

Communicating effectively with your team

Vesekhoyi Tetseo (Vee)

"The first questions in increasing productivity have to be - What is the task? What are we trying to accomplish? Why do it at all?" Peter Drucker

Communication means transferring thoughts and ideas with an intention of delivering information. In Dictionary.com it reads, 'It is the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs.' In other words, it means, communication is not simply a matter or reference to merely articulate words but the means of sending message through the body language, hand gestures, along with other factors.

Every communication requires a process. Effective communication occurs only if the receiver understands the exact information or idea that the sender intended to transmit. What we communicate and how people respond to your communication becomes the end result of your communication ability. How accurately can the message be transmitted? How precise is the meaning conveyed? How effectively does the received meaning affect behavior?

Effective communication should center around WHAT needs to be done, HOW to do it & most importantly WHY! Peter Drucker's question rightly answers this question, What is the task? What are we trying to accomplish? Why do it at all?" Peter Drucker

Types of Communication

Communication occurs in various processes and methods and depending on the channel.

Communication Channels

1. Verbal communication: This includes written and oral communication.

Written communication, that is postal mail, or email. The effectiveness of written communication depends on the style of writing, vocabulary used, grammar, clarity and precision of language.

The oral communication refers to the spoken words in the communication process. Oral communication occurs in a face-to-face conversation, or over the phone or on the voice chat over the Internet.

Voice modulation, pitch, volume and even the speed and clarity of speaking can influence communication.

2. Non-verbal communication: This includes body language, hand gestures, facial expressions and visual diagrams or pictures used for communication. The facial expression of the communicator plays a vital role. On the other hand gestures like a handshake, a smile or a hug can independently convey emotions.

Pictorial representations, signboards, or even photographs, sketches and paintings can be forms of nonverbal communication.

Communication Based on Style and Purpose

Formal and informal communication are two broad categories of communication that have their own set of characteristic features.

1. Formal Communication: Formal communications are what occurs in a set formal format. Typically, they are business communication or corporate communication. The style of communication in this form is very formal and official. They are official conferences, meetings and written memos and corporate letters. Formal communication can also occur between two strangers when they meet for the first time. Hence formal communication is straightforward, official and always precise and has a stringent and rigid tone to it.

2. Informal Communication: Informal communication includes instances of free unrestrained communication between people who share a casual rapport with each other. Informal communication requires two people to have a similar wavelength and hence occurs between friends and family. Informal communication does not have any rigid rules and guidelines. Informal conversations need not necessarily have boundaries of time, place or even subjects for that matter since we all know that friendly chats with our loved ones can simply go on and on.

Forms of Communication

Forms of Communication in the Workplace

Meetings, Agendas, Letters, Business Letters, Memos, Presentations, Notices, Announcements, Feedbacks, Policies, Group Discussions.

Forms of Communication in Business

Advertisements, Memos, Letters, Declarations, Press Releases, Campaigns, Annual General Meetings, Meetings, Publications, Addressing to the Public at Large, Manuals and Notices.

Three types of Communicators

1. Visuals communicators are those people that take in and process information through their eyes. They prefer to think, or rather visualize with their mind's eye. To be effective with them, you need to use key words such as "look, see, picture", etc.
2. Auditory communicators are people use their hearing to develop understanding. They talk to themselves in words that their minds can listen to. They like words that help them hear things.
3. Kinesthetic are feeling people. It doesn't matter how things look or sound to them, it needs to feel right (not necessarily good).

Effective Communication Skills

According to a study carried out by linguists, words just constitute 7% of the effective communication skills. Other elements of effective communication techniques, like body language, facial expressions, oration skills and confidence constitute, 93% of the effective communication skills.

Listening

The first and the foremost commandment for effective communication techniques is to listen to the other party. Apart from speaking your mind out, communication is also about listening and that too very carefully. Focus on what they are saying and reflect back on that conversation later.

Expression

Honesty is very important here. Whenever you are expressing yourself, talking truthfully and honestly will send out a signal that you trust your audience. Speak clearly and properly. Also try to be precise about the subject that you are speaking on. Do not beat around the bush. This will only confuse your audience.

Take Criticism Positively

If someone comes to you with criticism, its just natural human response to defend your stance. Try to take criticism positively and constructively. Try to empathize with the person and resonate your words in a very mild language.

Avoid Arguments

Most often than not, whenever you are trying to have a healthy conversation, it turns into an argument. Arguing does nothing, but wastes your time. Try to avoid getting into such situations. And even if you get into such situations, instead of winning the argument, find an amicable solution in a constructive way.

Understand the Audience

You need to be able to understand your audience, as they are the ones for whom you are speaking. Do not send out your message, before you are absolutely sure that they will grasp what you are saying

How to Communicate Effectively: Tips

There is a subtle difference between good communication skills and an effective communication. Good communication skills are highly influenced by the personality and idiosyncrasies of the person while effective communication gives a peek into the soul of the speaker and helps him connect with his audience on an emotional level. This article focuses on ways to communicate effectively

Gather Your Thoughts

Before you are ready to talk to the intended person or address a group of people, you should have a clear vision about what you are going to talk about. You can make a mental note of any three important issues, so that even if you fumble with one, you can have the other two to back you up.

Choose Your Words

Choice of words is the most important part of any communication. Choose simple, precise words that are appropriate for the issue you are addressing. Keep out offensive words or words that could demean your audience.

Voice Modulation

Another important aspect of effective communication is the technique of modulating your voice at appropriate places. Modulate your voice appropriately and pause at strategic places to allow your audience to absorb your ideas. If possible, evoke the interest of your audience by asking them questions or inviting their opinions. This will keep them engrossed in your talk.

Body Language

Body language and sign language are two different things. Remember, there is no need to couple every word with gesture or facial expression. This will make your talk more of a stage performance and defeat its purpose. Body language essentially means maintaining eye contact (only with right people!) and using hand gestures only wherever required.

Barriers of Communication

Many people think that communicating is easy. It is after all something we've done all our lives. There is some truth in this simplistic view. Communicating is straightforward. What makes it complex, difficult, and frustrating are the barriers we put in the way. Here are the 7 top barriers.

1. Physical Barriers. Physical barriers in the workplace include:

- * marked out territories, empires and fiefdoms into which strangers are not allowed
- * closed office doors, barrier screens, separate areas for people of different status

2. Perceptual Barriers. The problem with communicating with others is that we all see the world differently. How our thoughts, assumptions and perceptions shape our own realities.

3. Emotional Barriers. One of the chief barriers to open and free communications is the emotional barrier. It is comprised mainly of fear, mistrust and suspicion. The roots of our emotional mistrust of others lie in our childhood and infancy when we were taught to be careful what we said to others.

4. Cultural Barriers. These are the behaviors that the group accept as signs of belonging. The group rewards such behavior through acts of recognition, approval and inclusion. In groups which are happy to accept you, and where you are happy to conform, there is a mutuality of interest and a high level of win-win contact.

5. Language Barriers. Language that describes what we want to say in our terms may present barriers to others who are not familiar with our expressions, buzz-words and jargon. When we couch our communication in such language, it is a way of excluding others. In a global market place the greatest compliment we can pay another person is to talk in their language.

6. Gender Barriers. There are distinct differences between the speech patterns in a man and those in a woman. A woman speaks between 22,000 and 25,000 words a day whereas a man speaks between 7,000 and 10,000. In childhood, girls speak earlier than boys and at the age of three, have a vocabulary twice that of boys.

Do's of Communication Skills within your Team

Developing effective communication skills within the team can be done easily by exercising some basic manners, professional etiquettes and keeping an open mind.

- Do always respect all your fellow team members, irrespective of whether you are just a team member or a team leader.
- Do ensure whether all the team members understand the project requirements thoroughly and know what the project targets are. Ask questions or have discussions to clarify the same.
- Do organize regular team meetings to understand the doubts and queries of every team member and provide solutions accordingly.
- Do keep every team member informed with the latest project updates or project issues.
- Do define the role and responsibility of every team member clearly to avoid confusion or un-necessary re-work.
- When in a meeting or discussion, do, let every one have their turn to speak and suggest
- Do listen to others' opinions and use their suggestions if found to be effective. Listening plays a significant role in effective communication. Repeat others' words to acknowledge their point of views.
- Do ask for feedbacks and suggestions from your team members.
- Do always speak in a clear and slow manner. Give sound and logical reasoning to your opinions.
- Do always be polite in your way of speaking and behavior. Don't use rude tone or body language may bring upon negative feelings among the team members.
- Do clear out personal differences and misunderstandings by speaking it out with the concerned person. Don't keep harboring grudges against one another it will affect the team spirit and have a direct impact on the quality of your work.
- Do make appropriate use of emails, telephones, voice messages and instant messengers while communicating with the fellow team members. Follow the professional etiquettes while writing emails, greeting over telephones, leaving voicemails and sending instant messages. These modes of communication also have a lot of importance in today's work place.
- Do avoid using unpleasant words, expressions, giving out sensitive and confidential information while using the above modes of communication.
- Do display acknowledgement and appreciation through face-to-face interaction or electronic modes when a team member performs well. Just a pat on the back, a warm handshake or two lines of an appreciation mail can have a great impact to motivate a team member.
- When appreciated or praised, do thank the person in a polite and sophisticated manner. Do avoid continuous rejoicing about your personal success. This might create an uncomfortable situation for your other team members.

- Do always have a friendly attitude towards each other. Help others in need and you will get back others' help when you require the same.
- Do deal with tense situations with a calm mind. If words of any team member make you angry try to keep a cool head and put your point forward. Avoid using harsh words in return.
- Do avoid blaming others continuously when any work is not done. Instead, try to find out the root cause and see to it that it is not repeated in future.
- Do find out if any team member is facing any problem and have a discussion with him/her to address the issue. Speaking and constant interaction with each other always help in developing a healthy team spirit.

This final tip is one of the most powerful things you should NOT do. If you get angry, you lose. When you "lose it" in front of team members, their confidence is shaken and your credibility is undermined.

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Vesekhoyi Tetseo (Vee) is the associate Pastor with his wife Ai Nohara at Okinawa Daiichi Baptist Church, Okinawa, Japan. He is the father of three boys. Presently, he is the President of Asia Pacific Baptist Youth Fellowship and represents the Asia Pacific Baptist Youth as the regional Vice President of Baptist World Youth Department. Vee serves as leader/songwriter/worship leader of 'Vee Worship Band' and conducts international worship/leadership conference in and around the Asia Pacific.

