**Professional Communication**

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## Good communication skills in the workplace

Whether you're sitting in a meeting, attending a job interview, or emailing a client, having good communication skills is essential. It can mean the difference between getting your view across and being misunderstood, getting the dream job or missing out and building strong and positive working relationships rather than facing conflict and barriers.

In this article, we take a closer look at the different methods of professional communication and explain why it's so important to understand and master how you communicate in the workplace.

**Professional communication**, encompasses written, oral, visual and digital communication within a workplace context. This discipline blends together pedagogical principles of rhetoric, technology, software, and learning theory to improve and deliver communication in a variety of settings ranging from technical writing to usability and digital media design to more effectively communicate in the business world.

It is a new discipline that focuses on the study of information and the ways it is created, managed, distributed, and consumed. Since communications is a rapidly changing area, technological progress seems to often outpace the number of available expert practitioners. This creates a demand for skilled communicators.

Communication skills are critical to a business because all businesses, to varying degrees, involve the following: writing, reading, editing, speaking, listening, software applications, computer graphics, and Internet research. Job candidates with professional communication backgrounds are more likely to bring to the organization sophisticated perspectives on society, culture, science, and technology.

The field is closely related to that of technical communication, though professional communication encompasses a wider variety of skills.

## Professional communication theory

Professional communication draws on theories from fields as different as rhetoric and science, psychology and philosophy, sociology and linguistics.

Much of professional communication theory is a practical blend of traditional communication theory, technical writing, rhetorical theory, adult learning theory, and ethics.

Carolyn Miller in *What's Practical about Technical Writing?* refers to professional communication as not simply workplace activity and to writing that concerns "human conduct in those activities

that maintain the life of a community."[2] As Nancy Roundy Blyler discusses in her article *Research as Ideology in Professional Communication* researchers seek to expand professional communication theory to include concerns with praxis and social responsibility.[3]

Regarding this social aspect, in "Postmodern Practice: Perspectives and Prospects," Richard C. Freed defines professional communication as

A discourse directed to a group, or to an individual operating as a member of the group, with the intent of affecting the group's function, and/or B. discourse directed from a group, or from an individual operating as a member of the group, with the intent of affecting the group's function, where group means an entity intentionally organized and/or run by its members to perform a certain function....Primarily excluded from this definition of group would be families (who would qualify only if, for example, their group affiliation were a family business), school classes (which would qualify only if, for example, they had organized themselves to perform a function outside the classroom--for example, to complain about or praise a teacher to a school administrator), and unorganized aggregates (i.e., masses of people). Primarily excluded from the definition of professional communication would be diary entries (discourse directed toward the writer), personal correspondence (discourse directed to one or more readers apart from their group affiliations), reportage or belletristic discourse (novels, poems, occasional essays--discourse usually written by individuals and directed to multiple readers not organized as a group), most intraclassroom communications (for example, classroom discourse composed by students for teachers) and some technical communications (for example, instructions--for changing a tire, assembling a product, and the like; again, discourse directed toward readers or listeners apart from their group affiliations)....Professional communication...would seem different from discourse involving a single individual apart from a group affiliation communicating with another such person, or a single individual communicating with a large unorganized aggregate of individuals as suggested by the term mass communication (Blyler and Thralls, *Professional Communication: The Social Perspective*,[4] (pp. 197-198).

## Studying professional communication

The study of professional communication includes:

- the study of rhetoric which serves as a theoretical basis
- the study of technical writing which serves as a form of professional communication
- the study of in-person and virtual training, which serves as a form of communication delivery
- the study of visual communication which also uses rhetoric as a theoretical basis for various aspects of creating visuals
- the study of various research methods

Other areas of study include global and cross-cultural communication, technical and professional training, marketing and public relations, technical editing, digital literacy, composition theory, video production, corporate communication, and publishing. A professional communication program may cater to a very specialized interest or to several different interests. Professional communication can also be closely tied to organizational communication and corporate training.

Students who pursue graduate degrees in professional communication research communicative practice in organized contexts (including business, academic, scientific, technical, and non-profit settings) to study how communicative practices shape and are shaped by culture, technology, history, and theories of communication.

Professional communication encompasses a broad collection of disciplines, embracing a diversity of rhetorical contexts and situations. Areas of study range from everyday writing at the workplace to historical writing pedagogy, from the implications of new media for communicative practices to the theory and instructional design of online learning, and from oral presentations and training to the website design.

Types of professional documents
- Short reports
- Proposals
- Case studies
- Lab reports
- Memos
- Progress / Interim reports
- Writing for electronic delivery
- Web-based training modules

**Types of professional communication to master**

With the way we do business changing, and working from home becoming a viable option for many, forms of communication have also changed.

The ways that we communicate with our colleagues, business partners and clients have steadily shifted. You no longer have to be in the same office (or even the same country) to be able to do business, and the popularity of such communication apps as Skype and Zoom have made this easier than ever before.

**The different types of communication methods can be grouped together into three key categories:**

- **Oral Communication :** This is also often called "verbal" or "spoken" communication and includes face-to-face meetings, telephone calls, as well as mediums such as radio and TV.
- **Written Communication**: Within written communication, there are a huge number of methods, from sending emails and writing letters, to books, magazines, social media posts and various other forms thanks to the growth of the Internet.
- **Non-verbal communication**: When thinking about communication, it's important not to forget about things that we don't say, as it can still tell someone a lot about you. This could include your body language and gestures, your tone of voice and even how you dress.

**The importance of mastering Professional Communication**

Some of the best communicators of all time include people like Martin Luther King, Jr., Oprah Winfrey, Winston Churchill and Steve Jobs. Their messages have inspired people and changed the

world. By thinking about what they achieved you can start to understand the importance of good communication and the huge impact it can have on those around you, if you get it right.

**Here are a few reasons why having good professional communication skills can be important to you, in the workplace:**

1. **It can ensure you pick the right communication method for your audience**

With good professional communication skills, you can ensure you pick the appropriate communication channel for the specific audience. For example, in some cases, it may be appropriate to send a quick email, however, by reading the situation you may realise that for certain messages, it's more appropriate to arrange a call or even meet face-to-face.

2. **It is seen as a desirable skill by employers**

Being able to communicate effectively is an extremely desirable skill. This can be beneficial in your existing role, when being considered for a promotion or when job hunting.

3. **It can help avoid misunderstandings**

With poor communication, it's easy for messages to get misunderstood. By mastering professional communication, the potential for misunderstandings occurring can be minimised.

4. **It will help you work effectively in a group**

When you work in a team, you need to be able to regularly communicate with others. You need to listen to other people's ideas, whilst being able to clearly and effectively communicate your own. Good communication can also help to build a positive working relationship, so your team works more effectively and productively together.

5. **It can inspire others**

We're not all born presenters, but public speaking is still an important skill to master. With poor communication skills, your audience may become bored and disengaged. However, if you have good communication skills, you have the opportunity to engage and inspire those around you.

**How to develop your Professional Communication skills?**

When it comes to developing your professional communication skills, there are several things you can try.

- **Ask for feedback :** If you carry out a presentation, ask yourself how you think you could improve next time. If you're looking for a more objective point of view, ask for feedback from those who were in the audience. Take this feedback onboard and use it to make changes when you present next time.

- **Learn from others :** If you look up to someone who has good communication skills, watch what they do and learn from them. This doesn't have to be someone famous but could be a leader or mentor in your office.
- **Work on your active listening :** A good communicator listens. So next time you're engaged in a conversation, instead of trying to drive your opinion home, take a step back and actively listen to what is being said. Don't just listen to the words but consider their body language too and tone of voice. You may pick up on signs that you may previously have missed.
- **Study a professional communication course :** To really become a better communicator, you should consider enrolling in a course that can refresh your skills and develop new ones.

**Some of the most critical features of professional communication.**

## 1. Accuracy

Accuracy is one of the most vital features of professional communication. The relayed information needs to be correct. Inaccurate information cannot be viewed as credible. It significantly undermines the reputation of any organization. It may also attract litigation. Additionally, anyone who relays incorrect information also risks losing their credibility.

Apart from the accuracy of the content conveyed, effective professional communication also needs to be accurate even in simple things such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Even one mistake has the potential to lead to miscommunication between parties. Consequently, this may lead to financial losses for the business.

## 2. Clarity and Brevity

Communication needs to be brief and to the point. Professionals don't have time to read long circulars and letters littered with superfluous information. They will feel more comfortable with short letters designed to convey the message quickly.

Additionally, the information therein needs to be clear and free from any ambiguity. Therefore, a professional communicator needs to be conscious of the objective of their communication. This way, they avoid ambiguity which breeds miscommunication.

## 3. Distinctiveness

Communication in the professional world is done with a particular goal in mind. Generic professional communication will not achieve the intended objective. One needs to be specific to communicate effectively. The more specific the message is, the more the target audience is likely to understand it and the more it meets the desired objective.

Any communication in an organization should only deal with one particular subject at a time. This is the only way to reach effective results. Dealing with multiple issues at a time has the potential to create chaos and confusion. This is a threat to sound management.

## 4. Segmentation

When it comes to professional communication, employees in any organization, even the small ones, will have different needs, interests, and desires. Therefore, communication needs to be tailored to meet the specific needs of the target audience for it to have the desired effect or impact.

Communication in any organization needs to be segmented for specific departments. For example, writing one letter to all the departments and individuals may not be an effective way of communicating. The communicator should tailor the information to particular departments. Additionally, communication should be handled by an individual specialized in the workings of specific departments especially when expert knowledge is required.

## 5. Continuity

Continuity is also one of the most crucial features of professional communication. Communication must always be present in an organization. Without it, a company cannot claim to exist. As blood circulation is critical to a living body so is communication to a company. Managers should, therefore, ensure that communication is adequate and flowing smoothly in all directions.

Whenever there is a breakdown in communication, a misunderstanding arises leading to unfavorable hostility, conflict, and attitudes. Therefore, communication needs to be continuous. It should move up, down, and sideways to ensure that all concerned parties remain in the loop and are participating actively.

## 6. Internal and External Fields

Communication in an organization is primarily internal. It is an essential component in administrative function and is targeted to employees and other members belonging to a company. A public notice informing members of an annual general meeting in an organization is an example of internal communication. Internal communication may be either vertical or horizontal.

Communication may also go beyond the borders of an organization. When it extends to external parties who aren't necessarily members of the company, it is referred to as external communication. Such communication is usually intended to maintain relationships between external parties and the organization. It has a broad coverage and occurs less frequently than internal communication.

## 7. Two-Way Traffic

Communication is a two-way traffic. As it flows downwards from a superior to a subordinate, so should it flow upwards. For instance, when a manager conveys information to the employees, they should be ready to receive reactions and responses. Otherwise, they may not meet objectives efficiently.

The chain of communication is not complete until the receiver gets the message and the sender receives the response. Management should be able to speak, inform and order. On the other hand,

they should also be good at listening. Employees deserve an opportunity to share their opinions, thoughts, and feedback. Two-way communication benefits management and employees. In the end, the entire organization will have to gain.

## 8. Multi-Channel

Communication can be achieved through a wide variety of channels to ensure that it reaches audiences in different forms of settings. There are many channels to choose from including meetings, print, and bulletin boards. These fall under the category of traditional forms of professional communication. The new electronic means of communication are email, social media, smartphone, and chat app.

Many factors should inform the choice of the medium used to communicate. The communicator should consider the nature of the communication, the sense of urgency, and the distance between them and the recipient.

## Conclusion

Effective communication is critical to any organization. It is, therefore, imperative to understand the essential features of professional communication. Communication needs to be accurate, brief, to the point, continuous, specific, and segmented. It can either be internal and external. Moreover, we can channel it through a wide variety of mediums including print, oral, and electronic.

Communicators in the professional world have a lot of tools at their disposal and should choose which ones to use carefully. They should factor the essential features of professional communication and take their audience and intended goals into consideration before making decisions to ensure that their efforts pay off.