

# Interpersonal Communication Skills



MAKE  
BUSINESS

# Interpersonal Communication Skills

Communicating and influencing effectively are key skills for any individual. This workshop is designed to enable you to improve your interpersonal skills when dealing with colleagues, customers or clients.

Through participating in this workshop you will be able to:

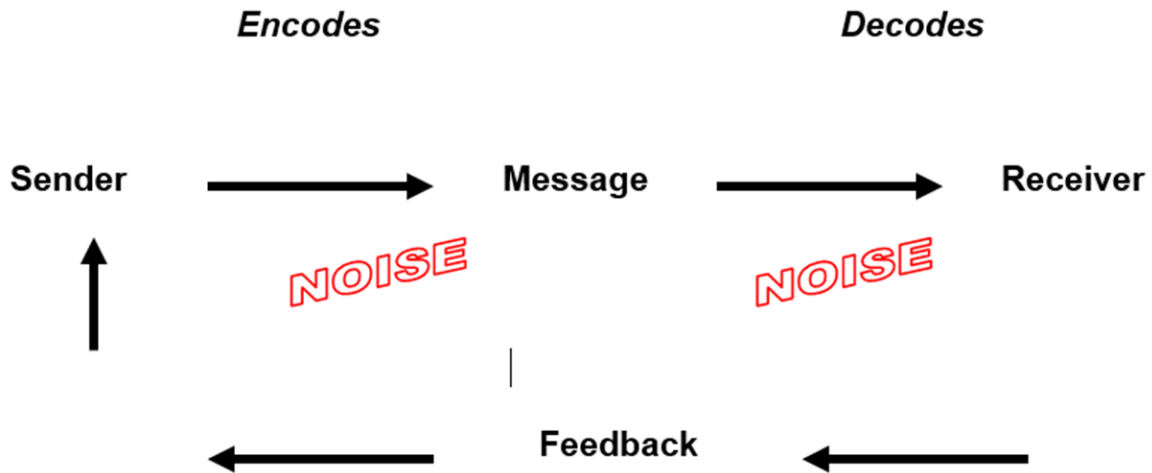
1. Recognise and avoid the barriers to effective communication.
2. Understand the factors that improve ability to influence or persuade others.
3. Devise strategies to deal with difficult inter-personal situations back in the workplace.
4. Understand the importance of constructive feedback.
5. Achieve better working relationships with others, such as colleagues and customers, by effective use of interpersonal communication skills.

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***Please note that in these notes the use of he as third person represents he/she***

# What is Effective Communication?



The **Sender** plans the communication and decides the content, channel and format according to the purpose of the communication and the needs of the receiver. For example, in an office, the sender may consider whether to talk face to face or pick up the telephone. He/she will consider how to make the message clear and concise to aid accurate interpretation. This process is called **Encoding**.

When preparing the content of the message it is a good idea to give the receiver an indication of when action is required. Be specific, don't just provide generalisations such as, *it's not urgent* or *as soon as possible*!

The **Channel** conveys the message and should represent the best way of reaching the receiver. Some people hide behind email when a conversation would be more appropriate.

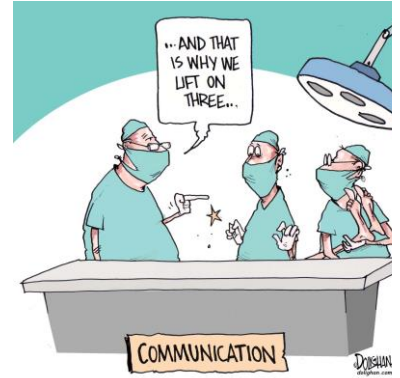
The **Receiver** 'lives' in a different world to the sender, so interprets the message according to own knowledge, skills and experience. This process is called **Decoding** and can be a major reason for communication breakdown if the message is not clear or if an inappropriate channel is chosen. If a communication requires an immediate response and perhaps some discussion, it is more appropriate to speak face-to-face, use the telephone, so that this can take place without delay and you can observe how the message is received.

**Feedback** is required by the sender to ensure that the message was correctly interpreted – the speaker correctly interpreted their intention. This might be a confirmation, an appropriate reply or observable response to the message.

**Noise** is the name that is given to interference or distractions that prevent effective transmission of the message from sender to receiver. Noise can occur at any point. It includes not only physical interruption but also emotional and semantic interference (words) as well.

Effective communication occurs when the message is correctly received, understood and acted upon. At each stage in the transmission process there is potential for “interference” to prevent this happening. Some of the factors that can cause problems are:

- Difficulty in finding the right words - lack of vocabulary.
- Different meanings - what is a pump?
- Different perceptions - which is worse a disaster or a catastrophe?
- Different levels of knowledge - simplifying technical details.
- Emotions - incoherence through anger, excitement, frustration, apathy.
- Background noise.
- Cascading of information (“send reinforcements we are going to advance” might become “send three and four pence we are going to a dance” when it has been passed on several times).



**Barriers to effective communication** can be summarised under three headings:

- Physical - can be seen, heard, and touched.
- Psychological - related to feelings, emotions.
- Semantic - to do with language, words.

**Physical barriers** include factors in the immediate environment that prevent people from communicating effectively, such as loud noises and the space between sender and receiver. A less obvious environmental factor is temperature; when a meeting room is too hot or too cold it affects the ability to listen and pay attention, or participate?

Another physical barrier is human disability - how often when you communicate do you consider any special needs the receiver may have? In an open plan office, some people might find it difficult to hear but be embarrassed to admit they have not heard every word.

**Psychological barriers** include emotions such as anger, aggressiveness and shyness. Emotions often prevent clear articulation of the message, which may become personal and lose meaning. Equally, if the message excites emotion in the receiver then he/she will not decode it effectively.

Other psychological barriers include status, intelligence, prejudice and education - people feeling inferior become unable to communicate effectively in some circumstances. Alternatively, as receivers we may be prejudiced against speakers with regional accents, assuming that they do not have anything useful to say or are not intelligent enough to contribute to a discussion. We are often unaware of inbred prejudice. It is also difficult to communicate with a disinterested receiver – consider a hook to grab attention if you suspect this.

**Semantics** includes the words and language used. Spoken (and written) communications need to be clear and concise. It is often difficult to know how much information to include - too much and people will lose interest; not enough and they will not understand. Jargon and ‘technical-speak’ also cause confusion because the receiver may not have the same knowledge as the sender.

# Summary of Barriers to Effective Communication

Remember - effective communication is a two way process.

If you do not understand ASK!! If you receive confusing feedback CLARIFY!!

## Physiological/Technological

- Environmental distractions.
- Noise.
- Temperature.
- Distance.
- Human disability.
- Poor listening skills.
- Lack of communication skills.
- Wrong channel for transmission.
- Inability to deal with people and/or develop constructive working relationships.
- Lack of knowledge or facts and figures required.

## Psychological

- Emotion, e.g. anxiety, shyness, anger, aggression, frustration, excitement.
- Passive personality.
- Reactive.
- Personality clashes.
- Lack of interest.
- Education.
- Status.
- Intelligence.
- Bias and prejudice.

## Semantics & Language

- Foreign speech and accent.
- Dialect - regional accents.
- Words with double meanings.
- Jargon and inappropriate use of technical language.
- Woolly use of language, rambling.
- Insufficient information.
- Formality.

## What Makes a Good Listener?

Listening is a skill that can be improved. One of the easiest ways to change the way you listen is to list the things you like and dislike about other people's listening habits.

List the most important things you like to see in a person who is listening to you:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Now list the four things you most dislike when someone appears not to be listening:

1.

2.

3.

4.



# Listening Dynamics

We can speak about 150 - 300 words in a minute, but hear about twice as many. So while the other person is speaking your brain has capacity to think about something else as well. It's not surprising that people are easily distracted and do not listen attentively all the time - effective listening is an active process, hearing is passive.

**WORST**

**BEST**



## Marginal listening

Marginal listeners are guilty of many things including:

- ☹ Preoccupation with their own thoughts.
- ☹ Staring blankly into space.
- ☹ Conveying a self-centred attitude.
- ☹ Insulting the speaker with indifference.
- ☹ Misunderstanding more than half of what is said.

## Evaluative listening

Better than marginals, evaluative listeners are still not fully present they are guilty of:

- ☹ Evaluating what is said in their own way rather than trying to listen or understand.
- ☹ Concentrating on composing a response.
- ☹ Making quick judgements about the speaker.
- ☹ Finishing the speaker's sentences.
- ☹ Rushing through a conversation.

## Active listening (Empathetic)

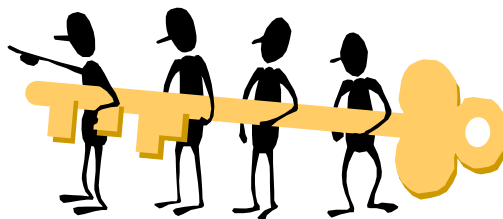
This takes practice and a concerted effort, but is the only way to get on the same wavelength as the speaker: Experts:

- ☺ Concentrate on what people are saying.
- ☺ Make an effort to see the speaker's viewpoint.
- ☺ Give feedback to the speaker.
- ☺ Empathise.

**Active listening leads to a sincere response. People respond to those who listen to them.  
Another good reason for improving your listening is that you will learn something!!**

# Ten Keys to Active Listening

1. **Resist distractions** - ignore external and internal 'noise' and focus on the speaker.
2. **Take notes** - most of us remember about 50% of what we hear, so take notes to remind you of exactly what was said.
3. **Let people tell their story** - when listening to a problem let the speaker tell the story the way he/she sees it. There is much valuable information in the narrative. Save your questions for later.
4. **Offer feedback** - let the speaker know you are paying attention by giving verbal and non-verbal "cues", for example by nodding your head or saying "Yes, I understand".
5. **"Read between the lines"** - sometimes the message someone wants to convey is in the part they leave out. Check it out!
6. **Relax** - create a relaxed atmosphere to put the speaker at ease.
7. **Listen completely** - try not to react to negative things that are said or stop listening if you think you know what they are going to say.
8. **Smile** – as much as is appropriate!
9. **Ask questions** – to check understanding.
10. **Care** - remember there is no such thing as an uninteresting speaker, only disinterested listeners.





# Workshop Communication Challenge

**Exercise – only available when attending a workshop**

**What Time Is It in Amberville?**

## **Objective:**

This exercise is designed to provide you all as a team with practice in exchanging information to answer a question and to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant information.

## **Material:**

1 set of statement cards

## **Timing:**

15 minutes to answer the question  
10 minutes Post Activity Review



## **Running The Exercise**

1. There are a number of statements on cards spread amongst the group
2. Using the information you are given, you must answer the question and adhere to the following rules:
  - Nothing must be written down.
  - Cards must not be shown to other team members
  - All questions must be addressed to individuals only – not to the group.
3. All team members must follow the rules above
4. At the end of 15 minutes, the team must give an answer and identify all relevant information.
5. Follow the activity, there is a review of your own communication and approach.

## Communication Challenge Follow up

Having completed the activity on the workshop, think carefully about your answers to the following. If you are working electronically on-line consider the statements below, and how they relate to you in general working settings.

Tick the boxes that you think most closely represents your behaviour when communicating in a group – ie. with one or more persons. Answer as honestly as you can, remembering that there are no correct answers nor points for saying what you think others might want to hear.

In group situations I am able to:

	<b>This describes me well</b>	<b>This happens once or twice</b>	<b>I don't think this happens</b>	<b>This definitely doesn't happen</b>
Control communication when appropriate				
Put my points across assertively				
Talk about problems				
Think independently				
Build on others' ideas with them				
Speak up when necessary				
Ask questions				
Listen actively to others				
'Stick to my guns' – avoid inappropriate influence				
Encourage others to participate				

In group situations:

	<b>This describes me well</b>	<b>This happened once or twice</b>	<b>I don't think this happened</b>	<b>This definitely didn't happen</b>
I am ignored				
I am over critical				
I argue				
I communicate within a sub-group				
I am impatient when others express an opinion that is different to mine				

When communicating with others I will do better if I:

1)

2)

3)

4)

When communicating with others I will do better if I do not:

1)

2)

3)

4)

## How Do You Rate as a Listener?

Rate yourself against the following questions, using the scale 1 – 5 1 = never 2 = rarely 3 = sometimes 4 = almost always 5 = always	
1. I allow the speaker to express his/her complete thoughts without interrupting	1 2 3 4 5
2. I actively try to develop my ability to remember important facts	1 2 3 4 5
3. During an important phone call I write down the most important details of the message	1 2 3 4 5
4. I avoid becoming hostile or angry if a speaker's views are different from my own	1 2 3 4 5
5. I repeat the essential details of a conversation back to the speaker to confirm that I have understood correctly	1 2 3 4 5
6. I exercise tact in keeping the speaker on track	1 2 3 4 5
7. I tune out distractions when listening	1 2 3 4 5
8. I make an effort to show when other people are speaking	1 2 3 4 5
9. I sound as if I am listening (I paraphrase and ask questions)	1 2 3 4 5
10. I remember that people are less defensive when they feel they are being understood	1 2 3 4 5
11. I understand that I am learning very little when I'm talking (I talk too much, listen too little?)	1 2 3 4 5
12. I understand that I don't have to agree with the speaker – but if I listen to the end I will understand their views	1 2 3 4 5
13. In personal conversation, I look for non-verbal forms of communication to provide information about what the speaker really means	1 2 3 4 5
14. I look as if I am listening in meetings (leaning forward, giving eye contact)	1 2 3 4 5
15. I check the spelling of names, places and organisations when taking a message so they are correct when recorded or for replying by email	1 2 3 4 5
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	
Divide your score by 15 to identify your overall approach to listening 1 = marginal 2 – 3 = evaluative 4 – 5 = active Review the statements to identify ways to improve your listening skills	

# Dealing With People Who Do Not Listen

Many people do not listen attentively or actively because:

- They assume they know what you are going to say.
- They have a short attention span.
- They are distracted.
- They do not think that what you are saying is relevant to them.
- They do not agree with what you are saying.
- They do not want to hear what you are saying.



So what do you need to do?

If you find that people do not listen to you, first ask yourself why and check:

- Do you need to change your style of communication?
- Is it too formal? Too informal?
- Too long winded?
- Too technical?
- Wrong tone?

If you feel that you have a clear and concise style that is right for the situation, reassess your structure:

- Are you giving too much information at once?
- Have you allowed time for the receiver to reflect and clarify?

Often an individual appears not to be listening because he is 'lost', so:

1. Give out your information or ask your series of questions in smaller chunks.
2. Use an introduction and summary for each section.
3. Use interim summaries at important milestones.
4. Always ask questions to check understanding if the person remains quiet or simply nods.
5. Ask open questions, *What's your understanding/opinions of what I've said?* not *Do you understand!!* If the answer is Yes to the latter the feedback is so limited that you do not know if your intended message has been understood just that the receiver wants you to think it has!

# Questioning and Summarising

Effective questioning means being able to draw out information, feelings and opinions from another person.

This is particularly useful if you are attempting to influence or persuade because people respond better when they are listened to and involved. If you simply tell people what to do you will find it very difficult to succeed in most situations. Useful types of questions include:



**Open** - to collect information. Useful ways to begin open questions are what, who, why, when, where, how or tell me about? Open questions should be carefully focused so that they are not too broad, otherwise the respondent may not give an appropriate answer. Open questions require the other person to talk

Examples: "How may I help you?"

"When did it happen?"

"Can you tell me why....?"

**Probing** - to find out further information or more detail. You need to listen carefully to be able to use this technique but it is worth doing so because it shows the speaker that you are interested in what they are saying.

Example: "What happened next?"

**Reflecting back** - repeating or paraphrasing the speaker's last sentence(s) to confirm understanding. This shows that you are listening and value what the speaker is saying.

**Clarifying** – checking understanding. Sometimes listeners tend not to do this if they feel they understand the 'gist' of what has been said. It adds value and effectiveness to conversations because it is infectious. If you do it, others will copy.

**Linking back** - shows you have been listening and noted an important point made earlier. A useful technique for 'controlling wafflers'

Example: "You mentioned X happened earlier, in what way is this giving you problems?"

**Closed** - usually requires a yes or no response. They generate very little information and so are best used to check facts or elicit simple data.

Example: "Did you know that the meeting started at 2 o'clock?"

## Some types of questions are best avoided:

**Multiple** - asking several questions at the same time. You'll probably only get one answer.

**Leading** - the answer is indicated in the question.

Example: "I think that is terrible, don't you?"

"So, you all agree with me on this?" (A favourite tactic of aggressive people)

"Surely, you are not naïve enough to agree with that statement?"

## Summarising

Summarising brings the discussion to a particular point and enables the questioner to move on to seek further information. It is also a critical skill in influencing others. It can be used to gain the initiative, to ensure common understanding, to steer the discussion into constructive paths and to gain commitment.



- **Gaining the initiative** - If you feel that the discussion is becoming too one-sided, gain the initiative by saying something like, "Can I check if I fully understand your points on this?" You may then summarise and deal with those points if you wish to before moving forward.
- **Ensure understanding** - Summarising is a good way of making sure that everyone has the same understanding of the points you have discussed, the points you have agreed and any not yet resolved. Once everyone understands the position you can move the discussion on. A technique used by effective meeting chairs but also useful during negotiations or when in discussion with one or more colleagues.
- **Steering the discussion** - Discussions are often made more difficult by people side-tracking into minor points, or by becoming bogged down in disagreement. Summarising can be used to get back to the point or to put disagreements on ice whilst areas of agreement are reached. For example, you might say "We seem to agree on these points (list them), can we shelve ..... (the area of disagreement) for the moment and look at ..... (some other points)?"
- **Gaining commitment** - Summarising is a good way of getting agreement, and thus commitment, at various stages in negotiations. For example, "can we agree that we will (list points of agreement)" or "If we do (whatever), that will meet your needs on that issue."

## Silence

- ♦ Is also a means of drawing someone out.
- ♦ Can show how relaxed you are and will therefore encourage others to relax.
- ♦ Makes it clear it is up to the other person to speak.
- ♦ Is embarrassing only if you allow it to be!



# Personal Impact

## Posture

- Keep your hands out your pockets. It looks sloppy and can result in jiggling change
- Sit upright but not rigid.
- Stance should be relaxed but not overly so:
  - Upright = confidence & in control
  - Arms folded = barrier / defensive; Shoulders not slumped
  - Different stances for different messages



## Eye Contact

- Demonstrates confidence.
- Long enough to be 'held' but not staring – observe the individual's reaction.
- Contact with everyone if talking to a group. Small groups (up to 12) = 1 - 3 seconds per person.

## Voice

- Tone & Pitch – Tone is the quality of your voice and Pitch is the degree of highness or lowness of your voice. Vary the Tone, Pitch & inflection to emphasise words (but men beware of high, squeaky voice).
- Projection – the skill of carrying your voice across distances. Crisp & clear; be strong to show you're in control.
- Articulation – the skill of speaking clearly. Don't mumble as it may look like you are hiding something or lack confidence, and therefore will not feel much confidence towards both you and what you are saying. Your speaking image can benefit greatly from precision and clarity. Lazy, sloppy speech indicates a lack of energy and maybe even a lack of commitment. Don't over-exaggerate the pronunciation of words too much.
- Pace – the speed of your voice. Vary the pace. People who talk quickly often do not give themselves time to get adequate breath. They also make it difficult for people to really hear, reflect on and interpret what's been said.
- Use pauses to allow reflection time, bring attention back onto you or emphasise points. Pauses let the breath drop into the body to recharge it, and at the same time allow the brain to organise the content before you speak. Sometimes we don't trust ourselves, or don't feel comfortable to hold pauses, so we will fill them up with 'ums' or 'errs', or throat-clearing. All of these detract from the message you want to put across. Feeling comfortable with pause will do a great deal for your vocal impact. It is a sign of great confidence, and people will feel more relaxed and at ease with you.
- Tone & Pitch – Tone is the quality of your voice and Pitch is the degree of highness or lowness of your voice. Vary the Tone, Pitch & inflection to emphasise words. When we are nervous, the throat muscles tense which can cause the pitch to rise in an uncontrolled manner, creating a shrill tone.
- Intonation & Inflection – How you emphasise different words and phrases to put across different meanings. People will take different meanings from what you say depending on how you say it – where and how you use intonation / inflection).



## Closeness

The physical distance we keep from others and our reaction to how other people approach us, have a big influence on our discussions and the accompanying connections with these people.

The amount of personal space we appreciate is strongly influenced by our culture. This also counts for the mutual distance in which we feel confident during a business meeting.



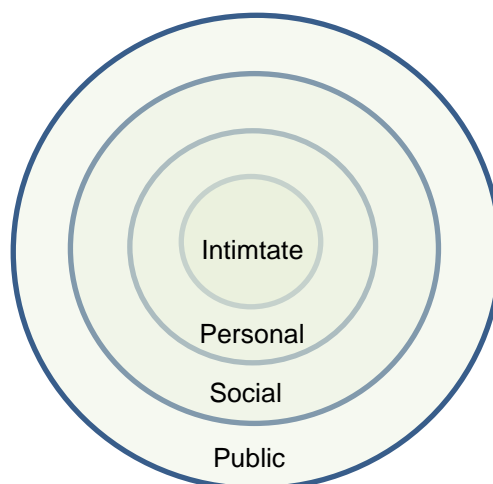
If somebody comes closer to us than we are used to, invading our personal space, he can give us an uneasy feeling. We feel inclined to take a step backward to establish the original personal space with which we are comfortable again. In general, people need a certain amount of personal space to feel optimally o.k.

This also indicates our wish to trace out our personal territory. When we are not at home we sometimes make a kind of temporary territory - a temporary space which we secure with our personal belongings. In this way we create a kind of personal air bubble around us. Who enters in there without being invited can count on a rejecting or angry response.

## Zones or Personal territory

Edward Hall has divided interpersonal space into areas of personal territory; public, social, personal, and intimate, that we intuitively respect and use.

- A. **Public space** ranges from 12 to 25 feet and is the distance maintained between the audience and a speaker such as the President.
- B. **Social space** ranges from 4 to 10 feet and is used for communication among business associates, as well as to separate strangers using public areas such as beaches and bus stops.
- C. **Personal space** ranges from 2 to 4 feet and is used among friends and family members, and to separate people waiting in lines at teller machines for example.
- D. Finally, **intimate space** ranges out to one foot and involves a high probability of touching. We reserve it for whispering and embracing.



# Building Rapport

When using the skills previously mentioned effectively you will naturally begin to develop rapport with people during interpersonal contact. You create rapport through:

- ✓ Verbal behaviour – words you use.
- ✓ Vocal behaviour – pitch, pace, volume, inflection.
- ✓ Physical behaviour – which is highly influential in getting our message across when 'out of step' or not congruent with the other two factors.



## Body Mirroring



Body language technique known as mirroring is also known as physical mirroring. You may not know what it is but actually; you've probably been doing it all your life without knowing it. Once you know how to harness the power of mirroring consciously - it's like young Skywalker recognising and harnessing the power of the Force.

Notice how people that seem to be engaged in an interesting conversation - they are excited about what they themselves are saying, they are about to say and what the other is saying, in other words, they have rapport - seem to take the same poses, whether sitting or standing up.

When sitting, either side by side or on opposite sides of the table - one leans forward and then the other leans forward as well, or one leans backward and then the other leans backward as well. They might cross their hands in the same manner, tilt their heads similarly, seem to be having similar side-activities (one playing with his key chain, the other with her pen), etc.

Are they directing their actions consciously? Probably Not. All their energies and concentration is on the discussion, everything else happens subconsciously. But actually, they don't even have to be having a discussion, they may just both be thinking their own thoughts... and still you can see mirroring going on - they make the same movements almost the same time without seemingly without having any perceivable interaction with the other person.

What is all this knowledge good for? Well, mirroring can be used as a tool for building rapport. Being similar or having someone similar in your vicinity creates a feeling of ease, comfort, being understood, protected (should there appear a threat of any sort).

So you can use the power of mirroring to create these feelings in the one you are mirroring. They'll then subconsciously link all those feelings to you (after all, you are the one actively mirroring) and rapport is naturally going to develop between you.

How, whom and from where should you mirror? Whom - that's easy, the person you want of course! How to do it is by assuming the same posture, doing the same movements with your hands, in all respects using your body in a similar fashion to theirs.

## More aspects of mirroring body language are:

**Following:** Doing the movements after they did them. Note that although your mind screams, "This is stupid! I'm going to get caught! This person MUST see me doing the same movements! This is ridiculous!" Don't listen to it, fight it, it is the voice of the Dark Side! Why? Because they NEVER NOTICE it! Instead, they feel more comfortable and relaxed in connection with you, and eventually (that's why you even bothered, right?) - more drawn to you.

**Pacing:** Doing the movements the same time with them. Yes. Sounds impossible? Well it isn't. Have you ever noticed how you sometimes happened to do the same things at exactly the same time with another person? Maybe yawn and then have a laugh about it? Because you thought it was accidental?

Well it wasn't, you had reached the second stage of mirroring. (Yawning is not a good example though; the last thing you want is the person you are attracted to yawning with you). There's nothing magical or supernatural about doing the movements at the same time, because essentially the second phase is a stage of transition between the first and the third. In mirroring, there's always a leader and a follower.

So far, they have been leading you (because you've been following) but now you are coming to the stage when YOU will be leading! And the inevitable stage between following and leading is pacing - you are doing movements simultaneously.

**Leading:** If you've done your mirroring right, have followed and paced, then you are ready for a revelation. You can lead! So, for example, if you want to take the conversation into a more serious frame then you are ready to do this and they will follow without it feeling forced. Another more advanced aspect, although controversial as to the effectiveness of it, is mirroring the blinking of their eyes and their breathing.

Being able to mirror the breathing and blinking will create an even deeper rapport. But be careful to not be over zealous in this effort because in concentrating too hard on the breathing and blinking you might miss a beat in the conversation. Just try to let it happen naturally.



**You cannot not communicate!!**

## Individual Diagnostic: Interpersonal Communication Styles

How do you get what you want from colleagues? This diagnostic will help to identify the approach you take when you are dealing with colleagues, especially when you need something from them.

Read through the following statements and consider them in relation to yourself. Score each one according to the following scale:

- 1 = completely disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = agree
- 4 = completely agree

Write the score you chose in the column on the right-hand side of the statement.

1.	I tell colleagues what I want.	
2.	If I have a logical case, colleagues will usually listen.	
3.	It is important that colleagues are able to deliver what they agree to.	
4.	I am clear about my objectives and try to stick closely to them.	
5.	I ask questions to understand where colleagues are coming from.	
6.	Compromises are sometimes necessary to achieve objectives.	
7.	I always try to put my case first.	
8.	It is unsatisfactory if colleagues do things because they feel intimidated.	
9.	It is much better if we both get something out of an agreement.	
10.	I expect team members to deliver what I need.	
11.	If I think I am not getting through, I change my approach.	
12.	When I put a point to a colleague, I generally have a fall-back position.	
13.	I cannot afford to be too sympathetic to the problems of others.	
14.	I think carefully about how to get my point across to colleagues.	
15.	If possible, I try to build in colleague's preferences.	
16.	It is important for me to support my arguments strongly.	
17.	It is important to listen when colleagues express their point of view.	
18.	You have to accept you will not get all your own way in dealing with colleagues.	
19.	I try not to be deflected from my course of action by others.	
20.	I prefer colleagues to do something because I have convinced them.	
21.	It is just as important to hear a colleague's point of view, as it is to put my own.	
22.	If I do not look after my own interests, no one else will.	
23.	Colleagues have a right to understand my reasons.	
24.	When dealing with colleagues, I accept that there has to be give and take.	

When you have finished the questionnaire, transfer the scores onto the scoring area below. Add up the totals for each of the three columns.

The approach with the highest score is the one which you generally adopt when dealing with colleagues, particularly when you need something from them. A brief description of each approach is given at below.

You will probably use all of them at different times but the scores will indicate your natural or preferred style. Each are valuable when used appropriately but over use or inappropriate use can weaken your relationship with colleagues.

## Scoring

Approach 1	Approach 2	Approach 3
1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.
7.	8.	9.
10.	11.	12.
13.	14.	15.
16.	17.	18.
19.	20.	21.
22.	23.	24.
TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL

### Approach 1: Directing

In dealing with colleagues you are direct and assertive. You say what you want clearly and you expect your colleagues to respond. You are generally not prepared to enter into dialogue with them over the details of what you want. *Check your listening skills to make sure you only use this style when appropriate.*

### Approach 2: Persuading

Your main concern is with getting your point and the strength of your case across to colleagues. You are prepared to listen to their point of view but mainly so that you can further strengthen your own case. *Check you fully understand your position and theirs before pushing your case.*

### Approach 3: Negotiating

You try to achieve the best possible outcome with colleagues by negotiating with them. You accept that there will have to be give and take and you will need sometimes to make concessions to achieve your priorities. *Well done; however, make sure that you are assertive in wanting to achieve a win/win outcome and do not give in to others that are stronger or not prepared to negotiate. Stick to your guns when appropriate.*

## Push/Pull Persuasion

The two basic influencing styles are **Push** and **Pull**:

<p>Forceful persuasion pushes someone</p>	<p><b>Push persuaders are directive:</b> This is an 'I' driven style where the influencer asserts their own views and ideas and expects others to follow. This style is most appropriate when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are an expert or need to be 'in charge' or take control.</li> <li>✓ You require speedy action.</li> <li>✓ You are working with new or inexperienced staff.</li> <li>✓ It is a critical situation such as safety, security or time deadline issue.</li> </ul> <p>When used ineffectively your colleagues might judge you to be a bit of a 'bull in a china shop' just crashing through others thoughts and feelings!</p> <p><b>Push persuaders use a persuasive reasoning style:</b> This is an issue driven style where the influencer wants others to buy into their ideas by presenting them in a logical, rational and objective way. This is most appropriate when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Your credibility with others and knowledge of the subject is high.</li> <li>✓ You need to get buy-in to an unpopular decision.</li> <li>✓ There is a 'best' answer and you've done your research to prove it.</li> </ul> <p>Over use or inappropriate use and you might be regarded as tough, cold or calculating!</p>
<p>Gentle persuasion pulls someone</p>	<p><b>Pull persuaders are collaborative:</b> This is a team-oriented style where the influencer aims to involve others who will offer views and ideas about the issues. This style is most appropriate when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You require commitment from others.</li> <li>✓ You want innovative ideas from others.</li> <li>✓ Your issue has no one or clear answer.</li> </ul> <p>If this style is overused or used ineffectively you may be regarded as wishy-washy or indecisive!</p> <p><b>Pull persuaders use a visionary style:</b> This is a style where you tap into other's emotions, engage their imagination and help them visualise what could be. This style is most effective when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are at the beginning of a complex change process.</li> <li>✓ You wish to gain people's attention and whet their appetite for future debate.</li> <li>✓ Innovative thinking is required.</li> <li>✓ You need to involve them in the outcome to improve commitment.</li> </ul> <p>Used ineffectively or overused and others may regard you as idealistic.</p>

Skilled persuaders use the most appropriate techniques for different situations and move between push and pull seamlessly. If one technique doesn't work, try another.



# Push & Pull Strategies

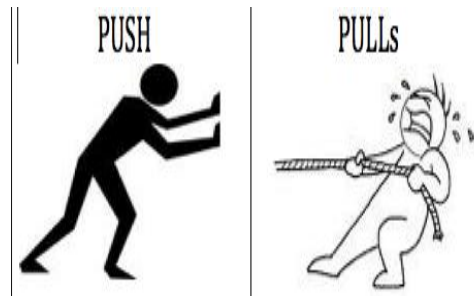
## The Push Strategy

### Five Steps

1. Set the scene.
2. Invite reactions.
3. Summarise.
4. Deal with objections.
5. Agree outcomes.

### Critical success factors:

- The quality of the proposals.
- Information given.
- The ability to get those proposals heard.



## The Pull Strategy

### Five Steps

1. State your own view of the problem.
2. Clarify others' views
3. Work towards agreement.
4. Look for a win/win situation.
5. Joint agreement.

### Critical success factors:

- The quality of the questions used to test understanding and to seek information.
- The ability to build upon ideas and proposals.

# Dealing with Difficult Situations

Prevention is far better than the cure.

There are no difficult people – only difficult situations.

The 'other person' probably finds the situation as difficult as you do.



Tips for  
Dealing with  
Difficult Situations  
at Work

So-called awkward or difficult people rarely start out as such but may become difficult to deal with as a result of your behaviour, that of another representative of your organization or a previous poor experience. If you are a skilled, assertive communicator you will avoid experiencing problems in most potentially difficult situations.

It is also worth remembering that you are not responsible for the behaviour of others. Your behaviour will influence how others respond; HOWEVER if an individual is having a bad day and is determined to be difficult, not understand or vent his anger you may not be able to turn the situation around. Simply diffusing it or gaining grudging acceptance may be the best you can hope for. If you do leave a people in a less than satisfied state, do return to the situation and seek further ways to improve it from the people's perspective.

## Why people appear 'difficult'

Research suggests people who are difficult to deal with may:

- Have misunderstood important details or facts.
- Lack information.
- Be frustrated about an unresolved problem.
- Feel they have been wronged or misled.
- Have technical problems (may not understand).
- Feel that others have been insensitive.
- Have stress at work or at home.

It is important to retain a positive attitude, however difficult the situation becomes, because positive behaviour immediately signals to the other person that something will be done. Responding in kind or appearing disinterested will imply that you don't care. If an individual thinks there is a problem then there is a problem to solve. Correct investigation will reveal exactly what it is, but until that has taken place you must deal with the problem that the person presents.

Deal with misunderstandings as they arise. Ask the person to state what he believes and why. State your point of view and explain what must happen. If the individual disagrees use the broken record technique.



# General rules for guiding discussion in difficult situations

- ✓ Outline a plan for the discussion with the other party.
- ✓ Check the facts and main points – summarise these so that you both have common understanding.
- ✓ Check areas of agreement and isolate issues that have to be dealt with or explored further.
- ✓ Deal with any issues on which you can agree fairly readily and then discuss a logical path for dealing with the outstanding issues.
- ✓ State indisputable facts and restate any contentious issues in your own words.
- ✓ Encourage the other person to talk to find out what he expects/wants/needs.
- ✓ Listen to the other party, show that you understand their point of view (although you may not agree with it) before saying what you think and what needs to happen next.
- ✓ Check compromise situations. What is essential for you and the other person?
- ✓ Discourage personal remarks – stick to the facts.
- ✓ Separate reason from emotion.
- ✓ At the close summarise to check agreements/decisions and responsibilities for actions. Confirm in writing.

**HOW TO HANDLE  
DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**



# Constructive Feedback

The aim of constructive and supportive feedback should be to promote the understanding of the individual so that they are aware of the impact of their actions and behaviour. It may require corrective action where the feedback indicates that something has gone wrong.

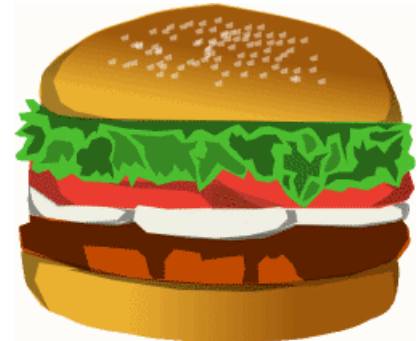
However, wherever possible feedback should be used positively to reinforce the good and identify opportunities for further positive action. Giving feedback is a skill and requires practice. Feedback should be based on facts not subjective opinion and should always be backed up with evidence and examples.

Feedback will work best when the following conditions are met:

- ☺ Feedback is related to actual events, observed behaviours or actions.
- ☺ Feedback describes events and behaviours without judging them.
- ☺ Feedback is accompanied by questions soliciting the individual's opinion why certain things happened.
- ☺ People are encouraged to come to their own conclusions about what happened and why.
- ☺ If corrective action is required, there is understanding about what things went wrong and an emphasis on putting them right rather than censuring past behaviour.
- ☺ Praise and critical feedback is given in a timely way so the giver and the receiver remember what happened!

## Sandwich Feedback:

Negative feedback is not always acceptable to us. It therefore is often rejected unless it is made constructively and with a positive intention. Negative feedback which is sandwiched in between 2 positive statements can be more acceptable.



This is one model for feedback which is not complex and should be non-confrontational.

a) What was done that was right.

*You are good at meeting deadlines and usually tell me if there is a problem.*

b) What needs to be improved.

*However, you didn't submit the monthly reports on time. Can you tell me what the problem was ... (discuss problem and agree how to prevent it happening in the future)*

c) Overall positive statement.

*Now we both understand the situation, and you are going to send a reminder to everyone to get the information to you in time to get the monthly report done on time, I am confident that there will be no problems at the end of this month ... (make sure the individual knows what will happen if he/she does not get the report in on time)*

## Good Feedback – or is something missing?

1. To a helpful colleague:

*Thanks very much for helping me prepare for that supplier meeting – it went really well.*

2. The greeting to a latecomer to your meeting as he walks through the door – he has done it several times before:

*You're always late so what's the excuse this time?*

3. Giving good news to a sales and bid team:

*We won the contract for supplying security services to the Olympic Games so thanks to everyone who contributed, but it's now that the real work starts.*

4. To an important supplier:

*We need to negotiate that cost further because it's not what we want.*

5. To a valued customer on agreement of some work:

*Your business is important to us so we are looking forward to working with you again.*

## Tool Kit

While the ideas discussed in this workshop are fresh in your mind, write down what you intend to start doing, stop doing and continue to do to improve your interpersonal communication skills

**Stop doing:**

**Start doing:**

**Continue to do:**