CHAPTER

1

Good communication works

In this chapter you will learn how to:

- ▷ define the term 'communication'
- ▷ list the different forms of communication
- ▷ identify each element of the communication process
- ▷ identify barriers to communication
- ▷ discuss the importance of good communication in the workplace
- ▷ apply ethics to your workplace communication
- ▷ identify the communication aspects of a multicultural society.

Evaluate your communication skills by completing the self-test checklists in the chapter.

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Communication in the workplace occurs for a number of direct and indirect reasons. Primarily it is necessary for passing information between people working in the same organisation and between their organisation and others. In the workplace, your ability to communicate is reflected by the quality and range of your communication skills.

Communication—written, spoken or even nonverbal—is also used by leaders and managers for evaluating performance, directing or instructing staff and motivating others. People working as part of a team or department with a good communicator as its leader are generally more confident and competent because they understand what they are doing and what is required of them. They are able to work together in a purposeful, supportive and flexible manner.

Firms, businesses or agencies that provide a product or service to others must interact and operate with other people. This interaction with clients, customers, staff and members of other organisations requires communication and will succeed if the communication is effective. Observe people who are good in their relationships at work and with others. How do they interact with others? What skills do they use? These people have the means; the capacity, and the will to communicate. Communication theory provides the means, their motivation provides the willingness and their communication skills provide the capacity. This book analyses the theory underpinning good communication; and its learning activities give you the opportunity to practise a range of skills that will help you communicate better.

Communication defined

People who are successful at work are often communication-oriented. They demonstrate empathy, awareness and concern for others; they use good listening skills and are aware of their own concerns and needs. These people are open, approachable and supportive of others.

Communication is the transfer of meaning

Communication is any behaviour, verbal or nonverbal, that is perceived by another. Knowledge, feelings or thoughts are encoded and sent from at least one person and received and decoded by at least one other. Meaning is given to this message as the receiver interprets the message. A connection is made between the people communicating. Communication lets us learn more about ourselves and the world around us, share experiences with others, persuade and influence others, and relax and enjoy ourselves.

FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

Workplace communication is classified into three forms.

Each of the channels of communication requires skills suited to the form of communication that is used to send the message.

Communication is classified into three forms:

1. verbal communication, either spoken or written
2. nonverbal
3. graphic.

Communication skills in spoken, written, nonverbal and graphic communication are all essential in the workplace. These forms of communication send messages through various channels.

Verbal communication can take the form of spoken words between two or more people, or written words in written communication.

Nonverbal communication is sent by any means other than words or graphics. Nonverbal components occur in oral, written and graphic communication, and in oral communication these include facial expressions, body movement, posture and dress.

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Format and layout are some of the nonverbal components of written and graphic communication.

Graphic communication represents ideas, relationships or connections visually with shapes, diagrams and lines. Graphic communication can have both verbal and nonverbal components—for example, some of the 'No Smoking' signs displayed in public places.

The ability to communicate is learned by gaining skills from others and from experience. As experience widens, new learning takes place. The communication style of individuals and organisations develops through using and adapting new techniques. Anyone who believes they can control the communication process is unaware that communication is an intricate, interactive process. The interactions of several elements affect the people communicating. You can do a great deal to influence the communication process but you cannot control someone else's perception, outlook, values and attitudes. Each of these affects the way communication is received.

The communication process

The process of communication is dynamic and interactive. Someone sends, someone receives and in between there is a message. As information flows, people place meaning and structure on the variety of messages received from others.

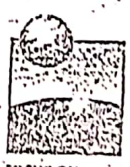
The communication process takes place in various situations for different reasons, with the potential for many interpretations. It has seven main elements.

Communication is an interactive process.

1. sender
2. message
3. receiver
4. feedback
5. channel
6. context or setting
7. interference or noise.

There are many models of the communication process. The diagrams presented in this chapter are representations of how communication works. It should be stressed

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION



FOCUS ON APPLYING SKILLS

1. For an introduction activity, break into pairs.
   a. Person A takes three minutes to interview Person B and then the roles are exchanged.
   b. Person B interviews Person A for three minutes. When the interviews are complete, return to the large group.
   c. Person A introduces Person B to the large group.
   d. Person B introduces Person A to the large group.
2. This activity demonstrates the importance of nonverbal feedback. Work in groups of two. Stand back-to-back with one another and conduct a conversation for two minutes, then discuss how easy or difficult it was to speak in this way. Comment on the way in which nonverbal communication helps two people to talk with and understand one another.
3. Work in pairs to discuss each of the following.
   a. What makes communication in the context of work different from communication in your home?
   b. Why is an understanding of communication important to your successful performance at work?
   c. Consider an example of a spoken communication that did not work well—one that you were responsible for. Briefly discuss how you could have improved the way you sent the message, or how the receiver could have acted to improve the way the message was understood.

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that they cannot be a complete guide; they take the most significant elements of the process and place these in a useful sequence.

As communication occurs, the sender and receiver interact by sending (encoding) and receiving (decoding) messages.

THE SENDER

Communication begins with the sender.

Figure 1.1 shows four elements of the communication process, which begins with the sender. Senders are individuals who react to situations from a unique vantage point, interpreting ideas and filtering experiences through their own perception (see Figure 1.2). Unique to individual senders, and integral to all the communication they engage in, is a background of accumulated attitudes, experiences, skills, cultural conditioning and individual differences that influences how they communicate. The sender encodes an idea or feeling in words or signs that the receiver will recognise and transmits this message to the receiver.

MESSAGE

The message connects the sender to the receiver.

The message is the idea or feeling transmitted from the sender to the receiver to achieve understanding. It makes a connection between sender and receiver.

THE RECEIVER

Perception influences communication.

The receiver decodes or interprets the message to achieve understanding. In doing this, the receiver is also acting as an individual from a unique vantage point, interpreting the idea according to a particular personal perception of the message. This perception is the result of the receiver's unique background of experiences, beliefs, concerns and many other factors.

Perception

Since perception has a significant influence on communication, it is useful to look closely at it. The way a message is perceived by the sender may be quite different from the way the receiver perceives the message.

Perception is the way people understand or give meaning to their environment. Perception and interpretation of the same message varies according to how each individual's perception is influenced by experience, attitudes and beliefs and a range of acquired skills or expectations. For example, one person may perceive the colour blue as cool, peaceful and comforting while another person may see blue as old-fashioned or formal. The particular or specific meaning is influenced by past experience. Even the context or setting of the communication affects perception. Blue may be calming and relaxing one day, too formal on another.

Perception can be compared with a pair of spectacles, through which we process all the signals received from others. The glasses place a particular focus on what we see, hear and understand, and influence the way we react to the message. The

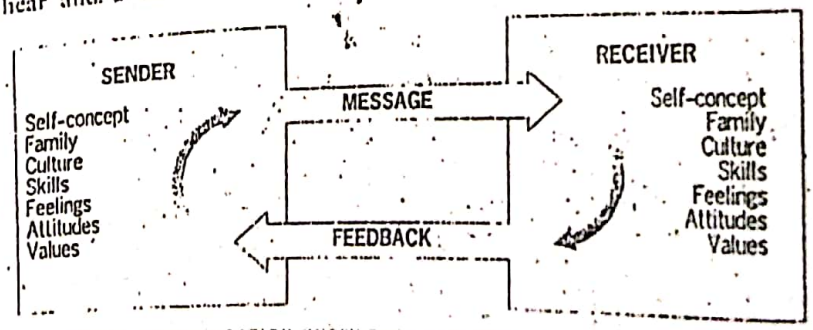

FIGURE 1.1 Four elements of the communication process

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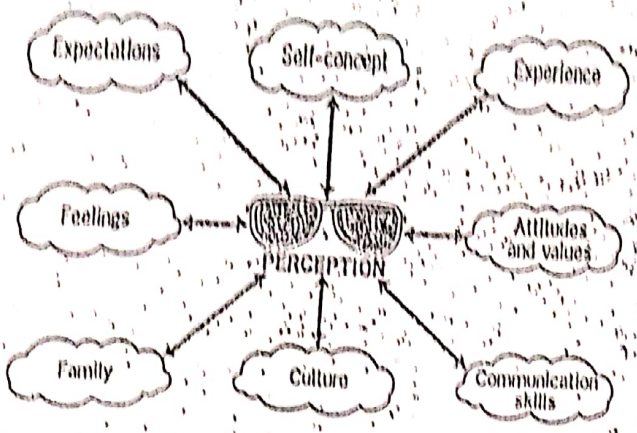

FIGURE 1.2 Perception

particular colour and focus of a message are affected by the pair of glasses worn. The glasses may distort the picture.

FEEDBACK

There is a constant feeding back of information as people interact. As well as encouraging the speaker to continue, listeners respond in a way that shows their comprehension and acceptance or non-acceptance of the message. Feedback is an essential part of successful interpersonal communication. It is the receiver's response to the sender's message, and can be intentional or unintentional.

Feedback is an essential part of effective communication.

Feedback:

- gives the communication continuity
- indicates understanding or misunderstanding of the message
- stimulates further communication and discussion.

Both sender and receiver need feedback. As you communicate, check with your receivers to establish that their understanding of the message is correct. Ask the receiver to rephrase what has been said and acknowledge your agreement or disagreement. It is important to the speaker to determine how the message is being received and helps receivers understand how their behaviour affects others.

Feedback can help or hinder your communication and the climate you create. In the workplace most people communicate face-to-face with their leaders, supervisors and colleagues, so the ability to provide appropriate feedback can assist the development of good working relationships and the productivity of the business.

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

A communication channel is the means or technique used to signal or convey a message—for example, a conversation, letter, telephone call, radio or television program. Information technology provides a fast channel of communication that is becoming more widely available and easier to use than in the past. Information technology is used to store, send, receive and present information.

The channel is the vehicle for the message.

All organisations have internal channels of communication and external channels. Figure 1.3 shows three more elements in the communication process—the channel, interference and context.

Choose a channel that suits your communication purpose, your needs as the sender of the message, and the needs of the receiver.

The flow of communication moves through the organisation along different lines or channels. Horizontal channels operate between colleagues at the same level of the

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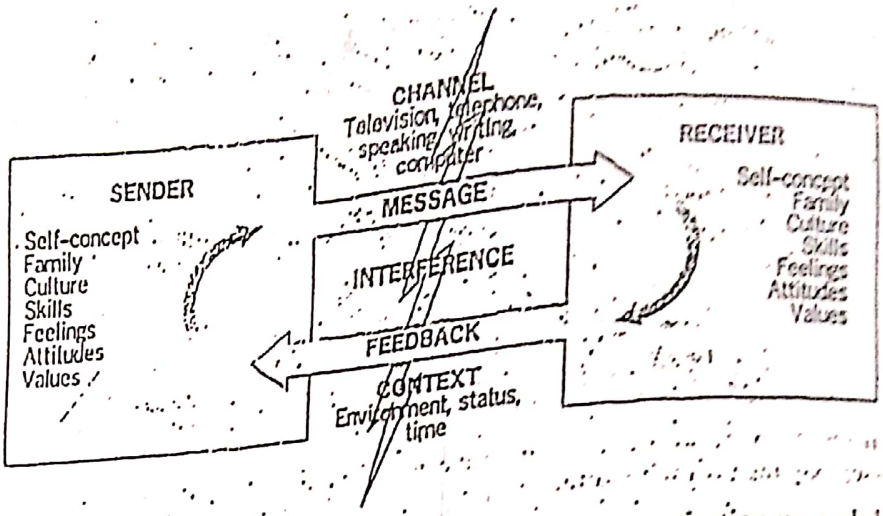

FIGURE 1.3 The seven elements of the communication process

organisation's structure, while vertical channels move communication up and down between different levels.

CONTEXT

Context affects the message.

Context consists of the situation, circumstances or setting within which communication takes place. Context plays an important part in how a message is encoded and decoded. The same message can have a completely different meaning depending on the situation, since emotions and reactions to ideas and events vary in different situations. For example, communication at a conference, in the lunchroom, at a formal meeting or in the office is taking place in different settings. It may use different language, relationships and authority to achieve the different communication purpose in each situation.

INTERFERENCE OR NOISE

Noise interrupts the communication.

The message received is not necessarily the same as the message sent. Something other than the intended message is received because noise, or interference, interrupts the intended message.

Send a message by electronic mail to a person who is afraid of technology and unable to access the computer screen, and communication barriers will occur because the channel is inappropriate in this case. Write a memo or business letter to this person and the message is more likely to be easily understood and accepted.

Noise or interference that interrupts the message or communication flow between sender and receiver can lead to misunderstanding, or to confused or ambiguous communication. Communication barriers occur as a result of a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the message. These barriers can be caused by the sender, the receiver, lack of feedback, a poor choice of channel, the wrong context or any other element in the

STOP AND REVIEW

1. 'Communication is an interactive process.' Briefly explain.
2. Define and give an example of verbal, nonverbal and graphic communication.
3. a. Define the terms 'sender' and 'receiver'.
   b. Define the term 'message'.
   c. Define the term 'feedback'.
4. a. Define the term 'perception'.
   b. List the four factors that may influence the perception of the sender or receiver of a message.
5. a. List four different types of communication.
   b. Define these and give an example of each.

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communication model. Even when communication barriers occur, something is communicated, but the noise or interference distorts the intended message.

Causes of communication barriers

Effective communication often passes unnoticed, while poor communication is obvious. The complete message and its meaning are distorted or interrupted.

Some of the factors that cause communication barriers are:

- inappropriate choice of words
- inappropriate channel
- inappropriate message
- receiver inattention
- lack of courtesy by the sender or the receiver
- nonverbal communication that does not support the words
- different cultural backgrounds
- poor layout and presentation
- inappropriate timing
- inadequate feedback.

Recognising these and other causes of poor communication is an important step towards avoiding them. Consider the possibilities shown in Table 1.1.

It is impossible for one person in the communication process to control the process, as one person cannot be responsible for someone else's communication style nor for all the other factors that contribute to communication barriers.

TABLE 1.1 Communication barriers

CAUSE OF BARRIER	OUTCOME	STRATEGIES TO AVOID BARRIER
Differences in perception	People often see and interpret the same event or action in a different way.	Listen carefully. Speak clearly and directly to the other person. Ask questions. Give feedback.
Different attitudes and values	People often form different interpretations.	Listen carefully. Speak clearly and directly to the other person. Ask questions. Give feedback.
Inconsistency between spoken and nonverbal communication	Poor communication and confusion due to an ambiguous message.	Match the verbal and nonverbal parts of the total message.
Withholding information	Others operate with only part of the message so mistakes are more likely to occur.	Plan and structure the message to include all necessary information.
Passing judgment by telling people their reaction is stupid	The receiver can become angry and retaliate.	Listen actively. Ask questions. Give feedback.
Dismissing others' concerns or points of view	The receiver may withdraw.	Listen carefully. Show you are aware of the other's point of view. Ask questions.

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COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

FOCUS ON APPLYING SKILLS

1. Michael works as a sales representative in the New South Wales showroom and warehouse of the Wood-Panel Division of a large Australian company, Woodstone. Senior buyers for a large kitchen joinery firm based in Queensland and Victoria visit the New South Wales showroom and show a keen interest in the new products. Michael is able to make further contact with this client firm by letter, telephone or personal visit.
   a. Outline the advantages and disadvantages of the three possible channels of communication.
   b. Decide which of them Michael should use for the first follow-up contact with this potential client. Give reasons for your choice of channel.
2. a. 'One of the most important skills that any person in an organisation needs is the ability to communicate. Without communication your other skills are less useful.' Explain the meaning of this statement.
   b. Should an organisation train its staff in workplace communication? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Working in groups of three:
   a. List three statements that you have written or spoken (or observed) that were insensitive to the receiver's feelings.
   b. Discuss the sort of communication barriers caused by each of these statements.
   c. Re-state, to the people you are working with, each of your three statements in a more sensitive way and ask them if they think the new version would be more effective.
   d. Discuss three ways in which communication barriers can affect interpersonal communication.
4. Two colleagues, Mary and David, meet in David's office to discuss the introduction of the new software package on the agenda at tomorrow's staff meeting. As they talk through the procedure to introduce this package to other staff:
   - David answers and deals with a telephone call and then continues the conversation with Mary;
   - Another person enters David's office and interrupts the conversation to ask Mary to solve a problem in the delivery times for stock;
   - When Mary has provided the solution, Mary and David resume their discussion;
   - Mary looks at her watch and exclaims that it is time for her next appointment;
   - As they rush to finish their plans they discuss who will present the new software procedures at the staff meeting. When that item comes up, Mary expects David to present the procedure; David believes Mary is to present it.
   a. Identify the communication barriers that occurred and explain briefly in two paragraphs how they contributed to the misunderstanding between Mary and David.
   b. List two sources of noise at the initial planning meeting.
   c. How could Mary and David have dealt with the noise or interference in their planning meeting? The checklist on page 11 can be used to evaluate your answers.
5. In a group discussion present your point of view on the following.
   a. Why is good communication so important in the workplace?
   b. What is the relationship between the message and the channel?
   c. How is feedback transmitted in nonverbal communication?
   d. What are two factors that influence a person's perception of the message?
   e. How does 'noise' affect communication?
   f. 'Communication is a learned behaviour.' Do you agree or disagree? Why?
   g. Why is it important for both the sender and receiver of a message to have empathy for the other person?
6. Checking what the other person said
   a. Work in groups of three (A, B and C).
      - Persons A and B are to discuss a topic of interest by taking opposite sides. Person C is the observer.
      - Person A opens the discussion. Person B gives feedback to Person A by summarising what Person A has said before giving an opposing view. Person A summarises what Person B has said before Person A continues with their opposing view.
      - Continue this for 10 minutes. When Person C believes that either Person A or B has not summarised the other person's point of view accurately Person C can give feedback to both A and B.
   b. After 10 minutes discuss the advantages gained by checking what the other person said.

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COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

In analysing the situation between Mary and David (see the previous Focus on Applying Skills) to identify noise or communication barriers, have I:

	Yes	No	Unsure
considered the responsibility of the sender?	☑	☐	☐
evaluated the appropriate channel?	☐	☐	☑
examined the message?	☐	☐	☑
considered the role of the receiver?	☑	☐	☐
identified the place of feedback?	☑	☐	☐
considered the impact of the context?	☑	☐	☐

SELF-TEST CHECKLIST

Empathy

To reduce the chance of communication barriers and associated problems, communicate with empathy—a feeling for and awareness of your receivers and their point of view. Also, be willing to provide appropriate and sufficient feedback to achieve understanding.

Communication in the workplace

For business decisions to be sound and relevant, timely and appropriate information has to be conveyed throughout the organisation. The successful organisation is the one that communicates well both internally and with other companies and clients. In fact, information flow is crucial to any organisation and the better the flow the more successful it is.

Information flow is crucial to the success of any organisation.

Many factors apart from our individual communication skills affect communication in the workforce. The organisation's culture and values, the resources available to it and its power relationships all affect communication.

Being a good communicator means acknowledging and working with these factors as well as communicating skilfully. Good communicators are honest with themselves and others and have the ability to say what they want or feel, but not at the expense of others. They realise that communication is not all about getting their own way and winning every time. Nor is it a means to manipulate other people so that they achieve their aim while appearing to be considering others. A sincere communicator avoids quick-fix tricks or techniques.

As well as using listening, speaking, questioning and feedback skills when dealing with others about simple, routine matters, effective communicators also use their interpersonal skills to greet others, find out and satisfy their expectations and needs, and finish the interaction courteously.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN COLLEAGUES

One of the routine tasks in any workplace is to gather, record and convey simple information. Another is to give and follow simple instructions. Good communicators use appropriate communication skills such as listening, speaking, questioning and offering feedback as they collect and organise information, and they give accurate, clear and comprehensive instructions. To complete these tasks successfully, they must also participate in discussions and interact in a supportive, efficient and effective way.

People who are able to communicate well in the workplace are generally happier in themselves and manage to handle difficult or tricky situations. They get the best

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from themselves and others at work. They are also much more likely to achieve outcomes that are satisfying for everyone. Stress in the workplace is reduced as people are more likely to cope with conflict early and in a competent manner.

COMMUNICATION BY LEADERS AND MANAGERS

Leaders and managers who communicate well are able to work directly with people. Consequently, there are fewer hidden agendas and issues are resolved at an early stage before they become long-term problems. Good communication by leaders and managers leads to fewer direct controls and more understanding, commitment and motivation.

Control

Communication can be used by an organisation's management as a means to control procedures and to encourage employees to conform to company objectives, directives or work procedures. People in organisations participate in employee assessment schemes, read manuals of procedure for different work tasks and set targets for company plans. People are using their communication skills constantly.

The difficulty for leaders and managers is to communicate in a way that achieves a balance between control, motivation and efficiency. Too much control may reduce initiative and even productivity, with less response to what the client wants and more emphasis on what the workers think the managers want. Too little control may cause uncertainty and insecurity.

Motivation

An organisation's management, including leaders of small teams, can use communication to motivate employees. Each employee needs, in varying degrees, achievement, power and a sense of belonging to the organisation. When an organisation acknowledges the achievements of individuals and groups, job satisfaction and performance are improved. Acknowledgment (feedback) can involve verbal praise or written letters or circulars that reassure employees that they are an important part of the organisation and that what they are doing is appreciated.

Balancing needs and goals

Communication in the organisation has another important role. A firm's interests and expectations and its employees' goals and needs have to be balanced. To understand and achieve this balance, both employer and employee need to understand one another. Good communication is essential.

When this understanding is achieved and the needs and goals of both are compatible, the behaviour required at work to achieve the organisation's goals is satisfying to the employee. The possible differences between the needs of the organisation and the individual are highlighted in Table 1.2.

The organisation must convey its viewpoint to employees, and employees must persuade management to appreciate their viewpoint. Slow, inefficient lines of communication may mean dissatisfied customers and demoralised workers. For all these reasons, business organisations need skilled communicators and good communication channels to move information through the organisation efficiently.

Ethics in communication

All of us have ideas about what is right and wrong, and we derive them from a variety of values and conventions throughout our lifetime. Personal ethics, professional ethics

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ORGANISATIONAL GOALS	INDIVIDUAL OR TEAM GOALS
Profit	Good pay
Return on investment	Job security
Employee efficiency	Fringe benefits
Production of quality goods and services	Scope for initiative and achievement
Competitiveness	Challenge
Low absenteeism and low turnover of employees	Satisfaction

TABLE 1.2 Organisational and individual goals

and corporate ethics are sets of moral principles by which we judge human actions and proposals as good or bad or right or wrong.

WHY DO WE NEED ETHICS?

Ethical behaviour requires us to act with equity, fairness, impartiality and respect for the rights of others. Professional ethics are the conventions for the right professional conduct or practice. In the workplace we are expected to behave according to the established rules and standards. Ethical behaviour leads to professional behaviour. People working for an ethical company behave with integrity.

Most organisations have a code of ethics, which is a statement of its primary values and the ethical rules it expects its employees to follow. In a company without a code of ethics people may be uncertain about how to deal with an issue or problem.

A code of ethics benefits the company and the individual by:

- reinforcing the organisation's standard of conduct
- reminding staff that management wants participants to consider ethical issues in their decisions
- identifying practices that are and are not permissible
- allowing leaders, managers and others to share experiences and ideas about what is and is not an ethical position
- developing a shared culture that is based on ethics and accountability.

WHAT MAKES AN ETHICAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATOR?

Business communication is an integral part of any company's activities. Professional business communicators behave ethically when they:

- follow the organisation's policies, procedures and guidelines
- communicate factual information objectively
- avoid using distortions of fact and misleading information
- respect the dignity of each person irrespective of ethnic background, religion or gender
- follow their company's code of ethics.

Communication in a multicultural society

Never before has it been easier for people to move between countries. As a result, Australia has an expanding tourist industry, an increasing number of foreign students paying for education in this country, and greater opportunities to trade with other countries. Australia is a multicultural society with a population drawn from diverse cultural, racial, religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Intercultural communication is important in Australia's multicultural society.

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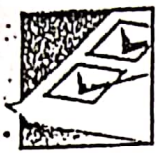

ETHICAL DILEMMA CHECKLIST

Whenever you feel there is an ethical dilemma in your communication use this checklist	Yes	No	Unsure
• Is the intended action legal?	☐	☐	☐
• Is my communication factual and objective?	☐	☐	☐
• Who will gain from the communication or action? (Do I know)?	☐	☐	☐
• Who will lose from the communication or action? (Do I know)?	☐	☐	☐
• Would I be happy for my coworkers, family and friends to know about what I am communicating?	☐	☐	☐
• Will I seek the opinion of other people who are knowledgeable about the subject?	☐	☐	☐
• Am I willing to seek an objective second opinion?	☐	☐	☐
• Does the language describing the issue talk about the real issue or something else?	☐	☐	☐
• Am I willing to acknowledge the position and interests of those opposing my message or actions?	☐	☐	☐
• Would I feel willing and confident to defend my message or actions at a meeting?	☐	☐	☐

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Intercultural communication is communication between people who live in the same country but come from different cultural backgrounds. Over time, a culture develops distinctive national patterns of communication and social behaviour. These patterns are the customs and conventions regarded as the characteristics of a particular culture. They affect the way people communicate and act as individuals or in groups.

What information we take in, which part of the message we choose to remember and which response we give are all a result of our perception. Effective communicators acknowledge differences in perception. They also use communication strategies that avoid the communication barriers caused by the ineffective intercultural communication strategies shown in Table 1.3.

STOP AND REVIEW

1. a. 'Communication begins with the sender.' What are the remaining six variables at work in the communication process?
   b. As a sender, how do you obtain feedback from your receiver?
2. What are two factors that will influence your choice of channel? Give examples.
3. Define the term 'context' and give examples of how the context can affect the message.
4. Give five examples of possible 'noise' in the communication process.
5. What is wrong with this statement? 'The sender of the message has full control over how it is understood.'
6. a. Recall, and describe in writing, a situation in which you believe communication was successful.
   b. Give three reasons why the communication worked well.
7. a. List three possible differences between the needs of the organisation and the individual.
   b. Why is it important to balance the needs and goals of the individual with those of the organisation?
8. List four attributes displayed by an ethical business communicator?

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TABLE 1.3 Communication strategies

DISCRIMINATORY COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES	PURPOSE	INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES
Derogatory labelling	To put down people from another culture or group.	Refuse to use derogatory labels.
Stereotyping people belonging to a particular group	To isolate or exaggerate certain factors and apply them to all people in that group.	Recognise and avoid the use of language that stereotypes groups of people.
Invisibility	To subsume one group into another by label, name or term.	Use inclusive language and language preferred by the minority group.
Imposed labelling	To reinforce the majority group's view because the minority lacks the power to define themselves.	Avoid the use of one single generic name for a number of different groups of people.
Extra visibility	To emphasise a difference such as sex, race or ethnic background.	Avoid emphasis on differences such as sex, race and ethnic background.

Effect of perception

Although people may live in the same country, their various cultural backgrounds and rules may mean that they see the same event differently and place different interpretations on it. We are limited by the 'baggage' of background experience that we carry. Our perception is determined by a background consisting of:

- values
- attitudes
- life concerns
- cultural conditioning
- skills
- other factors.

If we can expand our view of events by being aware of our background and its impact on our perception, then we can choose more appropriate messages or responses. Consequently, we can perform better in the workplace and become more willing to learn new ways to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Intentional and unintentional messages

Both culture and individual experience shape each person's perception, style of communication and interpretation of others' intentional and unintentional messages. Some of the many aspects of nonverbal communication influenced by culture are tone of voice, inflection, rate of speech, facial expressions, touching and body movement. Intentional and unintentional messages may lead to misunderstanding because of a message that is poorly constructed by the sender, or due to the receiver's perception and cultural background.

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Cultural sensitivity leads to better communication.

RULES AND PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR

The common rules and patterns of behaviour of one country may be very different from those of another. Cultural sensitivity leads to effective cross-cultural communication. Whereas intercultural communication takes place between people living in the same country but from different cultural backgrounds, cross-cultural communication occurs between people living in different countries.

Awareness of the different customs, rules and social behaviour in different cultures reduces the barriers caused by prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination. In Australia, people whose culture involves rigid rules on who speaks first or last in conversations, or the belief that to look down as someone speaks to you is courteous, would seem discourteous. This impression might lead to their exclusion from the conversation without them knowing why. What we assume and how we expect others to behave is affected by our cultural filter.

Different cultural groups have different rules for:

- humour and irony
- courtesies in speech, such as when to say 'please', 'thank you' or 'excuse me'
- the meaning of 'yes' and 'no'
- rules of politeness—who can speak to whom, and who can begin a conversation
- dress
- deference to others
- drinking alcohol
- use of time.

COMMUNICATING WELL

FOCUS ON APPLYING SKILLS

1. Work in groups of three.
   a. 'Communication by leaders and managers can be used for three reasons.' Identify and discuss the three reasons and give a workplace example of each.
   b. List three organisational goals and three individual goals in the workplace.
   c. How can communication balance these needs and goals?
2. a. Define the terms 'values' and 'ethics'.
   b. Why should business communicators behave ethically?
   c. How can a company's code of ethics help staff in their workplace?
3. a. Define the terms 'multicultural society', 'intercultural communication' and 'cross-cultural communication'.
   b. What role does perception play in the communication process?
4. Identify two different communication 'rules' that people in different cultures recognise.
5. In an article in the *Harvard Business Review* entitled 'Barriers and gateways to communication', Rogers and Roethlisberger (1952) suggested: 'The major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is our tendency to judge, to evaluate and to approve (or disapprove) the statements of the other person or the other group.'
   a. In small groups, discuss this idea, drawing from your own experiences.
   b. Report your findings to the large group.
6. Whether we speak or don't speak we are always communicating. It is impossible to not communicate. At work what we say, how we say it, when we choose to say or not say something, and even how we listen or when we stop listening sends a message to others.
7. Quick Quiz: Check your cross-cultural awareness.

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CROSS-CULTURAL BELIEF

Naming systems

	T	F
1. The Chinese naming system places the surname first.	☑	☐
2. In China, descent is traced through the female line.	☐	☑
3. The Vietnamese naming system places the surname first.	☑	☐
4. The Arabic naming system places the surname last.	☑	☐

Etiquette

5. In Australia, direct eye contact is a sign of discourtesy.	☐	☑
6. In Asia, avoiding of eye contact is a sign of respect.	☑	☐
7. To touch South-East Asians on the head is an act of extreme discourtesy.	☑	☐
8. In a Muslim culture, people do not pass things to each other with the left hand.	☑	☐
9. In Asian cultures, people find it easy to say 'No'.	☐	☑
10. For Thai people, sharing the cost of an outing is against accepted custom.	☑	☐

IN PRACTICE

Action list	Example of action at work or study	Actions I can take in future
I am able to use the three forms of communication well.		
I am able to send effective messages.		
I am an effective receiver of the other person's message.		
I acknowledge that my perception affects the message.		
I choose the appropriate channel to send my message.		
I use feedback that shows my understanding of the message.		
I can choose an appropriate context for the message.		
I can minimise and/or remove communication barriers.		
I can interact positively at work or in my place of study.		
I can distinguish between the other-person's intentional and unintentional messages.		
I act honestly, fairly and to the best of my ability when dealing with workplace colleagues.		
I can accept the cultural differences of a multicultural society.		

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Discriminatory language

The language people employ as they communicate can be used as a vehicle of discrimination or a vehicle of inclusion (see Table 1.3).

The need to offer Australia's diverse population equality of access to opportunities in education, jobs and promotion makes the use of communication strategies such as plain English and inclusive communication an essential part of workplace communication. These two strategies are presented more fully in Chapter 16.

Chapter summary

Define the term 'communication': Communication is any behaviour, verbal or nonverbal, that is perceived by another.

List the different forms of communication: Successful communication sends or transmits ideas, values and attitudes to others through three different forms of communication: verbal, nonverbal and graphic. Meaning is derived from the message as the receiver perceives, structures and interprets it.

Identify each element of the communication process: The seven elements of the communication process are the sender, message, receiver, feedback, channel, context and noise (or interference). They show the dynamic and interactive nature of communication.

Identify barriers to communication: Barriers to communication interrupt its flow and lead to confusion and misunderstandings. They can be caused by the sender, the receiver, lack of feedback, a poor choice of channel, the wrong context or any other factor that interferes with the message.

Discuss the importance of good communication in the workplace: Good communication establishes a connection and understanding between two or more people. It enhances individuals, work performance and relationships with others. It allows individuals to interact to satisfy their own needs and to develop their personal, social and work relationships. It also enables leaders and managers to control work procedures, motivate others and balance the needs and goals of individuals with those of the organisation. Successful people and organisations are usually those who communicate well, because they convey clearly to other people what they are doing and what they require. Successful communicators apply their interpersonal skills to listening, speaking, questioning, assertiveness, verbal and nonverbal communication.

The principles underlying these skills, and a range of learning activities that will help you to practise them are presented in the next four chapters.

Apply ethics to your workplace communication: Ethical communicators give honest and accurate information. They let others know about matters or information that affect them and maintain confidentiality of private information. They avoid spreading malicious gossip, putting others down or taking the credit for someone else's work. They communicate openly to achieve mutual understanding.

Identify communication aspects of a multicultural society: In a multicultural society, people in the same country have different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication occurs between these people. Culture conditions our perception of and reactions to signals and messages. It also determines the meanings we give to communication, events and situations. Aim to achieve successful intercultural communication by applying empathy and an open manner.

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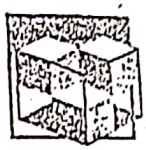
COMMUNICATION AT WORK



INTEGRATION ACTIVITY

Group discussion

Work in groups of three.

1. Each person is to think of someone who is good in their relationships with others at work and then discuss the following.
   a. How do these people interact with other people?
   b. What skills do they use?
2. Discuss and give examples of the ways we communicate:
   a. in words
   b. in pictures or symbols
   c. nonverbally.
3. Think of a situation when you tried to communicate with another person, or when somebody tried to communicate with you, and it failed. Think about the problems or barriers that interfered with the communication.
   a. Outline the situation to the members of your group and tell them why you think it failed.
   b. List the reasons for failure identified by your group.
   c. Come together as a large group to share the barriers identified by each group.

Role play: giving instructions

1. In your groups of three, nominate Person A to be Mitchell, Person B to be Carolyn and Person C, the observer.
2. Mitchell has been employed with the firm Arrow Ltd for five years. Carolyn has been working with Arrow for only one month.

   Mitchell has been asked by the Section Manager to show Carolyn how the communication process operates in the workplace. Mitchell must first identify each of the elements in the communication process, then describe their impact on personal interaction in the workplace.

   Persons A and B are to play the roles of Mitchell and Carolyn for ten minutes. Person C observes the role play and gives Mitchell feedback on how successfully he used his speaking, listening and questioning skills to instruct Carolyn.
3. All three people in the group should take a turn playing the roles of Persons A, B and C.
4. As a group, discuss the activity as follows. Did you find it easy to:
   a. organise information clearly and logically?
   b. speak confidently?
   c. ask questions clearly?
   d. listen to the other person?
   e. interact in a supportive way?
5. What did you learn from the activity about your capacity to communicate?

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KEY TERMS

communication
communication barrier
communication channel
communication process
context
cross-cultural communication
cultural sensitivity
decoding
discrimination
empathy
encoding
ethics
feedback
form of communication
graphic communication
horizontal channel
inclusive
intentional message
intercultural communication
message
multicultural society
noise
nonverbal communication
perception
receiver
sender
unintentional message
verbal communication
vertical channel

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CASE STUDY

COMMUNICATION AT WORK

Many people in the workplace acknowledge that communication affects the quality of their relationships and that good communication skills are vital to achieving understanding. Consider the following comments.

An Australian manufacturing industry leader suggests that communication is the key process at work. People's success at work is crucially dependent on their ability with symbols, and verbal and nonverbal communication. *An article called 'Teaching the bear how to dance' (Manufacturers' Bulletin, June 1996, pp. 12–14) states: 'You'll also find, when you have failures, rarely will it be the fault of an individual. If you give your*

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people all the right information they need to do the job, you'll find that the job will get done right.' The key to a successful workplace is good communication.

The staff of a large service organisation said that their survival in the service industry depended on their capacity to communicate with the customers. When customers are talking to staff about their needs, those supplying the service should listen attentively, ask appropriate questions and build the sort of business relationship expected by the customer. Customers expect staff members to respond in such a way that their needs and expectations are met.

The owners of a business catering to tourists suggest that it is all the little things they do to communicate with their visitors and others in the tourist industry that are so important. Some of these things are in the form of spoken communication, others are in a written form. Spoken communication such as telephone calls, face-to-face welcomes and farewells, giving information and responding to questions helps to meet customer needs and expectations and allows them to build a positive relationship with their customers. The spoken communication is supported by written forms such as brochures, letters, notices, tariff schedules and receipts.

The three different forms of communication—verbal, nonverbal and graphic—are used individually or in combination in the workplace. Communication is one of the most important skills in business because it creates a connection between people that leads to understanding.

Questions

1. 'Communication is a key process at work.' Explain this statement.
2. What is the key to a successful workplace?
3. What sort of communication skills are required by staff who meet customers' needs and expectations?
4. List four types of spoken and four types of written communication used in a business catering to the needs of tourists.
5. Why is it important for those in the tourism industry to build good relationships with their customers?
6. In one or two paragraphs, explain the importance of the three forms of communication in the workplace.

COMMUNICATION STYLES IN THE WORKPLACE

CASE STUDY

In an article called 'Analysing the process gets the point across' (In *People Management*, 2 May 1996, p. 46), Octavius Black suggests that 'Anyone can paint but we would paint better with some guidance and a clear understanding of the thought behind a good painting. The same principle applies to the communication process.' Each stage of the communication process should be examined and defined.

A communication behaviour model was designed by Octavius Black in collaboration with the University of London's Birbeck College, London Business School and organisations in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The communication behaviour model identifies the various stages of the communication process. By dissecting each stage of the process, it is possible to improve the way we communicate and, in doing so, influence others.

The initial stage of the communication process is to identify the reason for communicating at work—which is usually to achieve a specific business task or objective. How that process is handled will have an important bearing on whether the specific task is achieved. The next stage of the process to consider is the interaction between those involved in the task. For the task to succeed, it is necessary to gain the full cooperation and support of the individuals who perform it. Once the nature of the task has been identified, and the relationship with other people established, the most appropriate communication behaviour can be used.

Five broad alternative communication styles were suggested by Octavius Black and the other researchers he worked with from the London Business School and the organisations in the United Kingdom and Ireland. These are listed in descending order according to how much two-way communication they allow.

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- *Instruct*: clearly state what is to be done and communicate any further information essential to complete the task.
- *Inform*: clearly communicate what needs to be done, and provide any essential additional information that helps to achieve the purpose.
- *Consult*: get views (input) from other team members (which may or may not be relevant).
- *Involve*: request views (input) that will influence the task's final outcome.
- *Empower*: by providing a framework that will allow people to do what they think best.

The listed categories are not mutually exclusive—it would be difficult to involve without first informing. Equally, none is right or wrong, but should be used appropriately.

Questions

1. Explain what is meant by Black's statement: 'Anyone can paint but we would paint better with some guidance and a clear understanding of the thought behind a good painting'?
2. a. What are the two essential stages of the communication process?
   b. What is the purpose of each stage?
3. a. List and briefly describe the five broad alternative communication styles.
   b. Give an example of a situation appropriate to each.

Answers to *Quick Quiz* on page 17: 1T, 2F, 3T, 4T, 5F, 6T, 7T, 8T, 9F, 10T

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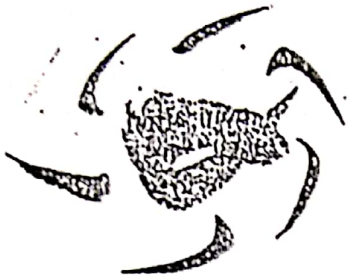
(Mr Khalid Jamal) II

CHAPTER

2



Nonverbal skills

this chapter you will learn how to:

- define the term 'nonverbal communication'
- identify its importance to the total message
- distinguish four ways of grouping nonverbal communication
- identify seven aspects of nonverbal behaviour
- highlight the role of nonverbal behaviour in the communication process
- confirm with the sender of a message the meaning of their nonverbal communication
- interpret and use your own nonverbal communication appropriately
- use nonverbal communication.

valuate your communication skills by completing the self-test checklists in the apter.

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In only a few situations do words alone send the message. The nonverbal communicatio accompanying the words reinforces and adds meaning to our message.

Our impressions and images of others are affected by our perception of their verb and nonverbal communication. Reactions to others' nonverbal communication influenc our liking, disliking and responsiveness and the way we respond and relate to one anothe

The ability to focus on nonverbal communication allows us to plan and deal wit situations in a purposeful, positive way and to communicate clearly. This in tur enables others to respond more easily because it lets them know what sort of perso they are dealing with and how that person is likely to respond to various situations

The nonverbal aspects of communication are so closely intermingled with th verbal that it is difficult to separate them. People receiving verbal and nonverba messages combine them with the context in which the communication takes place an interpret the total message.

Interpreting the nonverbal part of the message

Actions speak louder than words.

Nonverbal communication consists of that part of a message that is not encoded in words. The nonverbal part of the message tends to be less conscious and often reveals the sender's feelings and preferences more spontaneously and honestly than the verbal part. If the verbal message does not match the nonverbal communication, people tend to believe the nonverbal message.

FOUR TYPES OF NONVERBAL MESSAGES

Nonverbal communication can be classified into four types.

In working towards better communication, particularly in interpreting the nonverbal part of the message, it is helpful to consider four different types of nonverbal messages:

1. personal (to the individual)
2. common to a group of people or culture
3. universal (to humankind)
4. unrelated to the message (random).

Personal nonverbal communication involves various kinds of nonverbal behaviour that are unique to one person. The meaning is also unique to the person sending the message. For example, someone may work while talking, another person may work in silence. One person may laugh due to nervousness or fear, while another may cry.

Cultural nonverbal communication, by contrast, is characteristic of, or common to, a group of people. It is learned unconsciously by observing others in the society or group. In Aboriginal culture, for example, eye contact is less acceptable than it is in European culture.

Cultural nonverbal communication is rule-governed behaviour learned from others in the culture. The rules apply to the verbal and nonverbal parts of the message. For example, women tend to feel free to touch each other, whereas men are generally more self-conscious about this. The rules we learned as children about nonverbal messages create a level of cultural consensus.

Deep feelings, such as love and anger, can be expressed by words or by actions such as a touch, a look, posture, and tone of voice. However, each of these nonverbal cues varies significantly for each kind of feeling and also varies between cultures.

Universal nonverbal communication is behaviour that is common to humankind. It shows happiness, sadness or deep-seated feelings—for example, a smile or tears.

Unrelated nonverbal communication, such as a sneeze, is unrelated to the verbal message. It can distract from the verbal message, but has little effect on the meaning of the verbal part of the message.

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Physical characteristics

Physical characteristics such as body shape, general attractiveness, body and breath odours, weight, hair and skin colour are important parts of nonverbal communication. Because people react and respond to these factors, they all determine their responses in interpersonal encounters. First impressions and images of others can be associated unconsciously with past experiences of people with similar physical characteristics.

Physical characteristics can cause a reaction.

Touching behaviour

Stroking, hitting, holding or guiding the movements of another person are examples of touching behaviour that communicate nonverbally. Each of these adds a different meaning to a message. Touching can console or support the other person and show feelings such as affection, sexual interest or dominance. Hand gestures demonstrate feelings and convey thoughts and words through movement. A handshake, for example, can express dominance or equality. A pat on the arm can convey intimacy or control.

Touching adds meaning to the message.

Paralanguage (vocal qualities)

Paralanguage is that part of language associated with but not involving the word system. It consists of the voice qualities and vocalisations that affect *how* something is said rather than *what* is said. Voice qualities include:

Paralanguage is how something is said.

- pitch range
- pitch control
- rhythm control
- tempo
- articulation control
- resonance.

Vocalisations also give clues to the total message. Three of these are shown in Table 2.2. The tone of voice, rate of speaking and voice inflection are an important part of the total message. A tired person, for example, will speak more slowly than usual, a disappointed person may speak with a flat tone, while the tone of voice of someone excited about a coming holiday reflects this excitement.

Proximity (use of space)

Proximity means nearness, in terms of physical space. How people use their personal space and that of others communicates a message. This response to spatial relationships in formal, informal and intimate settings indicates how that person perceives and feels in that space.

Space can be used to indicate status.

People also use their height and weight to convey a message. If you tower over other people in a way that intrudes on their personal space you may cause their discomfort and withdrawal.

Personal space varies according to:

TABLE 2.2 Vocalisations

TYPE	EXAMPLES
Vocal characterisers	Laughing, crying, sighing, yawning, clearing the throat, groaning, yelling, whispering.
Vocal qualifiers	Intensity (loud/soft); pitch height (high/low).
Vocal segregates	Sounds such as 'uh-huh', 'um', 'uh', 'ah'; silent pauses.

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- gender
- status
- roles
- culture

Research has shown that Australians speaking to acquaintances or work colleagues leave about an arm's length of space between themselves and the other person. People speaking to friends and family leave about half an arm or an elbow's length between themselves and others. People in intimate relationships allow direct and close contact when speaking to each other. The use of space reflects the way people feel about others.

Artefacts

Artefacts are objects used to convey nonverbal messages about self-concept, image, mood, feelings or style. For example, perfume, clothes, lipstick, glasses and hairpieces project the style or mood of the wearer. Many artefacts are common to the group but we also use artefacts, particularly clothing, as an individual form of communication.

Appearance and clothing are important and highly visible parts of nonverbal communication. Consider the difference between the clothes you wear to the beach and the clothes you wear to a job interview. The choice of clothes reflects your mood and your attitude to the occasion. Other people note and place their own interpretation on your dress.

Clothes are vehicles for conveying nonverbal messages.

A police badge, a nurse's uniform, a university lecturer's gown and an Italian suit are all artefacts that can signal power or lack of power in a situation. If a plain-clothes police officer shows the police badge at an accident, others immediately perceive his or her authority. Even if you decide you will not bother about personal appearance or clothes, others will read this message as part of your nonverbal communication.

Environmental factors

Environmental factors influence communication.

The environment can influence the outcome of communication. For this reason, organisations give careful consideration to office space, factory layout, the sales area and conference venues. The environment should put people at ease and match their expectations; an unsuitable environment can produce 'noise' that causes communication barriers and interferes with the communication process.

Certain instincts, such as the desire for privacy, familiarity and security, need to be satisfied. Careful design of the workplace can meet these needs and in so doing improve communication, productivity and morale. Natural and artificial light, colour, temperature, tables, chairs, desks, lounges, plants, sound, artwork, magazines, and floor and wall coverings all have an impact on people's perception of an organisation.

In the workplace, attention to punctuality or a disregard for it can make a strong nonverbal impact. A disregard for punctuality may, like a sloppy appearance, merely reflect a casual attitude. However, a deliberate decision to keep a contact waiting may be a way to communicate a negative message.

While punctuality is a matter of courtesy, attitudes towards its importance vary between cultures. To be kept waiting for a business appointment on a tropical island will not have the same significance as a delay in some European countries where punctuality is highly regarded.

The above discussion of the seven aspects of nonverbal communication provides a theoretical analysis. However, to consider each aspect in isolation is artificial. In practice, what is sent as a total message is a cluster of nonverbal cues in association with the spoken words.

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a. Define the term 'nonverbal communication'.
b. It is often said that 'actions speak louder than words'. Explain.

List and define the four types of nonverbal communication.

Explain the difference between nonverbal messages that are personal to the individual and nonverbal messages common to a group of people.

a. List three of your personal nonverbal actions.
b. From your own experience, list two nonverbal behaviours that can express satisfaction and two that can express dissatisfaction.

List the main differences between the rule-governed behaviour for sitting and walking for men and women. In your answer, compare the socially acceptable ways in which arms, legs and the body are used when men sit and when women sit.

6. Define and give examples of cultural nonverbal communication and universal nonverbal communication.
7. Assume two people are standing side by side and will touch by one placing a hand on the other person's shoulder or arm. According to etiquette rules of our culture, who would touch whom first in the following situations?
   - College principal and student
   - Company director and new employee
   - Interviewer and interviewee.
8. Why is nonverbal communication an important part of the message?

STOP AND REVIEW

Analysing nonverbal communication

People communicate nonverbally with body movement and with personal relationship behaviours. This nonverbal communication changes or complements the verbal communication. Nonverbal communication always occurs in a context, or framework. The context often determines the meaning of the nonverbal behaviour. On different occasions the same nonverbal gesture may have completely different meanings. Without context and spoken words, nonverbal behaviour is almost impossible to interpret with any accuracy.

Nonverbal behaviour should be interpreted in its context.

SEVEN DIFFERENT ASPECTS

Theoretical writings and research classify nonverbal communication into seven main areas.

1. body movement (kinesic behaviour)
2. physical characteristics
3. touching behaviour
4. vocal qualities (paralanguage)
5. space (proximity)
6. artefacts
7. environment.

Body movement

Body movement, or kinesic behaviour, includes movements of the hands, head, feet and legs, posture, eye movements and facial expressions—all these affect the message. Body posture—the way a person stands, leans forward or back, and moves the head—all affect the message. A person leaning forward, pointing and shaking a finger at someone, is seen as trying to dominate the other person. The way this is received by others, and the type of feedback given, determines how the communication will flow. Ekman and Friesen's (1978) five main categories of body movement are listed in Table 2.1.

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TABLE 2.1 The purpose of the Five Categories of Body Movement

CATEGORY	DEFINITION	PURPOSE	EXAMPLE
Emblems	Emblems are non-verbal acts learnt through imitation.	To reinforce or replace the words.	The nonverbal signals for 'okay' are a nod or a smile.
Illustrators	Illustrators are non-verbal acts that relate to, and illustrate, the spoken word.	To accentuate or emphasise a word or phrase.	A nod of the head and wave of the arm in a certain direction, accompanying the words 'Over there'.
Affective (or feeling) displays	Affective displays are changes in facial expression that display emotion.	Unconscious displays reflect feelings, whereas intentional expressions can disguise or hide feelings.	Facial muscles may 'drop' with surprise or shock; a smile may be used to deceive or disarm the listener.
Regulators	Nods and other head movements are nonverbal acts that regulate communication between people.	To maintain and control the flow of speaking and listening. Regulators indicate whether to continue, repeat, elaborate or change from speaker to listener.	A nod to encourage another person to continue speaking.
Adapt	Nonverbal acts performed unconsciously in response to some inner desire.	To display instinctive responses.	Scratching an itchy ear; raising the arms in shock or horror.

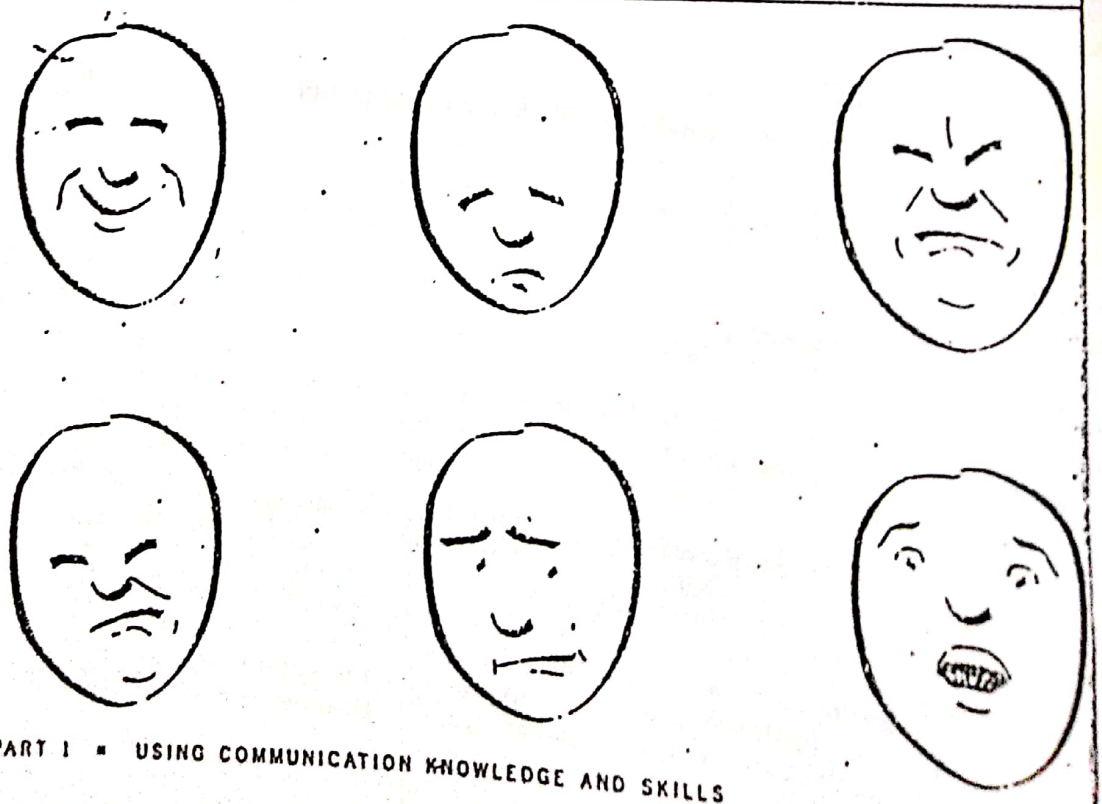

FIGURE 2.1 Six different facial expressions

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NONVERBAL CUES AND MESSAGES

FOCUS ON APPLYING SKILLS

1. Working in pairs, and without using words, use nonverbal cues to convey the following meanings.
   - No!
   - What do I do next?
   - Please help me finish.
   - Please stop badgering me.
   - What do you think?
   - I feel defeated.
   - I'm really happy.
   - I'm bored.
   - Let's get out of here.
2. Some nonverbal communication is common to a group of people. Nominate one gesture used by people in each of the roles listed in Table 2.3.
3. Work with someone else in your group by standing together.
   a. Person A stays still, on exactly the same spot, while Person B takes up a position that feels comfortable in relation to Person A.
   b. Person B explains what made them choose that comfortable position.
   c. Person A talks about how they feel—that is, whether Person B is standing too close, the angle, the amount of contact, the impact of height difference, gender issues, body size and body space.
   d. Explore the concept of eye contact by working in pairs. Each pair seats themselves comfortably and holds a two-way conversation for three minutes without making any eye contact at all. Once the conversation is finished come together as a large group to discuss:
      - What it felt like to take part in the activity (the process)
      - What was talked about (the content)
      - What you liked most about the activity
      - What you liked least about the activity.

   As a large group close the activity by talking with natural eye contact about immediate activities such as the coming weekend, holidays or some other event.

ROLE	GESTURE
An army cadet to a senior officer	
A police officer directing traffic	
A train guard to a train driver	
A football umpire to a player	
An angry parent to a child	
A friend to another friend	

TABLE 2.3 Give examples of nonverbal communication common to the roles

STOP AND REVIEW

1. Researchers divide nonverbal communication into seven areas. List these.
2. a. List and give an example of each of the five main categories of body movement.
   b. What is their purpose?
3. a. Define the term 'paralanguage'.
   b. 'Paralanguage will often determine the message being sent.' Briefly explain. In your answer, give examples of three vocalisations and discuss their impact on the message.
4. How does our use of space convey messages to others?
5. What part do artefacts play in nonverbal communication?
6. Identify two interpretations that a business executive might place on a colleague's lack of punctuality.
7. How do environmental factors influence communication?

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Matching the nonverbal and verbal parts of the total message

The total message combines spoken words with nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication adds meaning, modifies or changes the spoken words in six ways.

1. Repeating—for example, pointing when giving directions.
2. Contradicting—for example, looking at your watch and backing away while telling someone, 'I'm very interested in what you're saying.'
3. Substituting—using facial expressions as a substitute for words, to show pleasure, disappointment and a range of feelings and experiences.
4. Complementing—modifying, emphasising or elaborating words in a way that conveys attitudes and intentions towards others; for example, standing in a casual way or using a careless tone of voice that conveys a lack of respect for the listener.
5. Accenting—moving the head and hands to emphasise parts of the verbal message; for example, shaking the head as you say 'No'.
6. Controlling the flow of communication—nodding your head or changing position can indicate that the speaker should continue or give you a turn.

DEALING WITH CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THE VERBAL AND NONVERBAL MESSAGE

Nonverbal messages may contradict or complement verbal messages.

The accurate interpretation of nonverbal messages comes from knowing people and their pattern of interpersonal communication, both verbal and nonverbal. The nonverbal communication is seldom consciously observed unless it confuses the receiver. On some occasions it is possible to ignore confusing nonverbal communication. At other times it must be acknowledged or even confronted. For example, when the verbal message conveys agreement while several nonverbal signals such as pitch of voice, facial expression or posture indicate lack of agreement or even ridicule, check the meaning of the nonverbal part of the message. It is useful to check the meaning when you:

- are in doubt
- are uncomfortable with the communication
- have to make a decision on the basis of the total message.

Consider the impact of culture

Because your cultural background influences the way you interpret the nonverbal messages of others, it is important to consider specific messages in context. If you discover inconsistencies between the verbal and nonverbal messages of someone from another culture, stand back and consider the message in the context of the situation. This allows you more scope for interpretation and a better chance of understanding the intended message rather than the one your cultural background suggests.

HOW TO CHECK THE MEANING OF NONVERBAL BEHAVIOUR

The total message includes the words and the nonverbal behaviour.

When you are in doubt about the meaning of nonverbal behaviour, confirm it with the sender and try not to make assumptions or pass judgment. Gestures and body movements are nonverbal behaviours that contribute to the total message. The total message is understood more easily when you follow the four-step process below.

1. Hear the words.
2. See the nonverbal behaviour.
3. Confirm their meaning with the sender when the verbal and nonverbal messages conflict or confuse you.
4. Consider the context or setting.

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NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Use this checklist as you watch an interview or a political broadcast on television or video. As you watch the program, identify nonverbal communication that interacts with the spoken message in a way that:

SELF-TEST CHECKLIST 2.3

	Yes	No	Unsure
repeats	☐	☐	☐
contradicts	☐	☐	☐
substitutes	☐	☐	☐
complements	☐	☐	☐
accents	☐	☐	☐
controls the message	☐	☐	☐

IN PRACTICE

Action list	Example of action at work or study	Actions I can take in future
I am able to use appropriate nonverbal communication		
I can distinguish between the four types of nonverbal communication—personal, common to a group or culture, universal, random		
I can differentiate the seven different aspects of nonverbal communication		
I can use nonverbal communication appropriately when giving feedback		
I can use personal space effectively		
I can match the nonverbal and verbal parts of my message		
I feel confident to deal with the contradictions between another person's verbal and nonverbal messages		
I can check the meaning of the other person's nonverbal behaviour by using the four-step process		

Chapter summary

Define nonverbal communication: Nonverbal communication consists of all that part of a message that is not encoded in words, for example, tone of voice, facial expression or gestures and movement.

Identify the importance of nonverbal communication in the total message: Verbal and nonverbal messages communicate as a total message. They may be in agreement with each other, or contradict. If the verbal and nonverbal messages are inconsistent, the nonverbal part of the message has the stronger effect and is the more credible part of the total message.

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Distinguish four ways of grouping nonverbal communication: Nonverbal communication is either personal (unique to the individual) common to the group or culture, universal, or random. The part of the nonverbal communication that is common to a range of people is a clue to what they consider to be acceptable behaviour; personal nonverbal communication characteristics such as gestures and mannerisms create an impression of the sender's personality.

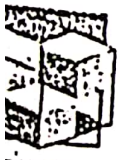
Identify seven aspects of nonverbal behaviour: The different aspects of nonverbal behaviour are body movement (kinesic behaviour), physical characteristics, touching behaviour, vocal qualities or paralanguage, the use of space or proximity, artefacts and the environment. A combination of these aspects makes up the nonverbal part of the total message communicated.

Highlight the role of nonverbal behaviour in the communication process: Nonverbal behaviour may be specific (e.g. pointing in the direction of the bus stop) or general (e.g. waving in the general direction of the next suburb). Body movement aims to communicate more than can be said with words alone. It is expressive (e.g. enthusiastic or weary) so it also conveys emotions or attitudes.

Confirm with the sender of the message the meaning of their nonverbal communication: When you observe other people's nonverbal communication, it is more useful to confirm with them the meaning of their nonverbal communication than to make your own interpretations or assumptions. Confirming the message reduces the chance of misinterpreting the nonverbal message.

Use nonverbal communication appropriately: Nonverbal communication is sent by at least one person and received by at least one other person. The accuracy with which it is interpreted and its value in clarifying the message depends on the sender's ability to communicate accurately and on the receiver's ability to interpret the message accurately.

Use appropriate nonverbal communication: The appropriate use of nonverbal communication and the ability to interpret nonverbal communication accurately are two of the skills demonstrated by good communicators. These skills are used as each of us listens, speaks, questions and communicates with others. In this chapter the seven aspects of nonverbal communication have been presented in isolation. In practice, the aspects occur in clusters and must be read and used together. Your task is to identify the seven aspects and learn to integrate them with the verbal and contextual information to convey or grasp the total message. A skilled communicator regards this as a continuous life task.



RATION
TY

USING YOUR NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION APPROPRIATELY

The object of this activity is to increase your nonverbal communication skills so that you give your message confidently and courteously—that is, so that you express assertion. You are asked to role-play aggressive and passive behaviours as well as assertive behaviour. Some of the nonverbal behaviour that indicates assertiveness, aggression and passivity is shown in the Nonverbal Behaviour Checklist on page 35.

Procedure

1. Divide into groups of three. Nominate Person A to be Jenny, the team leader; Person B is James, a team member; Person C is the observer. Jenny, the team leader, asks James to meet with her at 4 p.m. James responds with the question: 'What will we be discussing?'

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NONVERBAL BEHAVIOUR	ASSERTIVE	Y/N	AGGRESSIVE	Y/N	PASSIVE	Y/N
Posture	Upright and relaxed	☐	Leaning forward	☐	Shrinking away	☐
Head	Firm and comfortable	☐	Chin pushed forward	☐	Head down	☐
Eyes	Direct and regular eye contact	☐	Staring, often piercing or glaring	☐	Glancing down with little eye contact	☐
Face	Appropriate, courteous and friendly expression	☐	Rigid and set	☐	Hesitant, smiling even when upset	☐
Voice	Confident, with appropriate speed, pitch and volume	☐	Loud, fast and dramatic	☐	Soft, trailing off at ends of words or sentences	☐
Arms/hands	Relaxed, moving easily and reflecting the verbal message	☐	Controlled sharp gestures with fingers pointing and jerky movements	☐	Still or slow, not reflecting the verbal message	☐
Movement/ walking	Confident and measured pace appropriate to the context	☐	Overly confident and heavy or fast, deliberate, hard	☐	Slow and without confidence, or fast and uncertain	☐

NONVERBAL BEHAVIOUR CHECKLIST

2. The role of Jenny is to be played in three different ways:
   a. assertively
   b. aggressively
   c. passively.

   Person C, the observer, uses the Nonverbal behaviour checklist to give Person A feedback on how successfully they used assertive, aggressive and passive nonverbal communication as they played the role of Jenny.
3. All three people in the group should take a turn playing the roles of Persons A, B and C.
4. Discuss the activity in the group as a whole by answering the following questions:
   a. Did you find it easy to use your nonverbal communication to show assertive, aggressive and passive behaviour in the role play?
   b. How well did each of you use behaviour that showed assertion, aggression and passivity nonverbally?
   c. Are there other ways to show assertion, aggression and passivity nonverbally?
   d. What effect did each of the three different ways of communicating nonverbally have on the person playing the role of James?
   e. What were your reactions and feelings about the activity?

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KEY TERMS

adaptors
affective displays
artefacts
body movement
context
cultural nonverbal communication
emblems
illustrators
nonverbal communication
paralanguage
personal nonverbal communication
proximity
regulators
total message
universal nonverbal communication
unrelated nonverbal communication
vocalisations

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CASE STUDY

DO NONVERBALS COMMUNICATE?

Geoff Smithers is the Manager of the Claims Department of Cure All Household Insurance. Geoff is always appropriately dressed for the Manager's position in a suit and tie. He is an affable open type of person who cares for his staff. He moves around with an easygoing manner, smiling and always taking the time to say 'Hello' and acknowledge staff. He expects honesty and openness from the staff. He also expects them to greet and respond to one another and customers courteously.

Lyndall and Debbie work at the reception area of the Claims Department. Their duties include attending to customers' needs and requirements, answering the telephone, redirecting calls when necessary, and general office duties. In Geoff's view Lyndall is a moody person who often responds to customers' greetings by keeping her head down or looking at her keyboard.

Debbie on the other hand has the habit of strutting around the office using a loud voice to catch attention, and she latches onto anyone who will listen to her. She also sits with Lyndall and gossips about the other staff and what she did over the weekend. Some of the staff have told Geoff they feel uncomfortable when they see Debbie and Lyndall sitting in a huddle chatting. Debbie also wears clothing to shock. Sometimes her clothes are simply not in keeping with office culture.

Geoff needs urgent work to be done. In his usual affable manner he approaches the front desk. He notes Lyndall slumped over the keyboard with that look on her face that suggests 'Don't bother me. I am too busy'. Geoff quickly changes direction and turns to Debbie, who is wearing an outfit more suited to a party. She is sitting next to Lyndall with her hands behind her head, peering at Geoff through half-shut eyes.

Geoff knows that neither person wants to do what he needs done now. He makes a quick decision and says to them both: 'I want this claim finished by close of business so it can be posted this evening'. He left them with the work.

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(SIR Khalid Jamal II

CHAPTER

3

Listening skills

In this chapter you will learn how to:

- ▷ identify four different listening responses
- ▷ practise appropriate questioning responses
- ▷ provide feedback from reflective listening
- ▷ describe barriers to listening
- ▷ practise various listening skills
- ▷ listen carefully.

Evaluate your communication skills by completing the self-test checklists in the chapter.

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There is a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is a physical process. The ears receive sensations or stimuli and transmit them to the brain—for example, a loud, sudden or unfamiliar sound catches attention.

Listening refers to the interpretative process that takes place when we hear something. When we listen, we store, classify and label information, all of which involves attention, interpretation and understanding. Listening to another person takes time and effort.

At work, people listen in order to understand instructions, receive new information, understand changes in procedure, and to interact with other people. Whatever the purpose, concentration and a deliberate effort to be interested in the speaker's message will increase listening effectiveness.

Listening involves both hearing and striving to understand the other person's message. If you listen well, you will understand its content, meaning and feelings. If you are distracted, much of this will be lost.

The process of listening

Listening is an active process.

Each day a great deal of our time is spent listening and talking to others. Listening serves two broad purposes in this process.

1. As the sender of a message, listening to your receiver's answers tells you how the other person has interpreted your message.
2. As the receiver of a message, listening to the other person allows you to understand their meaning.

A variety of listening skills can be learned and developed with practice. Listening is so important that it is worth practising the different skills in each type of listening shown in Table 3.1.

Sometimes you will use only one of these types of listening skills. On another occasion you might use all in combination. Each type of listening involves a set of behaviours or skills. They enable you to focus on the speaker, invite the speaker to continue, give feedback or show empathy with the speaker.

FOCUS ON THE SPEAKER

Show interest in the speaker.

In attending listening, you focus on the speaker by giving them your physical attention. You use your whole body and the environment you create to provide feedback that assures the speaker of your total attention. Some ways of offering this feedback are eye contact, posture and body movement.

The quality of your attending listening skills is also improved by:

- understanding the impact of moving into the personal space of others
- the impact of the environment
- the capacity to ignore distractions.

The six factors in Table 3.2 help you to give your complete attention to the speaker.

TABLE 3.1 Four listening skills

TYPE	PURPOSE
Attending listening	To focus on the speaker
Encouraging listening	To invite the speaker to continue
Reflecting listening	To mirror the feelings and content of the message
Active listening	To show empathy with the speaker

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TABLE 3.2 Attending listening

FACTOR	PURPOSE
Eye contact	• Use supportive eye contact. • Focus your eyes on the speaker without being intimidating. • Show sensitivity—avoid staring directly at the speaker for long periods to avoid making them uncomfortable.
Posture	• Use your posture to show you are attending to the other person. • Lean slightly towards the speaker in a relaxed way. • Face the person squarely. • Maintain an open position with arms and legs uncrossed.
Body movement	• Avoid moving about a lot. • Avoid fiddling with objects, crossing or uncrossing legs, signalling or speaking to passers-by.
Personal space	• Position yourself at a distance that is comfortable for both you and the speaker. Comfort in the use of physical distance depends on culture or personal preference. • Avoid moving into the speaker's personal space.
Environment	• Create an environment without distractions or interruptions. • Remove any physical barriers between you and the speaker. • Establish an environment where you can both feel relaxed.
Avoid distractions	• Face and maintain contact with the speaker. • Ignore distractions rather than turning away from the speaker. • Stop what you are doing and focus your attention on the other person.

INVITE THE SPEAKER TO CONTINUE

Offer feedback.

Encouraging listening indicates that the listener is willing to do more than listen. Encouraging listening provides feedback that invites speakers to say more and to disclose their thoughts and feelings. The following strategies will encourage the speaker to continue.

Invitation to disclose

Invite speakers to continue but without pressuring them to disclose their feelings or thoughts. It is their choice, so let them decide. They may be feeling ambivalent about whether to discuss their feelings or keep them private. Continue to give attention by using eye contact and an open posture and let them choose whether or not to disclose: For example, if the speaker seems upset or annoyed, you might say something like 'You seem to be upset about the discussion with that last client. Would you care to talk about it?'

Minimal and brief responses

Minimal and brief spoken responses let speakers know you are listening and encourage them to continue. Some of these responses are 'mm', 'hmmm', 'yes', 'I see',

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along with attentive posture. Other nonverbal cues like nodding and facial expressions convey your interest without attempting to control or divert the conversation away from the area of interest.

Pause

A pause, or brief silence, allows the speaker time to consider, reflect and decide whether to continue the conversation. As a listener, use this time to watch the speaker's body movement. This can give you clues to the total message—its content and the speaker's feelings. Let the speaker have time to think. Allow silences.

Use encouraging questions

Use open questions.

Asking open questions will encourage the other person to share more personal feelings and thoughts. An example of an open question is: 'How did you go about collecting the files?' An example of a closed question is: 'Did you collect the files?' Open questions encourage the speaker to answer at greater length and in more detail, whereas closed questions usually lead to a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Avoid 'why' questions because they can make the other person defensive. Rather than encouraging speakers to explore their actions, a 'why' question urges them to justify their actions. It can also sound disapproving.

By asking open questions about what, when, where, how and who, you can help the speaker to be more specific and revealing. Although encouraging questions show that you are interested in talking, they do not necessarily show that you understand. To show you understand, make reflective statements that clarify and summarise the other person's communication without interrupting the flow of words or thoughts. Reflective statements are discussed in the next section.

MIRROR THE CONTENT AND FEELINGS IN THE MESSAGE

Show the other person you understand.

Reflecting listening restates both the feeling and content of the speaker's message, to show that you understand. There are several techniques you can use to provide this kind of feedback.

Paraphrasing focuses on the content rather than the feelings. It rephrases the essential part of the message concisely in your own words. Listen for the main ideas and direction of the message and rephrase it for the speaker.

FOCUS ON APPLYING SKILLS

ATTENDING AND ENCOURAGING LISTENING

1. Work in pairs to practise attending and encouraging listening skills. Take turns to act as the speaker and listener.
   As the speaker, choose a controversial topic on which you hold a very definite position, or a topic you feel strongly about, and speak to your listener about this for three minutes.
   As the listener, use the following guidelines to focus your listening.
   a. Show your interest in the speaker by your body movement: face them, make eye contact, lean forward, and keep an open posture.
   b. Notice the speaker's body movement. This may indicate their feelings.
   c. Use familiar, comfortable language that you both normally use and understand.
   d. Use feedback to invite the speaker to continue by using minimal responses.
   e. Ask as few questions as possible. When you do ask questions, use attending and encouraging questions. (Some examples are shown in Table 3.3.)
2. At the end of the exercise, discuss with one another your effectiveness as listeners. Refer to points (a) to (e) in question 1.

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Paraphrasing helps to achieve a full understanding of the content. The speaker either agrees with your summary or disagrees and can then rephrase the message. For example, phrases such as 'You're saying that ...' or 'I see, you would say that ...' help you to paraphrase the message. Avoid repeating the other person's statements word for word.

Paraphrasing is useful at work to confirm instructions or information before you take action. Whether at work, or in other situations, it is a very useful way of indicating to the speaker that you are concentrating on the message.

Reflective statements are made by expressing briefly the essential feelings you receive from the message. This helps the speaker to focus on them. For example, to reflect feelings from the message, 'I thought I would have got that last promotion. Seems like I miss out every time', the listener replies, 'It's really discouraging' or 'You feel discouraged' or 'You seem discouraged'. This lets the speaker know that you understand their feelings.

Clarifying establishes with the speaker that your understanding is correct. Make clarifying remarks in terms of your feelings rather than as criticisms of the speaker. For example, if you feel confused by what the speaker has said, you might say something like 'I feel a bit confused about that last remark. I think you are saying ...' or 'Could you repeat that? I don't think I understood' or 'Could you give me an example of ...? I'm not sure I followed what you said'.

If you have misunderstood, the speaker can then rephrase the message. Clarifying gives the speaker feedback and shows what the listener understands. It takes the guesswork out of communication.

Summarising is used to gather up and condense the most important points made in a long conversation, to conclude it and give it shape or direction. As you summarise, use statements such as 'So far we've covered ...' or 'Your main concerns seem to be ...'. Summarising lets the other person know you understand what is most relevant, and their thoughts and feelings. Such feedback results in clear communication. Both sender and receiver understand the message.

SHOW EMPATHY WITH THE SPEAKER

While reflective statements restate the feelings and content of the message, active listening goes one step further. It also communicates to other people that you understand the problem from their point of view. An active listener has empathy with the speaker. This technique lets the speaker either confirm or correct the listener's feedback. Active listening also helps other people to reach their own decisions and form their own insights.

Understand the issue from the other person's point of view.

Active participation

The process of active listening involves actively participating in the conversation with the other person. It requires a conscious attempt to empathise with the speaker in terms of the content and feelings and to enable them to express and recognise those feelings. For example, a response by the listener such as 'You seem to be feeling down about this ...' lets the speaker either agree or disagree with that response. Listening responses that help you to participate actively are shown in Table 3.3.

When you use active listening, you are giving the other person all your attention in order to understand their perspective, and to communicate your understanding. Active listening also lets speakers find their own understanding and insights.

Attending, encouraging and reflecting listening are separate listening skills which people combine as they interact with one another. As well as using these skills, an active listener understands the situation from the other person's point of view. It is a

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FOCUS ON APPLYING SKILLS

REFLECTING AND PARAPHRASING SKILLS

1. Work by yourself. Read the following statements and write a reflective response to the feelings expressed by each message.
   a. 'I know how to do it. Leave me alone.'
   b. 'I like to swim each morning. It makes me feel good all day.'
   c. 'I never know where I stand with you. Whenever I talk about the new project, I get the feeling you disapprove.'
   d. 'I never have enough time to get everything done.'
2. Work in groups of three to:
   a. Identify the content and feelings of each statement.
   b. Discuss the responses prepared in question 1.
   c. Discuss how the responses could be improved.
3. Work in pairs.
   a. Think of a topic that interests you, such as your last holiday, a member of your family, your favourite sport, or a piece of music.
   b. Each person uses listening skills to gather as much information and understanding about the topic as possible.
4. *Quick Quiz:* Paraphrasing

Tick True (T) or False (F) for the following statements.

TRUE/FALSE

Paraphrasing by the listener	T	F
1. focuses on the content rather than the feelings	☐	☐
2. allows the speaker to add new information	☐	☐
3. helps you listen carefully	☐	☐
4. shows speakers they are unimportant	☐	☐
5. restates what speakers have just said	☐	☐
6. lets the listener ignore the speaker	☐	☐
7. helps the listener to understand or confirm information	☐	☐
8. lets the speaker exaggerate	☐	☐
9. means that the listener always agrees with what the speaker said	☐	☐
10. helps to avoid mistakes	☐	☐
11. means the listener repeats word for word what the speaker said	☐	☐

more intense form of listening. Speakers who are given the opportunity to talk with active listeners are more likely to find their own satisfactory resolution to the problem or issue of concern.

Feedback

Feedback is the connecting, continuing or completing link.

What you choose to listen to, understand and interpret affects how you respond to the speaker. If you listen for both the words and the feelings and receive the message accurately, it is possible to give feedback that helps the understanding of both speaker and listener. A good listener gives feedback in a way that is appropriate to the speaker's needs and to the situation. Feedback is the connecting or completing link between listener and speaker, and is discussed more fully in Chapter 5, Workplace communication.

By listening well, you can avoid directing and leading, blaming, judging or evaluating the other person. Rather than feeling the need to be responsible for others or to confront them, a good listener accepts and is accepted by others. Skill in listening lets you enjoy the company of others as you listen for pleasure, information, to help others or to interact in a work team.

Different types of questions are used for different reasons. Figure 3.1 differentiates between three types of questions and paraphrasing. Open questions such as 'Tell me

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TYPES OF RESPONSE	EXAMPLES
Attending	• 'I hear you ...' • 'I see ...' • 'Oh ...' • 'Uh hmmm ...'
Encouraging questions	• 'I'd like to hear how you feel.' • 'Would you like to talk about it?' • 'You'd like to talk further?' • 'Perhaps you'd like to tell me?'
Reflective statements	• 'You really dislike some ...' • 'Sounds as if you're really ...' • 'It's really exciting ...' • 'You feel it is a good idea ...' • 'You seem discouraged ...'
Clarifying questions	• 'I think you're saying ...' • 'Could you give an example ...?' • 'I feel a bit confused. Could you repeat that?'
Active listening: Empathy	• 'I understand how you feel.' • 'You seem upset about this.' • 'I see. It really means that ...' • 'On another occasion you'd like ...'

TABLE 3.3 Examples of listening responses

about ...' or 'Tell me how ...' allow the person to give a lot of information. The listening funnel shows how the Probing questions such as 'In what way were you able to ...?' start to narrow the listener's range of responses. Closed questions such as 'When did you do that?' 'Where?' 'Who?' usually have only yes/no or specific answers. Paraphrasing questions are used to check that your understanding of the message matches the sender's meaning.

HOW GOOD A LISTENER ARE YOU?

SELF-TEST CHECKLIST

How often have you noticed the following interfering with your ability to listen effectively?

	Often	Sometimes	Never
Your attention to the message	☐	☐	☐
The status or role of the speaker	☐	☐	☐
The rate at which the message is spoken	☐	☐	☐
The speaker's accent	☐	☐	☐
Familiarity with the subject	☐	☐	☐
A poorly organised message	☐	☐	☐
The speaker's resemblance to someone you dislike	☐	☐	☐
The importance of the subject	☐	☐	☐
Your lack of familiarity with the message	☐	☐	☐
The speaker's opposition to some of your opinions and beliefs	☐	☐	☐
The gestures made by the speaker	☐	☐	☐
Your tendency to think about something else.	☐	☐	☐

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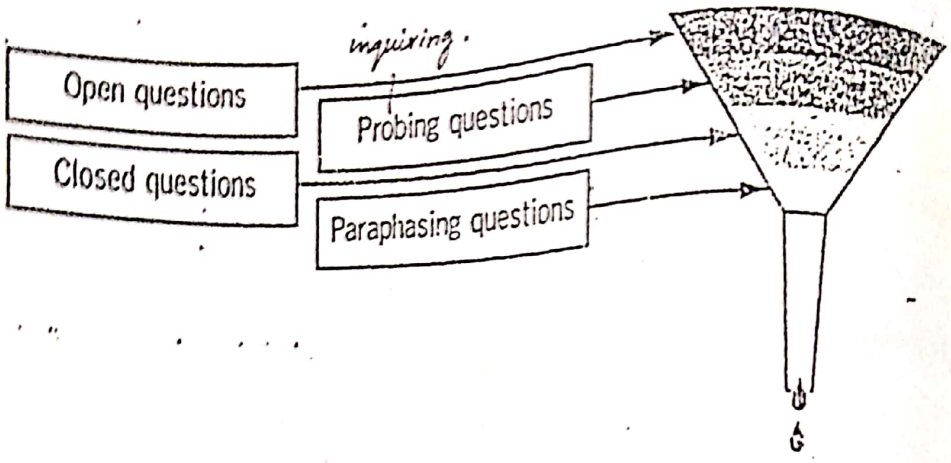

FIGURE 3.1
Listening funnel

Barriers to listening

Barriers interfere with the message.

Barriers may be due to the listeners themselves when some aspect of their own background interferes with their perception of the speaker or of the spoken message. Barriers may also be due to any one of the elements in the communication process—sender, receiver, message, channel, environment or ineffective feedback. An unclear message caused by static or interference on the telephone line is an obvious example of a communication barrier caused by the channel. Neither the listener nor the sender can prevent such a barrier. Listening is made easier when the speaker can send a clear unambiguous message. It is also made easier when the listener avoids the following barriers.

STOP AND REVIEW

1. What are the two broad purposes served by listening?
2. a. Give a definition of listening.
   b. Think of a person you regard as a good listener, and one who is a poor listener. Identify three aspects of their listening techniques that make them either a good listener or a poor listener.
3. Identify three examples of nonverbal feedback you might use in attending listening.
4. If you wanted to listen carefully to a colleague, what aspects of the environment would you attend to?
5. a. Name four strategies that a listener can use to provide feedback when using encouraging listening skills.
   b. Explain the difference between open and closed questions.
   c. 'Avoid "why" questions because they can make the other person defensive.' Briefly explain this statement.
6. a. What is the main purpose of (i) encouraging listening, (ii) reflective statements?
   b. Define the term 'paraphrasing' and explain its purpose as a listening response.
   c. Define the term 'reflective statement' and explain its purpose as a listening response.
   d. Define the term 'clarifying question' and explain its purpose as a listening response.
   e. Define the term 'summarising' and explain its purpose as a listening response.
7. a. 'Active listening goes one step further than restating content and feelings.' Explain this statement.
   b. When is active listening most useful?
   c. List four benefits of active listening skills.
8. What role does feedback play in the listening process?

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LISTENER'S INEFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO THE SPEAKER	EXAMPLE OF BARRIER	SPEAKER'S RESPONSE TO THE BARRIER
Ordering, directing or commanding	'Stop it or else ...' 'You must do this'	Resentment
Warning and threatening	'You'd better do this or else ...'	Anger
Lecturing or preaching	'It's in your own best interest to do this'	Resistance
Judging, criticising	'I think you've gone too far this time'	Offence
Disagreeing	'I think you're totally wrong'	Put down
Blaming	'It's all your fault'	Defensiveness
Name calling	'You're stupid'	Distress
Probing, interrogating	'Why did you ... ?'	Defensiveness
Using ridicule or sarcasm	'Someone like you is not expected to know ...'	Hurt

TABLE 3.4 The impact of a listener's inappropriate verbal response

BARRIERS IN THE LISTENER

Often the most significant barriers to listening are present in the listener. Some examples of such barriers include:

- boredom or lack of interest
- the listener's dislike of the speaker's personality or physical appearance
- a desire to change rather than accept the speaker
- a tendency to make early conclusions or to listen only for a pause so the speaker can be interrupted
- the intrusion of the listener's own values or attitudes
- the listener's tendency to judge the speaker
- the listener's willingness to hear only that part of the message they agree with
- the listener's opinion that the speaker lacks credibility.

You will recognise some of these barriers, and perhaps be able to add to them from your own experience as a listener or as an observer of another listener. Table 3.4 gives examples of barriers to listening and their impact on the receiver. As a sender, no matter how skilled you are at speaking or communicating the message, communication will fail if the receiver does not listen.

STOP AND REVIEW

1. 'Barriers interfere with the message.' Explain this statement.
2. What is the difference between listening barriers caused by the sender and those caused by the receiver of the message?
3. 'A person's attitude can cause a communication barrier.' Briefly explain this statement.
4. Refer to Table 3.4:
   a. List four inappropriate listening responses identified in this table.
   b. Give examples of a situation where you observed each of the inappropriate listening responses.
   c. Which of the four listening skills (attending, encouraging, reflecting or active listening) would have been more appropriate in each situation?

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IN PRACTICE

Action list	Example of action at work or study	Actions I can take in future
I listen actively		
I listen for feedback from the sender		
I listen for the content of the other person's message		
I attend to the speaker as I listen		
I am able to ignore distractions		
I invite the speaker to continue		
I can, when appropriate, restate the feelings and content of the message		
I listen with empathy		
I use my nonverbal communication appropriately		
I use paraphrasing appropriately		
I give feedback appropriate to the context		
I avoid barriers to my own listening skills		
I listen to achieve mutual understanding		

Chapter summary

Identify four different listening responses: The four listening responses are: focus on the speaker, invite the speaker to continue, mirror the content and feelings of the message, and show empathy with the speaker.

Practise appropriate questioning responses: Open questions encourage the other person to share their thoughts and feelings. Encouraging questions are open questions about what, when, where, how and who. Clarifying questions let you, as the listener, check your understanding of the message with the other person. Use closed questions only when a 'yes' or 'no' answer is required. Avoid 'why' questions because they may make other people feel defensive and justify their position rather than seek new ideas or further understanding.

Provide feedback in reflective listening: A good listener does this by paraphrasing, using reflective statements, clarifying and summarising. The result is a fuller understanding and clear communication.

Describe barriers to listening: These barriers can be caused by the sender, the receiver, the message, the channel, the environment or the way in which feedback is given. Barriers from the listener may be due to boredom, a difference in values, lack of interest, or ineffective verbal responses.

Practise various listening skills: The learning activities in this chapter enable you to practise attending listening skills that focus your attention on the speaker, and encouraging listening skills that allow speakers to say more and to disclose their feelings and/or thoughts. You will also be able to practise reflective listening, a response that shows the other person you understand the content and feelings conveyed by the message. The integration activity gives you practice in active listening so that you can

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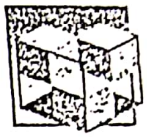
restate the content and feeling, and also to let the other person know that you understand the situation from their point of view—that is, to demonstrate empathy.

Listen carefully: Good listeners use all four listening responses, singly or in combination, to make their listening response appropriate to the situation. Effective listening leads to mutual understanding.

GOOD LISTENING SKILLS



INTEGRATION ACTIVITY

1. Attending, encouraging and reflecting listening

Form into groups of three to practise listening skills. Allocate the roles of:

A Speaker
B Listener
C Observer

Take a turn at all three roles. A speaks, B listens and responds, C observes and assesses the listener's effectiveness according to the guidelines below.

The speaker makes the following statements one at a time. The listener responds to statement (a) by paraphrasing; statement (b) by clarifying; statement (c) by reflecting feeling; and statement (d) by reflecting meaning.

Speaker's statements

a. 'I keep getting all the worst assignments in this section, and I just don't think it's fair!'
b. 'We have clients complaining every day about errors in delivery or late deliveries. If you can't meet the order you should let us know so that we can notify the client.'
c. 'It's not my job. Someone else can do it.'
d. 'What you expect from this job is unrealistic. The time needed to complete all the tasks varies and I can't control the number of tasks. How am I supposed to get my job done?'

Observer's guidelines

Observe the speaker and listener. Note when each listening skill has been used, decide if the skill and the appropriate nonverbal behaviour—body language, facial expression and eye contact—was used successfully, fairly satisfactorily, or poorly, and place a tick in the appropriate column of Observer's Checklist 3.1.

Discuss your observations with the speaker and the listener.

2. Role play: Active listening

Form into groups of five. Nominate one person to play the part of Susan and one to play the part of Jacob. The other three act as observers.

	Successfully	Fairly satisfactorily	Poorly
Paraphrased	☐	☐	☐
Clarified	☐	☐	☐
Reflected feelings	☐	☐	☐
Reflected meanings	☐	☐	☐
Used attentive body language	☐	☐	☐
Used facial expression that encouraged the speaker	☐	☐	☐
Maintained eye contact.	☐	☐	☐

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Susan

You have walked past the supervisor's office and witnessed your immediate superior presenting your report to the supervisor. You heard the supervisor say to him, 'You have done an excellent job.' Your are angry because your superior has presented your work as his own. You go to his office and wait for him.

Jacob

You have taken Susan's report to the supervisor. The supervisor puts it aside and begins to discuss progress on the project you started last week. This project is now ahead of schedule. He says, as you are about to leave, 'You have done an excellent job. I will read Susan's report later.' You go back to your office to find Susan waiting for you.

The people playing the roles of Susan and Jacob are to act out the interaction between them. Susan is angry because she believes Jacob presented the report as his own work. Jacob is to use the cluster of listening skills: attending, encouraging, reflecting and active listening to respond appropriately to Susan.

Observers

The observers are to complete three tasks.

a. Use the Checklist below to assess the listening skills used by Jacob as he responds to Susan's anger.

	Yes	No	Unsure
1. Did the person playing the role of Jacob use			
a. body posture and position	☐	☐	☐
b. eye contact	☐	☐	☐
c. facial expression	☐	☐	☐
that conveyed the impression that he was listening to Susan?			
2. Did Jacob use			
a. words	☐	☐	☐
b. tone of voice	☐	☐	☐
c. rate of speaking	☐	☐	☐
that conveyed the impression that he was listening to Susan?			
3. Did Jacob give Susan enough encouragement to continue, either by			
a. minimal but positive responses, or	☐	☐	☐
b. supportive body movement?	☐	☐	☐
4. Did Jacob ask helpful questions?	☐	☐	☐

5. Circle the word that best describes Jacob's listening skills:
   Satisfactory Good Very good Excellent
6. List any barriers created by either Susan or Jacob.
7. As a group, give feedback to the people playing the roles of Susan and Jacob. Suggest alternative responses they might have used.

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KEY TERMS

active listening
attending listening
barriers
clarifying
closed question
empathy
encouraging listening
feedback
listening
open question
paraphrasing
paraphrasing question
probing question
reflecting listening
reflective statement
summarising

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CASE STUDY

IS IT WORTH IT?

'Our house is now ready for a redesign' Abby said to Jim. 'The tenants moved out last week so the architect can inspect the house and give us some advice about the design.' The house was a heritage free-standing cottage that Abby and Jim agreed would be good to live in when it was renovated to suit their needs.

Abby said 'I'll get the phone book and choose an architect from the Yellow Pages'. They looked through the long list and chose the one that stated 'We are the complete architectural service'. 'That's the one we want' Abby said. 'They'll do everything for us.'

Abby and Jim's first meeting with the architect, Geoff, did not turn out as they expected. They thought they could say 'There's our house and floor plan. Please design it'. Geoff said 'We have to sit down and discuss what you really want from your house. I do not simply design or redesign a dwelling without input and guidance from the people who are going to live in it'. Geoff took a notepad from his briefcase. Jim decided he didn't like Geoff for some reason. He said 'I don't want you to take notes. I think you should just be able to tell us what is best for our needs'. Geoff said 'That's not right. I am going to make some notes as we talk'.

Geoff asked Abby and Jim the following questions without giving them time to answer any of them. 'What I need to know is, what sort of lifestyle you are likely to lead—what do you want in terms of comfort and what style of accessories do you like? I also need to know how many people will be living in the house at any time because that will affect how many bedrooms you require. I note you said you both would like to have some privacy that you can retreat to when all your family come to visit or to stay. Could this be an upstairs addition?'

As Abby and Jim tried to answer all the questions at once, Geoff said: 'To create the extra floor space you need, we will have to extend upwards at the back of the house so that the renovations will not be noticeable from the front – this way, the character of the house will be retained. If you accept this recommendation you will require a bathroom-toilet upstairs'. He drew some examples. Abby and Jim began to see the

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picture more clearly but they felt that Geoff had been so busy doing the sketches he hadn't heard their answers to his questions.

Geoff then noted other relevant concerns such as adequate and comfortable living area, recreation room for the family, and a practical modern kitchen, and finally suggested an idea that would incorporate off-street car parking.

Abby and Jim finally felt quite happy about their first meeting with the architect. As they did not know what they wanted and had no idea what to expect, they felt he had informed them of what could and could not be achieved in the redesign of their house. Geoff was happy too. He felt he had taken them through the various stages of 'what if...?' and 'what about...?'. He felt Abby and Jim had a clear picture of his ideas for their house but he wasn't sure if he really knew what they wanted: perhaps he had jumped to conclusions.

At their second meeting Geoff showed Abby and Jim his design for their house. They both looked at it and said 'No this is not what we want. We want something that looks like a heritage house. This looks a combination of a heritage house and a Cape Cod extension'. Geoff said 'It is just what you need'. Abby and Jim replied in unison 'No. What do we do now?'

Questions

1. What barriers to listening does this case study reveal?
2. Describe some of the weaknesses in Geoff's questioning skills.
3. How could Geoff have used encouraging listening skills to gather more information about their needs?
4. Describe how Abby and Jim could have used attending listening skills to understand Geoff's questions better.

Answers to *Quick Quiz* on page 44: 1T, 2T, 3T, 4F, 5T, 6F, 7T, 8F, 9F, 10T, 11F

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CHAPTER

4

Interpersonal communication

In this chapter you will learn how to:

- use appropriate social skills in personal interactions
- interact in a supportive way
- use assertive communication
- construct 'I' statements
- use different types of feedback appropriately

Evaluate your interpersonal communication skills by completing the self-test checklist in the chapter.

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At work, those who seem successful in interpersonal communication appear to relate easily and confidently to those around them. They have good listening, speaking and nonverbal communication skills, and can use assertion without alienating others. Overall, their perception of messages is accurate and their responsiveness allows others to use their own interpersonal skills to express their expectations and values. They develop good personal, social and work relationships and create a positive communication climate.

Creating a communication climate

Communication climate: the tone of a relationship, expressed by people's verbal and nonverbal messages.

The communication climate is created by the way people feel about each other. It is positive when people feel that they are valued, and when they interact confidently and courteously. Relationships can be built on openness, honesty and trust when people feel goodwill towards one another and are willing to speak with others, listen carefully, ask questions and offer feedback. Information and ideas are conveyed accurately this way.

A negative communication climate is created when someone's contribution is not appreciated. Such a climate makes it difficult for people to get and give information and to take action. If it is hard to communicate, people feel uncomfortable and unwilling to interact. They are less willing to ask questions, or offer ideas and feedback, and are more inclined to wait and see what happens. Communication is less accurate and interpersonal relationships are less effective in a negative communication climate.

EMPATHY

Empathy is the ability to understand and feel as the other person feels.

Those who respond appropriately and show empathy reassure others that their message has made contact. Empathetic people have the skill to:

- attend to what is said
- retain objectivity
- recognise nonverbal cues about the feelings of others
- understand the content of the message
- understand others' feelings
- communicate their understanding to others.

Empathy enhances the communication climate. The tone of the communication is positive and the communication concentrates on the needs and interests of the people involved.

WIN–WIN APPROACH

The win–win approach is one that concentrates on the needs and interests of the people communicating. Rather than winning positions or gaining victories over the other person, the win–win approach lets you gather or give information in a way that creates a positive communication climate and transfers information accurately. The communication is more likely to get things done and to create and maintain goodwill because each person understands the needs and interests of the other. Figure 4.1 shows each person feeling positive about the message. The win–win approach is discussed more fully in Chapter 7, Dealing with Conflict, and Chapter 8, Negotiation Skills.

SELF-DISCLOSURE

Self-disclosure involves your reaction to a situation.

At work, people may learn a lot or very little about their colleagues. It depends on how much people are willing to disclose about themselves. Self-disclosure involves showing how you feel about a situation and revealing something about the past that affects

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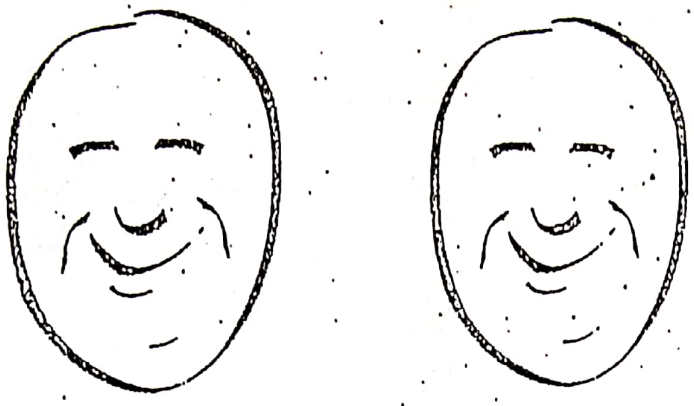


FIGURE 4.1 Results of win–win approach

your reaction; in this way, you allow others to know more about you. This openness comes from an acceptance and appreciation of yourself. Others come to understand you by observing how you react.

Self-disclosure does not mean you have to reveal intimate details about your past. It just means sharing ideas and feelings and giving feedback to others on how their behaviour is affecting you. The amount of self-disclosure is affected by the communication climate. In a positive climate people disclose more, in a negative climate they disclose less.

Both self-disclosure and feedback increase understanding and open communication. This allows you to establish more satisfying relationships at work and in your social and family life.

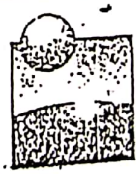
Effective interpersonal communication

Interpersonal communication takes place in the workplace whenever two or more people interact with each other or in small groups. When the actions taken in response to your communication match your intentions, your interpersonal communication is effective: the message is received accurately, as you intend it to be received.

Successful interaction requires confidence.

Workplace relationships built on good communication work well. Those built on poor communication do not work so well.

Some of the particular communication strategies that manage the interaction and achieve a balance that satisfies both parties are assertion, 'I' statements and feedback.



FOCUS ON APPLYING SKILLS

EMPATHY AND SELF-DISCLOSURE

1. Think of someone with whom you feel empathy. What helps you to feel it?
2. Think of someone with whom it is difficult to feel empathy. What makes this difficult?
3. Think of a person whom you consider has good interpersonal skills. How does this person show empathy for another? (Describe behaviour such as facial expressions, listening and nonverbal elements.)
4. List three of your strongest communication skills. How do these skills help you to communicate?
5. Think of your most recent pleasant interaction.
   a. Describe your communication skills in the interaction (facial expressions, type of listening and nonverbal elements).
   b. Describe the other person's communication skills.
   c. Briefly describe the amount of self-disclosure in the interaction.

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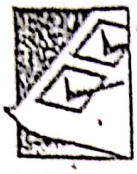

SELF-TEST CHECKLIST 4.1

HOW GOOD IS YOUR INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION?

Technique	Very successful	Successful	Unsuccessful
I am able to:			
Express openness	☐	☐	☐
Show empathy	☐	☐	☐
Use supportiveness	☐	☐	☐
Be positive	☐	☐	☐
Demonstrate equality	☐	☐	☐
Use 'I' messages	☐	☐	☐
Listen	☐	☐	☐
Provide appropriate feedback	☐	☐	☐
Use appropriate self-disclosure	☐	☐	☐
Communicate assertively	☐	☐	☐

ASSERTIVE STRATEGIES

Assertive behaviour acknowledges your rights as an individual and the rights of other people. This is the ideal attitude to have at work and in our everyday lives. Assertive people tend to demonstrate open, expressive and relaxed behaviour. They are able to build honest, fulfilling relationships with others.

Assertiveness

An assertive person can negotiate and collaborate without feeling uncomfortable.

Two assertive people can express different points of view. The assertive person wants to be heard and acknowledged. This does not necessarily mean winning. It means being accepted and treated as an equal—respecting the rights of others and being respected in turn. Two assertive people can accept that each has a different opinion or perspective.

Assertive people acknowledge their rights and the rights of others.

Assertive leaders are able to manage others without feeling the need to manipulate or to be aggressive, because they recognise the rights of other workers. The assertive follower recognises the right of the manager or leader to make reasonable requests and to expect the job to be done. Such people feel comfortable with themselves and with others in the organisation. They get on with the job in a manner that satisfies their own needs and the needs of the organisation.

When the occasion demands, assertive people can disagree, stand up for their rights and present alternative points of view without being intimidated or putting anyone else down. Assertive people realise what type of behaviour is suited to a particular situation and recognise when their own behaviour is assertive, aggressive or non-assertive.

Aggressiveness

An aggressive person may need to win.

An aggressive person may have to win at all costs. This means dominating and, on occasion, humiliating others, even to the point of ignoring a suggestion that provides the best solution simply because it is someone else's solution. The rights of others to participate, enjoy a sense of satisfaction and receive acknowledgment for their work are ignored. An aggressive person is often in conflict with others.

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Submissiveness

Submissive people are unable to assert or promote a point of view. They find it difficult to lead others because their style of relating means submitting to another's point of view, even to the extent of ignoring their own rights. When problems or unpleasant situations arise, a submissive person tends to avoid them, leaving them to someone else.

Submissive people are unable to promote a point of view.

THE 'I' MESSAGE

A useful technique to develop assertion and show openness with others is to use an 'I' message. This is a way of sharing emotions and letting others know both how you perceive their behaviour and how it affects you. One of the best ways to begin assertive statements is to say, 'I feel ... when ...'. For example: 'I feel annoyed when you do not let me know you will be late.'

An 'I' message can have two, three or four parts.

We can all express our needs and wants with an 'I' message that shows our personal involvement and our willingness to share our feelings.

'I' messages can express our feelings about behaviour that is acceptable and pleasing, or unacceptable. Those dealing with behaviour that is unacceptable to you are more difficult to express, so this section focuses on their construction.

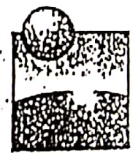
An 'I' message can have two, three or four parts. The formulae for two-, three- and four-part 'I' messages are shown in Figure 4.2.

In a two-part 'I' message, you:

1. 'own' the feeling,
2. describe in concrete terms the behaviour that is causing the feeling.

The formula in a two-part 'I' message is: feelings + behaviour. Following this formula, a two-part assertive message becomes: 'I feel angry when the dirty clothes are left in the bathroom'. In the second part, take care to simply describe the other person's behaviour rather than interpret, judge or evaluate it.

COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS



FOCUS ON APPLYING SKILLS

1. a. Stand up and move around the room. As you move around, greet everyone in the room nonverbally, with a smile, a handshake or any other nonverbal communication you like.
   b. Sit down with a person you do not know. Spend three minutes talking to each other about who you are and what you would like to gain from this course.
   c. Move to another person you do not know and spend three minutes repeating part b. of this activity.
   d. Work with the same person for another three minutes, discussing how you see yourselves as similar to and different from each other.
2. Work by yourself to list the things you enjoyed when you were introducing yourself to others in the tasks above, and what you disliked. What, in your opinion, were your particular strengths and weaknesses in communicating with others? List these too.
3. Complete Self-test Checklist 4.1 to self-evaluate your interpersonal communication.
4. To explore eye contact, discuss in a small group any topic of interest for ten minutes. Throughout the discussion be aware of the eye contact you do or do not make. Think about when you:
   - began eye contact
   - stopped eye contact
   - avoided eye contact.

   Work in pairs to list the ways of using eye contact. Close by discussing as a large group what you liked most and what you liked least about the activity.

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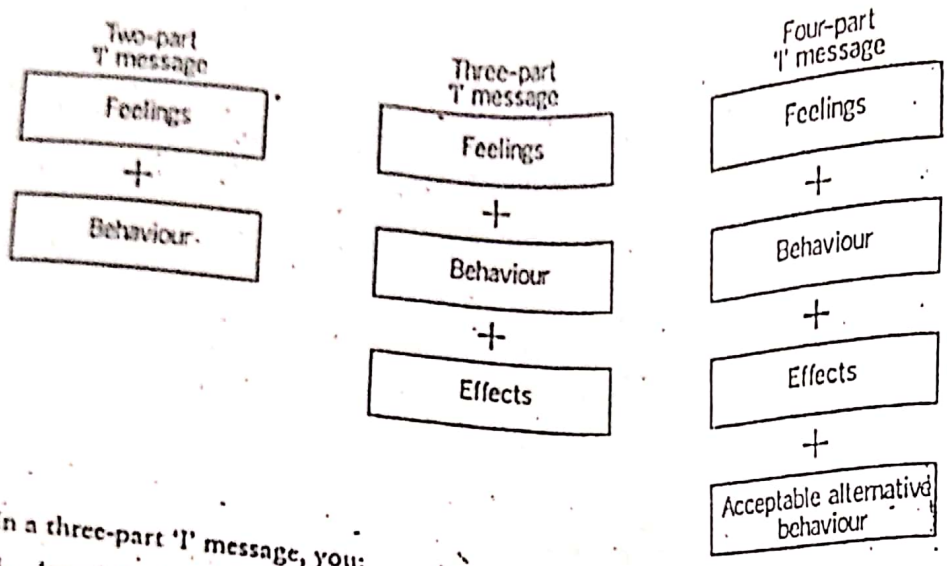

FIGURE 4.2
Some formulae for 'I' statements

In a three-part 'I' message, you:

1. 'own' the feeling
2. describe precisely the behaviour that is causing the feeling
3. state what effects the behaviour has on you.

The formula in a three-part 'I' message is: feelings + behaviour + effects (the statements may occur in a different order). Following this formula, a three-part assertive statement becomes: 'I feel ... when ... because ...': For example, the message may be: 'I feel annoyed when you do not let me know you will be late because I am unable to reschedule my timetable'.

In a four-part 'I' message, you:

1. 'own' the feeling
2. describe exactly what behaviour is causing the feeling
3. state the effect of the behaviour on you
4. offer an alternative, acceptable behaviour.

The formula in a four-part 'I' message is: feelings + behaviour + effects + acceptable alternative behaviour. Your assertive message would then say 'I feel ... when ... because .... I would like ...'. For example: 'I feel annoyed when you do not let me know you will be late because I am unable to reschedule my timetable. I would like you to ring me to let me know you will be late'.

You can use the fourth part of the message to suggest the alternative acceptable behaviour straightaway, or negotiate a behaviour that is acceptable to both people by using the problem-solving agenda described in Chapter 12.

Successful 'I' statements communicate how you feel in a non-threatening way that is acceptable to the other person. They produce a positive outcome. Though assertive, they do not blame or even interpret the other person's behaviour. On the other hand, aggressive statements often start with blame: 'You make me ...'.

Once you become skilled at 'I' messages, you will frame them in your own words and may omit the words 'feel', 'when' and 'because'.

FEEDBACK

Effective communication is based on giving and receiving feedback, the receiver's response to a sender's message. The message you send in words is sometimes received

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1. Define the terms 'communication climate' and 'empathy'.
2. How does empathy affect the communication climate?
3. List the five skills demonstrated by an empathetic person.
4. Briefly explain the win–win approach.
5. Define the term 'self-disclosure'.
6. List the five qualities of a person who is good at interpersonal communication.
7. List the five specific interpersonal skills demonstrated by a person who is good at interpersonal relationships.
8. a. What are the main differences between assertive, aggressive and submissive behaviour? Describe two ways in which a person can be aggressive to another. What would be your typical response to this type of behaviour?
   b. If assertive behaviour is preferable to aggression or submission, define the basis of assertiveness.
   c. When is an assertive message effective?
9. What is the formula for a three-part 'I' message? What is the fourth part that can be added to make a four-part 'I' message?

STOP AND REVIEW

incorrectly or does not convey exactly what you meant to say. Feedback lets the sender understand how the message is received and helps the receiver confirm whether their perception of the message is correct or incorrect. In the communication process, feedback can be a continuing or completing link.

Effective feedback creates trust and an open relationship between sender and receiver. It is one of the main ways to assess how accurately your message has been received, how we affect others, and how others perceive us.

In an organisation, appropriate, constructive feedback creates a positive communication climate which, in turn, creates an open and encouraging organisational climate. In contrast, a rigid or competitive environment can make most people hesitant about communicating or offering ideas.

TYPES OF FEEDBACK

Several different types of feedback are used in organisations and businesses. They include negative feedback, positive feedback from leaders or managers, positive feedback from co-workers, and self-evaluation. People may evaluate their own work and their interactions with other people. Techniques for four different types of feedback are discussed below.

Immediate and specific feedback

Be specific about others' behaviour rather than general—for example 'This file could do with a tidy up' is a more useful kind of feedback than 'Your files are always untidy'. Describe what needs to be done, and avoid judging or threatening the other person.

Give feedback only when the person is ready to accept it. Someone who is upset or defensive is less likely to accept suggestions or new material. Refer only to behaviour that the receiver is capable of changing, and include only what the receiver can handle at a particular time.

It is destructive to bring up past behaviour and grievances. Deal with the current situation—for example, say 'We agreed to take turns answering the telephone. It's your turn', instead of 'You always expect me to answer the telephone'.

When you give immediate and specific feedback, respect the other person's right to respond. Take the time to listen. Acknowledge their response. In some cases their response and feedback may indicate that you need to change your behaviour.

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IN PRACTICE

Action list

	Example of action at work or study	Action I can take in future
I use empathy		
I apply the win-win approach		
I use self-disclosure		
I interact in a supportive way		
I use assertiveness		
I use 'I' messages		
I can use immediate and specific feedback		

Negative and positive feedback

Negative feedback is not necessarily detrimental to the receiver; the result depends on how it is provided. Positive feedback from superiors and peers encourages the repetition of that behaviour and acknowledges a worker's role in and contribution to the organisation. Chapter 5, Workplace Communication, describes questioning skills you can apply to feedback.

Informative feedback

This type of feedback comes from listening to the words of a message and the feelings it conveys. Informative feedback is based on understanding and uses paraphrasing to help both the sender's and receiver's understanding. Effective listening focuses on the content of a message and identifies the speaker's purpose and main ideas. Good listeners rephrase or summarise the message. As you respond, consider why the speaker has expressed an idea. Try to withhold judgment. Try to work out what their unexpressed feelings are. Share your perceptions about the message instead of giving advice.

Appropriate and accurate feedback helps communication. Inappropriate and inaccurate feedback hinders it. The major barriers to good interpersonal communication and relationships are caused by approving or disapproving another person's statements, feelings or attitudes. In contrast, when you consider these from the other person's point of view, you stop making judgments and make an understanding connection. By acknowledging and expressing your own feelings as you give and receive feedback, you build a relationship on trust and openness.

As well as achieving effective work relationships, feedback lets people know what needs to be done in the workplace. Tasks become easier to understand and complete accurately and efficiently.

Undercurrent message

The undercurrent message is something you sense that the sender wants to conceal or is unable to convey. If you can only sense it without understanding it, the undercurrent gets in the way of open and direct communication. By using feedback skilfully you come closer to understanding others' verbal, nonverbal and undercurrent messages. In addition, you gain a closer understanding of your own communication methods and how to improve them.

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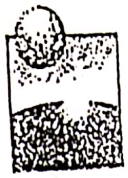
1. Work in pairs.
   a. Stand back to back and talk to one another for two minutes about a topic of your choice. Do not turn towards one another until the two minutes are up.
   b. As a large group, discuss how it felt to speak in this way.
   c. Brainstorm to create a list of nonverbal behaviours that help you communicate.
2. Work in pairs.
   a. Each person (A and B) prepares two different distinctive shapes without letting the other person see them.
   b. Person A describes one of their shapes to B for one minute, while B sits with their back turned. As A describes the shape, B draws it without asking any questions, and without showing it to A until the minute is over.
   c. Change roles, following the procedure in step b.
   d. Compare the shape described by each person with the shape drawn by the other person.
   e. Take turns to describe and draw the last two shapes. (Take one minute for each.) This time the listener can ask clarifying questions.
   f. Compare the shapes. Were the last shapes a better match than the first? Explain your answer.
3. Identify the following examples of feedback as specific, negative or positive, and as peer or supervisor feedback.
   a. Your supervisor tells you that you are doing a good job.
   b. You have a regular staff appraisal.
   c. Co-workers tease you about not working hard enough.
   d. Co-workers tease you about working too hard.
   e. The supervisor criticises your performance.
   f. It is noted that you completed several jobs.
   g. You find a new way of completing a task.
4. You are required to attend a weekly planning meeting scheduled to run from 9.15 a.m. to 10.15 a.m. Jeremy, your colleague and the chairperson, invariably starts the meeting late and allows it to run over time. Develop an appropriate three-part 'I' message that will indicate your feelings about this behaviour and its effect on you.
5. Think about any situation where you have asserted yourself. Discuss with your group what you think was your greatest strength and weakness in that situation. Discuss how you could improve your ability to assert yourself.



FOCUS ON APPLYING SKILLS

Chapter summary

Use appropriate social skills in personal interactions: Interpersonal skills enable you to communicate and to build personal, social and work relationships. These skills enable communicators to acknowledge and express their thoughts and feelings in words and actions that form a connection with the other person. At work, those who succeed in interpersonal communication relate easily and positively to those around them by using good listening, speaking and nonverbal communication skills.

Interact in a supportive way: Supportive communication boosts confidence and self-esteem. People tend to perform better in their jobs when they are made to feel that they make a worthwhile contribution to the workplace interaction. The communication climate is positive.

Use assertive communication: Assertive people take responsibility for their actions and respect the rights of others. Their interpersonal skills give them direct contact with others. Overall, their perception of messages is accurate and their approach to people is positive and confident.

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Construct 'I' statements: These statements are used to disclose how you feel about a situation and to show openness with others. They let you ask for what you want. An 'I' statement follows a two-, three- or four-part formula.

Use different types of feedback appropriately: Feedback is the continuing or completing link in the communication process. Feedback may be informative, specific, negative, or positive. Appropriate and accurate feedback helps communication. Inappropriate and inaccurate feedback hinders it.

INTERACTION ACTIVITY

The object of this activity is to increase your capacity to use interpersonal tools as you interrelate with others.

1. Work on your own to list the things that increase and those that decrease the following aspects of self in Table 4.1.
   Think about who you are and what you value as you complete the table.

TABLE 4.1 Increasing or decreasing self-esteem

	THINGS THAT INCREASE	THINGS THAT DECREASE
Self-esteem	Being cared for	Being ignored
	Doing a job well	Handing an assignment in late
Self-awareness		
Self-confidence		
Self-esteem		
Self-image		

2. Work individually to indicate on a scale of 1 to 4 in Table 4.2 the importance of the following to your personal life.

TABLE 4.2 My rating scale

	1 LITTLE IMPORTANCE	2 SOME IMPORTANCE	3 IMPORTANT	4 VERY IMPORTANT
Family				
Work				
Social life				
Social standing				
Relationships				

3. Work in small groups to:
   - list the situations you have observed where someone with a high self-esteem has created a positive communication climate
   - decide why high self-esteem helps to create a positive communication climate
   - discuss how the win-win approach helps create a positive communication climate.
4. When someone describes something terrible that has happened, how often have you heard the reply 'Yes I know'? If you were listening with a keen ear you would note that the 'Yes I know' reply implies that they knew what had happened. In fact the opposite is often the case. 'Yes I know' is not an empathic response.

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STATEMENT	RESPONSE	TICK THE EMPATHIC RESPONSE
1. I can't believe it. I just drove my car into the back of another car.	What did the other person say?	
	I had that happen to me.	
	You feel upset.	
2. The loan company refused me a loan.	You feel at a loss about what you can do now.	
	What made them do that?	
	I wouldn't go near them again if I were you.	
3. I just lost my job. What am I going to do?	Don't worry, there are lots of others anyway.	
	You feel at a loss.	
	I was made redundant three years ago but it all worked out for the best.	

TABLE 4.3

In small groups discuss the statements in Table 4.3 and tick the panel that contains what you think is the most empathic response.

5. In small groups, discuss whether it is easy or difficult to talk about feelings, and focus on the following questions: What feelings are easy to express? Which ones are difficult to express? What feelings expressed by someone else are the hardest to deal with?

   Describe a context in which it is difficult to express feelings.

   Create a group list of the six best feelings from last weekend.

6. Work in pairs. Sit opposite one another. Each person is to describe themselves in the third person to their partner, for example: 'George Black is of average height and slim build. He has thick brown hair and looks fit. Today he is wearing ...' Each person describes themselves for three minutes and then the roles are reversed. Then discuss:

   - What it felt like to describe yourself
   - What you liked least about the activity
   - What you liked most about the activity.

KEY TERMS

communication climate
confidence
empathy
equality
expressiveness
feedback
'I' message
interaction management
interpersonal communication
self-disclosure
undercurrent message
win–win approach

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CASE STUDY

FREYA AND SAMUEL

Freya works as a personal assistant to Samuel. She is an industrious person who works quietly but efficiently. She is by nature a reticent person. Samuel on the other hand is very outgoing and on occasions overly assertive. Yesterday, Samuel asked Freya to prepare the final draft of a proposal. Freya sat quietly at her desk and thought, 'Hello, here we go again. He wants me to write for him yet again without ever acknowledging my input. My name is never acknowledged on any document, I never receive a "thank you" note from him. He does praise me quietly but deep down I feel he doesn't value me!'

Instead of voicing these concerns to Samuel, Freya just looked down and nodded. Samuel leaned forward with hands on hips and said: 'Thanks Freya, and by the way I would like the draft proposal on my desk by tomorrow so I can read it and brief the section manager next morning. Please make sure the format is correct and make sure you spell check the proposal carefully.' With that he started to walk away. Freya leapt to her feet and shouted at Samuel, 'What do you think I am? Your personal servant? I feel pushed around and used. Before I can do any of this I have to understand what it is you want. I am not a mind reader. Besides, it's your job – you do it.'

For the first time, Samuel began to understand Freya's real value as his personal assistant. Nobody else in this organisation can do this type of skilled work the way Freya can. He will do anything to retain her. He began to think ...

Questions

1. Samuel has to respond appropriately to what Freya said. What should Samuel do to convince Freya to continue working with him?
2. If you had to ask Samuel to change his nonverbal communication, what would you suggest?
3. What should Freya do to communicate more assertively with Samuel?

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1. I can't believe it. I just drove my car into the back of another car.	What did the other person say?	
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CHAPTER

5

Workplace communication

In this chapter you will learn how to:

- give full, accurate and clear instructions
- prepare different types of questions
- follow a set of instructions
- develop a short oral report

Evaluate your communication skills by completing the self-test checklist in the chapter.

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Every workplace includes a range of communication activities such as gathering, recording and conveying simple routine information; giving and following simple and routine instructions; and participating in small informal work groups. In each of these activities it is important to communicate well, by receiving and sending accurate messages. People who communicate well are likely to work cooperatively and more efficiently.

People who use spoken language well are in the best position to give and receive instructions about what happens in their workplace. They are able to inform, explain, make requests and consult in a way that improves understanding and encourages others. This chapter focuses on giving and receiving spoken instructions and making oral reports.

Giving instructions

Successful instructions lead to the intended outcome.

Direct instructions are to the point and indicate who, what, when, where and how a task should be completed.

Clear workplace instructions explain the objectives, provide background information and describe the intended outcome. Then it is up to the person receiving the instructions to decide how, when and where to reach this outcome.

GIVE CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS

When instructions are unclear, people cannot accomplish their workplace activities to the standard required. To do the job well, people need to understand how to do it and the reasons for doing it.

When giving instructions at work, follow these simple guidelines.

1. Determine what has to be accomplished—the intended outcome.
2. Give the reasons for doing the job.
3. Follow the steps of the task in the order given.
4. Use verbs (action words) rather than abstract words, and start with a verb.
5. Have the other person paraphrase the instructions back to you.
6. Use words appropriate to the receiver's level of understanding.
7. Use familiar and simple words.
8. Indicate clearly each step of the task, in sequence.
9. Demonstrate the skills required by the task if it involves machinery or equipment.
10. Encourage questions.
11. Ensure that your timing is appropriate.
12. Follow up the person's progress with the task.
13. Offer timely and specific feedback.

A systematic approach is helpful.

The instructor must explain precisely each step of the task, and the receiver must fully understand and follow the instructions, so a systematic approach to instruction is necessary. It follows the sequence shown in Figure 5.2.

A STRUCTURED APPROACH

Group your ideas into a logical structure that is easy to follow.

Once you have determined what needs to be accomplished, group the instructions into introduction, body and conclusion. The introduction gives the purpose of the job. Emphasise any dangers and highlight any safety measures that must be taken.

In the body of the instructions, outline the whole task and describe each step of the procedure slowly and clearly. Whenever it is possible for the other person to perform the step immediately, demonstrate how to do it first and then let them practise and ask questions. Check understanding by asking questions and observing how they complete the task. Lead the other person through each step of the process. Never assume that

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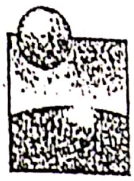
FOLLOW A SET OF INSTRUCTIONS

1. How do you usually get your instructions for the tasks you have to do?
2. Think about an occasion when you received instructions that were easy to understand. How did the instructor make them clear to you?
   b. Think about an occasion when you received instructions that were hard to understand. What did the instructor do that made them so difficult?
3. Name some of the causes of unclear instructions on Figure 5.1.



FOCUS ON APPLYING SKILLS

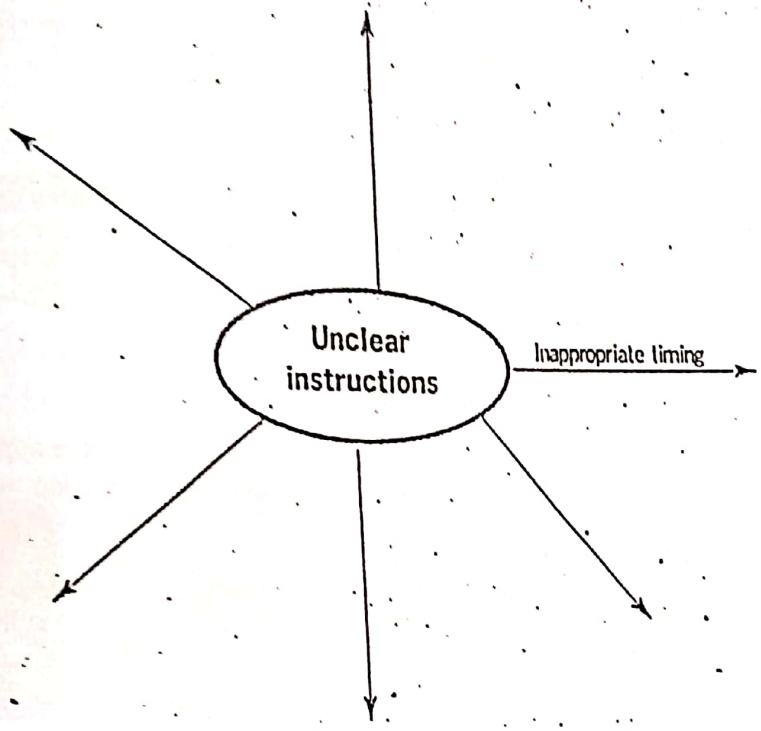


FIGURE 5.1 Unclear instructions—some causes

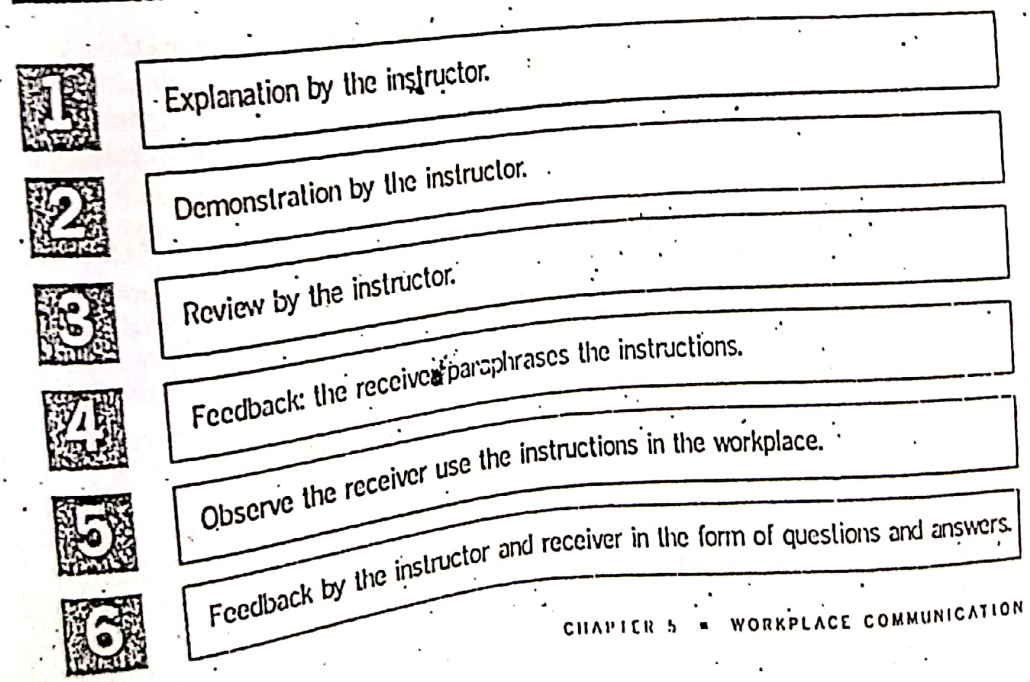


FIGURE 5.2 A systematic approach to workplace instructions

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someone knows what workplace standard must be achieved: take time to explain it. Use videos, pictures and real objects to help people learn. They add meaning to verbal instruction.

In the conclusion, repeat the main points and state the standards again, particularly when safety is an issue. As you give feedback, be constructive. Correct any mistakes and let the other person know what they do well.

As you give the instructions, speak clearly and project your voice so that you are easily heard and understood. Use simple words.

FOLLOW A SEQUENCE

Prepare the instructions in sequence, in either of the following three ways:

1. Move from the simple to the complex.
2. Move from the familiar to the unfamiliar.
3. Follow the required order of tasks.

GOOD TIMING

When you give instructions, ensure that the timing is right and the communication climate is positive so that the people receiving them have enough time to:

- listen and understand fully
- say what they think and feel
- ask questions
- show that they are willing and able to follow the instructions.

Instructions given in a thoughtful, appropriate and controlled manner at the appropriate time are more easily understood, and people are more likely to do the job well.

QUESTIONING SKILLS FOR GIVING INSTRUCTIONS

As you give instructions, you need to know how thoroughly they are being understood.

Simple routine instructions usually only require questions to confirm that the person can:

- remember the facts
- rephrase the instructions in their own words
- apply the instructions to a new situation.

By asking these questions, you engage the other person in a two-way communication process. You are also offering them feedback.

USE A VARIETY OF METHODS

Workplace instructions that use a variety of communication methods are easier to remember. Some of the different methods are shown in Figure 5.3.

Sometimes you can simply give verbal instructions and demonstrate the task. On other occasions your spoken directions may need support from written instructions and graphics. Once people understand what to do, you want them to be able to carry out and complete the task. Written instructions and graphics are a handy reference.

ADVANTAGES GAINED BY USING VISUAL MATERIALS

Visual materials should be simple, clear and easy to see.

The visuals (sometimes also called 'graphics') supporting instructions should convey their message without words. Symbols do this very efficiently, and Figure 5.4 shows four symbols that mean the same thing anywhere in the world, regardless of what language is spoken.

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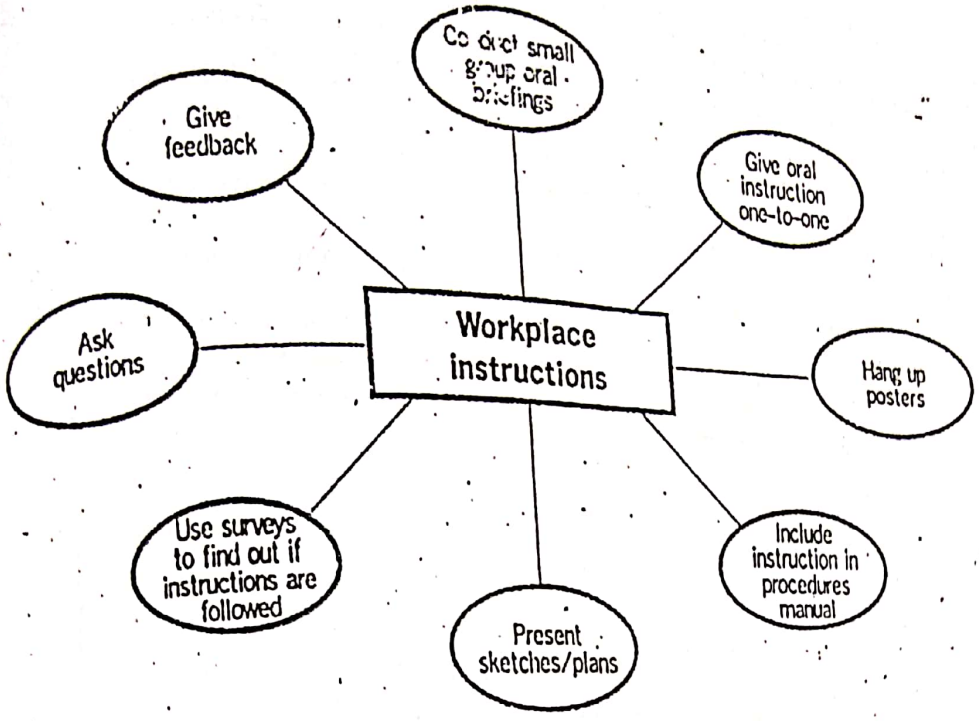

FIGURE 5.3
A range of communication methods

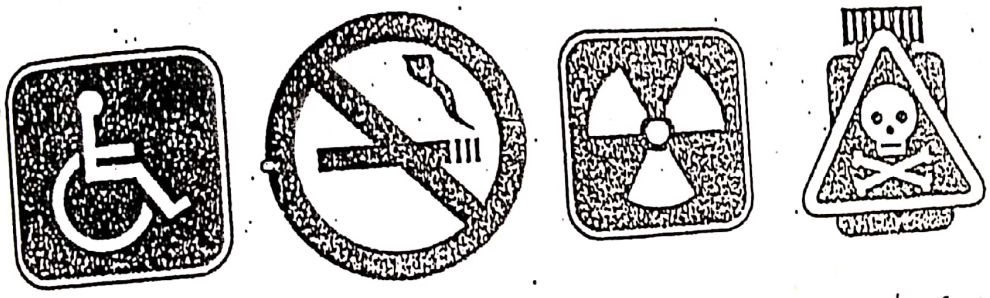

FIGURE 5.4
Four International symbols

Visuals create interest and add clarity to instructions. They also reinforce the main points and show the total picture. The visuals accompanying instructions must show an accurate picture of what has to be done. Their purpose is to explain, simplify and/or emphasise the main relationships.

Receiving and following instructions

When you receive instructions in the workplace, be willing to ask questions and to share ideas and information. You want to be able to follow directions successfully because you are working with others towards a common goal. Strategies to help you follow instructions more easily are:

- Listen carefully.
- Concentrate on the instructions, and avoid thinking about anything else.
- Avoid jumping to conclusions.
- Ask questions about what standards must be reached.
- Paraphrase to check your understanding.
- Double check any safety issues.
- Ask for help if you cannot follow the instructions.
- Ask general questions.

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FOCUS ON APPLYING SKILLS

PREPARE A SET OF INSTRUCTIONS

1. Work in small groups. Brainstorm to list different sorts of workplace instructions.
2. Prepare a set of instructions for one of the following tasks.
   a. install a door frame
   b. prepare a Brandy Alexander cocktail
   c. format a computer disk
   d. paint a wooden planter box
   e. change the tyre on a car
   f. put new strings on a guitar
   g. assemble a vacuum cleaner
   h. park a car on a steep slope
   i. any other familiar task.

   As you prepare the instructions use an introduction, body and conclusion and check that each required step is described in clear, concise and specific terms.
3. What are the advantages of clear instructions?
4. What are the disadvantages of unclear instructions in the workplace?

QUESTIONING SKILLS

When receiving instructions, your questions should be:

- brief and clear
- focused on the work task
- general, when you want an overview
- specific, when you want to understand particular facts or ideas
- rephrased, when the instructor does not understand your question
- open, when you want more information and an idea of the instructor's understanding
- closed, when you want a specific answer.

Questions like these help you think about and evaluate all the facts and tasks involved. As instructions are given and received, issues should be dealt with assertively and cooperatively. People who listen carefully and ask questions are able to achieve the intended outcomes.

Presenting oral reports

An oral report should always use the appropriate workplace language (the language used on the job). The sender uses oral communication skills to explain exactly what has happened and what the receiver has to do. Often a workplace hazard is reported orally to a team leader before a written report is prepared.

Certain factors which affect the impression we give when we orally report problems are:

- Sentence structure
- Order of information presented
- Knowledge of special terms
- Appropriate language
- Status of the person or people being addressed
- Cultural factors

An oral report should have a clear, logical structure and sequence. The report's purpose should be identified first and supported with accurate and objective information. Simple, direct language helps the receiver understand it.

Use 'first', 'second', 'third' and so on to indicate each stage of the report. Keep your sentences simple with one subject and one action rather than several complex ideas. This way the listener can follow your ideas easily.

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GIVING INSTRUCTIONS

SELF-TEST CHECKLIST 5.1

Did the Instructor:	Yes	No	Unsure
1. Prepare people by putting them at ease?	☐	☐	☐
2. Use the introduction to give reasons for doing of the task?	☐	☐	☐
3. Sequence the information in the body of the instructions appropriately?	☐	☐	☐
4. Begin each step with a verb (action word)?	☐	☐	☐
5. Give a clear overall picture of what was to be done?	☐	☐	☐
6. Use clear, simple language and explain any technical terms?	☐	☐	☐
7. Encourage questions to check that each step was understood?	☐	☐	☐
8. Demonstrate step by step?			
9. Give the instructions in different forms such as verbal, written, diagram?	☐	☐	☐
10. Use the conclusion to repeat the main points and intended outcome?	☐	☐	☐

Plan your oral presentation by deciding what its purpose is, and sorting out your information. Discard anything irrelevant. Organise important material into the 'what, where, when, who and why' sections to give it a logical structure.

An oral report presents a subject by describing what, where, when, who and why it happened, as shown in Figure 5.5. Oral instructions that follow the order of tasks performed on the job make it easier for the listener to follow. One of the disadvantages of oral reports is its informality. An oral report can become distorted as the information is passed on. It is also easier to ignore than a written report.

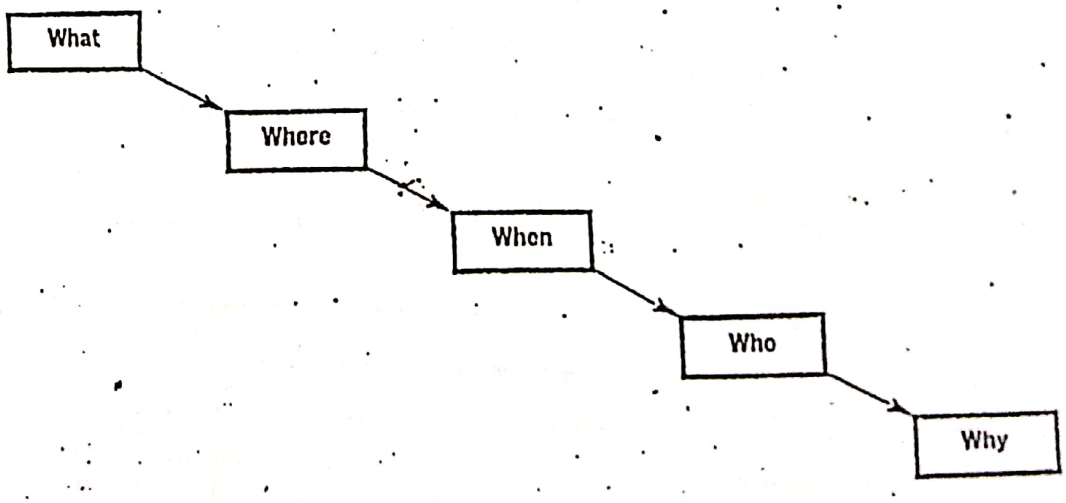

FIGURE 5.5 Oral report sequence

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FOCUS ON APPLYING SKILLS

ORAL REPORTS

1. 'Oral Communication is part of the job and cannot be separated from it.' Work in small groups to:
   a. Discuss this statement.
   b. List as many oral communication tasks performed at work as you can think of.
   c. Choose one job and decide approximately what proportion of work hours would be spent on oral communication.
2. a. Think about an oral report that you found difficult to understand. What made this difficult?
   b. What did you do to overcome the difficulty?

STOP AND REVIEW

1. List three ways in which you can sequence the content of a set of instructions.
2. What is the purpose of organising the introduction, body and conclusion for a set of instructions?
3. Why should you choose an appropriate time to give instructions?
4. a. List three types of questions you can use as you give instructions.
   b. Why do you ask questions as you give instructions?
5. a. What sort of questions should you ask as you receive instructions?
   b. A good instructor asks for and gives feedback. Why?
6. Why should visual materials be used with instructions?
7. List the sequence used by the systematic approach to workplace instructions.
8. List three factors to consider as you make an oral report.

IN PRACTICE

Action list	Example of action at work or study	Action I can take in future
I follow the six steps of the systematic approach as I give workplace instructions.		
I know how to sequence my instructions.		
I can use more than one communication method in my instructions.		
I can use visual materials appropriately.		
I give the instructions my full attention.		
I check any safety issues involved in the instructions.		
I ask brief, direct questions when seeking feedback.		
I decide what the oral report's purpose is.		
I use a logical, sequenced structure in an oral report.		
I present oral reports well.		

Chapter summary

Give full accurate and clear instructions: Instructions should develop ideas, knowledge and skills step by step. Determine what the intended outcome requires. Decide how to convey the details of who, what, when, where and how a task will be done. Plan the instructions first, and take a structured approach by using an introduction, body and conclusion. The language used for instructions should be appropriate for the tasks required. Present your instructions in a sequence (a) that moves from the simple to the

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complex; or (b) that moves from the familiar to the unfamiliar; or (c) that follows the order required by the job.

Prepare different types of questions: When you give instructions, ask questions to assess your receivers' understanding and encourage feedback. These questions should encourage them to remember facts, restate the information in their own words and apply the information to a new situation. When you are receiving instructions, ask questions to clarify your understanding. The questions should be brief, direct, and relevant to the work task. Ask general questions when you want an overview, and ask specific questions when you want a particular idea or fact.

Follow a set of instructions: Listen carefully; ask questions to clarify any points that are unclear. By using your communication skills appropriately you will find out what you need to do and you will be able to work assertively and cooperatively with others as you follow the instructions.

Develop a short oral report: Oral reports describe what, where, when, who and why something happened. If you are clear about your objective, aware of your receiver's needs and able to use appropriate workplace language, your message will be easy to understand and likely to achieve the intended result.

INTEGRATION ACTIVITY

1. Work as a large group. The purpose of this activity is to listen to a set of instructions and respond appropriately.

One person reads the instructions to the rest of the group.

Instructions

- Everyone seat themselves in a circle looking inwards.
- Everyone clap their hands once and then clap their hands on their knees.
- Then everyone points to the centre of the circle with their index finger.
- The instructor then says a word such as 'rain'.
- The person on your left responds with a word associated with the word 'rain' (e.g. 'wet' or a rhyming word (such as 'plain') while everyone continues to clap their hands together, then claps their knees, then points their index finger to the centre of the circle.
- Then the next person on the left says a word associated with the word 'wet' or 'plain', or a word rhyming with 'wet' or 'plain'. Maintain the momentum until you have been round the circle at least twice.
- Anyone who runs out of ideas may accept suggestions from others in the circle. It is a lot of fun and works better if everyone tries to maintain the flow.

Once the activity is complete, discuss the ease or difficulty of following the instructions.

a. Did you ask enough questions to clarify what you had to do before you began the task?
b. Would it be helpful if the activity was demonstrated first, then followed by a practice session?
c. What happened to the level of performance as you moved through the activity?
d. How can you relate taking part in this activity to giving and receiving instructions at work?

2. a. When you give instructions it is important to give feedback. Why?
   b. What are the three links that feedback makes in the communication process?
   c. What are three features of good feedback?
   d. Briefly explain why it is important to check your interpretation of your receivers' feedback.

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3. Prepare two questions. The first question should encourage those receiving your instructions to remember the facts. The second question should ask them to restate the information in their own words.
4. Work in small groups. Each person in turn uses the instructions prepared in question 1 of the Integration Activity to tell the others how to complete the task. As you give the instructions, use the two questions prepared in question 3 (and any others you may need) to check the receivers' understanding. Those receiving the instructions are to ask questions to clarify any points that are unclear.

Use Self-test Checklist 5.1 on page 71 to evaluate the effectiveness of your instructions.

KEY TERMS

direct instructions
oral report
routine instructions
sequence
visual materials
workplace instructions
workplace language

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CASE STUDY

WATER WATCHERS INCORPORATED

A large local council has secured a project, funded by the Department of Land and Water Conservation, to regenerate an area of environmentally sensitive coastline. They have contracted Water Watchers Incorporated to manage the project on their behalf.

The project involves the recruitment and supervision of two work teams working at various sites along the coast. Training the team members in occupational health and safety and in the basic principles of coastal regeneration is also part of the project.

Water Watchers has appointed Louise Lake to manage the project and it is her responsibility to:

- liaise with the local council and the government department.
- recruit members of the work teams.
- appoint onsite supervisors and instruct them about their responsibilities.
- schedule training sessions and ensure that qualified trainers and training materials are available.
- instruct accounting staff to order materials and process wages for supervisors and trainers.
- supervise the overall running of the project to ensure that outcomes are met.

To set up the project, Louise is required to give instructions to all those involved. She has to inform trainers of the times of classes, the materials required, the topics to be covered, the location of training facilities, the processes for collecting class rolls and training materials, and enrolment and assessment procedures. Site supervisors must be instructed on the location of sites, the scope of works to be undertaken, materials required and the procedure for purchasing. A set of instructions must be prepared to advise accounting staff of the procedures for paying staff and for materials ordering.

All people working on the project must understand Water Watchers' policies and procedures and how these relate to their work: for example, timesheets, occupational health and safety guidelines, requirements

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for ordering materials, use of the organisation's equipment and vehicles.

Louise must also set up communication systems between herself and everyone involved. For example, work teams will need to communicate with each other about the use of equipment.

Source: Ann Morris, Coordinator – Employment Opportunity Programs, Austraining (NSW) Pty Ltd

Questions

1. What should Louise keep in mind to ensure that her instructions are received and understood?
2. Outline at least two strategies Louise could use to keep the communication climate positive, to maintain consistency in the instructions, to provide opportunities for feedback and questioning, and to ensure that the instructions are easy to understand and followed?
3. What problems could Louise face in communicating with supervisors working onsite some distance from the organisation's offices? How could she minimise these?
4. Louise will have to keep in mind that she has to follow instructions from her own management and from the local council. What should she do to ensure that she clearly understands these?

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