

Communication Skills in the Modern Workplace



In a day and age where our communications include everything from Zooming, to texting, to talking on speaker phone while driving down the road, there is no doubting that communicating in the workplace and in our homes has become a lost skill. Less and less our communication involves sitting across from someone, making eye contact and having a human conversation. As a result, studies have shown that information quickly gets lost or is forgotten due to our lack of engagement in how we communicate with each other. This can prove disastrous in the workplace as missing even the smallest detail can end up derailing an entire project or task. For this reason, it's important to realize what [effective communication](#) in the information age looks like and some steps you can take to become more effective.

Active Listening

Even though much of our communication is electronic, you're still going to have to engage directly with your colleagues and employees from time to time. Think about the feeling you have when someone continuously interrupts you, has their nose in their phone, or doesn't seem at all interested in what you have to say. Active listeners avoid all these pitfalls and make it a point to let you know their listening through non-verbal behavior like nodding their head and making eye contact. They also reiterate key points using phrases and questions like "Just so I understand..." or "To make sure we are on the same page..."

Positive Body Language

Something that is easy to overlook but makes a huge difference when you're talking with someone is your body language. When you're talking with someone, do you tend to slouch back in your seat, cross your arms and avoid eye contact? This type of body language subconsciously tells the other person that you aren't interested in what they have to say. On the other hand, if you sit tall, open your body toward the person you're engaging and make regular eye contact, you come across as welcoming, non-threatening, and you let the other person know that you value what they are saying.

Show Respect

Although this one seems obvious, it's remarkable how many people don't convey respect when communicating with others. This is true for both live conversation and electronic communication. If you avoid talking down to others, take time to acknowledge their perspective and ask questions, you show them that they are worth your time and you genuinely want to hear what they have to say.

Email Etiquette

The vast majority of our communication today is via email or some other electronic platform. While it might seem less personal than talking face-to-face, email is designed for information to be exchanged concisely and quickly. Therefore, you should master the skill of breaking up your emails into bullet points or short paragraphs that are easy to read and understand. If you send long-winded messages that are full of unnecessary filler language and unneeded details, people are not only less likely to read your note, they may find themselves confused with so much information.

Your emails need to also convey respect and the utmost professionalism including a short subject line, the proper salutation and goodbye.

Be Open-Minded

This is especially true if you're new to a company. If you're going to be successful,

this is the time to listen, learn, ask questions, and be open to new ways of doing things. You're going to make mistakes. The key is to be open to constructive feedback and learn from the process. If your employer sees that you're open-minded and willing to learn, you'll quickly be seen in a favorable light and your chances of moving up quickly become much greater.

Be Willing to Give Feedback

Even if you're the type of person that prefers to put your head down and go, you're going to be asked to give feedback at some point during your career. Whether it's regarding an upcoming project or re-writing the entire policies and procedures manual, being able to give valuable feedback is something many people struggle with. If you're able to provide constructive feedback in a professional manner, you will likely play an integral role in improving your team or organization.

Communication is vital to the success of any organization. Without it, teams fail to work cohesively, production suffers and ideas aren't shared. In short, you have a bunch of individuals doing their own job under the same roof. The way we communicate has changed in the modern workplace. Gone are the days of three martini lunches and sales meetings where everyone meets under one roof. With that being said, it's still important to remember that how you listen, respond and talk with others can be a make or break difference in your success as an individual and for the company.

If you make it a habit to implement some of the practices above, you'll quickly become a more effective and respected member of your organization and the your workplace will be much happier as a result.

If you need more information, contact me, Jeff King. I am a [Life Sciences recruiter](#), working with the [pharmaceutical, biotech, and medical device industries](#).