

## Workplace Communication

Workplace communication remains one of the most overlooked and untrained job skills. All of us contribute to the quality of our workplace through our interactions with our coworkers. Here are a few tips to help you communicate more effectively:

### How You Say It

The same message can be interpreted in vastly different ways depending on the tone in which it was delivered. A negative, accusatory or aggressive tone puts the listener on the defensive, causing the underlying message to be distorted or not heard at all.

### Know Your Audience

Effective communication starts with observation. Because everyone communicates differently, knowing and mimicking your coworkers' individual styles can vastly improve your exchanges. While a brusque, to-the-point style may work with a Type A personality, it may seem rude and impersonal to someone who likes to make small talk before getting to business. Knowing and adapting to these styles can make all the difference.

Timing is sometimes the most critical part of delivering your message. If you require someone's attention, it's often helpful to schedule a meeting instead of approaching that person at a busy time. This can be done informally by requesting that someone see you when time permits.

### Stay on Point

Meetings are frequently derailed by off-topic discussions. Before speaking, envision topical bullet points and limit your comments to those few. If you find yourself veering off course or notice others looking at their watches as you speak, wrap it up by briefly summarizing your main point.

### Limit Your Message List

A common office frustration is being copied on email discussions that don't concern all addressees. Abuse of the 'reply all' function reduces productivity, creates confusion, and eventually causes employees to disregard communications because they don't have the time to filter out irrelevant information. Before relaying mass correspondence, verify that each person on the list needs access to the information being sent.

### Always Follow Up

Never assume that an email or other message has been received. Information can be lost in transmission or accidentally deleted or misplaced by the recipient. Make a habit of regularly following up on important communications.

### Give Accurate Timetables

Nobody likes to be told no. When asked to perform a task that may take you away from other important work, inform your coworker of the time or expense the new task may take to accomplish, and the effect that will have on previously scheduled projects. Armed with this information, they can then decide whether to proceed. This technique also helps alleviate the perception that you are unwilling to help.

### Give Frequent Updates

It's easy to lose perspective when working on large-scale projects that aren't due until months later. Schedule weekly or monthly summaries of tasks in progress with coworkers to keep them up-to-date on changes that may affect them.



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