#4 Proffesional Communications

What is Effective Communication?

The ability to communicate information accurately, clearly, and as intended, is a vital of soft skill that need to be polished continuously.
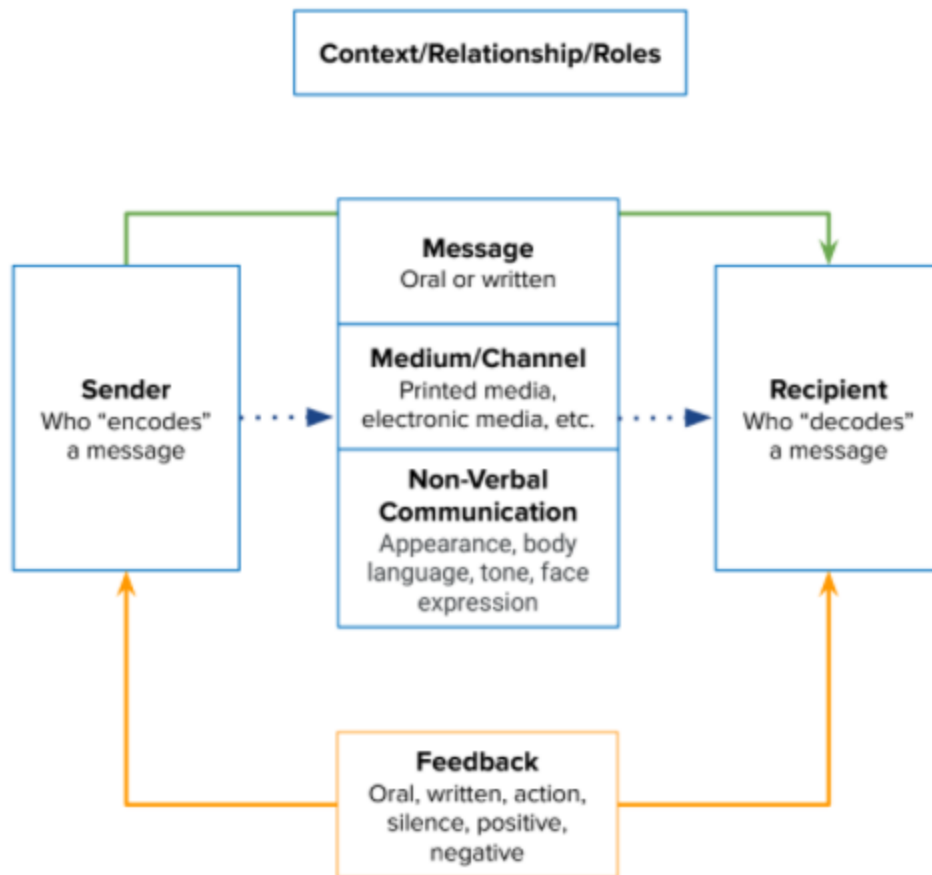
Why we need Effective Communications?

1. **To Ensure a same level of understanding**
   Nobody wants to waste their time and hard work for working on things that were not Intended. Communicating properly will provide clarity and direction, which allow you to execute your duties accurately and save up you energy from endless revisions.

2. **To build trust**
   Communications help you to understand and to be understood. Failure to talk is often blamed for damaging relationship of partnership.

Communication Framework

- Effective communications refers to transfer of information that produces equal level of perception, understanding, and intended behavior between the sender and recipient.

- A message could affected by the context, relationship between parties, improper channels, or nonverbal communication which is harder to interpret.

Examples of Workplace Ineffective Communications Examples

1. **Assuming everyone understands**

Tasya is working with a team of five, which is planning to develop a chatbot project. After a brainstorming session, the team delegated jobs to every member. Tasya felt that the process lacks one more step to complete, but she says nothing because she feels that the meeting was over and she did not want to disturb the other team members. She hoped that the team members will take notice and fill in the gap themselves.

When the team met for a progress update a week later, they found out that the step was a crucial one and that no one attempted to fix the gap. Everyone either assumed the other is working on it or was unaware of it due to the team not creating any minutes of meeting.

2. **Using the wrong communication tool and unable to perceive non-verbal cues**

Rendi is a team leader of a company's data scientist division. When he met his team member Ricky in the hallway when Rendi was about to go out for a meeting. He asked him to complete an important task to be submitted in two days. When Rendi asked two days later, the member said that he forgot because at the time his mind is preoccupied as he is preparing for a user meeting. Ricky believes that he was not briefed properly.

Common Root Causes of Ineffective Communication

1. Physical
2. Psychological
3. Language
4. Systematic
5. Interpersonal

Physical

⇒ Geographic distance between the sender and recipient

Example: When you are working remotely, email or texts can be the preferred communication channels.

However, emails may not be able to sufficiently express the intended tone and message. Despite geographical distance, you can use video chatting platforms like Google Meet to discuss critical points.

Psychological

⇒ The psychological state (stressed, happy, passionate) influences how a message is sent and received.

Example: A stressed person is more likely to become less receptive to messages.

If you're feeling emotional due to personal reasons, don't reply to an email at that instant as how you communicate is largely influenced by your current emotions. Take a moment during the day, and when you've regained composure, read the email again.

Language

⇒ Language is not limited to our mother tongue as we know it

Understanding technical language (programming, marketing jargons, etc.) can help.

Example: Non-IT people might not understand programming terminologies. Using those terms can frustrate both parties because the parties are not involved in the same playing field. Instead, use illustrations and show examples how it looks like to get your point across.

Despite that, ask the other party to remember your example so they won't feel confused again in the future and they can speak in your language.

Systematic

⇒ Existing structure or hierarchy that may not provide a clear roles and responsibilities or limit the easiness of conversing

Example: Becoming anxious when talking to a supervisor. Remember that as a team, everyone works together to achieve a goal and it is imperative that everyone helps each other to get through it.

Along with this thinking, talking to your boss politely with a clear objective and planning (i.e. what it is that you want to get by conversing with them) through the right channels will help structure your communications and eliminate ambiguity. That way, your supervisor will be able to identify what you need and provide guidance.

Interpersonal

⇒ People's communication style (driver, analytical, expressive, or amiable) affect communications effectiveness.

Failure to adjust to each other's character may frustrate both parties.

Example: Imagine you're talking to a supervisor who is known for being direct. Before you explain your ideas, start off the conversation by telling them the goal of your idea. This way, the supervisor gets what he wants from the beginning: the big picture—the projected goal of your planning.

In contrast, when you're speaking to an expressive type who is known for building relationships with people, begin the conversation with small talks such as "How's your day?"

Principles of Effective Communications

1. **The desired outcome of any communication process is a mutual understanding**
   This cannot be stressed enough. In professional context, strong communications is a sign of high-performing culture. With employees trying to understand each other, and not forcing their opinion or commands, productivity can be achieved.

2. **Communication is not optional**
   The old adage might say "silence is gold." In workplace, however, the harder you try not to communicate, the more you do! Not communicating anything is communicating something. Ignoring or misinterpreting nonverbal signs might lead to undesired situations. So next time you think "less is more," think again.

3. **What is said cannot be unsaid**
   Communication is irreversible. You might regret and apologized for what you have said, but you cannot take it back.

4. **Assumption is the enemy of growth**
   Often we behave and think based on limited information or preconceptions that we have. Being influenced by this idea is dangerous as we operate in assumptions that often leads to lose-lose situation (e.g. the breakdown of relationships). Always start communicating with an open mind and clarify anything that you want or haven't understood.

5. **Communication is a two-way street**
   Consider this: "Ineffective communication is the fault of the sender." Do you agree with this? Remind yourself of the communication framework in slide 8. Communication is not an act of sending out information, but it also involves receiving information.

   It therefore requires active listening when you are not the one doing the speaking. It is your duty to listen carefully to the information, ask questions, and check that both parties understood the intention of the message. So when you're not clear on anything, don't be afraid to ask.

6. **Communication is a long-term commitment**
   Effective communication is best thought as a long-term project that needs to be constantly trained. Even the most expert in communication will learn something new depending on their audience and context. Even if you're a naturally shy person, start taking small steps to communicate more effectively.

Forms of Communication

1 Explicit   2 Implicit   3 Active Listening

Explicit

How to communicate effectively in different communications medium

Did you know?

⅓ of today's working hour is actually spent on reading & responding to digital communication.

Source : McKinsey Global Institute Report on Social Economy

Communication Channels

1 Email

2 Chat Platform

3 Conference Call

4 Face to Face Meeting

Emails

How to write an effective email

- Be mindful on who receive the message. Who is your intended recipient? Identify who you would put in the "To", "CC", or "BCC" columns.

  Do not copy everyone that is not relevant to the conversation.
- Subject header should be clear and needs to provide the main message
- Keep your message **clear** and **concise**. **Refrain from using** long sentences.
- **Use bullet points** if there are several points you need to mention.

  Use 'active tense' as much as possible instead of 'passive tense'. To illustrate:

  "A proposal will be written to clarify the project to the client", versus

  "I will write a proposal to clarify the project to the client." Which one sounds better?

  Both are grammatically correct, but if you want to show that you are an action-oriented person who takes responsibility of your work, it is advised to use the second option—the active tense". Passive voice is common in the workplace, many used because it's easy to use and often sounds more formal. But ultimately, it diffuses official responsibility.
- At the end of the message, state the **expected output from your email.** Are there any action plans? Is there any deadline?

- Always check spelling and grammar. It's an indicator of your professionalism.
- When sending large or multiple attachments, remember to **use a file compression** utility/ hyperlink or alternatively use cloud storage like Google Drive.
- Writing in ALL CAPS to emphasize your point can be perceived as shouting. Refrain from using them.
- Emojis diffuse formality of the email. Refrain from using one on business communications and use only when you're writing non-formal email.
- Be mindful when using Internet abbreviations, e.g. ASAP, FYI, CMIIW, because not everyone will understand them. Also refrain from using less formal abbreviations, such as BTW, OMG, LGTM.

Chat Platforms

Effective of using chat messaging

- **Start with a polite greeting** such as "Good morning, sorry to text you." regardless of your level.
- Get to the point and **be straightforward**
- Send your text in **readable** format, break it down to smaller chunks of text
- Keep it **professional** - stay off from unnecessary information
- **Avoid jargons**, especially to someone who might not understand those terms.
- **Do not overuse** emoticon
- **Prioritize email**, use chat platform only if it is urgent
- If the content of the text is urgent, explain briefly about the issue and **invite them to an in-person meeting or a call** to discuss the matter directly
- **Be mindful** of other people's time unless it's very urgent. How would you feel if someone sent you a text at midnight over something that can done tomorrow?

Sample of chat Messaging
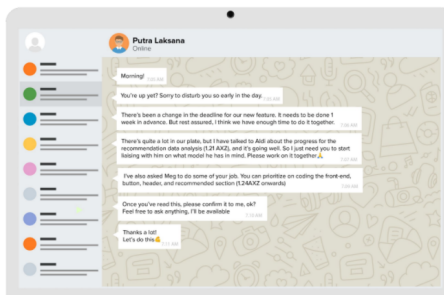
Conference Calls

As a conference leader

- **Be on the call** several minutes before everyone log-in and start the call ontime. It's a sign of your professionalism.
- Begin by **introducing yourself** and **briefly acknowledge who is in the call**.
- **Explain** the objective of the meeting, brief agenda, and the expected output.
- **Be active and moderate the conversation**, ensuring that everyone is engaged and follow the conversation.
- **Post-conference call**, make sure you send out email to **reconfirm minutes of meeting** and ensuring that everyone is on the same page of the discussion.

As a participants

- Minimize cross-talk, i.e conversation that doesn't relate to the main topic.
- Ensure that you speak loudly and clearly, especially if you are on speaker.
- Mobile phones should be switched off or put on silent mode.
- Speak up when you think someone speaks too fast or when you have problem with the volumes.
- Be engaged throughout the conversation.
- When you're not talking, you can use the **mute button** to prevent the noise around you from getting into the call, especially if you're at a noisy location.

Face-to-face meeting

Guidelines

- **Come to the meeting well prepared**. Understanding what the meeting is about, whether it's for information sharing, status update, or decision making, will help you prepare what you are going to talk about.
- **Be ready with data and information that can support the meeting.** Don't assume that other people have or already know about the data.
- **Be actively present** throughout the meeting : smile, don't be anxious - take a few deep breaths. Make your presence felt by the other audience.
- **Explain your reasons** if there is a conflict in your views after listening to the other party.

- **Avoid assumptions.**
- **Ask questions** to clarify anything.
- **Be honest** – acknowledge it if it is a mistake from your side and then explain how you plan to ensure it does not happen again. This applies not only during face-to-face interactions, but through emails or calls as well
- Listen and **do not try to interrupt** especially if it is about a problem/escalation.
- Maintain **appropriate level of eye contact.**

Rule of thumb when discussing via text or in person

1. **Choose the right medium to communicate (face-to-face vs written) depending on the context/relationship of the person you are going to talk to.**
   Example: I want to ask for help from someone who is more senior than me. I decided to have a face to face communication instead of writing.
   Example: I want to explain something that is quite detailed and need a long discussion to go through them. The medium I choose are both. I send the detailed information through an email so that the person can have a read first before we meet. Avoid using chat platforms to send detailed information.

2. **If you need fast response, you may consider chat platforms/direct call instead of emails.** An important point here is to be polite and apologize first for asking them suddenly.

3. **If you feel that you need to make a decision together, it will be better if you arrange a meeting/ conference call rather than discussing it via email.** This will ensure team consensus, preventing any misunderstanding about the subject matter, and provide clear work allocation.

Implicit

How to communicate effectively in different interpersonal.

Non-Verball Cues

1.	**Strengthen what is said in words** Some people talk with their hands. Making a fist or stretching your hands while verbally convincing your team that you are up to the task can assure them better and show your conviction.
1.	**Reveal information about their emotional state** Your facial expression, your tone of voice, and your body language can often tell people exactly how you feel, even if you hardly say a word or try to disguise it. A shrug of the shoulders and a tired expression when saying "I'm fine, thanks" may actually imply that things are not really fine at all.
1.	**Convey feedback to other people** There are a number of signals that we use to tell people that we agree, disagree, finish speaking, or wish to speak. Smiles and nods tell someone that you are listening and that you agree with what they are saying. Movement and raising one hand may indicate that you wish to speak. These subtle signals give information gently but clearly.

Types of Nonverbal Communication

Body movement
Range from shaking the head to indicate disagreement to stretching your hands to indicate openness and dominance

Posture
The manner you take when standing or sitting. Slouching for instance can be perceived as signs of boredom, nervous, or fearful

Eye contact
Maintaining eye contact shows that you are fully engaged to talk to the other person

Tone (pitch) of voice
How fast, slow, high, or low the speech you make can determine the level of urgency and how you are feeling

Facial expressions
This includes smiling and frowning, and is one of the non-verbal cues that is difficult to control

Example of effective body gesture and posture when delivering a message in public when delivering a message in public

1. Do not make unnecessary gestures, such as fidgeting.

2. Know where to stand. Stand away from distraction.

3. Stand with your best posture. Stand properly, do not put hands in your pockets, Do not put hands on your hip, or hold your hands upfront.

4. Use the right gestures - open arm is the best gesture to make audience remember more about your points.

5. Never use your fingers to the audience.

6. Always engage with the audience.

What are the non-verbal cues that should be avoided:

- **Crossed arms and/or legs**: Indicates defensiveness or that you are unwilling to take the ideas that you are hearing. This will discourage the participants from coming up with more points.

- **Leaning back in your chair**: Indicates a negative reaction to something you just heard. Again, this will discourage other participants from speaking up.

- **Talking with a small voice**: indicates that you are not sure with your points and may cause the recipients to not believe to what you are saying

- **Avoiding eye contact:** " The eye is the window to the soul." Not looking to your counterpart may convey that you are not confident or saying something dishonest. This could be difficult for naturally shy person. The trick is not to directly look at the other person's eyes; looking at his forehead or mouth will make you look like you're looking into the person's eyes.

Pitch Pattern Shapes Your Communication Image

1. Open your mouth wider

Do you mumble? **Open your mouth wider**.
Do you speak too softly? Open your mouth wider.
Do you speak too quickly? Open your mouth wider.
A lot of of vocal tonality issues disappear when you simply open your mouth wider.

2. Breathe!

If you're taking in enough breath to fuel a sentence then you'll be able to use your voice in much more interesting ways, including speaking with power and conviction.

Did you shoulders rise and fall? If they did, that means you're breathing wrong. Correct breathing happens from the diaphragm, not the chest. When you breathe, the only thing that should be moving is your stomach because that means you're properly breathing from your diaphragm.
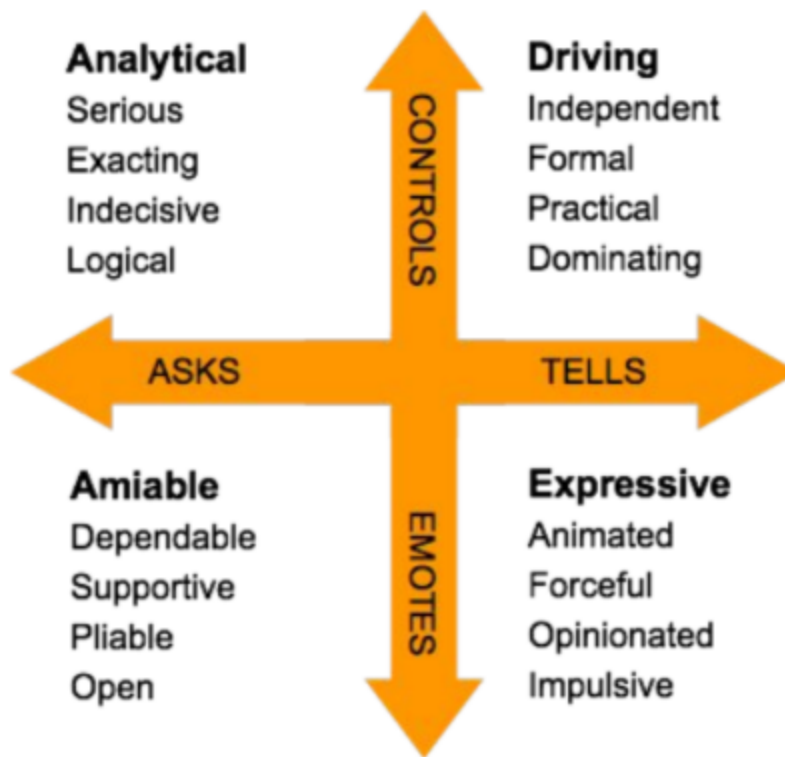
3. try recording yourself

Most people never do this because it's awkward, uncomfortable, and it could be painful to hear our own voices. But this is another situation where just taking a small step will put you ahead a lot more. Identifying the discomforts in your voice will help you to modify and adjust how you express similar message next time you do it.

4. Drinks a lots of water

Dry lips obviously interferes your speech. Not only it's good for your health, being hydrated also allows you modulate your voice.

Understanding your Communication Style

Analytical
Serious
Exacting
Indecisive
Logical

Driving
Independent
Formal
Practical
Dominating

CONTROLS

ASKS

TELLS

EMOTES

Amiable
Dependable
Supportive
Pliable
Open

Expressive
Animated
Forceful
Opinionated
Impulsive

> *The Power of SOCIAL STYLE is realizing that there are people out there that have different preferences in how they like to think, how they like to think, how they like to receive information and how they like to communicate.*

Social Style Groups
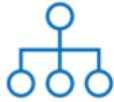
Driver - Wants to know <u>WHAT</u>
Seen by others as direct, active, forceful and determined. They initiate social interaction and they focus their efforts and the efforts of others on the goals and objectives they wish to get accomplished.

Analytical - Wants to know <u>HOW</u>
Typically described by others as quiet, logical and sometimes reserved or cautious. They tend to appear distant from others and may not communicate unless there is a specific need to do so.

Amiable - Want to know <u>WHY</u>
Appear less demanding and generally more agreeable than others. They are interested in achieving a rapport with others who often describe them as informal, casual and easy going.

Expressive - Wants to know <u>WHO</u>
Tend to be more willing to make their feelings known to others. They can appear to react impulsively and openly show both positive and negative feelings. They are typically described by others as personable, talkative and sometimes opinionated.

Active Listening

A research conducted by U.S. professors found that 70% of people's time were spent in some forms of communication. Speaking comprises of only 30% of that chunk, whereas 45% were spent listening to other people talking.

The research rings true even now. Throughout university we spent most of our time listening to lectures. The situation looks similar at workplaces either for office newcomers, who often receives tasks from their supervisors, go to divisional meetings, or attending company town hall meetings. Even Richard Branson famously quotes: "Listen more than you talk. Nobody learned anything hearing themselves speak."

The number shows that listening is the communication skills that most people use the most frequently. But how much information people retain from listening is a whole different matter. The short answer is: not enough. Why, then, haven't we listen optimally when we do it all the time?

Source: Interplay: the process of interpersonal communication. Adler, R., Rosenfeld, L. and Proctor.

Two main problems

1. **Instead of listening, we are only *hearing***

   Hearing refers to the entry of sounds into our ears which happens automatically once we detect a sound.

   Listening, however, requires more than that. Listening requires concentration and a focused effort, which is defined as active listening. Listening means accurately receiving and interpreting messages by paying attention not only to the message, but also how it is told. In other words, you need to use more than your ears to pick up the verbal and non-verbal cues help the listener to understand the intention fully.

   People also often think that listening is a passive process. Think back of a proposition mentioned early in the module, "Communication is a two-way street." Listeners are encouraged to be the speaker, asking for clarifications and feedback. This is what it means by ***active*** listening: listen to evaluate, analyse, and clarify, thus being fully involved in the communication process.

2. **Treating conversations like a competitive sport**

   Have you been in situations where you *think* you're listening to others, but in reality what you're focusing on is how to jump in to tell what we think, offer advice, or make a judgement the moment the speaker finishes talking? In other words, we are not listening to understand, but to respond.

   We often associate speaking to power, whereby those who speak the most, make a witty point, or even speak the loudest as an excellent communicator. We might have found ourselves interrupting and arguing, instead of listening to the entire idea. At this point, assumptions were made and conclusions were reached, which might be inaccurate.

   Our desire to respond as swiftly as possible could have lead to misunderstanding the point of the speaker, which in turn may frustrate or irritate them. This is not a function of listening. Effective listening does not mean that you have to agree but should listen and attempt to understand **first**.

Three A's of Active Listening

1. Attention

Attention

"Listening involves a certain surrender, a willingness to sit with what one does not already know. Listening requires us to stretch a little beyond what we know, expect or want."

—Diana Senechal, Author

2. Attitude

Attitude

Active listening not only means focusing fully on the speaker, but also actively showing verbal and non-verbal signs of listening. As such, even if you are paying attention, you could be doing so with the wrong attitude.

3. Adjustment

Adjustment

An important element of listening is being **active** in evaluating, analysing, and clarifying messages. When you encounter ideas that is unclear or want to ensure that you understand the same thing, it is your role to adjust the level of understanding by engaging in the process:

Final touch

Not all conversations in a workplace will be easy; there will be times when you have to deal with difficult conversations. How you deal with the difficult conversation will measure strength of the relationship—you want things to be excellent and go well all the time but it's how you handle the bumps that you can show your strength and determination to get it right.

Remember **CARE** when you communicate with other people.

C
Bring **Clarity**

A
Talk about **Action**

R
Remain Consistent and **Realistic**

E
Focus on being **Effective** than winning the communication

When It's Time to Listen, Listen Well

Instead of creating assumptions and immediately interrupt someone, listening can provide you with many benefit, including:

1. **Knowledge is power**
   In today's information-driven world, knowing more information determines your success. Receiving and fully understanding the information, rather than jumping to conclusion, make you a more knowledgeable person.

2. **You won't reveal anything that you'll later regret**
   Once you say something, you can't take it back. How many times have you revealed something and then later wished that you hadn't? Or expressed a thought you might better have kept to yourself?

3. **Avoid saying anything inaccurate or silly**
   This is not to suggest to remain silent most of the times. But it's easy to speak thoughtlessly, with insufficient information, or out of a wrong assumption. That can make you look less intelligent than you are. Minimize the chances of it happening by listening more than talking.

4. **Encourage speaker to communicate fully, openly, and honestly**
   By not immediately responding and giving some time for the speaker to gather their thoughts allow them to communicate further information more openly. This way, the speaker will feel understood and more appreciated.

5. **When you do speak, people will listen**
   Who do you listen to more closely--someone who never shuts up, or someone who speaks when needed? Creating a habit of "listening first" not only shows that you appreciate the other person, but by the time it's your turn to speak, people will give more weight in your feedback because you have tried to understand them.