

Considering Other Factors When Communicating

Learning Objective

After completing this topic, you should be able to

- *recognize how factors other than intention inform your decision on which method to use for your interpersonal communications*

1. Choosing the best communication method

Let's talk about choosing the best communication method. Essentially communicating with impact is...

[Scene opens: the host is interrupted by Joe and Cary walking into frame.]

You're not texting her, are you?

What? Oh, I know. She'll be so disappointed though. I feel really bad.

Well but if Alison had...wait, so who's going to design it now? The launch is Friday.

[Joe is slightly confused.]

Yeah, I've been meaning to talk to you about that.

[Joe and Cary walk away.]

Sounds like Alison's design for the new marketing launch has been rejected. She put a lot of work into that design. Messages can offend if they're not conveyed in the right way. And a text was not the best way for Cary to break the news.

Texting is great for exchanging information, but it's impersonal. When there are other factors to consider, it's not always the best option. Cary doesn't want to face the awkwardness of delivering bad news in person and is anticipating Alison's emotional response, but what about Alison's needs?

Two-way methods of communication – a face-to-face conversation or a phone call – work best in emotional situations. It gives you the chance to discuss the situation and come to an immediate understanding.

Although it's always necessary to keep your primary intention in mind, there are other factors to weigh when deciding which method is best for your audience. These factors include emotion, privacy, dialogue, motivation, recall, and generation differences in the workplace.

[Joe and Cary enter the scene again.]

Alison's met with Felix...

Felix? Who? VP Felix?

[Cary looks a little startled.]

Well, you didn't hear this from me, but I guess she sent him an e-mail complaining about her design being rejected!

[Joe and Cary walk away.]

So Alison sent Felix an e-mail and now everyone knows about it. If your communication isn't for public viewing or you don't want others to hear about it, avoid texts, e-mails, and social media. Unless your settings are managed tightly, it's all too easy for privacy to be violated. And rumors, like this one, undermine a productive and harmonious workplace.

Frank is **not** happy. He just sent you an e-mail cc'ing everyone...

[Joe and Cary enter the scene.]

OK, that's it. Let's quit all this texting and e-mailing. We need to get everyone together to finalize roles and expectations once and for all.

[Cary's tone and body language are emphatic. Joe and Cary walk away.]

Cary's on track here. E-mail trails are OK sometimes, but there's nothing like a well-facilitated meeting for a productive discussion.

And let's face it: motivating people is a challenge! A lot of motivation comes from the tone and nuance of speech, body language, and actions. Meetings where face-to-face interaction, dialogue, and body language combine with video or graphic presentations can motivate in more ways than written communications alone.

[Joe and Cary enter the scene.]

That went well.

[Cary's tone and body language are positive.]

Yeah! But a lot's hanging on this launch. I'm just glad you took some notes.

[Joe's tone and body language are positive. Joe and Cary walk away.]

When the big day arrives, Cary needs to make sure that no detail of the launch is overlooked.

If you want someone to remember steps, guidelines, or instructions, you'll have to describe them. A job aid can be useful here. Attention spans are short these days.

One more consideration: the generation differences in your organization. Intention always drives your decision when choosing how to communicate, but you should be aware of your audience preference.

Younger workers like Millennials and Gen Xers are used to texting and posting comments on social media. Boomers rely on e-mail and voice messages, while Traditionalists may want a hard copy from time to time. So using texting for a reminder or for acknowledging a person's community efforts on social media is best.

Don't categorize people, but do offer as many options as possible.