

Course Code: HSC102B
**Course Title: Business Communication and
Presentation Skills**

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Lecture 15

Conversation Skills

At the end of the Lecture students will be able to:

- Identify the levels in casual and business conversation
- Practise assertive conversations
- Apply conversation techniques for effective communication

Introduction

Conversations in a business context are probably more formal than talking in a casual context. In business, you will get many opportunities to engage in formal conversations, and in each one of them you should be able to leave a positive impression on the person or the group you are conversing with.



Levels of Conversation

The 4 levels of conversation are based on the degree and the amount of personal disclosure:

Level 1

- **Small Talk or “Exchange of Pleasantries”:** Conversation happens on neutral ground on nonthreatening topics. It allows people to form perceptions about each other. At this stage one decides, if he/she wants to invest in the particular relationship.

Level 2

- **Fact Disclosure:** This is “getting-to-know” stage where one discloses facts like work and home location. It’s also a signal that one is opening up, though in a neutral ground.

Levels of Conversation(Cont..)

Level 3

- **Viewpoints and Opinions:** This stage of conversation comes into play when one can offer views on topics like politics, movies and other impersonal things. Sharing of viewpoints and opinions require “buffering-effect” of the 1st two stages for two reasons:
 - ✓ First, a person needs rapport with another before they can discuss potentially contentious statements, even if they’re having a healthy debate.
 - ✓ Second, sharing viewpoints and opinions opens a person to the scrutiny of another, and this requires that there is some level of safety and trust in a relationship

Levels of Conversation(Cont..)

It is important to remember to stay within a “safe-zone” during the conversation as offensive opinions may end up as relationship breakers.

Level 4

- **Personal Feelings:** The fourth stage is disclosure and acknowledgment of personal feelings. This stage allows one to share personal excitement or grief. The personal matters are disclosed
- This stage requires trust, rapport, and even a genuine friendship, because of the intimate nature of the subject. Trust is built through continuous interaction and through the passage of time. Interacting at this stage warrants for sensitivity, active listening and empathy.

Characteristics of Conversations

Conversations are better structured than casual talk, especially if there is an agenda in place.

All key people must be involved- The conversation will be meaningless if they are not involved.

Conversations must be risk-free- People will express themselves only when they feel that they are risk-free.

Guidelines That Help With Conversation

- ❑ Learn more about the other person- Being aware of the person's likes, dislikes, and aspects that are related to work
- ❑ Listen and encourage- Be an excellent listener and encourage the person to continue speaking
 - 'So , what did you do?'
 - 'What is the other alternative?'
 - 'Go on'
 - 'Tell me more'
- ❑ Say 'yes' and acknowledge the other person's ideas-
'However when you have to say 'no', you should also do that
- ❑ Maintain a positive body language- Listen carefully, keep eye contact, and maintain the right distance

Tips for an Effective Conversation

- Talk slowly: Typically, good talkers don't rush into a conversation
- Pick a topic of shared interest
- Notice the details
- Give unique compliments
- Express your emotions
- Offer interesting insights

Summary

- Conversation is an art and a useful way to engage others
- Conversations form the grounds for good negotiations
- Make the conversations interesting
- Conversations are looked upon by company managements as a means of engaging people
- It is important to remember to stay within a “safe-zone” during the conversation as offensive opinions may end up as relationship breakers.

References

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