

Module 2: Communication Reflection Essay

Leading with clarity in a High-Stress Organizing Project

Communication as a Technical Leader

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Setting the Scene

During a professional organizing job involving a hoarding cleanup, I was assigned as the lead organizer overseeing a team of three additional organizers. The client's space was extremely cluttered and emotionally sensitive, and we had a plan for tackling it methodically, room by room. One of the organizers on the team had prior experience leading jobs and came in with a strong presence, but instead of following the agreed upon structure, she began directing others and rearranging tasks based on her own ideas. I quickly realized that I needed to redirect the group without creating conflict or damaging team morale.

Three Communication Skills that Helped

Three communication skills helped me navigate this situation more effectively. First, I relied on active listening. I paused before responding to her resistance, listened to her reasoning, and let her finish explaining her approach. That helped me understand her intentions before jumping to frustration. Second, I used calm and confident tone to reassert my leadership without being confrontational. I said, "I appreciate your initiative, but let's stick to the plan we reviewed as a team this morning," to reinforce structure without escalating tension. Third, I used emotional intelligence to validate her experience and redirect her focus to teamwork, which helped shift the energy from resistance to collaboration.

My Partner's Feedback on my Communication

After the shift, I asked her privately how she felt the day went. She told me, "I'm used to being the lead on these kinds of jobs, so I didn't mean to step on your toes, I just wanted to keep things moving." That helped me understand that her behavior wasn't personal. She also said, "You kept your cool, and didn't snap at me, and I respect that." Finally, she said, "Thanks for listening instead of shutting me down." Her feedback showed me that my effort to balance firmness with empathy had a real impact and actually helped strengthen our working relationship.

My Partner's Behavior During the Interaction

During the interaction, her behavior shifted noticeably. While I was speaking, she initially had crossed arms and didn't make much eye contact. But as I kept my tone steady and validated her experience, she started to nod and open up. Later in the day, she asked clarifying questions instead of taking the lead herself, and she deferred to me when decisions needed to be made. Her body language relaxed, and her tone became more collaborative. I could tell she felt more included in the process rather than pushed aside.

How that Made Me Feel

Her change in response made me feel respected and encouraged. I had been anxious about asserting leadership, especially with someone who had more experience in hoarding than me. Her openness to feedback and her eventual willingness to align with the team plan made me feel like I handled the situation well. I was proud that I didn't let stress or ego take over, and that I chose to lead through listening, tone, and clear communication rather than authority alone.

Reflection on Growth and Engineering Communication

This experience reinforced how critical communication is in leadership, even outside of technical fields like engineering. As a lead organizer, I had not only managed tasks but also emotions, personalities, and expectations. The ability to communicate a plan clearly, listen actively, and adjust my delivery based on how others are reacting is what kept the job on track. These are the same skills emphasized in engineering communication, tone, active listening, and emotional intelligence. Whether it's coordinating a cleanup team or collaborating on a technical project, how we communicate often matters more than what we are saying. That's a skill I'll continue to build on.

Peer Review Rubric

RUBRIC

Has the learner addressed all 6 of the assignment questions?

10 points

Yes

0 points

No

Is the learner's submission comprehensible?

0 points

Not at all. The learner's response is difficult to understand due to a lack of organizational structure, poor syntax, poor grammar, and/or misspellings.

3 points

Somewhat. The learner's response is well-organized and easy to understand, however there are a number of syntax, grammatical, and/or spelling errors.

6 points

Yes. The learner's response is well-organized and easy to understand. There are minimal syntax, grammatical, and/or spelling errors.

10 points

Very much. The learner's response is well-organized and easy to understand. There are no syntax, grammatical or spelling errors.

Describe one thing the learner has done well and one thing that, in your opinion, they might change for the better.

You could make an even stronger impact by succinctly labeling each section with the specific question addressed. This would enhance clarity for readers scanning for rubric alignment. Otherwise, the essay meets and exceeds expectations.

and

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ommunication theory in practice during a challenging conversation. Learning occurs beyond the textbook.

Did the learner provide three examples of how the skills made them a more effective speaker and listener?

0 points

No. The learner did not address this question in their response.

3 points

Somewhat. The learner responded with simple "yes" or "no" answers.

6 points

Yes. The learner responded with complete sentences.

10 points

Very much. The learner responded with several sentences for each example.

Did the learner record three partner comments on the learner's skills?

0 points

No. The learner did not address this question in their response.

3 points

Somewhat. The learner responded with simple "yes" or "no" answers.

6 points

Yes. The learner responded with complete sentences.

10 points

Very much. The learner responded with several sentences for each example.

Did the learner describe their partner's behavior while the learner was speaking and listening?

0 points

No. The learner did not address this question in their response.

3 points

Somewhat. The learner responded with simple "yes" or "no" answers.

6 points

Yes. The learner responded with complete sentences.

10 points

Very much. The learner responded with several sentences for each example.

Did the learner describe their feelings about their partner's reactions?

0 points

No. The learner did not address this question in their response.

3 points

Somewhat. The learner responded with simple "yes" or "no" answers.

6 points

Yes. The learner responded with complete sentences.

10 points

Very much. The learner responded with several sentences for each example.

Did the learner reflect on how their communication has improved?

0 points

No. The learner did not address this question in their response.

3 points

Somewhat. The learner responded with simple "yes" or "no" answers.

6 points

Yes. The learner responded with complete sentences.

10 points

Very much. The learner responded with several sentences for each example.

Did the learner reflect on what their learning means from a perspective of engineering communication?

0 points

No. The learner did not address this question in their response.

3 points

Somewhat. The learner responded with simple "yes" or "no" answers.

6 points

Yes. The learner responded with complete sentences.

10 points

Very much. The learner responded with several sentences for each example.