Communication Guidelines

HR Marketing Team

Version 1.0.7

For

SoftServe

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Contents

1 Introduction

To support SoftServe as a thriving and successful Company we must communicate effectively with each other and with our Customers. Employees must have the information they need to be successful in their role.

HR Department gained feedback from Staff on how the Company can improve and enhance effective communications. In feedback received from the Employee Communication Questionnaire it was evident that SoftServe should outline its standards in communication and that a guide on best practice would provide a way forward. Overall Company needed to take a more strategic approach to communication with identification of responsibilities for Employees at all levels. This document has therefore been developed to meet those needs.

2 Vision

In all Company communications to proactively demonstrate understanding and respect, ensuring that we communicate in a way that is open, timely, clear and appropriate to the recipient.

3 Purpose

The purpose of Communication Guidelines is to establish timely communication across the Company and to ensure that the Employees have the skills to share information and coordinate their activities efficiently.

Communication is provision and exchange of information and instructions, which enables SoftServe to function efficiently and Employees to be properly informed of developments.

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It involves the management of relationships and the need for Staff involvement. Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about message. Every member of Staff has a role and a responsibility to support effective communication.

For the purposes of this policy communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated. Not only the responsibility for communication but also how effectively that responsibility is carried out.

Communication establishes the initial basis for developing and empowering Employees. This process area establishes a culture for openly sharing information across Company levels.

Establishing effective communication begins with communicating the Company’s values, policies, practices, and other significant Company information to the Employees. In addition to this top-down information, bottom-up communication is stimulated by seeking the opinions of individuals on their working conditions through surveys.

4 Goals

The aims of the Communication Guidelines are as follows:

- To ensure a flow of information which is timely and relevant between and across all Employees.
- To use systems which promote communications in a clear and direct way.
- To provide an awareness of the services provided by the Company; how these interact with each other, and the role that individuals play in the success of these services.
- To ensure that all Employees receive consistent messages.
- Individuals or groups are able to raise concerns and have them addressed by Management.
- Where Staff have raised issues, made suggestions or put forward ideas for change, they should receive feedback on the outcome.
- Employees' opinions on their working conditions are sought on a periodic and event-driven basis and where appropriate, the results of these analyses, decisions based on them, and actions taken are communicated to the Employees.
- Communication practices are institutionalized to ensure they are performed as managed processes.

SoftServe pursues a policy of openness and Management regularly meet Employees on an informal and formal basis to pass on information about current issues, respond to queries and receive feedback.

5 Standards for Communications

All communications at SoftServe should be:

- **Open, honest, professional and transparent**

The reasons for decisions are available. Decision makers are accessible and ready to engage in dialogue. When information cannot be communicated the reasons for non-disclosure are articulated: Questions are expected and answered.

- **Factually accurate and timely**

Information arrives at a time when it is needed, is relevant and can be interpreted in the correct context.

- **Clear**

Messages are communicated in plain language: English or Ukrainian. They are easy to understand and are not open to misinterpretation.

- **Two way**

Systems exist to support communication up and down the Company as well as across the sites and various teams.

- **Efficient**

The communication and the way it is delivered is “fit for purpose”, cost effective and appropriate to the recipient.

6 Responsibilities

All Employees have a responsibility to demonstrate the institutional standards in communication.

Specifically:

6.1 All Employees

These are the core responsibilities for effective communication for all Employees at SoftServe:

- Employees should be aware of the Communication Guidelines and demonstrate the principles of good practice.
- Employees are responsible for ensuring that they communicate effectively and appropriately in line with the standards for communication.
- Employees should be aware of the various methods of communication and utilize them appropriately in their work.
- Employees should tackle incidents of poor communication in a proactive and constructive way.
- Information should be shared openly and appropriately in a timely fashion.
- Where a Company constructively raises an issue relating to poor or inappropriate communication, the individual should consider carefully this feedback and reflect on their communication style.

6.2 Management

Those who have direct responsibility for the supervision or management of other Staff have the following responsibilities in addition to the listed above:

- Act as a role model – demonstrating good practice in communication in all aspects of the role.
- Ensure that the principles of good practice are applied in each Team in their area of responsibility.
- Ensure effective two way communication operates to and from the Senior Manager and the Team.
- Ensure effective and appropriate feedback is provided to Staff.
- Reflect on communication standards and practices within the Team and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Where Staff raises issues of poor communication to take action to ensure they are resolved.
- Where communication issues are raised that cannot be dealt with success to ensure that they are taken to the Senior Management for action and support.
- Update the Team communication skills as required.
- Support and promote a culture that encourages Staff inclusion and involvement and challenges non-engagement.

- Ensure all Staff understands where their role fits in achieving those longer term objectives.
- Ensure that when Staff raises issues of poor or ineffective communication they are dealt with proactively and constructively to effective resolution.
- Ensure that all Staff is aware of the Communications Policy and that they meet the standards required by the Company and the Team.
- Ensure consistency, equity and parity in communications processes cross the Company and across departments.

6.3 Senior Management

In addition to the core responsibilities identified above those operating at President, Executive Vice Presidents, and Vice Presidents level have the following additional responsibilities:

- Demonstrate leadership and proactivity in line with the vision for Communications.
- Encourage involvement and inclusion from all Staff throughout the Company.
- Ensure non-engagement is challenged and proactively and constructively resolve issues of poor communication.
- Ensure that communication systems and processes actively support the vision of SoftServe.
- Regularly review and seek ways to enhance approach to communications.
- To ensure there is equity and priority of application of good practice in communications across the Company.

7 Practices to Perform

The Employees-related policies and practices of the Company are communicated to the Employees.

1. Employee and departments are informed of policies and practices that affect them.

2. Whenever people-related policies and practices are changed, the changes are communicated to the Employees.

3. The Company periodically determines whether the Employees are aware of its people-related policies and practices.

4. When misunderstandings of the people-related policies and practices exist, corrective action is taken.

Information about Company values, events, and conditions is communicated to the Employees on a periodic and event-driven basis.

Information that is communicated to the Employees includes the following:

- Company mission, vision, and strategic objectives
- Business ethics
- The Company's values
- Business plans and objectives
- Financial results and conditions
- Business performance
- Quality, productivity, cost, or time-to-market results
- Changes in Company structure or processes
- Notable events
- Other important information

8 Communication Structure

8.1 Companywide direct communication

8.1.1 Electronic mail announcements

Electronic mail announcements are used to inform Employees about Company policies, changes, news etc. They are divided into four mailing lists.

8.1.1.1 Alias executivemessage@softserveinc.com

Moderated mailing list containing emails of all Employees in the Company.

Purpose:

1. To send information about issues, that can influence or influenced the possibility to perform Employees' direct duties.
2. To send information about solving/fixing issues mentioned in the item №1.
3. To send information from Senior Managers and their directions.
4. To present changes in corporate policy and strategy.

Membership: Mandatory, all Employees are included.

Posting:

1. President and Executive VPs, Vice-Presidents, HR Marketing Team (HR Department) – direct posting.
2. All other posts are automatically redirected to moderator for review.

Moderators: HR Marketing Manager, Senior HR Marketing Specialist (HR Department).

Important! For local purposes executivemessage-ua@softserveinc.com ,

executivemessage-us@softserveinc.com will be used.

8.1.1.2 Alias news@softserveinc.com

Mandatory read-only mailing list for news and other non-critical information.

Purpose:

1. To send sport/social activities/etc.
2. To send client visits to SoftServe
3. To send news from SoftServe Pulse
4. To send daily news

5. To send other information that is not included in other alias.

Membership: mandatory, all Employees are included

Posting:

1. HRMarketing Team (HR Department) – direct posting.
2. Marketing Team – direct posting.
3. All other posts are automatically redirected to moderator for review.

Moderators: HR Marketing Manager, Senior HR Marketing Specialist (HR Department)

Important! For local purposes news-us@softserveinc.com, news-ua@softserveinc.com, news-lviv@softserveinc.com, news-SoftServeBusinessSystems@softserveinc.com will be used.

8.1.1.3 Alias achievement@softserveinc.com

Mandatory read-only mailing list for client's recognitions and greetings.

Purpose: To send clients satisfaction/thanks letters according to Congratulation to ALL policy.

Membership: Mandatory, all Employees are included

Posting:

1. HR Marketing Team (HR Department) – direct posting.
2. All other posts are automatically redirected to moderator for review.

Moderators: HR Marketing Manager, Senior HR Marketing Specialist (HR Department)

8.1.1.4 E-mailing rules for aliases in Development Centers.

1. The following roles have permissions to send e-mail notifications to all Development Centers (for example to Dnipro Office Mail - news-dnipro@softserveinc.com):
   - SoftServe President;
   - VP Development Centers;
   - Managers of IT and CIS departments for messages about software updates and announcements about maintenance activities;
   - HR Marketing Manager, Senior HR Marketing Specialist

2. The following roles have permission to send e-mail notifications to a specific Development Center:
   - Development Center Director;

- HR Marketing Specialist;

All additional requests regarding each Development Center e-mail notifications can be send to HR Marketing Manager.

8.1.2 SoftServe Pulse

SoftServe Pulse is the corporate information and social resource.

It is updated regularly and contains useful articles and information to keep the Employees informed of what's going on in the Company, share experience, information, personal news and even your mood.

Pulse.softserveinc.com platform replaces our corporate newspaper SoftServe United and combines other information projects and initiatives. This resource functions as an internal social network.

We recommend using the latest versions of browsers for viewing the platform:

- Internet Explorer 9 and above;
- Google Chrome 20 and above;
- Opera 12 and above;
- Mozilla Firefox 13 and above;
- Safari 5 and above;

It is also recommended to get acquainted with SoftServe Pulse User Guide

SoftServe Pulse is located on corporate intranet.

Resource is administrated and moderated by HR Marketing Team.

8.1.3 Surveys

Employees' opinions on their working conditions are sought on a periodic and event-driven basis.

1. Input is collected on a periodic basis. Mechanisms for gathering opinions from Employees include the following:
   - Opinion surveys or Company climate questionnaires
   - Assessments
   - Interviews with a sample of the Employees
   - Discussions with Management, including meetings that allow individuals to skip levels of Management or to meet with Management representatives
   - Group meetings on concerns
   - Email or other electronic means

- Exit interviews

2. The receipt of opinions from members of the Employees is acknowledged.
3. Inputs are analyzed and results are prepared according to the topics being studied.
4. Where appropriate, the results of these analyses, decisions based on them, and actions taken are communicated to the Employees.
5. To ensure confidentiality, results are presented so that individuals or groups cannot be identified as the source of information unless they have given their permission to be identified.
6. Action plan is developed.
7. Actions items are tracked to closure.

8.2 Meetings communication

At SoftServe meetings are conducted according to guidelines for maximizing meeting efficiency based on the Company's culture and values, business processes, and the purpose of the meeting. Meetings are conducted to make the most effective use of participants' time.

Meetings are called only if they offer an adequate benefit for the time consumed; otherwise, a more efficient way to accomplish the goal is pursued.

To the extent possible, a meeting's purpose, objectives, and procedures are planned, and an agenda is distributed in advance to all meeting attendants.

Meetings are conducted to maintain focus on accomplishing their original purpose.

Meetings are conducted to encourage the participation of all who are able to make a contribution.

8.2.1 General Meeting Rules

Punctuality is a must. Keeping people waiting is considered the height of poor etiquette as it abuses their time.

If the results of the meeting have an effect on others who were not present it is considered proper business etiquette to inform them.

Prepare well for the meeting as your contribution may be integral to the proceedings. If you are using statistics, reports or any other information make sure it has been handed out at least three days prior to the meeting.

Dress well and arrive in good time. Your professionalism is linked to both.

Always remember to switch off a mobile phone.

If there is an established seating pattern, accept it. If you are unsure, ask.

Acknowledge any introductions or opening remarks with a brief recognition of meeting initiator and other participants.

When discussions are under way it is good etiquette to allow more senior figures to contribute first.

Never interrupt anyone - even if you disagree strongly. Note what has been said and return to it later with the meeting initiator's permission.

When speaking, be brief and ensure what you say is relevant.

It is a serious breach of business etiquette to divulge information to others about a meeting. What has been discussed should be considered as confidential unless it is agreed to share this information.

8.2.2 Guidelines for meeting initiators

The person calling the meeting (henceforth "meeting initiator") should be the one with the most direct or urgent interest in the topic at hand.

Meeting initiator should decide the time, place and agenda.

Meeting initiator must make the purpose of the meeting clear to the attendees, how long it will last and what is expected of them, i.e. particular information or preparation of documents.

Meeting initiator should strive to ensure the meeting stays within a set framework or agenda so that it is kept as short and effective as possible. Meeting initiator must keep circular disagreements and the like to a minimum.

Meeting initiator should to record the proceedings or (pre-) appoint someone; documenting major decisions or action points. This should be distributed to the attendees for reference after the meeting.

8.2.2.1 Before the meeting:

1. State clear and reasonable meeting purpose.
2. Plan a meeting and issues you want to cover.
3. Schedule a meeting to attendants using Microsoft Outlook.
4. Schedule a meeting room using SoftServe Intranet (SoftServe Portal) - mind space capacity/attendance size.
5. Only people that are relevant to meeting topic or contributors should be invited.
6. To the extent possible agenda is distributed in advance to all meeting attendants.

8.2.2.2 During the meeting:

1. Meeting starts and ends punctually, unless it is agreed with all meeting attendants.
2. Meeting initiator act as moderator during the meeting and assigns roles to participants.
3. Don't allow the meeting to get off topic and stick to the agenda.
4. Meeting initiator makes summary in the end of the meeting and confirms action items with assignees.
5. Meeting initiator writes meeting minutes, unless there is an assigned person for this.

8.2.2.3 *After the meeting:*

1. Meeting initiator sends meeting minutes to all meeting attendants during 24 hours after meeting, unless there is an assigned person for this.

2. Actions to perform set on the meeting are assigned and tracked to completion by meeting initiator.

8.2.3 Guidelines for meeting attendants

1. When meeting request is received respond with three options: “Accept”, “Tentative” (requires explanation), “Propose New Time” (requires explanation), and “Decline” (requires explanation).

2. Come to meeting punctually.

3. Do not interrupt presenters and do not speak on top of each other. Wait for your turn, unless it is agreed to ask questions during the talk.

4. State your mind clearly and shortly.

5. Revise meeting minutes and tasks assigned after the meeting.

8.2.4 One to One meetings

Managers should have one to one meetings with Staff who report directly to them on a regular basis. This provides the opportunity for the Manager to maintain an understanding of the role and obtain progress on objectives and identify any support that is required.

8.2.5 Team Meetings

Team meeting is a two-way method of communication and feedback through meetings is important as information/ideas can be channelled through Managers to Senior Management for response and action.

Should take place on weekly planned basis. Tuesday is strongly recommended for holding a Team meeting.

Should be attended by all members of the Team.

Opportunities should be provided for all Staff to contribute equally.

The agenda should be open to input from the whole Team.

Meetings should be held at a time and in a venue, which allows and encourages input.

Agenda items for Team meetings should include:

- Strategic and longer term planning
- Opportunities to share good practice
- Opportunities to understand the work and contribution of Team members
- Operational objectives and progress
- Health and Safety
- Employee, Customer or stakeholder feedback

- Feedback to Senior Managers
- Resolutions and decisions taken on Senior Management and Management meetings

Team meeting minutes should be distributed among Employees within 24 hours after the meeting and published on SoftServe Intranet Site on your department page. The link to meeting minutes should be provided to Internal Audit for revision.

8.2.6 Management Meetings

Management meetings are held every week on Tuesday. Each Manager is directly responsible for providing feedbacks from Employees to Senior Management and vice versa.

Manager is directly responsible for timely and correct sharing of information received on Management meeting with his Employees. Manager should provide this information right after each Management meeting on Team meeting. Company strongly recommends Managers to hold Team meetings on the same day with Management meeting.

8.2.7 Company Meetings

The opportunity for all Staff within a Company to meet together at least once a year is considered to be beneficial in developing working relationships and enhancing communications. All Staff should be updated on operational issues and strategic developments, they should also have the opportunity to be advised of and have input to changes, which directly affect their work.

If it is not possible to arrange a meeting for all Employees then appropriate alternate methods are developed for informing all Staff of changes and gaining their input and feedback.

8.3 Management communication

8.3.1 Open door policy – "Walking the job"

Managers should strive to develop a system that enables them to be easily accessible to Staff. To allow this to happen Managers are encouraged to either have set open door times or to allow Employees to visit them anytime according to free time in Microsoft Outlook calendar. Managers should also aim to regularly visit members of Staff at their place of work on a more informal basis to discuss current work issues.

All of the above will help to build mutual understanding and improve overall communication and decision-making within departments.

8.3.2 Planning Change – Staff Inclusion and Involvement

Managers at all levels should actively seek opportunities to include and involve Staff in changes that will impact on them and their work. In some cases this may be a minor operational issue, at other times it could be more significant strategic change. Staff should be advised in advance of any planned change and be given an opportunity to have input, the subsequent ideas being considered before the decision is made.

8.3.3 Feedbacks

Where Staff have raised issues, made suggestions or put forward ideas for change, they should receive feedback on the outcome. It is also important that all Staff is kept informed and provided with feedback from Senior Managers. The line Manager therefore has a role in ensuring feedback is provided on institutional and strategic issues and on operational issues.

8.4 Client communication

Good business relationships are all about how you relate to people - be that your Customers or clients and whilst there are many smaller things you can do to foster good business relationships the main element you should be focusing on is developing trust.

8.4.1 Building Trust

Building a business relationship doesn't happen overnight and both trust and credibility need to be earned. Similarly, building trust also means that you are willing and prepared to risk being completely open and honest with your clients and Customers who will then be able to perceive you as a real person with both strengths and weaknesses. If you can do that, you'll find that your openness will be rewarded with reinforcement and support by clients who see you as a business person who operates with a high degree of integrity as opposed to operating behind a 'cloak and mask'. In building trustworthy relationships, you've got to release any sense of fear – of failure, of rejection, of the unknown, of not knowing the right answers or not having the ideal solutions all the time etc. and firmly put your efforts into knowing exactly who you are, what our business stands for and what we have of real value to offer prospective clients and Customers. In order to have that trust reciprocated however, and to build and develop a client base, there are some things which you need to do in return.

8.4.2 How to Treat Your Clients

Your clients should already take it as read that you have the knowledge and expertise in your chosen field but what they'll value more than anything is that you are concerned about them. Here are some useful tips:

- Be interested in their business and not just your own. It's only by understanding their business that you'll be able to provide them with what they need.
- Return every phone call and every e-mail. Whether its existing Customers or new enquiries, always return correspondence as soon as you can, even if you can't always provide them with what they want.
- Be proactive – don't just sit and wait for them to tell you all about their new innovations. Keep your eyes peeled on the local and trade press and visit their Company website frequently and find out if they've had any recent developments. Call up or send them an e-mail to congratulate them on any good news and put some referrals their way, if possible.
- Make them feel like 'the special one'. When you're meeting with a client, only talk about them not about any of your other clients. Make sure they feel like you're only interested in them. And send them a letter or e-mail after any meeting, thanking them for their time and summarising any agreed points that were discussed.
- Keep your problems to yourself. Always be upbeat when talking with your client. They'll have issues of their own and won't want to hear about yours.
- Don't criticise your client. Even if you're being ambivalent about a particular client, don't criticise them to anyone else.
- Don't lie. Own up to any mistakes you might have made early on. Don't leave it to your client to stumble across any errors you've made later on.

By being honest and showing integrity towards your client, and in being polite and considerate, you'll be well on your way to developing a trusting relationship between you and your clients or Customers that should serve you well for many years to come.

8.5 Delivery Communication

8.5.1 Project Manager - Client Partner Communication

Items that PM should communicate to the Client Partner.

1. <u>Staffing Changes</u>

- ✓ Terminations
- ✓ Resignations
- ✓ Maternity leave
- ✓ Illness greater than 2 days
- ✓ Vacation schedules – impacts and risk assessment
- ✓ Promotions – passing competency tests
- ✓ Career aspirations
- ✓ Rotations
- ✓ Additions

2. <u>Invoicing issues</u>

- ✓ Overwork on specific tasks/project in general

3. <u>Quality issues</u>

- ✓ Quality of Deliverables

Basically, anything that could potentially effect client satisfaction should be communicated to Client Partner.

8.6 Interpersonal communication

8.6.1 Email communication

Email communication should be effective, professional and succinct. Staff should consider if e-mail is always the best way to communicate or if face to face communication would work more effectively.

Nevertheless, email is considered to be official communication tool at SoftServe. If it wasn't said by email, it wasn't said. "I told you on the phone last week," "I told you in the hall" etc., are unacceptable.

8.6.1.1 Think Before You Email

8.6.1.1.1 Consider Email Purpose

When writing an email adhere to the following rules: be polite, respect people's privacy, keep the message simple, clearly identify the purpose of the message and action that you want the recipient to take after reading your message.

8.6.1.1.2 Be concise and to the point

Do not make an e-mail longer than it needs to be. Remember that reading an e-mail is harder than reading printed communications and a long e-mail can be very discouraging to read.

8.6.1.1.3 Addressing Email Message

It is important that you target your message to the appropriate audience.

8.6.1.1.3.1 The To line

Clearly identify the recipients of your email message. They should be the persons, who are directly requested to perform a certain action.

When sending one email both to external recipient and to internal mail distribution group, open the group to show all email addresses.

Otherwise external recipient will not be able to reply to mail addresses covered in mail distribution group.

Open the mail distribution group reasonably to protect the mail addresses from spam.

8.6.1.1.3.2 The Cc line

Cc means carbon copy. Here, enter the address of anyone you would like to receive a copy of your email.

No action or response should be expected of individuals on the *Cc* line. The recipient only needs to read and/or file the message.

Try not to use the cc: field unless the recipient in the cc: field knows why they are receiving a copy of the message. Using the cc: field can be confusing since the recipients might not know who is supposed to act on the message. Also, when responding to a cc: message, should you include the other recipient in the cc: field as well? This will depend on the situation. In general, do not include the person in the cc: field unless you have a particular reason for wanting this person to see your response. Again, make sure that this person will know why they are receiving a copy.

8.6.1.1.3.3 The Bcc line

Bcc means blind carbon copy. If you want to send a copy of your email to another recipient, without the original recipient's awareness, put the address on the *Bcc* line.

Use your sound judgment on when to use this option, as there is a risk of the person in the *Bcc* line hitting the *Reply All* button, and unintentionally revealing his/her participation in the email correspondence.

8.6.1.2 Replying to Emails

8.6.1.2.1 Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions.

An email reply must answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions – If you do not answer all the questions in the original email, you will receive further e-mails regarding the unanswered questions, which will not only waste your time and your recipient time but also cause considerable frustration. Moreover, if you are able to pre-empt relevant questions, your requestor will be grateful and impressed with your efficient and thoughtful service.

8.6.1.2.2 Response Time

Emails should be answered as soon as possible. Good ethics it to answer to all emails within the same working day. In rare cases when you cannot respond to the email within the same day, send a reply informing the recipient of the time when the answer should be expected.

The priority emails must be answered within 4 hours, but preferably immediately, unless other deadline is mentioned in the letter.

Production needs may require different time response. Please be advised to consult your manager for this recommendations.

8.6.1.2.3 Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation

This is not only important because improper spelling, grammar and punctuation give a bad impression of the Company, it is also important for conveying the message properly. E-mails with no full stops or commas are difficult to read and can sometimes even change the meaning of the text.

8.6.1.2.4 Make it personal

Not only should the e-mail be personally addressed, it should also include personal i.e. customized content. For this reason auto replies are usually not very effective. However, templates can be used effectively in this way, see next tip.

8.6.1.2.5 Use templates for frequently used responses

Some questions you get over and over again. Save these texts as response templates and paste these into your message when you need them. You can save your templates in a Word document, or use pre-formatted emails.

8.6.1.2.6 Don't leave out the message thread

When you reply to an email, you must include the original mail in your reply, in other words click 'Reply', instead of 'New Mail'. Leaving the thread might take a fraction longer in download time, but it will save the recipient much more time and frustration in looking for the related emails in their inbox.

8.6.1.2.7 Read the email before you send it
Reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.

Take the time to make your message look professional. When you are sending a message that will be read by someone higher up on the chain of command (a superior for instance), or if you are about to mass-mail dozens or thousands of people, take an extra minute or two before you hit *Send*. Show a draft to a close associate, in order to see whether it actually makes sense.

8.6.1.2.8 Do not overuse Reply to All
Only use Reply to All if you really need your message to be seen by each.

8.6.1.2.9 Use Out of Office Assistant
When you are out of the office, do not leave your associates wondering why you have not responded to their email messages. To avoid this, you should set up an automated reply to the messages you receive while you are out.

8.6.1.3 Composing Email Message

8.6.1.3.1 Writing Subject Lines
The subject in email is mandatory.

Remember! The subject of your email should be meaningful to enable recipients to comprehend the subject matter easily and correctly.

Subject line should accurately summarize the body of the message. Therefore, the subject of email should be written only after the message was composed.

In case when the main project consists of many subprojects, the title of the main project should go first in *Subject* line, followed by the title of subproject. After that the topic of the email message should be written in the *Subject* line.

8.6.1.3.2 Try to restrict yourself to one subject per message
If your email contains multiple messages that are not closely related, it is better to break the issues into separate messages with proper subjects allowing your recipient to deal with each message individually.

8.6.1.3.3 Email Message Structure
Since reading from a screen is more difficult than reading from paper, the structure and lay out is very important for e-mail messages. Use short paragraphs and blank lines between each paragraph. When making points, number them or mark each point as separate to keep the overview.

While compiling an email message, follow the layout of the letter with its constituent parts. The main parts of the letter are the following ones:

8.6.1.3.3.1 Salutation
The salutation of your email massage can differ depending on the recipient’s status and the letter style – formal, neutral, or informal. Please see below for appropriate examples:

Formal style

Dear Sir/Madam if you do not know the name of the person you are writing to

Dear Gentlemen / Dear Sir or Madam if you are writing to a Company

Dear Mr + surname -a title used to address a man

Dear Mrs. + surname – a title used to address a married woman

Dear Miss + surname – a title used to address a single woman

Dear Ms. + surname – a title used before a woman's family name because it is not important to say whether she is married or not or when you do not know whether she is married or not. Many women prefer to be addressed as **Ms.** Rather than **Mrs. or Miss.** in business correspondence.

Neutral style

Dear + the unified attribute - if you are addressing a group of people. For example: *Dear Project Managers, Dear Developers, Dear all, Dear everyone, Dear colleagues.*

Informal style

Dear Tom, Hello everyone, Hi, Hello.

8.6.1.3.3.2 Message body

a) ***Introduction,*** in which you clearly state our reason for writing. In the introduction we clearly state the reason we are writing

I am writing to you (not I write you) with reference to/in connection with… я пишу стосовно

I am writing in response to your letter of 22 July regarding…

I am writing to inform you…

I am pleased to inform you that

I am writing to request your advice on a business matter

I am writing to enquire whether you could let me have some information about …

I would like to know…

I have received your letter of…

Thank you for your letter of…

In reply/in response to your letter у відповідь на Ваш лист

In confirmation of our telephone conversation I would like to inform you на підтвердження нашої телефонної розмови я б хотів повідомити Вас що...

I am sorry for the delay in answering your letter перепрошую за затримку з відповіддю

b) ***Main body***, in which you develop subject by introducing major, points in separate paragraphs. In the main body we develop our subject introducing each main point in a separate paragraph.

c) ***Final paragraph,*** in which you sum up what you've talked about, or you express your wish for something to be done by the recipient of the message. In the final paragraph we sum up what we have talked about before, or we express our wish for something to be done.

Could you, please, give me the details of …?

I would be grateful/ thankful if you could send me …

Please inform me about that (let me know this) in the shortest possible time/ asap

I would like to assure you that… хочу Вас запевнити, що

I am looking forward to receiving your consent (approval, confirmation) Чекаю Вашої згоди, схвалення, підтвердження

I am looking forward to hearing from you

If you gave some information in the letter, you can close:

I hope that this information will help you.

Please contact us if you have any questions.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Please do not hesitate to let us know if you require any further information. (Formal)

Other expressions you might find useful:

You will find attached…

Please find attached…

Attached to this letter you will find…

Further information will be sent on…

Thank you so much for…

As requested by you...

8.6.1.3.3.3 Ending and Signature

If you begin a letter with **Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms/Miss + surname** you end with **Yours Sincerely.**

If you start with **Dear Sir/Madam** you end with **Yours truly/Yours faithfully.**

If you use **Dear, Hi, Hello,** you end with **Best regards, Regards, Best wishes, All the best.**

Use the automatic signature

The corporate standard of email signature looks like the following:

Full signature

Name Surname
Title

SoftServe | Empowering your Business through Software Development

52 V.Velykoho, Lviv 79053, Ukraine
Tel: +380-32-240-9090 x 1000
Cell: +380-67-000-0000
Fax: +380-32-240-9080

Corporate website | Career website |
Email

Short signature

Name Surname | info@softserveinc.com | Title | SoftServe Inc. | +380-32-240-9090 x1000

Note: The signature can be changed depending on a situation. If you reply to a person you have mailed before, you can shorten your signature to contain just your name, for example. But, if you forward email message to a person you have never mailed before, leave the full signature as it is tuned up.

Caution: Avoid using department name in your signature. The names of SoftServe departments were formed historically, and are solely for internal SoftServe use. Many of them contain name of the other client or the name of obsolete technology that shouldn't be displayed to the client, especially if this is new lead.

Important: Do not use abbreviations of your position in your signature. Please use full form of your position from SoftServe Explorer.

Examples of position names for signature	
Wrong Form	**Correct Corm**
~~SBU Manager~~	Strategic Business Unit Manager
~~TechLead~~	Technical Leader
~~PM~~	Project Manager
~~BA~~	Business Analyst
~~QA~~	Quality Assurance Engineer
~~VP~~	Vice President

8.6.1.3.4 Add disclaimers to your emails

It is important to add disclaimers to your internal and external mails, since this can help protect you from liability.

Please use standard email disclaimer:

"This email may contain confidential and privileged material for the sole use of the intended recipient. Any review or distribution by others is strictly prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient please contact the sender and delete all copies"

8.6.1.4 Relevant Language to Use

8.6.1.4.1 Don't use the excessive punctuation

You see lots of email messages with a dozen exclamation points at the end of a sentence for added emphasis. Remember, if something is important it should be reflected in your text.

8.6.1.4.2 Don't type in capitals

IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING. This can be highly annoying and might trigger an unwanted response in the form of a flame mail. Regardless of your intention, people will react as if you meant to be aggressive. Therefore, try not to send any email text in capitals.

8.6.1.4.3 Take care with abbreviations and emoticons

In business emails, try not to use abbreviations. The recipient might not be aware of the meanings of the abbreviations and in business emails these are generally not appropriate. The same goes for emoticons, such as the smiley. If you are not sure whether your recipient knows what it means, it is better not to use it.

Some of the more common abbreviations are listed in the list below. However, only the following ones are commonly accepted and widely used in English language:

'FYI' (for your information), **'ASAP'** (as soon as possible), **'BTW** (by the way)', **'IMHO'** (in my humble opinion), **AKA** (also known as), **TBD** (to be defined).

Beyond that, you run into the risk of confusing your recipient.

8.6.1.4.4 Do not send or forward emails containing dishonourable, racist, sexist, obscene or otherwise offensive remarks

Writing or even forwarding just one potentially offensive remark, or comment especially concerning Customer or partner can negatively impact business relationships. Use appropriate and politically correct language.

Try to be polite and always think before you mail.

When in doubt follow the main rules of email communication in order not get into an absurd situation.

8.6.1.4.5 Use English language in all emails regarding English speaking Customers

When emailing internally use English language also. Take into account the possibility of email to be forwarded to the Customer or another English-speaking person, so preserve proper email message structure and be polite when writing your emails.

8.6.1.4.6 Use active instead of passive

Try to use the active voice of a verb wherever possible. For instance, 'We will process your order today', sounds better than 'Your order will be processed today'. The first sounds more personal, whereas the latter, especially when used frequently, sounds unnecessarily formal.

8.6.1.4.7 Do not overuse the high priority option

If you overuse the high priority option, it will lose its function when you really need it. Moreover, even if a mail has high priority, your message will come across as slightly aggressive if you flag it as 'high priority'.

8.6.1.4.8 Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT

Even more so than the high-priority option, you must at all times try to avoid these types of words in an email or subject line. Only use this if it is a really, really urgent or important message.

8.6.1.4.9 Avoid long sentences

Try to keep your sentences to a maximum of 15-20 words. Email is meant to be a quick medium and requires a different kind of writing than letters. Also take care not to send emails that are too long. If a person receives an email that looks like a dissertation, chances are that they will not even attempt to read it!

8.6.1.4.10 Keep your language gender neutral

In this day and age, avoid using sexist language such as: 'The user should add a signature by configuring his email program'. Apart from using he/she, you can also use the neutral gender: ''The user should add a signature by configuring the email program'.

8.6.1.5 Formatting Email Message

Keep your emails easy-to-read and well-written; it helps the reader stay focused on the content of the email instead of being distracted by poor structure, grammar, or spelling.

When sending emails, make sure your recipient's mail system is able to receive your mail in formatting you set. Remember that when you use formatting in your emails, the sender might not be able to view formatting, or might see different fonts than you had intended. When using colours, use a colour that is easy to read on the background.

8.6.1.5.1 Take care with rich text and HTML messages

Be aware that when you send an email in rich text or HTML format, the sender might only be able to receive plain text emails. If this is the case, the recipient will receive your message as a .txt attachment. Most email clients however, including Microsoft Outlook, are able to receive HTML and rich text messages.

Using the rich text messages is allowed only for internal correspondence. For external messages only Plain Text and HTML formats are appropriate.

8.6.1.5.2 Keep paragraphs short

Paragraphs should be no more than five or six lines long.

8.6.1.5.3 Watch font size

Avoid fonts that are smaller than 10 points or larger than 12 points (except in headlines or to embed details). Also, remember that writing in all capitals is considered shouting and is often perceived as aggressive and rude.

8.6.1.5.4 Use "white space"

Use white space — empty space on the screen — to separate paragraphs and areas of detail. The white space helps to ease the transition from one subject to another.

8.6.1.5.5 Use bullets and tables

Lists and tables help the reader identify the key points in a condensed format that is separate from the text.

But make sure the Customer's mail system will reflect the formatting properly, that is why it is better to answer the letter in the same format of the letter received. If you received the letter in HTML format, keep the same format when answering.

8.6.1.5.6 Use spell checking option when composing email message

It is strongly recommended to run a spell checker before sending an email.

8.6.1.6 Sending Emails with Care

8.6.1.6.1 Attachments

Do not send unnecessary attachments. By sending large attachments you can annoy people and even bring down their e-mail system. According to corporate standards it is allowed to send attachments in any format with size no more than 15 MB. Wherever possible try to compress attachments and only send attachments when they are productive.

Please archive all files before sending. Try to use ZIP Archive as it is the most common in the business world.

Types of attachment format carrying possible viruses might be blocked from receiving.

8.6.1.6.2 Do not distribute an active (executable) program as an e-mail attachment

Please note that IT cannot guarantee successful exchange of active (executable) content via email.

Every day both malicious software and IT countermeasures (antivirus, spam-filters) are becoming more complex and smarter, increasing risk that some of project deliverables will be considered suspect and blocked at corporate network perimeter. Antivirus and email system vendors are sending out updates which can start blocking such content any time. E.g. as you all know recent versions of Outlook won't allow to even save(!) attachment with executable (.EXE) file.

So we have no way to ensure that e.g. RAR archive with your JavaScript will not be inspected by some smart scanner and blocked. It can happen on both sides (at Customer and ours), so there is no way we can effectively control this.

IT recommends using corporate FTP server for all data exchanges between customers and project teams, unless customer provides file exchange facilities.

8.6.1.6.2.1 How to use FTP Server

To get FTP Server access please contact IT department. For more information, please refer to this document.

FTP server should be used only for transferring information but not for storing! Data located on FTP server is not secured by backup. Please be advised to remove files from FTP once they are transferred.

FTP server will automatically delete files that were not accessed for 35 days.

8.6.1.6.3 Do not copy a message or attachment without permission

Do not copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without permission of the originator. If you do not ask permission first, you might be infringing on copyright laws.

8.6.1.6.4 Do not request delivery and read receipts

This will almost always annoy your recipient before he or she has even read your message. Besides, it usually does not work anyway since the recipient could have blocked that function, or his/her software might not support it. If you want to know whether an email was received it is better to ask the recipient to let you know if it was received.

8.6.1.6.5 Do not ask to recall a message

Biggest chances are that your message has already been delivered and read. A recall request would look very silly in that case. It is better just to send an email to say that you have made a mistake. This will look much more honest than trying to recall a message.

To avoid incorrect sending put the recipients as the last step of message creation.

8.6.1.6.6 Do not use email to discuss confidential information

Sending an email is like sending a postcard. If you don't want your email to be displayed on a bulletin board, don't send it. Moreover, never make any discriminating comments in emails, even if they are meant to be a joke.

8.6.1.6.7 Do not forward chain letters

Do not forward chain letters. We can safely say that all of them are hoaxes. Just delete the letters as soon as you receive them.

8.6.1.6.8 Don't forward virus hoaxes

If you receive an email message warning you of a new unstoppable virus that will immediately delete everything from your computer, this is most probably a hoax. By forwarding hoaxes you use valuable bandwidth and sometimes virus hoaxes contain viruses themselves, by attaching a so-called file that will stop the dangerous virus. The same goes for chain letters that promise incredible riches or ask your help for a charitable cause. Even if the content seems to be bona fide, the senders are usually not. Since it is impossible to find out whether a chain letter is real or not, the best place for it is the recycle bin.

8.6.1.6.9 Don't reply to spam

By replying to spam or by unsubscribing, you are confirming that your email address is 'live'. Confirming this will only generate even more spam. Therefore, just hit the delete button or use email software to remove spam automatically.

8.6.1.7 Reading the messages

If you have received the email and even if you are in copy – read the message to the end!

8.6.2 Phone communication

Whether answering the phone or making phone calls, using the proper etiquette is a must in order to maintain a certain level of professionalism. Proper etiquette leaves callers with a favourable impression of you, your department, and SoftServe in general.

All Employees should respond to incoming telephone messages directed for their attention at the earliest opportunity.

Remember that you are representing not only your department, but Company in general, and etiquette is very important. Using phrases such as "thank you" and "please" are essential in displaying a professional atmosphere.

Please be advised to use the phone if you want to get the results quickly and more efficiently from the recipient.

8.6.2.1 Be Prompt Whenever Possible

Be as prompt as possible in answering the phone. SoftServe Employees, Customers and partners lead busy lives and if you let the phone ring too long before answering, they might have already hung up.

8.6.2.2 Greetings and Mood

It's important to be upbeat and positive when answering the phone. Smiling before you pick up the phone often helps in this regard. Always greet the caller according to the time of day and identify yourself with either a first name or first name and surname.

8.6.2.3 Be Prepared

It's important that you're prepared and know to handle the call. You'll need to understand how to transfer calls internally and you should also keep a pen and pad handy so you can jot down details of the call as the caller may need you to take certain action on their behalf so it's important that this is conveyed accurately. Information you could be looking to gather might include the caller's name, Company name (if applicable), time and date of call, reason for call and their contact details.

8.6.2.4 Answering Your Phone

1. Answer your calls within three rings (if possible).
2. Always identify yourself when you answer the phone: "This is _______."
3. Speak in a pleasant tone of voice - the caller will appreciate it.
4. If you have no opportunity to talk ask for the number and available time to callback.
5. Learn to listen actively and without interrupting.
6. Use the hold button when leaving a line so that the caller does not accidentally overhear conversations being held nearby.
7. If the caller has reached a wrong number, be courteous. Sometimes a caller is transferred all over Company with a simple question and the caller gets frustrated. If possible, take the time to find out where they should be calling/to whom they should be speaking.

8.6.2.5 Making Calls

1. When you call someone and they answer the phone, do not say "Who am I speaking with?" without first identifying yourself: "This is ________. To whom am I speaking?"
2. It is appreciated if you'll ask if it is appropriate time for the call.
3. Always know and state the purpose of the communication.
4. When you reach a wrong number, don't argue with the person who answered the call or keep them on the line. Say: "I'm sorry, I must have the wrong number. Please excuse the interruption." And then hang up.
5. If you told a person you would call at a certain time, call them as you promised. If you need to delay the conversation, call to postpone it, but do not make the other person wait around for your call.
6. If you don't leave a number/message for someone to call you back, don't become angry if they are not available when you call again.

8.6.2.6 Putting Callers on Hold

If you need to place a caller on hold for any reason, firstly tell them why and ask them if they object to being placed on hold. If they agree it is OK, and you find that you're still going to be delayed in getting them the information they need or being put through to the right person because they're busy, you should go back to the caller every minute or so, explain that you're still trying to put them through to 'X' or get the information they need and ask them if they would still like to be put back on hold. And, you should repeat this every minute until either you can resolve the situation or they decide to try again another time.

8.6.2.7 Taking Messages

1. Be prepared with pen and message slip when you answer the phone.
2. When taking messages be sure to ask for:
    - Caller's name (asking the caller for correct spelling.)
    - Caller's phone number and/or extension (including area code)
3. Repeat the message to the caller.
4. Be sure to fill in the date, time, and your initials.
5. Place the message slip in the called party's inbox or in a conspicuous place in their office, such as their chair.

8.6.2.8 Passing on Messages to Colleagues

If you've been asked to pass a message on to a work colleague, always do so as soon as possible. The longer you leave it, the more likely you will either forget to do so or you'll pass on incorrect details of the call.

8.6.2.9 Transferring Calls

1. Let the caller know where you are transferring them.
2. Press transfer button.
3. Dial the 4-digit extension number where you are transferring them.
4. After you hear response please hang up. You're done.

8.6.2.10 Ending the Call

Before ending the call, you should always try to recap what you've discussed, if appropriate, and ask the caller if there is anything else you can help them with before saying 'goodbye' and hanging up. It's also good practice to let the caller hang up before you do.

There are several ways that you can end a long phone call without making up a story or sounding rude:

1. Leave the conversation open.
2. Promise to finish your discussion at another time.
3. End on an "up" note.
4. Tell the person how much you've enjoyed speaking with him/her.

As long as you are honest and polite with the other person, you shouldn't have any problems getting off the phone and onto something else.

8.6.2.11 Other Useful Tips

- Never chew gum or be eating when you're answering the phone. It sounds extremely unprofessional to the person at the other end of the line.
- Speak slightly more slowly on the phone than you would if you were having a general face-to-face conversation. Important details can get overlooked if you speak too quickly and it also saves you from having to repeat yourself.
- Keep an eye on the time – If you're the one calling others, remember that at lunchtimes and after 5pm, it is often difficult to get hold of people and you may either find you hit voicemail or the recipient may not be best pleased to take your calls at certain times of day
- In general, however, if you're friendly, courteous and helpful, answering the phone should not present you with too many problems.

8.6.3 Phone teleconferencing

This is often referred to as conference calling or audio conferencing, and refers to any conference that takes place via a telephone. The key etiquette rules that apply to phone teleconferences are as follows:

8.6.3.1 A round of introductions is necessary

Teleconference call participants are never in the same physical location. When you talk over the phone all you hear is audio sounds, so you loose the ability to know exactly who you are talking to. One of the very first things that should take place before a teleconference call begins is to introduce all of the conference call participants. Everyone should have a clear understanding of who is present in the room listening in on the call.

8.6.3.2 Reduce all possible distractions

Have you ever talked to someone on a phone call and all you could hear on the other end were papers rattling or some other endless background noise. It can be very distracting, and can really hinder effective communication. While you can never fully eliminate all possible distractions from the conference call, it is important to make the effort to eliminate as much noise and distraction as possible.

8.6.3.3 Be considerate

This is just as important in personal meetings as it in conference calls. Let other's speak. Don't interrupt. Don't monopolize the conversation so that no one else has the opportunity to voice an opinion. These are all basic rules of polite interpersonal communication, but they are certainly important to remember.

8.6.3.4 Keep an eye on time

Another important phone teleconferencing rule to follow is time management. Don't allow the conference call to get off topic and stick to the agenda. It is a good idea to set a time limit on the conference call when you organize the conference so that everyone can plan accordingly. If you find yourself going over the time limit, be considerate. You may need to postpone the rest of the conference call to a later time to accommodate everyone's schedule.

8.6.4 Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing are available at SoftServe allowing people to hold virtual meetings, they enable important discussions to take place without the need for each attendee to be physically present in the same location.

Nevertheless, as it is a visual medium, the same care and attention is needed as would be the case if you were attending a meeting for real and there are other points of etiquette which you should also follow.

8.6.4.1 Preparation Ahead of the Videoconference

With people sometimes being located overseas and in different time zones, it's firstly important to ensure that everybody is made aware of the time at which the videoconference will take place and how that equates to their own specific time zone. Each participant should be sent a copy of the agenda ahead of the event, alongside a list of all the names of the people who will be attending, albeit 'virtually'.

8.6.4.2 Prepare for the Unexpected

The 'unexpected' is likely to be as a result of any technical difficulties that emerge during the videoconference itself so all the participants should be made aware of any instructions in the event of any technical failure alongside any other contingency plan for alternative communication should the technical equipment fail on the day of the event itself.

8.6.4.3 The Role of the Moderator

Just as in any meeting, somebody is going to have to take the role of the moderator – the person who will be responsible for ensuring that the videoconference runs smoothly. In videoconferencing, this person is usually referred to as the moderator. It is their job to make sure that all of the equipment has been set up prior to the start of the videoconference and that it all works. When it comes to etiquette, it is very much the moderator's role to set the standards which are expected and with this in mind, then as well as sending each participant a copy of the agenda (including start and finish times) the moderator should also set out the rules of etiquette regarding how each participant should interact within the videoconference itself. It is also the moderator's responsibility and good to introduce all of the speakers in the room in which the videoconference is taking place to all of the people who are watching or participating remotely.

8.6.4.4 Dress

You should dress for a videoconference as you would for a similar face to face meeting at work so that's likely to mean business attire. The only difference being that certain patterns such as stripes and plaids for example or clothing with intricate patterns should be avoided as this type of attire responds badly to cameras. Neutral and pastel colours are best. Also remember the background you're standing in front of. If the background's dark, wear something lighter and vice versa otherwise it may be difficult for people to see you. Some videoconferences will also have been set up so that the people who are linking in remotely are also going to speak on camera from wherever they are in the world so as a participant you might also need to think about clothing too. This obviously wouldn't be a factor if you're not going to be participating on camera.

8.6.4.5 Speech

When speaking to camera, make direct eye contact with the camera lens and speak clearly and slowly. This is a particularly important aspect if you're holding a videoconference with attendees who are linking in from different parts of the world so also ensure that you only use verbal terminologies which everybody will understand. Also be aware that microphones will pick up other sounds too apart from your voice so avoid things like rustling papers, for example.

8.6.4.6 Body Movements

Many people get more nervous than usual when speaking in front of a camera but it's important to stay calm, relaxed and to appear natural in front of the camera. Important messages or information you're trying to convey can get lost if people are focusing on you fidgeting or pacing up and down and not your communication, for example.

8.6.4.7 For Participants

If you're in a remote location from the virtual meeting room and have been asked to speak at the videoconference, make sure you follow good etiquette by identifying yourself before you begin. A good example would be:

"Good afternoon. I'm ________ from the ___Department. My question is…."

And, subsequently, each time you're asked to speak, you should identify yourself.

It's also important to remember to allow a couple of seconds between one speaker and the next as sound in particular can often be subject to time delay depending on each person's geographical location. And, because of the nature of a videoconference, they are not conducive to interruptions or people talking over another so the general rule is 'one person speaks at a time'. The moderator should also ensure that the videoconference doesn't deviate from the agenda and that it starts and finishes on time.

8.6.5 Instant Messaging

Microsoft Office Communicator is official instant messaging services at SoftServe, which means that IT department officially supports it. Communicator is available for all Employees and should be installed on each workstation.

8.6.5.1 Use of Message Alerts

There are several message alerts you can switch on or off beside your name so that people will know if you're available to message. One of the most important aspects of instant messaging is to respect these. Therefore, if somebody's alert says 'away' or 'busy', treat that in much the same way as you would a 'do not disturb' sign on a door. In other words, if the alert says they're busy, do not send them an instant message until they put up the alert saying they're available. Even where it does say 'available', it's always polite to ask first if they've got a bit of time to spare.

8.6.5.2 Be Brief

Don't type long winded paragraphs when using Microsoft Office Communicator. What you need to say should be concise and to the point. On the other hand, don't revert to 'text speak' either. Abbreviations might be perfectly acceptable within an instant messaging conversation you're having with your best friend but might not be understood or thought appropriate by a colleague; therefore it is not acceptable to use them.

8.6.5.3 Be Careful What You Write

Don't include anything that you wouldn't be prepared to write in an email or typed letter.

8.6.5.4 Avoid Confrontation

Instant messenger communications should be only be used for things like arranging a meeting or to ask a quick question to which you're looking for a quick response. Don't use it to criticise or to reprimand somebody. These are situations which require face to face communication.

8.6.5.5 Using Emoticons

Use them sparingly. For example, a smiley face to indicate your pleasure at something somebody has told you is probably fine but don't pepper your instant messaging conversations with them as it can become confusing and isn't good etiquette.

8.6.6 Raise of Concern

A concern is an issue, state of affairs, condition, or grievance that an individual or workgroup wants the Company to address and resolve.

SoftServe welcomes all constructive feedback on its activities, whether positive or negative, and understands that, from time to time people may be dissatisfied or concerned with the way the SoftServe or its Staff has acted. The Company will respond positively, where necessary, by improving procedures, correcting mistakes and learning from experience. This procedure aims to provide a mechanism which will deal with genuine concerns or complaints of impropriety, irregularity, misconduct, poor performance or ineffectiveness in a timely and open way. That is why Employee or departments may raise a concern to any level of Management without fear of reprisal.

8.6.6.1 How to raise a concern

It is the duty of every Employee to speak up about genuine concerns in the workplace. It applies whether or not the information is confidential.

SoftServe is committed to ensuring that any Staff concerns of this nature will be taken seriously and investigated. A disclosure to the SoftServe will be protected and confidential, unless Employee allows sharing this information.

8.6.6.1.1 Before you raise a concern or complaint

Consider whether there are more appropriate procedures to make your point such as suggestion schemes or other feedback mechanisms.

8.6.6.1.2 Raising an initial concern

Concerns can often be resolved satisfactorily and dealt with quickly on an informal basis. If possible, talk informally to the person most directly involved in the situation you wish to raise your concern about and as soon as possible after the situation arises.

8.6.6.1.3 What information should the concern/complaint contain?

- The background to the concern/complaint including dates and times of any particular incidents and the names of any people against whom you are complaining or who can provide evidence in support of your concern/complaint.
- Any specific issues which you want to be addressed.
- What outcome(s) you hope to achieve from the concern/complaints process.
- Concerns or complaints should not contain offensive or abusive language - please always try to be polite. Vexatious and malicious complaints (ie repeated or persistent complaints which are trivial or untrue, made purposely to abuse this concern/complaints procedure) or those accompanied by abusive or aggressive behaviour will be excluded.

8.6.6.1.4 Procedure of how to raise a concern

The following steps should be followed:

Step 1 – If you feel able to, raise the matter with your Team or line Manager so it can be resolved locally.

Step 2 – If you don't feel Step 1 is appropriate or it hasn't worked; please raise the matter with your Career Advisor or your Vice President.

Step 3 – If the above steps have been followed but not worked, or you feel that the matter is so serious or sensitive that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, please contact Executive Vice Presidents or President.

8.6.6.1.5 Independent advice

If you are unsure whether or how to raise a concern or want free independent advice you may contact your Career Advisor.

8.6.6.1.6 Guiding principles

To ensure that this policy is adhered to, and assure Employees that their concerns will be taken seriously the person who receives concern will:

- Not allow the person raising the concern to be victimized for doing so.
- Treat victimization as a serious matter that may lead to disciplinary action which may result in dismissal.
- Not attempt to conceal evidence or unacceptable practice.
- Take disciplinary action if an Employee destroys or conceals evidence or if evidenced, poor or unacceptable practice or misconduct is found.
- Give feedback to the person raising the concern to confirm that appropriate action has been taken.

8.6.6.1.7 Resolving of concern

The Staff member will attempt to resolve the concern and, within 7 working days of it being received, will write to you with one of the following outcomes:

- The concern has been resolved.
- The concern requires more time to investigate the matter(s) raised.
- The concern can be resolved (in a specified time, if possible).
- The concern cannot be resolved in the way you require and you can pursue a formal complaint if you wish.

8.6.6.1.8 What you can expect from Company:

Company will:

- Deal impartially with your concern/complaint within the time frames set out above and in a polite and straightforward way.
- Maintain confidentiality throughout the concern/complaints process, revealing information to others only to the extent necessary to complete a proper investigation and make a considered response and keeping the record of your complaint separate from other records.
- Ensure that no complaint made in good faith will be used to your disadvantage in future.

8.6.6.2 How to deal with concern

8.6.6.2.1 Listen

Listening to a person’s grievance without interruption is the first thing you should be prepared to do. Not only will that enable you to assess their complaint more fully, if you interrupt halfway through their complaint or get annoyed with them, they’re likely to get even more agitated than they already are.

8.6.6.2.2 Recap

Once they’ve finished making their complaint, you need to firstly recap the issue to let them know that you’ve understood the reason for their complaint. This might seem unnecessary but you need to ensure that what you’ve heard accurately reflects what they have told you. Once that’s agreed, you should then apologise to the person. And, if you’ve heard incorrectly, you need to ask the person to re-iterate the complaint again and then apologise.

8.6.6.2.3 The Apology

When you apologise, it’s important that you don’t pass the buck and don’t make excuses. Whether it is or isn’t directly your fault, you are the representative of the Company here so it’s important to accept responsibility. In other words, you have accepted liability, you’ve apologised and you’ve stated that you are going to try to come up with a resolution and they are the 3 things, the person wants to hear.

8.6.6.2.4 The Resolution

Persons who complain can often help a Company improve their performance by identifying weak areas in the organisation which you can then rectify. Therefore, in dealing with complaining persons, you not only get the opportunity to find out what’s going wrong in the Company but you also get the chance to enhance your reputation by providing a satisfactory resolution which, as a result, can often improve perception of your Company. That’s the outcome you should always be aiming to achieve, and it’s only possible if you follow the correct etiquette for dealing with complaints.

8.6.7 What to Do When You Make a Mistake

There is great virtue in making mistakes, learning from them, and improving along the way. When you fix a problem, you not only get a chance to right a wrong, but you can build a strong working relationship, too.

You can recover from blunders and be a winner. Here's how:

- Make things right. Your first responsibility is to correct the mistake. The faster you address the problem, the more credible you'll appear to others.
- Apologize. When you make a mistake, you'll usually gain stature by apologizing in a direct way. You won't appear incompetent, only human. And you send the message that you're big enough to admit it.
- Let the matter rest. There is no need to bring up the matter over and over again. One apology suffices.
- Ask if you can do something else. After resolving your mistake, ask if you can help in any other way. Perhaps an "I'm sorry" doesn't seem sufficient. Offering something extra can build good will.
- Let others know you've learned something. Assure those affected by your error that it won't happen again. If you have learned something from the experience that would be helpful for others in your department to know (such as application deadlines, etc), share the information!
- Keep records. Keep a record of errors made, the causes, and their solutions. Review the list of mistakes to prevent their recurrence.

9 Communication Skills

9.1 Overview

The interpersonal communication skills are necessary to establish and maintain effective working relationships within and across workgroups. Each Employee is responsible for developing personal communication skills. Nevertheless, Company provides opportunities to improve communication skills through departments and offices to which Employees are assigned to.

Interpersonal skills that support working relationships include the following:

- Interpersonal communication
- Active listening skills
- Group communication
- Problem resolution skills
- Conflict resolution skills
- Negotiation skills
- Multicultural sensitivity and other diversity-related skills.

Needs for developing interpersonal skills are identified through next mechanisms:

- Self- or workgroup evaluation
- Observation by Manager, workgroup leader, or other responsible individual
- Performance Appraisal

Methods for developing or improving interpersonal skills include the following:

- Self-training
- Training or orientation provided by the Company
- Mentoring or coaching
- Group discussion or workshop

9.2 English courses

SoftServe provides opportunity of attending English courses for each Employee according to the production needs for free. Company understands that excellent knowledge of English language improves communication with clients and as a result increases quality of services.

Company determines queue of Employees for English studies according to production needs and provides them with free studies. Nevertheless, Employees who are currently not in the priority list for attending English courses may apply for studies at 50% discount price by sending a request to English Department.

9.3 How to Make a Speech

At some time or other you may be called upon to make a speech at work. Because there are so many different reasons and occasions for making a speech, there will often be different approaches depending on the circumstances. There are a number of things, however, that are common considerations to all speeches and by knowing the types of things you should and shouldn't say and do, you'll stand more chance of your speech being accepted well and of your message being clearly understood in the way you intended it to be.

9.3.1 Preparation

The key to a good speech is good preparation and that all begins by asking yourself four questions:

- Who is my audience?
- What do they want from me or need to know from me?
- How long am I allowed to talk for?
- How long do I need to talk for?

If you're asked to make a speech, hopefully you'll have been given a few days or weeks to prepare it. It's useful to keep a pad handy in which you can jot down thoughts as they occur to you or even record them onto a Dictaphone. Have a good idea of the themes or topics you intend to talk about and obtain any relevant facts and figures if you need those kinds of things to back your points up with. Depending on what type of speech it is, it's often quite useful to adopt a 'past-present' approach. This means taking your audience on a journey back in time then bringing them up to the present as this is often a way to make an impact upon the points you are trying to make. It also helps to keep the attention span of your audience for longer if you can occasionally weave in facts that they didn't know or to give them an insight into things which they would not have been fully aware of.

Quite often, a speech to do with business will often have the audience coming up with questions that occur to them as you're progressing with your speech. Therefore, it's also useful to build in your own Q&A. s. If there's time and you're comfortable with unscripted responses, you might even throw out those questions to the audience. This is bound to wake them up if you think they're in danger of losing interest and nodding off. However, unless you're confident and can control your audience, this can sometimes be a risky strategy as a speech can easily turn into a heated debate if you lose control.

9.3.2 Writing Your Speech

Good option would be to prepare some notes or bullet points which you can take onto the platform with you that you can refer to now and again and just use these as jumping off points which you can then flesh out naturally. You should try and get your 'big idea' across in the first few minutes of a speech to capture the audience's attention. It is the first and last 30 seconds of a speech that the audience tends to remember the most. Your ending should, therefore, also conclude on a high or positive note and should also inspire your audience in some way.

9.3.3 Rehearsing and Final Checks

It's always a good idea to rehearse your speech before you deliver it. Recording it and playing it back to yourself will give you some useful tips as to what does and doesn't work and also about any improvements you might need to make to the way you deliver it, perhaps changing intonation or injecting humour in certain places, for example. You should also time yourself (if you have a limit on the amount of time you can talk for) and deliver your speech at the same speed as you intend to on the day. That way, you'll be able to add to it if it's too short or cut bits out if you're going to run over time. If the latter is likely to be the case, then make sure you edit appropriately and cut out the less important bits rather than talking too quickly in order to try to squeeze everything in. If you end up rushing it to get everything in, you'll have the opposite effect as you'll lose your audience near the very beginning. Other things that can help you to iron out any problems can be by practising in front of a mirror or in front of another person who can give you their opinion.

9.3.4 The Big Day

As you get close to delivering your speech for real, try to relax. If you've had to walk up to a stage or platform to deliver it, take a pause and a few shallow breaths, just to regulate your breathing first and this will also help to calm any nerves you might have. If you're not using a microphone, make sure you can be heard by everybody and try to move around the stage or platform a little to command everybody's attention. If you do have a microphone, speak at your normal voice level but speak a little more slowly and distinctly and, unless your microphone is attached to you, remember not to move around in this instance or else your voice will be lost. Smile and look enthusiastic and try to look around at the audience at least as much as you look at your notes or script. If you don't glance at the audience from time to time and you don't look enthusiastic, you'll soon find that the audience will get bored and switch off. Vary the pitch of your voice to convey different emotions and to inject or lessen pace as these are skills which can be used to great dramatic effect.

9.4 How to Make a Presentation

Before looking at how to give a presentation it would be worthwhile you taking a look at the related paragraph entitled ‘How To Make A Speech’ as many of the skills you need to be able to give a good presentation are very similar to those needed for effective speech making so, in terms of considering your audience, the topics you’re going to discuss, rehearsing and how to project your voice etc., please refer to the speech making article for more tips on that aspect as they would be very similar for giving a presentation. This chapter, however, will look more at the kinds of issues that tend to be more specific to presentations as opposed to speeches with two of the most common factors being the use of visual aids and audience participation.

9.4.1 Using Visual Aids

Technology has become so advanced these days that presentations can often be just as exciting watching a theatre production. They can incorporate pyrotechnics, sound effects, background music and much more to create the effects the presenter wants to give. However, if you’re asked to give a presentation at work you’re less likely to be going too far ‘over the top’, yet there are still many ways in which you can add value to your presentation and to keep your audience’s attention more effectively than you might be able to in making a speech.

PowerPoint presentations can be highly effective by putting the focus onto key elements within each section of a presentation with the use of frames containing bullet points which can swoosh in from the side or explode in to the centre of the screen and there are all sorts of other effects in between. Then you can use a slide projector, overhead projector, flip charts, posters and several other things besides. The important thing to bear in mind when using visual aids is to ask yourself, “does the visual aid add to an understanding of the information I’m trying to get across?” If you can say ‘yes’ to that, then a visual aid should be used at that juncture but if you can’t, don’t use one. Whilst they do liven up a presentation, they should be used carefully to simply illustrate a particular point, as opposed to being the focal point of the presentation. An obvious example of where you could use a visual aid would be where you are explaining sales figures and growth trends within your Company, where just verbalising a load of sales figures will have little impact. However, if you have a visual aid which demonstrates a graph of these figures, then your audience are much more likely to understand the importance of the figures you’re conveying to them.

9.4.2 Logical Running Order

Most of the best presentations run in a logical sequence, beginning with point A going on to Point B and so on and so forth. To keep your audience in touch with the significance of what you’re talking about, it’s often a good idea to relay to them the order of events before you begin. That way, they can adapt their minds in knowing the sequence which will help them better understand how all the pieces fit together.

One of the best quotes about giving presentations re-emphasises this point. Unlike a speech, a presentation is often more of a set of jigsaw pieces which all interweave to form a complete whole and this is why, when giving a presentation, it’s often important to refer back and relate something you’ve already mentioned to something you’re talking about 10 minutes later so, try to remember this famous quote as it will help you when structuring your presentation. “Tell them what you’re going to tell them, then tell them, then re-iterate what you have already told them.” It might sound confusing but once you get to put a presentation together, you’ll see the validity of this quote.

9.4.3 Common Problems

Try to ensure that all of your visual aids are set up and in the order they are meant to be used before you give your presentation. There's nothing worse than, say, using a slide projector to illustrate the points you're making only to find as you turn the projector on that all of the slides are in back to front order. Your biggest nightmare will be if your visual aids are powered by electricity and the supply fails or the machine malfunctions. Obviously, this can never be predicted but it's a good opportunity to think on your feet and it's also something you should make a contingency for during your preparations. In other words, try to have a back-up or rescue plan. The graph you're displaying on a PowerPoint presentation? Well, you could always have that drawn up on a Flip Chart as back up, for example. In other circumstances, you may simply have to think on your feet. For example, if you were going to demonstrate certain facts and figures using a visual aid, are you able to take out the numbers and simply use words to describe the points you are making in terms of general trends instead of referring to specific figures. People will be able to tell the difference between 'huge growth' and a 'slight increase'.

Often, a good way to get around a power failure or a machine malfunction is to have prepared a handout in advance which you can give to each member of your audience before you make your presentation. Of course, don't forget to keep one for yourself. That way, if you can't use your visual aids, each member of the audience should still have a hard copy version containing the same kinds of diagrams, graphs, pictures etc. that you intended to show and therefore, the presentation can go on in its original form. Therefore, although highly effective, always think of visual aids as a 'complement' to your presentation but don't rely on them.

9.4.4 Group Presentation

In a group presentation, it often gives you the chance to get out of the spotlight for a while and put others into it. However, there are still issues you need to consider. Things like how you're going to introduce the next speaker and effect a smooth transition from one speaker to the next will be important in maintaining the flow of your presentation. Does each person also know what the other person is going to be talking about? You don't want to be duplicating information. It's also important that each person knows how long they have to speak and not to run overtime as that will hamper the next person's presentation.

9.4.5 Q&A

Finally, unlike a speech, a presentation will usually involve a question and answer session with the audience. This is often the trickiest part as you, as presenters, are not likely to know exactly what questions you might face and your responses will have to be totally unscripted. All you can do is to consider beforehand what questions you think you might get asked and to prepare answers as best as you can. And, if you're part of a group, then you also need to ensure that any answers you give as individuals do not conflict with the answers another group member might have given as you'll lose your credibility if you're not all 'singing from the same hymn sheet'.

So, similarly to a speech, preparation is the key to giving a good presentation. Don't overdo the visual aids but use them effectively and have a back-up plan prepared in case the visuals fail.

10 Measurement and Analysis

Responsibility for monitoring review and further development of the Communication Guidelines will lie with the HR Department.

HR Department will use the following to benchmark the effectiveness of communication across the institution.

- Annual Employee Questionnaire
- Exit interviews
- No of concerns relating to inappropriate or ineffective communication
- Number of Disciplinary issues relating to inappropriate or ineffective communication
- Feedback via Performance review
- Feedback from Staff following events on communication

As a result of monitoring and review the Communication Guidelines will be enhanced and the Action Plan developed further to ensure SoftServe Employee are supported in their work by effective communications at all levels.