



7 Cs activities

English (National University of Sciences and Technology)



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7Cs of Effective Communication

1. Clear:

Any message needs to come out clearly from your communication rather than the recipient having to assume things and coming back to you for more information. This will only lead to more time being wasted on emails.

Do not try to communicate too many things in one message. This will dilute the attention of the reader. For an example of poor communicating skills, look at this email below.

Bad example:

Dear James,

I would like to talk to you about the new client's project which the engineering team had discussed yesterday. I might need the help of John from your team.

Regards,
Kevin

There are innumerable things that are wrong in this email. James might not even know who the new client is or what the project is about. He probably was not part of the meeting with the engineering team. Furthermore, there might be more than one John in James' big team. Kevin also mentions that he wants to talk. However, he hasn't mentioned what time he would like to talk, neither has he asked James if he would be free at any of the time slots available.

Here's how this email could be made clearer.

Good example:

Dear James,

As you may know we have signed up XYZ as our new client. I had a meeting with the engineering team yesterday and had discussed the campaign requirements for this project. John Redden from your team had done a pretty good job last time doing the social media campaign for ABC and so I would like him to work on the XYZ campaign too. Would you be available sometime tomorrow to discuss this further?

Regards
Kevin

This email has all the information James needs to know. He can be well prepared for the meeting and also check on John's availability and have an answer for Kevin when they meet the next day – in whichever time slot both the men are free.

2. Correct:

When too many emails are being written in a day, people tend to type fast and therefore might make spelling mistakes. Spell check will not be able to catch it if the wrongly spelt word is in fact another word in the English language. You also need to ensure that you address people the right way and spell their names correctly. Additionally, you need to ensure that the reader has sufficient knowledge and education to understand the technical terms that you use in your communication.

Bad example

Dear David,

Further to our conversation today, I am attaching the plan for the first stage of the project. Hope the one weak deadline is okay with you and your team.

Regards

Sally

There were two glaring spelling errors in this e-mail. 'Conversation' was spelt 'conservation' and 'week' was spelt 'weak'. Though these are minor errors, they could gravely impact the credibility of your professionalism and the brand image of the organization you represent. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to check all your spellings and prefixes before you send an email, especially if you are sending it to a client or a vendor outside of your company.

3. Complete:

A complete message will have all the information the reader needs to know to be able to respond or take action. If you require the reader to take some kind of action, ensure that you have a 'call-to-action' in your email and also communicate the urgency of the task in question. Incomplete messages lead to iterations, a lot of back-and-forth, and waste of time and effort on both ends. Here is an example of an incomplete message.

Bad example:

Hi all,

Let us meet tomorrow to discuss the product launch event. Please be there on time.

Thanks
Chris

There is no mention of the time of the meeting scheduled for, or the location, neither is there any set agenda. The recipients of the email would have to write back or call back to Chris to clarify.

Good example:

The best way to have written this email is:

Hi all,

Let us meet tomorrow at 11am at Conference room 3 to discuss the product launch event. We will have to decide the keynote speakers and complete the event invite draft tomorrow. Please be there on time.

Thanks
Chris

4. Concise:

People more often than not tend to write 4 sentences in a place where they could have finished the message in 2 sentences. This wastes the time of the sender and the receiver and in turn limits their productivity too. Furthermore, try not to add fillers such as 'I mean', 'sort of', 'for instance', 'basically', etc. Your message needs to be accurate, to the point and crisp. Here is an example of a bad email.

Bad example:

Hi Suzanne

I think we need to talk about the CSR campaign, I mean the one which we need to do as a quarterly exercise. I think it is a great way of enhancing our brand image. Basically, it would just be a visit to an orphanage but we can sort of do other things too. For instance, we could take the kids out for a short trip to a nearby park or zoo. Let us sit and talk tomorrow.

Regards
Jennifer

The mail is full of fillers and extended phrases wherein she could have finished the email in just two sentences, such as the one below.

Good example:

Hi Suzanne

I need to discuss the quarterly CSR campaign with you. Let us take the kids out this time to a nearby park or zoo instead of just visiting them. This will help enhance our brand image. We'll talk in detail tomorrow.

Regards
Jennifer

5. Concrete:

You need to believe in you what you want to convey to the audience. Concreteness is a quality which needs to come to the fore especially during marketing or advertising campaigns. There need to be details that capture the attention of the audience, not bore them.

Bad example:

"Hilltop Resort is the best resort. Do come to us on your next holiday"

This is a vague ad message. It is made to sound like just another resort advertisement among a hundred others. The audience will never remember this ad message. There are no concrete details to take away from this message.

Good example:

"Hilltop Resort is the jewel of the western hills. Take a break from your work. Escape from life's chaos and stress. Relax and rejuvenate yourself at Hilltop. Go back fresh and energized!"

This message gives you visualizing details. The reader can actually imagine being in a beautiful resort breathing fresh air and swimming in a pool instead of slogging away at his or her office. That is a concrete message conveyed to the audience.

6. Coherent:

Your message needs to have a logical flow. All sentences in your email or report should be connected to the previous one and stick to the main topic. Without coherence, the reader will easily lose track of what you have conveyed.

Bad example:

Dear Nam,

Thanks for submitting the industry report. Finn will give you some feedback on it. Finn also wanted to find out if you will be available for the client meeting tomorrow. We will be discussing the budget for the next phase of the project.

Regards
Shirley

The email was supposed to be about the industry report which was submitted and the feedback for it. The question about the meeting had come out of nowhere and will now distract Nam and her priorities.

Good example:

Dear Nam,

Thanks for submitting the industry report. Finn will give you some feedback on it. You will be receiving an email from him with detailed comments.

Regards
Shirley

This email talks only about the report. Therefore, Nam knows that her report has been viewed and she needs to wait for feedback. There are no other distractions. The query about the meeting must have been an entirely different email.

7. Courteous:

Being courteous is of profound importance in a corporate setting. Individuals who work together are not necessarily friends and therefore, to maintain a healthy working relationship, being courteous is a necessity. Hidden insults and aggressive tones will only cause trouble among individuals and result in reduced morale and productivity.

Bad example:

Hi Drew,

I really do not appreciate how your IT team ignores the requests of my team alone. My team is an important function in this organization too and we have our own IT requirement. Can you ensure that your team responds promptly to my team's requests hereon?

Regards
Stanley

This email is condescending, judgmental and disrespectful. Drew might now order his team to not respond to your team's requirements entirely.

Try this instead:

Good example:

Hi Drew,

I understand that the IT team is swamped with work and gets requests from every department in the organization. My team however is working on a high-priority project and I would greatly appreciate if you could ask your team members to respond to my team's queries promptly and help us complete this project on time. Please do let me know if you need anything from me.

Regards

Stanley

As a result of the polite request, it is likely that Drew will feel appreciated and important and he will definitely ask his team to help your team out. Work gets done and everybody is happy too.

To sum up, working with other individuals, be it within your team or other teams in the organization is the norm in today's corporate setting. Therefore, communication becomes a critical skill. When you communicate well, you become more efficient, you tend to command respect among your peers and you maintain a healthy relationship with your colleagues. Keep in mind the 7 Cs of effective communication and accelerate your career growth.