

Communicate More Clearly in Just 7 Steps

Develop a reputation as someone worth listening to by putting these communication strategies into action.

BY [DIANE GOTTSMAN](#), OWNER, THE PROTOCOL SCHOOL OF TEXAS

Most of us have no trouble talking, but many of us could use some help in effectively getting our message across, especially when communicating in the workplace. First-rate leadership embodies strong communication skills, as the successful exchange of information or ideas is critical to any business.

Clear communication builds engagement, harmony, and loyalty among coworkers. There are plenty of obstacles that can hinder effective discussions and leave coworkers frustrated, confused, or disengaged. Fortunately, most of the biggest hurdles can be corrected as you fine-tune your emotional intelligence.

These 7 tips will help you become a better communicator at work (and everywhere else).

1. Focus on the other person.

Even those who consider themselves master multitaskers can't deny strong one to one communication requires the eyes to show respect. If you are replying to text messages while someone across the table is expecting your complete attention, your actions signal you are not interested. We also miss important social cues when we don't give another person our full attention.

Although you are perfectly capable of carrying on a thoughtful conversation, giving concise feedback, and scanning your emails for important updates, you are best served to look squarely in the eyes of your client or supervisor and give them your undivided attention.

2. Listen.

Workplace miscommunication comes with a cost in terms of lawsuits, low morale, loss of respect, misunderstandings, and poor customer service.

Listening is perhaps the most underrated communication tool at work (and in life). So often when someone else is speaking, we are focusing on what we want to say next, instead of listening to what they are attempting to tell us.

Break the habit by reframing what you just heard or don't understand, asking for clarification if you have a question or concern. Use your body to your advantage by smiling, nodding when appropriate, and facing the person who is speaking, shoulder to shoulder. Avoid shaking your foot or fidgeting, which sends the message you are anxious for the conversation to be over.

3. Be concise.

Be respectful of everyone's time by keeping your message brief, direct, and specific. We've all been around people who tend to ramble, veering conversations off on random tangents, or devoting excessive time to personal agendas.

Be mindful of starting (and ending) meetings when you say you will. The consideration will be appreciated.

4. Timing is everything.

If you are working on deadline and a coworker pops into your office to talk about something that's not urgent, ask if you can get back to them instead of trying to multitask or getting annoyed: "This report is due shortly. Can I get back to you in about an hour?"

Likewise, people will be more receptive to your idea when they have an adequate window available to process it. Set up a meeting that works for you both to discuss a project. Don't try to talk about non-urgent matters with someone who is scrambling to prepare for a big client presentation.

5. Choose the right delivery.

Decide the most appropriate method for the message and the recipient. Sometimes a face-to-face discussion is necessary, other times a quick text

works just as well. Certain information is best delivered via email, which can be read at the recipient's convenience and not only provides a written record but allows for more thought and careful choosing of words.

6. Ask questions.

Communication is a two-way street. Thoughtful, open-ended questions are the workhorses of effective communication: they show your interest, invite others to contribute, identify and clear up misconceptions, improve understanding, and spark new ideas.

7. Use your words to your advantage.

Your words have the power to forge connections, build your career, help others, and improve your business. Avoid speaking in destructive ways, such as gossip, disparaging remarks, or negative comments. That doesn't mean never disagreeing or expressing a concern, but doing so in a way that is constructive. Keep an open mind and avoid personal attacks on character or opinions.