recovery time. Worst-case scenario, it is perfectly acceptable to simply smile and say, "you know, I'm just not comfortable answering that question." This usually results in the questioner saying, "oh, sorry I asked."*



WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION QUIZ

1. I should be honest with co-workers at all times.
True or False?
2. It is sad but many adults feel bullied in the workplace.
True or False?
3. One of the primary reasons there are miscommunications at work is...
 - a) no one is listening
 - b) no one says what they mean
 - c) we do not back up what we say with nonverbal communication
4. The easiest way to end an argument is to say you are sorry.
True or False?
5. Typically only 5% of our nonverbal communication is deliberate?
True or False?
6. I have _____ seconds to make a first impression.
7. People are more likely to trust me when they first meet me if they can see both my hands.
True or False?
8. When you shake someone's hand it's appropriate to move your body in close proximity to theirs and it's okay to pat them or put your other hand on their elbow or shoulder.
True or False?
9. When someone says, "Don't get up!" they really mean it and it's not necessary to get up.
True or False?
10. If I'm meeting two or more co-workers at the same time, I should always introduce myself and shake hands with the women first.
True or False?



11. The objective of first impressions is to determine whether I trust someone enough to continue a relationship with them.

True or False?

12. People appreciate a clean and neat appearance, however, they will notice my attitude and demeanour more than they'll notice my clothes.

True or False?

13. Can I send an e-mail as a thank you after a lunch meeting?

- a) Sending an E-mail thank you is all that is expected.
- b) A hand-written note is always the best option.
- c) Just call...it takes so much less time.

14. Should a man or a woman initiate a business handshake?

- a) The most senior person by age.
- b) It does not matter – just do it!
- c) Whoever invited the guests should initiate handshakes.

15. How long does a person have to return business phone calls?

- a) Business calls should be returned within one hour.
- b) A maximum of seven days.
- c) Each person needs to establish a return calls policy.

16. If invited to a function where I will not know anyone except the guest of honor, whom am I allowed to bring?

- a) No one, unless the invitation explicitly states “and guest”.
- b) A client or friend who may know the guest of honor.
- c) If you are uncomfortable alone, don't attend. Send a note of regret.

17. At a business lunch who should pay the bill?

- a) Always split it down the middle.
- b) The person who did the inviting should pay the bill.
- c) The person who makes more money should pay the bill.

18. When I am wearing a nametag it should be on my right lapel.

True or False?



19. A good hand shaker maintains hand contact until an introduction is complete.

True or False?

20. How would you introduce your boss to your spouse at a work related event?

- a) Mr./Ms. Boss, I'd like you to meet my spouse.
- b) Spouse, this is my boss Mr./Ms. Boss.
- c) Spouse, I'd like to introduce Mr./Ms. Boss.

21. Business casual means a man's shirt should have a collar.

True or False?

22. Chewing gum is a good habit to get into if you want to keep fresh breath.

True or False?

Research suggests that 90% of those who are kept fully informed are more likely to be motivated to deliver added value to the company. The business benefits of communication are clear: the more you communicate with staff, the more they are motivated to deliver results for the organisation.



Modern Communication Tips:

When using the telephone:

- z Act as though you are communicating face-to-face; do not eat and talk, type and talk, or do anything that would interfere with completely focusing on the speaker/listener on the other end of the phone.
- z Stand up if you can and smile when you talk. This increases the energy and improves the tone when you are talking on the telephone.
- z Always leave your name and number at the beginning and again at the end when you are leaving a telephone message.
- z Make telephone “appointments”—schedule specific times to talk, rather than play telephone tag.
- z Do not put callers on the speakerphone without permission and if you do, always tell them if someone else is already in, or enters, the room.

When using email:

- z Always respect the company’s policies for mixing business and personal communications.
- z Always use a subject line. Keep subject line to 30 characters or less (approximately 6–7 words)
- z Treat email as a memo- attach additional information as a letter or formal memo
- z Keep email length to 3–5 sentences.
- z Use a separate email to address separate issues.
- z Always insert your signature with first and last name, title, place of work, and telephone number. A mailing address and/or fax number as well as company website information are also helpful.

When sending paper communication:

- z Always choose the mode of communication, print/paper, electronic, or voice that is preferable to the recipient of the communication.
- z Always use a spell and/or grammar check.



- z If the information is sensitive always request a receipt notice; either an email send-back message or a voicemail. It is the sender's responsibility to ensure receipt.
- z Send less, but more concise information.
- z Remember you are sending an impression. Be inclusive, be appropriate and be neat.

When sending a fax:

- z Always consider confidentiality. Telephone to ensure receipt of sensitive documents
- z Always send a cover page and include the following on the cover page:
 - z Your name (first and last), telephone number and fax number
 - z The recipient's name (first and last) telephone number and fax number
 - z The number of pages



General Business Communication Tips: Group Assignment

Work with your group to complete this worksheet.

1. How can you be casual, comfortable, and courteous at the same time?
2. How do you know when “friendly” goes too far with client relationships and what do you do if that happens?
3. What are some techniques for getting people to listen when you have something to say?
4. How can you improve your listening skills and “read between the lines”?



5. How can you keep control of situations and earn the respect of your clients?

6. How can you be diplomatic when you have to give bad news?

7. What can you do to master your non-verbal communication and send a positive message?

8. How can I learn to monitor my speech style, grammar and tone of voice?



COMMUNICATING CONFIDENCE

How we talk, our tone of voice, speech style and the vocabulary we use says a lot about who we are. Whoever is listening can often pick up clues about how much we really know, how strongly we feel about something and how much self-confidence we have just by listening to the words we use and how we use them. It's important to learn how our body language along with can the words we use can help us to communicate to others that we are positive and happy. The only challenge can be those words and phrases that show the opposite. Here are some examples:

The following words say, "I'm not entirely sure" or "I'm not too confident" or "I'm not feeling very optimistic"....

maybe sorry no! that's not possible

Huh! sometimes but.... hmmm...

I can't.... #\$(^&^..... never always

what?

These words say "I'm confident", "I'm positive", "I'm confident"....

yes! thank you I'll find out let's see

I can If...then.... What about... Please

I will I want to

When we speak to others, especially someone who is angry or upset, we want to use language that shows concern and a willingness to help, however, we do not want to take personal responsibility for things beyond our control and we do not want to appear incompetent or wimpy in our communications with them.



KEYS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

1. You should know the point you are trying to get across and state it at the beginning of communication.
2. Speak clearly and slowly enough that the listener can understand. Listen when it's the other person's turn to speak and watch their body language.
3. Use words that show your positive side and speak with energy.
4. Speak in full sentences but try to keep things short and simple when possible.
5. Give the listeners an opportunity to ask questions and be sure to ask them a few questions so you know they understood.
6. Try not to say "hmmm" or "umm" or leave long pauses between your sentences.
7. If you are speaking an opinion, say so. Don't speak as though your statements are facts or the only way it can be.
8. Use your whole body when you speak, make direct eye contact, make your body language match what you say and control your expressions and hand movements.



COMMON MISTAKES THAT SERVICE PEOPLE MAKE

- z Thinking the customer needs them more than they need the customer.
- z Thinking they can get by on “charm” alone. Service without quality works sometimes but not long term
- z Acting as though the telephone ringing or approaching customers are interruptions.
- z Forgetting that customers are people too; they have emotions and expectations.
- z Acting as though the customer is not as smart as the serviceperson, and then trying to take advantage.
- z Being dishonest and thinking no one will notice or remember
- z Acting as though they deserve a reward/tip just for doing the basics.
- z Being overly familiar with customers—too personal or giving too much information.
- z Letting his or her own negativity ruin an experience for a customer.
- z Forgetting that co-workers, suppliers, and everyone they come in contact with while “on the job” is a customer too.



