

# WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

## PART I: Common Advanced Vocabulary About Workplace

**communication:** the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium.

**labor:** 1. work, especially physical work. 2. Workers, especially people who do work with their hands.

**labor day:** it is an annual day of celebration of the labor movement and the institution of achievements.

**a labor union:** an organization of workers that bargains with employers over wages, benefits, and working conditions.

**a strike:** when workers stop working in order to protest something, usually related to their job or workplace.

**wage:** the money that someone is paid for their work.

**salary:** a fix amount of Money that someone is paid for their work, usually paid once a month.  
minimum

**benefits:** Extra payments or services that an employer provides for their employees, in addition to wages. For example, health insurance or a retirement plan.

**working conditions:** the conditions in which someone works, such as the temperature, the amount of space, or the type of work.

**insurance:** when you make monthly payments to a company to help you in case something bad happens. For example, if you get sick and can't work, or if your house is damaged in a fire.

**sick leave:** time that you're allowed to take off from work when you're sick.

**maternity leave:** time that a mother is allowed to take off from work before and after the birth of her child. Payment during this time may be partially or fully covered by the government, or by the employer.

**vacation:** days that you're allowed to take off from work, in addition to weekends and holidays.

**to demote:** to move someone to a lower position in their job.

**to promote:** to move someone to a higher position in their job.

**to lay off:** to stop employing someone. For example, because of a decrease in business.

**to fire:** to stop employing someone. For example, because that person was not doing their job well, or because the company doesn't need that person's job anymore.

**a downsizing:** when a company reduces the number of employees, often because of a decrease in business.

**an economic recession:** a period of time when there is less business activity and more unemployment.

**to be out of work/ to be unemployed:** to not have a job.

**to retire:** to stop working because one has reached a certain age, or because one can no longer work due to illness or injury.

**a retirement plan:** a financial plan that allows someone to save money while they are working, so that they will have money to live on when they retire.

**to quit/to resign:** to stop working at a job, usually because one is taking a new job, or for personal reasons.

**taxes:** the money that people and businesses must pay to the government, based on their income or profits. The government uses this money to provide public services.

### Exercise 1 – Fill in the blanks with the correct word:

(to retire, benefit, to fire, salary, to demote, maternity leave, to promote, insurance, downsizing, communication, working conditions, a strike)

1. Effective \_\_\_\_\_ between managers and employees helps prevent misunderstandings and conflicts at the workplace.
2. The workers decided to go on \_\_\_\_\_ after negotiations with the company failed.
3. Although her job is demanding, she is satisfied with her \_\_\_\_\_ because it is above the industry average.
4. The union is negotiating better \_\_\_\_\_, including safer equipment and shorter working hours.
5. Health \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the most important perks offered by the company.
6. Employees are entitled to \_\_\_\_\_ when they have a baby.
7. After years of hard work, the company decided \_\_\_\_\_ him to the position of Senior Manager.
8. Due to poor performance, the board chose \_\_\_\_\_ him to a less responsible role.
9. The company announced a massive \_\_\_\_\_ plan, which would reduce the workforce by 20%.
10. After working for 40 years, she finally decided \_\_\_\_\_ and spend more time with her family.
11. The company had no choice but \_\_\_\_\_ several employees who were involved in fraud.
12. One of the main \_\_\_\_\_ of working here is the flexible schedule.

## PART II- READING

### The Key to Effective Workplace Communication

In modern workplaces, communication is more than just exchanging information — it's about building trust, solving problems, and promoting collaboration. Whether it's an email, a team meeting, or a quick chat by the coffee machine, the way we communicate can influence productivity and workplace **morale**.

There are two main types of communication in the workplace: **formal** and **informal**. Formal communication includes emails, reports, and presentations, where tone and structure are important. Informal communication, on the other hand, happens in casual settings and often builds personal **rapport**.

In a global work environment, being aware of cultural differences is also critical. A phrase that's polite in one culture might be too direct or vague in another. **Miscommunication** can easily occur if **tone**, context, or body language is misread.

Technology has added both opportunities and challenges. Tools like video conferencing and instant messaging make communication faster, but they also require employees to adapt their style and be clear, **concise**, and respectful.

Ultimately, effective workplace communication requires listening actively, expressing ideas clearly, and being sensitive to others' **perspectives**. These skills are just as important as technical abilities in today's professional world.

## Vocabulary Focus

**morale:** The confidence and enthusiasm of a group. (eg: **Good communication improves team morale**)

**rapprochement:** A friendly, trusting relationship (eg: \_\_\_\_\_)

**concise:** Short and clear without unnecessary information ( eg: \_\_\_\_\_)

**tone:** The emotional quality or attitude of communication ( eg: \_\_\_\_\_)

**miscommunication:** Failure to communicate clearly (eg: \_\_\_\_\_)

**formal/informal language:** Types of communication styles (eg: \_\_\_\_\_)

**body language:** Non-verbal communication (eg: \_\_\_\_\_)

**perspective:** A particular point of view (eg: \_\_\_\_\_)

## Comprehension Questions

1. What are the two main types of workplace communication mentioned in the text?
2. Why is cultural awareness important in workplace communication?
3. What are some challenges brought by technology in communication?
4. How can poor communication affect the workplace?
5. What skills are necessary for effective workplace communication?

## Exercise 2 – Fill in the blanks with the correct word:

(rapport – morale – tone – miscommunication – formal – concise)

1. Good leaders know how to keep team \_\_\_\_\_ high during difficult times.
2. The email was too casual; it should have been more \_\_\_\_\_.
3. It's essential to use a polite and respectful \_\_\_\_\_ in professional emails.
4. A short and \_\_\_\_\_ report saves everyone's time.
5. She quickly built a strong \_\_\_\_\_ with her team.
6. There was a serious \_\_\_\_\_ between the client and the supplier.

## Language Focus: Formal / Informal Expressions

**Formal English** is used in professional, academic, and official contexts. It follows grammar rules strictly, avoids contractions and slang, and tends to be more polite and impersonal.

**Informal English** is used in everyday conversation with friends, family, or in relaxed settings. It's more personal, casual, and may include slang, contractions, or idioms.

## Key Features

### 1. Vocabulary

- **Formal:** choose precise, neutral, and professional words.
- **Informal:** use casual, sometimes shortened words.

Formal	Informal
Request	Ask
Purchase	Buy
Assist	Help
Apologize	Say Sorry
Approximately	About
Therefore	So
Commence	Start/Begin

### 2. Grammar & Structure

- **Formal:**
  - Longer, complex sentences.
  - Avoids contractions (do not, cannot).
  - Passive voice often used ("The report was submitted yesterday").
- **Informal:**
  - Shorter, simpler sentences.
  - Uses contractions (don't, can't).
  - Active voice preferred ("I sent the report yesterday").

### 3. Tone

- **Formal:** Polite, distant, objective.
- **Informal:** Friendly, personal, emotional.

Example:

- Formal: *"I would like to inform you that the meeting has been rescheduled."*
- Informal: *"Hey, just letting you know the meeting's been moved."*

### 4. Pronouns & Addressing People

- **Formal:** Titles and surnames → *"Dear Mr. Johnson,"*
- **Informal:** First names or nicknames → *"Hi Alex,"*

### 5. Idioms & Slang

- **Formal:** Avoids idioms/slang.
- **Informal:** Commonly uses idioms, phrasal verbs, and slang.

Example:

- Formal: *"She is not interested in participating."*
- Informal: *"She doesn't feel like joining in."*

## When to Use Each

- **Formal English:** Academic essays, Business emails, Presentations, Official documents, Speaking to authority figures
- **Informal English:** Texting friends, Casual conversations, Social media, Friendly emails/messages

## Rewriting Exercise: Formal ↔ Informal

### Part A – Rewrite the following informal sentences in a formal style:

1. Can you give me a hand with this report?
  2. Sorry, I can't make it to the meeting tomorrow.
  3. We're gonna start the project next week.
  4. I need more info about the new policy.
  5. Thanks a lot for your help!
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### Part B – Rewrite the following formal sentences in an informal style:

6. I would like to apologize for the inconvenience caused.
7. We regret to inform you that your request has been declined.
8. The conference will commence at 10 a.m. sharp.
9. Should you require further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.
10. I am writing to request additional time to complete the assignment.

# Communication – it's much easier said than done

By Clare Gascoigne

## Trust is key in an open organisation

Getting staff to talk to each other ought to be the least of your problems, but internal communication can be one of the hardest nuts to crack in business.

'Communication comes up in every department. The repercussions of not communicating are vast,' says Theo Theobald, co-author of *Shut up and Listen! The Truth About How to Communicate at Work*.

Poor communication can be a purely practical problem.

Gearbulk, a global shipping business with branches around the world, faced language and geographical difficulties, as well as a huge amount of paperwork. With up to 60 documents per cargo, it was a logistical nightmare to track and monitor jobs, while tighter security regulations after 9/11 meant customs documents had to be ready before a ship was allowed to sail.

Installing an automated system means data is now entered only once but can be accessed by anyone in the company, wherever they are.

'Reporting is faster by a matter of months,' says Ramon Ferrer, Vice President of Global IT at Gearbulk. 'An operational team carrying a voyage all the way across the world doesn't always have to be talking to each other – and we don't waste time duplicating the same information.'

Given today's variety of communication tools, it seems strange that we still have a problem communicating. But the

I PREFERRED IT WHEN HE  
HID BEHIND HIS COMPUTER  
SENDING SILLY E-MAILS



brave new world of high-tech can create barriers – senior managers hide behind their computers, staff use voice mail to screen calls, and employees sitting next to each other will send e-mails rather than speak.

'Managers should get up, walk round the office and talk to people,' says Matt Rogan, Head of Marketing at Lane4, a leadership and communications consultancy. 'Face-to-face communication can't

be beaten.'

Theobald recommends checking e-mail only three times a day, allocating a set period of time to deal with it. 'If you leave the sound on, the temptation is as great as a ringing phone. People will interrupt meetings to check their e-mails.'

Another problem is simply hitting the 'reply all' button, bombarding people with information. 'We had unstructured data coming at staff from left, right and centre, leaving it up to individuals to sort out,' says Gearbulk's Ferrer. 'Our new system has reduced e-mails and changed

the way people work. It will remind you about work flow.'

Information overload also means people stop listening. But there may be a deeper reason why a message fails to get through, according to Alex Haslam, Professor of Psychology at Exeter University.

'Everyone thinks a failure to communicate is just an individual's error of judgment, but it's not about the person: it's about the group and the group dynamics,' he says. 'Just training people to be good communicators isn't the issue.'

The problem is that employees develop common loyalties that are far stronger than the need to share information. This can even extend to questions of safety.

In the mid-1990s there were a lot of light air crashes in Australia because the two government departments responsible for air safety weren't communicating,' says Haslam. 'The government was trying to save money and both groups felt threatened. The individuals were highly identified with their own organisation and unwilling to communicate with the

other department.'

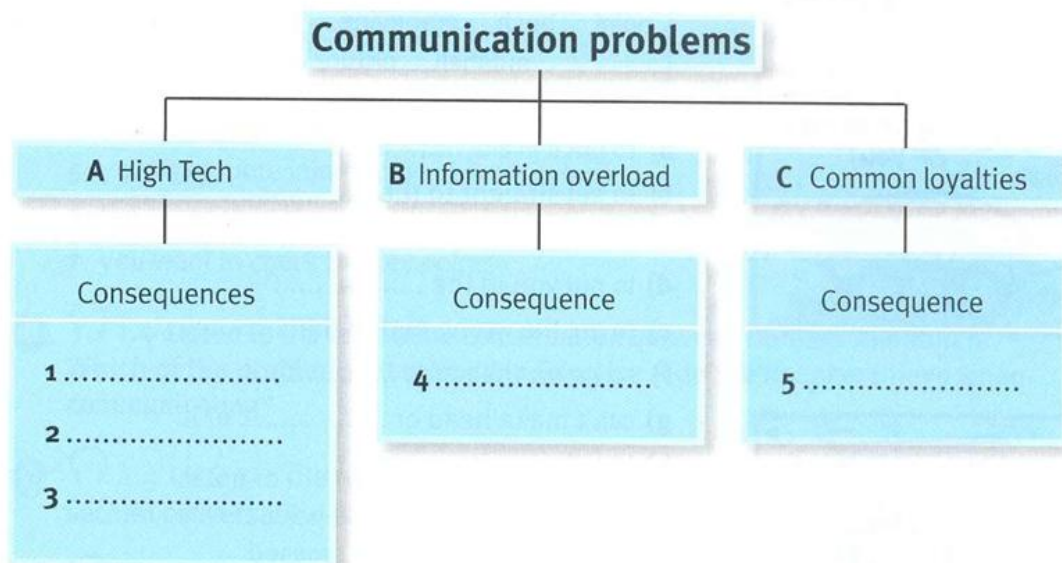
A company is particularly at risk when cost-cutting is in the air. Individuals withdraw into departmental loyalties out of fear. Sending such people on yet another 'how to communicate' course will be pointless. Instead, Haslam believes that identifying the sub-groups within an organisation and making sure each group feels valued and respected can do far more to encourage the sharing of information. The key to communication, he says, is trust.

From the *Financial Times*

FINANCIAL TIMES



**C** Read the article and complete the chart below.



• Read the article again and answer these questions.

1. What communication problems did Gearbulk have?
2. How did Gearbulk overcome the problems?
3. What solutions does Theobald recommend for the above problems?
4. According to the author, why do staff often receive too many e-mails?
5. Why weren't the two government departments (responsible for air safety) communicating?
6. What does the author think about sending people on communication courses?

Which word in each group does not form a word partnership with the word in bold?

1 <b>waste</b>	time	resources	information
2 <b>face</b>	trouble	problems	difficulties
3 <b>duplicate</b>	information	time	work
4 <b>install</b>	systems	factories	equipment
5 <b>save</b>	money	time	experience
6 <b>develop</b>	truth	loyalty	motivation
7 <b>share</b>	support	information	ideas
8 <b>allocate</b>	time	ideas	resources
9 <b>interrupt</b>	e-mails	conversations	meetings

### LET'S DISCUSS!

- "Face-to-face communication can't be beaten" Do you agree?
- How will communication change in the Office of the future?

### SKILLS: Dealing with communication breakdown

#### A. What expressions can you use on the phone in the following situations?

1. You don't hear what someone says \_\_\_\_\_
2. The person speaks too fast or too quietly \_\_\_\_\_
3. You don't understand a word or expression they use \_\_\_\_\_
4. You want to check the spelling of something \_\_\_\_\_
5. You want more information about a subject \_\_\_\_\_
6. The connection is not good and you can't continue the conversation \_\_\_\_\_
7. You want to check the key points \_\_\_\_\_

### EXERCISES

#### Complete each sentence with the best word.

- 1 Good presenters rarely ramble. They usually try to be as succinct as possible.  
a) inarticulate                      b) hesitant                      c) succinct
- 2 Her arguments were so ..... that we all agreed to her proposal.  
a) fluent                              b) extrovert                      c) persuasive
- 3 The audience were very ..... and carried him through his difficult presentation.  
a) responsive                      b) eloquent                      c) coherent
- 4 She is a very ..... person. She always keeps her attention fixed on what she wants to achieve.  
a) sensitive                      b) focused                      c) fluent
- 5 He never says what he thinks or shows what he feels. How can anybody be so ..... ?  
a) rambling                      b) fluent                      c) reserved
- 6 Everybody seems so ..... here. They behave and speak freely, and do not really care what other people think.  
a) incoherent                      b) articulate                      c) uninhibited
- 7 We know that not all politicians are ..... Some of them even use an autocue.  
a) eloquent                      b) inhibited                      c) hesitant



**D Match these new idioms with their definitions.**

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1 air your views             | a) tell somebody all the information they want or need to know                            |
| 2 be at a loss for words     | b) unable to say anything because something surprising or totally unexpected has happened |
| 3 drop a hint                | c) express your opinions about something in public  |
| 4 give somebody the low-down | d) give somebody regular information about things   |
| 5 keep somebody up to date   | e) make a suggestion in an indirect way   |

**E Complete the sentences with the appropriate form of an idiom from exercise D.**

- 1 E-mail me every day to keep me up to date with the latest developments, will you?
- 2 When she was told she'd been nominated Businesswoman of the Year, she .....
- 3 Could you briefly ..... on their financial situation before our meeting this afternoon?
- 4 Every week in our department there's a meeting where the administrative staff can ..... and discuss problems.
- 5 We can't be sure, but management ..... that there might be redundancies.

**WRITING PRACTICE**

**-Write an e-mail (70-80 words) to your Head of Department, including:**

- a request to go on the course
- why you think the course would be useful
- some details of the course
- an enquiry about the possibility of financial support towards the course fee.

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