Communication Skills for Professional Practice

CENG20008 Professional Engineering

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Today's Learning Objectives

- **Understand** the need for effective communication in the workplace

- **Discover** some of the methods used commonly to communicate effectively in the workplace

- **Explore** different methods for good oral communications

- **Recognise** the accepted methods of written communication used in engineering organisations

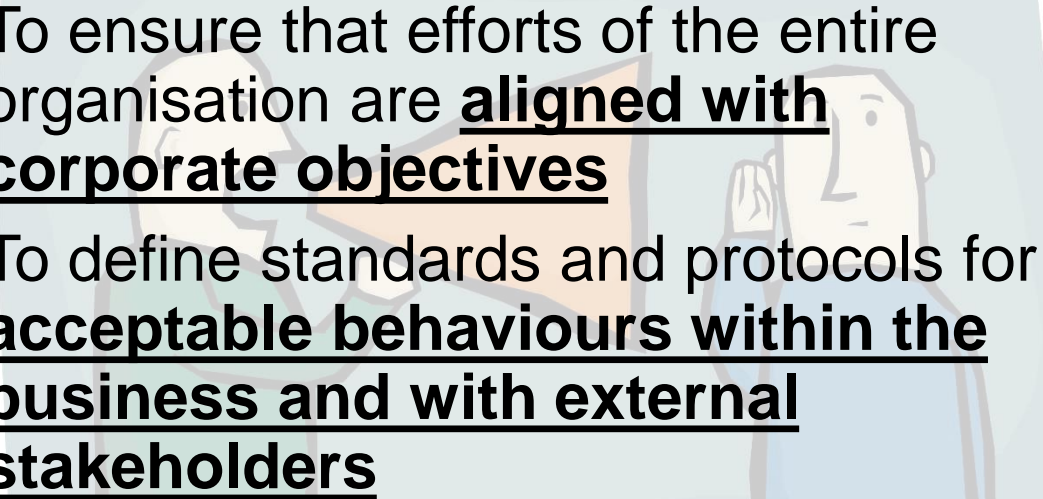bristol.ac.uk

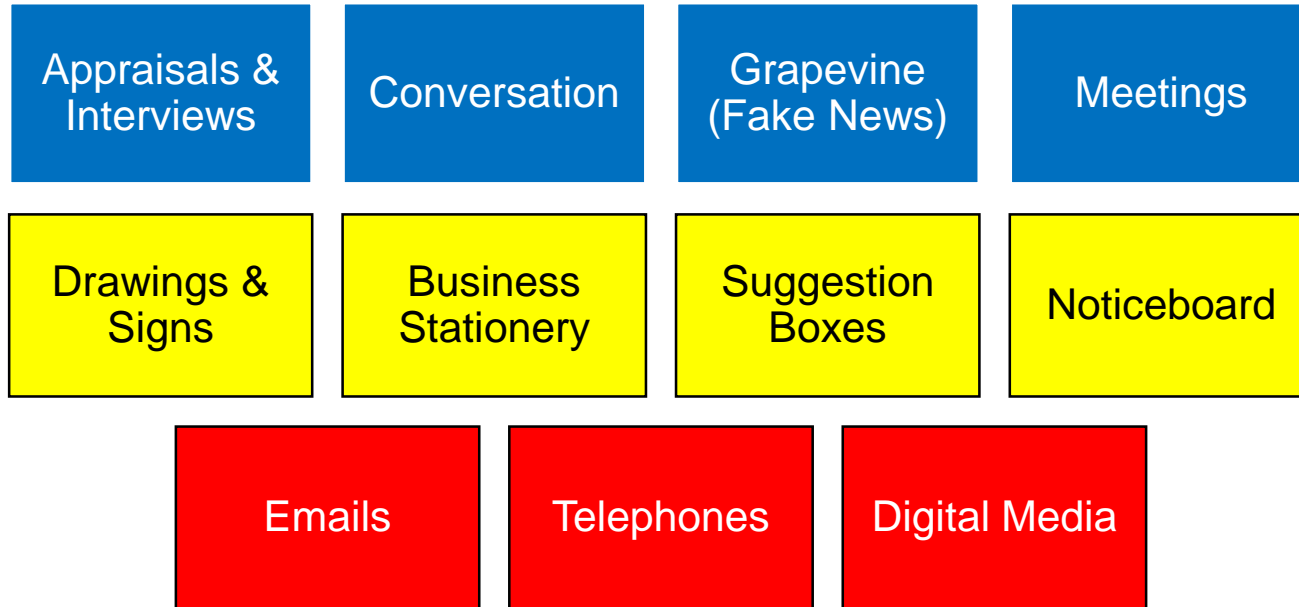# What's the purpose of a workplace communication system?

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What's the purpose of a workplace communication system?

- To ensure that efforts of the entire organisation are **aligned with corporate objectives**

- To define standards and protocols for **acceptable behaviours within the business and with external stakeholders**

Examples of Communication Methods and Aids

| Appraisals & Interviews | Conversation | Grapevine (Fake News) | Meetings |

| Drawings & Signs | Business Stationery | Suggestion Boxes | Noticeboard |

| Emails | Telephones | Digital Media |

Communication = (Gathering + Sharing)*Information

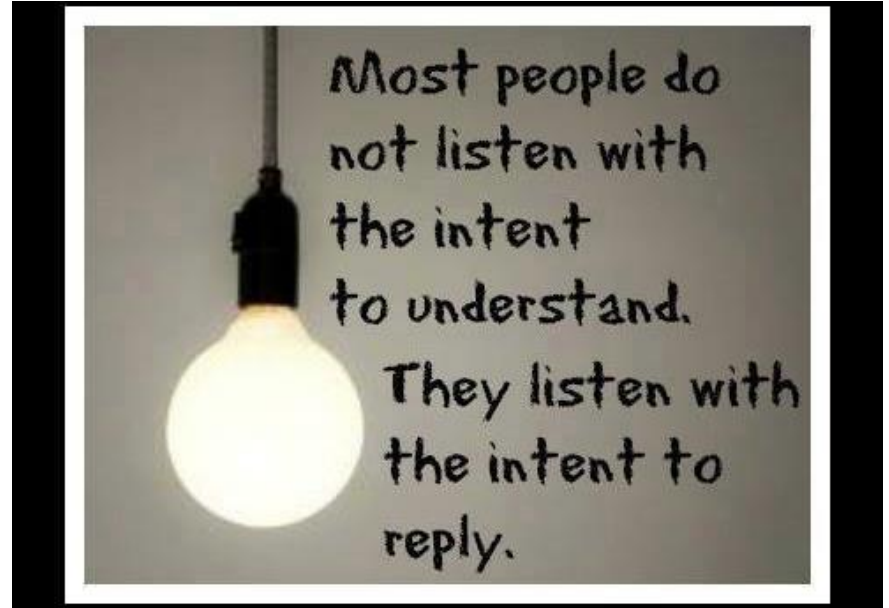|		
Customers	Suppliers	Colleagues
Literature	Reading	Note-Taking

Gathering Information

- Listening
  - Actively listen to them
  - Do not rely just on questionnaires, complaints or service records
- Visiting
  - Spend time with customers to see their real needs
  - Customers have information that is difficult to get elsewhere

Most people do not listen with the intent to understand. They listen with the intent to reply.

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Gathering Information Suppliers   Colleagues

Suppliers

- Remember, you are *their* customer and they will share information to satisfy your needs

- Suppliers may have processes or technical expertise that your business needs

- Supplier partnerships are key

Colleagues

- Use your manager sparingly – and for specific business issues

- Experienced colleagues can provide project/technical expertise – but will expect this to be a two-way process

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Gathering Information: Reading

- Adults read at many different levels
  - acquiring detailed, factual, complex information
  - skipping through articles to find anything interesting
- Readers expect properly prepared material with good structure

- Reading techniques are varied:
  - High resolution (best for learning)
  - Normal speed (recreational)
  - High speed (quick access to areas of interest)
  - Scanning (advanced form of high-speed reading – get an overview only)

Gathering Information: Note-Taking

- Very simple & effective method for recording information when situations prevent the note-taker to control the flow of data
- The best notes are made from rough notes made at the time which are then collated into a complete & structured set

- Active listeners make notes to show the speaker that they are listening
  - some cultures appreciate this simple courtesy
  - it allows the writer to recap on specific issues for clarification
  - information recall at a later date may be noticeable better

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Sharing Information
Written Communication

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Writing Style Tips

- Avoid using many words when few will do:
  - "The audibility of oral delivery should be received by the listener with sufficient acoustic energy for reception at a speed that is acceptable to the listener without the need for repetition."
  - All of the above just means "Speak clearly and slowly."

- Avoid ambiguity:
  - "Nothing is more effective in relieving stress concentration than increasing the radius of the concentrating feature."

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Writing Style Tips

- Avoid jargon:
  - DNA = ???
  - TLA = ???
  - LOL = ???

- Avoid saying nothing
  - "An appropriate value of ballasting resistor is selected by using a technique which permits the determination of an ideal resistor."
  - This actually says that to choose a resistor, you need to use a resistor- choosing process

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Preparation for Creative Writing

- Consider the variables:
  - **What does the reader really want** from your written content?
  - How much **knowledge** will he/she/they already have?
  - What are the **boundaries** of your subject/topic, and what can be omitted?
  - **What are your motives for communicating with the reader(s)?**
  - **What authority do you have** to communicate on this matter?

Preparation for Creative Writing

▪ Consider the variables:
- How can you make this communication very **readable**?
- What is the most **appropriate** media/format to use?
- What **balance** between text, pictures, diagrams and tables will you have?
- How can you check that the reader really **understands** the subject?
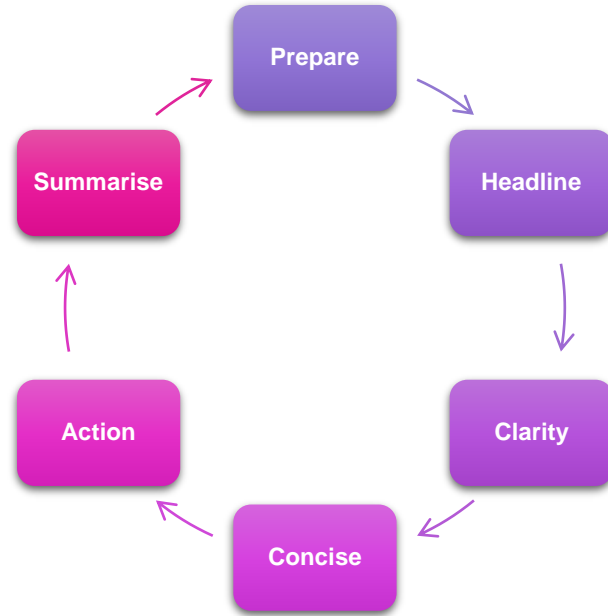
Never forget the power of punctuation

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Sharing Information: Oral Communication

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A Typical Communication Flow

```
        Prepare
   Summarise    Headline

   Action        Clarity

        Concise
```

- Think before you speak
- Listen before you talk
- Headlines capture attention
- Be clear and stick to the facts
- Clear and concise = memorable
- Actions speak loudest of all
- Leave the audience in no doubt what needs to be done next

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Intonation & Body Language are powerful

- Telephone
  – the tone of voice used can lead to misunderstanding
  – "I never said he took your laptop"

- Conference Calls (voice, Skype, etc.,)
  – time to speak ⇔ number of people
  – listen twice as much as you speak

- Face to Face
  – be aware of body language – including your own!
  – watch out for "micro-inequities"

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Communication 'Camembert'

▪ How much of communication is the words?

Legend: ■ Tone of Voice

38%

7%

55%

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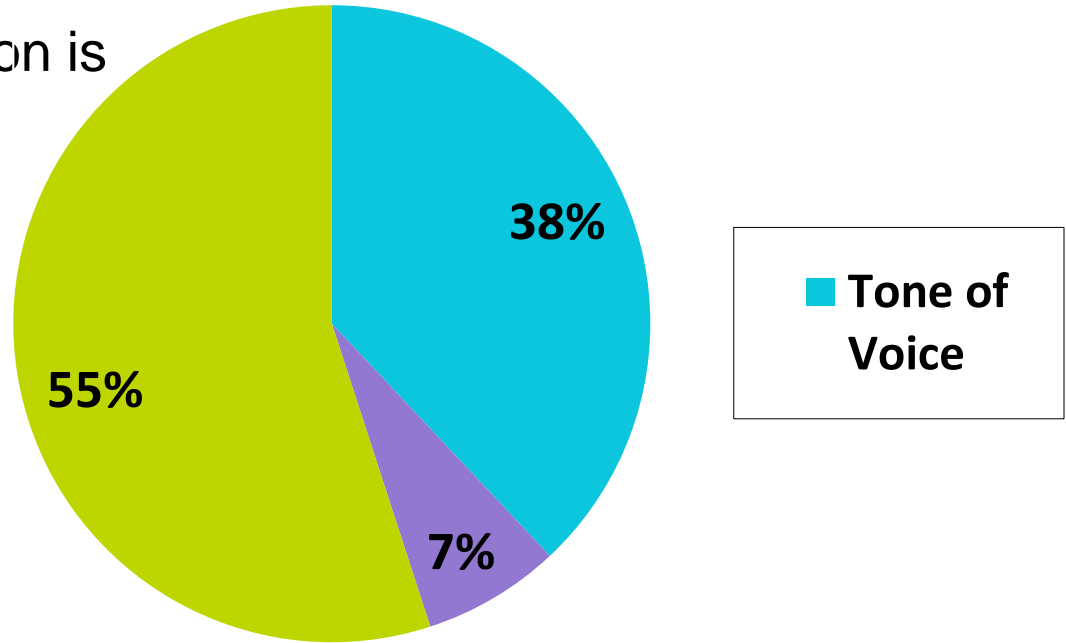
Confident Delivery Increases Influence

- Audiences react better to confident speakers
- Body language can give you away
- Find common ground with your audience and share experiences
- Use humour fittingly

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When Trust is High, Communication is Easy, Instant and Effective

- *"It takes twenty years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you will do things differently."*
  - *Warren Buffet*

- Key steps to building trust
  - be reliable and consistent
  - be open and honest
  - show integrity
  - WYSIWYG becomes Do What You Said You Would Do

Building Trust with Larger Audiences

- Avoid exaggeration
- Always be honest
  - especially when you don't know the answer
- Stay on track
  - keep to time and agenda
- Relate to personal experiences where appropriate
- Show you care about the audience

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Interaction Helps Build Trust and Holds Interest

- Two-way communication is the most effective form
  - from you to the audience
  - from the audience to you

- Look for feedback
  - audible (questions, murmurs)
  - visible (body language, movement)

- Use response to help you:
  - engage with the audience
  - identify gaps in understanding – and close them
  - respond positively to questions (or hecklers)
  - adapt in real-time to make your communication more effective

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Summary – Oral Communication

- Think about the communication flow

- It's not just what you say, it's how you say it

- Build a rapport with your audience

CALL TO ACTION

- Over the next week try at least one of these ideas and techniques that is different to your normal approach

- If that works, add another

- Practice, practice, practice!

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Summary of Today's Lecture

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