**Communicate effectively in a professional context**

Effective communication in the workplace is all about where, how, and when you’re communicating. Try these seven tips to become a stronger communicator.

**1. Know where to communicate—and about what**

Communication happens in many different forms—face-to-face, over email, via instant messages, and in work management platforms. To be most effective, make sure you’re following communication guidelines and messaging about the right things in the right places.

Sometimes, knowing where to communicate is half the battle. Your company may have different communication tools—which makes knowing which tool to use all the more important. Which tool is appropriate for your question or comment? Do you need to communicate in real time, or is it ok to send an asynchronous message? If you’re not sure, ask a team member or manager where you should be sending different types of messages. It is important for everyone to be on the same page. For example, at Asana, we use:

Slack

Asana

Gmail

Zoom

Read: Why a clear communication plan is more important than you think

**2. Build your collaboration skills**

Collaboration is the bedrock of effective teamwork. In order to build strong team collaboration skills, you need to practice open and honest communication. This doesn’t necessarily mean always agreeing on things—knowing how to disagree and work through those differences is a key part of collaboration, too.

Collaboration and communication skills are kind of a “chicken and egg” scenario. You can build good collaboration by communicating effectively—but knowing how to collaborate is a key component of strong communication. Essentially, this just means you’ll have to practice improving both collaboration and communication skills over time. As you improve team collaboration, you’ll get better at conveying information and opinions in a work environment—and as a result, that honest communication will make collaboration feel more effortless.

Read: 10 easy steps to boost team collaboration

**3. Talk face-to-face when you can**

Perhaps the most tried-and-true way to avoid miscommunication is to talk face-to-face. If your team is virtual, speaking via video conferencing also works. Face-to-face communication is particularly important if you know a conversation is going to be hard. Tone can be difficult to communicate through writing so ideally, you want your team member to be able to see your facial expressions and body language.

If your team is remote or distributed, communicating via a phone call instead of a video conference could work as well. Video conferencing fatigue is real, and it can make collaboration and communication particularly difficult for remote teams. Communicating over the phone reduces some of the visual strain, while still giving you the ability to hear your team member’s voice and tone.

**4. Watch your body language and tone of voice**

Communication isn’t just about what you say—it’s also about how you say it. Make sure you aren’t crossing your arms or coming off as curt. Oftentimes, your body language may have nothing to do with the current situation—maybe you’re tired or stressed about something in your personal life. But your team members, who might not have that context, could see your actions and assume you’re angry or upset about something. Particularly for hard conversations, try to relax your body language and facial expressions to avoid giving off any unintentional cues.

**5. Prioritize two-way communication**

Listening is just as important to communication in the workplace as talking. Part of being a collaborative team member is listening to other people’s ideas instead of just trying to put your own ideas out there.

There are two common types of listening: listening to reply and listening to understand. When you listen to reply, you’re focusing on what you’re going to say next, rather than what the other person is saying. With this type of listening, you risk missing key information or even repeating what the other person just said.

Instead, try to listen to understand—that is, listen to what the other person has to say without thinking about how you’re going to reply. If you do think of something you want to say, jot it down so you can go back to listening to understand, instead of trying to remember the thing you want to say next.

**6. Stick to facts, not stories**

“Facts vs. stories” is a technique recommended by the co-founder of the Conscious Leadership Group, Diana Chapman. In this case, “facts” are things that have actually happened—things that everyone in the room would easily agree on. A “story,” on the other hand, is your interpretation of the situation.

For example, say your manager gives you live feedback during a small team meeting. That is a fact. You weren’t expecting the feedback, and you feel like your manager shared the feedback—instead of saving it for your 1:1—because they’re dissatisfied with your work. This is a “story” because you have no way of knowing if this is true or not.

Stories are inevitable—we all create stories from facts. But try to separate stories from facts, and avoid acting on stories until you’re able to validate them. For example in this case, you might want to talk to your manager during your next 1:1 and ask why they shared feedback in a team meeting.

Read: How to write a memo for effective communication (with template)

**7. Make sure you’re speaking to the right person**

Effective workplace communication is as much about who you’re talking to as it is about what you’re saying. Poor communication often occurs when you’re talking to the wrong people, or trying to share information in the wrong setting.

To avoid this, make sure the right people are in the room or receiving the message. If you aren’t sure who that would be, go through an exercise to identify any important project stakeholders who might be missing.

**Reference:**

https://asana.com/resources/effective-communication-workplace