



Business News 01: Good communication at work

An important **factor** in a company's success is good communication among its employees. The most successful companies have a **network** of **informal** and **formal** communication that the management **supports**.

Although managers believe they have given clear instructions, often employees have failed to understand them. When managers give instructions they should make sure that they have been understood correctly.

Employees find it harder to communicate with other employees who have higher positions in the company. People of the same position may talk **openly** to one another about how things are going but are less **honest** with someone higher up in the company. They often **filter** information and change the facts to tell the boss what he wants to hear.

One way of reducing the distance between employer and employees is to **cut down** the ways in which employees can show their higher position in the company. In Japanese companies, for example, it is usual for all staff to wear the same **uniform**. Many companies have a **common dining area** for all staff.

The office **layout** and the distance between employees can affect how well they communicate. The farther away one person is from another, the less often they communicate. Some research has shown that when the distance is more than 10 metres, the chances of communicating at least once a week is only eight percent. If someone is less than five metres away the chances of communicating at least once a week rises to 25%.

Therefore, the office layout should be carefully planned. **Open-plan** offices, for example, are designed for quick and easy communication between staff.

One of the most important lessons for all managers to remember is that communication is a **two-way** process. They should always **encourage** their employees to ask questions and they should always try to get **feedback** from their employees.

Vocabulary

factor (noun)

a fact or situation which influences the result of something, e.g.

People's voting habits are influenced by political, social and economic factors.

Heavy snow was a contributing factor in the accident.

Price will be a major factor in the success of this new product.

The economy is regarded as the key factor which will determine the outcome of the general election.

The film's success is largely due to its feel-good factor i.e. its ability to make people happy (informal use).

network (noun)

a large system consisting of many similar parts that are connected together to allow movement or communication between or along the parts or between the parts and a control centre, e.g.

a television network

a road/rail network

a computer network

Massive investment is needed to modernise the country's telephone network.

We could reduce our costs by developing a more efficient distribution network.

a network of spies/a spy network

informal (adjective)

(of situations) not formal or official, or (of clothing, behaviour, speech) suitable when you are with friends and family but not for official occasions, e.g.

The two groups agreed to hold an informal meeting.

He's the ideal sort of teacher - direct, friendly and informal.

'Hi' is an informal way of greeting people.

formal (adjective)

describes language, clothes and behaviour that are serious and correct, e.g.

a formal dinner party

You should wear formal dress.

supports (verb)

agrees with and gives encouragement to someone or something because you want them to succeed, e.g.

My father supported the Labour Party all his life.

The majority of people in the town strongly support the plans to build a by-pass.

I think it's important to support local businesses by buying locally.

openly (adverb)

without hiding any of your thoughts or feelings; honestly, e.g.

They openly ridiculed my suggestions.

We talked openly about our personal problems.

honest (adjective)

truthful or able to be trusted and not likely to steal, cheat or lie; open, e.g.

She's completely honest.

I'd like you to give me an honest answer.

He had an honest face (= He looked like he could be trusted).

To be honest (with you), I don't think it will be possible.

filter (verb)

remove the parts they don't want to include and keep the parts they want include

cut down (phrasal verb)

reduce, e.g.

We have to find way to cut down our spending.

If you don't cut down the number of hours you work, you're going to burn out!

common (adjective)

belonging to or shared by two or more people or things, e.g.

We have many common interests.

English has some features common to many languages.

open-plan (adjective)

describes a room or building which has few or no walls inside, so it is not divided into smaller rooms, e.g.

an open-plan seating arrangement

two-way (adjective)

describes a situation that involves two people or two groups of people working together to achieve a shared aim, e.g.

Negotiations are a two-way thing - both sides have to come to a compromise.

Remember, friendships are a two-way street (= both people have to make an effort).

encourage (verb)

talk or behave in a way that gives someone confidence to do something, e.g.

They've always encouraged me in everything I've wanted to do.

My parents always encouraged me to work hard at school.

My boss encouraged me to do a degree at the Open University.

feedback (noun)

information or statements of opinion about something, such as a new product, that provide an idea of whether it is successful or liked, e.g.

Have you had any feedback from customers about the new soap?

positive/negative feedback