Importance of Effective Communication in the Workplace
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Table of Contents

Importance of Effective Communication in the Workplace
Overview ..................................................................................................................... 3

Lesson #1 › Basic Communication ................................................................. 4
  Lecture Guide & Lesson Plan .................................................................... 5-7

Lesson #2 › Listening Skills ....................................................................... 8
  Lecture Guide & Lesson Plan ................................................................. 9

Lesson #3 › Communication Styles ...................................................... 10
  Lecture Guide & Lesson Plan .................................................................. 11,12

Lesson #4 › Nonverbal Communication .................................................. 13
  Lecture Guide & Lesson Plan .................................................................. 14

Lesson #5 › Constructive Attitude ............................................................ 15
  Lecture Guide & Lesson Plan .................................................................. 15,16

Lesson #6 › Resolve Conflict .................................................................... 17
  Lecture Guide & Lesson Plan .................................................................. 18-20

Lesson #7 › Workplace Diversity .............................................................. 21
  Lecture Guide & Lesson Plan .................................................................. 22

Lesson #8 › Skill of Asking Questions ..................................................... 23
  Lecture Guide & Lesson Plan .................................................................. 23,24

Summary .......................................................................................................... 25
Importance of Effective Communication in the Workplace

“I speak to everyone in the same way, whether he is the garbage man or the president of the university” ~ Albert Einstein

Regardless of the shape or size of an organization - you need good communication skills. As simple as communication might seem, it can be misunderstood causing conflict and or frustration in any personal or professional relationships. Learning and understanding the skills needed to be an effective communicator are valuable in the workplace. The benefits of effective communication especially in the workplace can help increase productivity, decrease errors, and support operations to run smoother.

Eight lesson plans have been developed to address the needs of effective communication in the workplace. The following lesson plans will help guide and demonstrate best practices for improving communication within the workplace:

- Basic Communication
- Listening Skills
- Communication Styles
- Nonverbal Communication
- Constructive Attitude
- Resolve Conflict
- Workplace Diversity
- Skills of Asking Questions

**AIMS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1.) Enhance Communication
   - Listening
   - Non-Verbal
   - Questioning Skills

2.) Explain Why Effective Communication Is So Important In the Workplace

3.) Gain a Sense of Your Own Communication Style

4.) Understand Damage Caused By Poor Communication
Lesson: Basic Communication

Essential Question: How good are your communication skills?

Primary Learning Objectives: Understanding the importance of effective communication. Identify strengths and weaknesses on how well you communicate. Gain the understanding the need to develop effective communication skills and to teach the importance and need for good communication skills. Bring awareness to current communication skills.

Class Level: Workplace training, all proficiency levels, all age groups

Duration: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Materials Required: Communication Quiz and Ranking sheet, Pen or Pencil

Key Vocabulary: Communication skills, Self-Appraisal, Awareness

Introduction: Effective communication skills are some of the most important skills that you need to succeed in the workplace. The purpose of communication is to get your message across to others clearly to avoid miscommunication. In order to identify areas that need improvement, we need to discover and understand how we communicate today. So are you communicating effectively? The class will take this short quiz to find out.

Procedure: Hand out the quiz to the class. In form the class that this quiz will bring awareness on current ability to communicate well. This quiz is a great way for employees to recognize their style of communication and identify areas needing improvement. Distribute quiz. Once the class has completed the quiz (3 minutes) then distribute ranking sheet. Employee should review their answers of the quiz and total their results. Read the ranking sheet out load to the class to determine their score and discuss details

Review: This exercise is aimed at bringing awareness to effective communication and seeks out areas that could be improved upon. Understand the basic process of communication; identify problem areas, and being to explore skills to enhance your communication skill.

The Practical Press Inc. [PDF document] retrieved from:
http://www.thepracticalpress.net/pdf/COMMQUIZONLINE.pdf
Use the following Rating Scale to score your communication behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Not at All</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_____ I am open and direct when I have something to say
_____ I am aware that the words I choose may have different meanings to the listener
_____ I recognize that the message I hear may not be the same message that the other person meant to send
_____ I analyze the receiver before I send the message and form the message according to that analysis
_____ I pay attention to the receiver as I am speaking
_____ I am purposeful and brief when I communicate
_____ I limit my use of technical jargon unless I am sure that the other person understands
_____ I don’t use slang and colloquialisms unless I am sure that the other person understands them
_____ I avoid inflammatory words
_____ I know that what I say is as important as how I choose to say it
_____ I analyze my communication style to determine which nonverbal messages I use most often
_____ I think about whether it is best to deliver a message in e-mail, over the phone or in person
_____ I form opinions based on what I hear, not what I think before I hear the message
_____ I listen to ideas and consider them whether I agree or not
_____ I look for ways to improve my listening skills

**Communication Self -**
Appraisal Quiz Ranking Sheet

50-60............... You are an exceptional communicator! You almost never contribute to misunderstandings! Or, you extended the truth slightly when completing this appraisal.

40-49............... You are an effective communicator! You seldom cause communication breakdowns or misunderstandings. You are a person who can analyze the message and the intent.

30-39............... You are an average communicator! You have your share of lapses. Most of us do. Start action planning to improve your communication skills. Start learning to listen.

20-29............... You are a below average communicator...but, you are also honest. You are already aware of your shortcomings and should start working on them immediately. Start action planning to improve your communication skills. Pick up a few books and articles on effective communication. Create a daily checklist of action items that you intend to focus on each day. Use this to keep yourself on track.

10 and below........ Your honesty is commendable! Not only will you benefit from an action plan, you will also be well-served by taking a few courses in effective communication. Develop a daily checklist. Find ways to analyze misunderstandings to see how and where you contributed. Enlist the aid of colleagues, family and friends to help you in this developmental process.
Lesson: Listening Skills

Essential Question: How good a listener are you?

**Primary Learning Objectives:** Learn how to be a good listener. Students will be able to demonstrate good listening skills. Listening for specific information and to understand the importance of active listening skills for everyday life.

**Class Level:** Workplace training, all proficiency levels, all age groups

**Duration:** 30 to 40 minutes

**Materials Required:** Piece of paper, pen or pencil

**Key Vocabulary:** Listening skills, information, following directions

**Introduction:** This is a simple lesson in following directions and expresses the importance of listening and following directions. Inform the class that they are going to participate in an activity that will prove how well of a listener they might be.

**Procedure:** The trainer will communicate each instruction of the activity to the class. The trainer will pause, the repeat the instruction again. The instruction will only be said twice and cannot be repeated for a third time. The students will complete the instruction per the trainer.

**Review:** Once the class completes the lesson plan, they should hold up there results for the other students to see each outcome. Results will show that things were done differently amongst the group. This lesson plan demonstrates the importance of having good listening skills.

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**References**

The Nebraska Department of Education Listening Lesson Plan [Word Document]

retrieved from: www.education.ne.gov

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**Following Directions Sheet**
1. Write your name first name on the last line of the paper at the left-hand margin.
2. On the first line on the paper write the numbers 1 through 9. Start at the left and print the numbers. Leave a space between each number.
3. Circle the number 6.
4. Draw a star in the upper left-hand corner of the page.
5. Fold your paper in half the long way.
6. Open up your paper, and then fold it the opposite way.
7. Use the tip of your pencil to poke a hole in the center of the paper (the place where the two folds meet).
8. Draw a heart around the hole you made in your paper.
9. Write the first initial of your last name in the upper right-hand corner of the page.
10. On the last line on the page, write the word done near the right margin.
Lesson: Communication Styles

Essential Question: What does communication style mean to you?

**Primary Learning Objectives:** Good communication skills require self-awareness. Understanding your communication style will provide insight to how others perceive you allowing you to make necessary changes (if needed) to create worthy impressions.

**Class Level:** Workplace training, all proficiency levels, all age groups

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Materials Required:** Handout, Flip Chart Paper, Markers

**Key Vocabulary:** Communication Style, Outspoken/Direct, Quite/Reserved, Thoughtful/Analytical, and Friendly/Unassuming.

**Introduction:** Before starting the activity, write the following headers on separate flip chart paper: Outspoken/Direct, Quite/Reserved, Thoughtful/Analytical, and Friendly/Unassuming. Hang paper on four different walls, away from each other giving space to gather as a group by each word. Begin by explaining to the class that everyone has different communication styles. Explain to the class the four basic types: Outspoken/Direct, Quite/Reserved, Thoughtful/Analytical, and Friendly/Unassuming (or as Hamilton labels them, Open, Closed, Hidden, & Blind). Then ask the class to think about what their own communication might be.

**Procedure:** Ask the class to stand and walk to the flip chart paper where their communication style is posted. After the class moves to the best described communication style, give each group the handout related to this lesson plan. Ask the group to answer the questions on the handout together as a team. One person from the group will scribe and record the group's comments on the handout. After each team has answered all the questions, they should return to their seats and discuss the answers with the whole class.

**Review:** Express the importance of understanding communication styles and that everyone is different. The outcome of this lesson is to teach the class that just because someone's communication style is different than yours doesn't mean that their style is wrong. It just means that it is different.

**References**

Communication Style Questionnaire
What is your group’s communication style?

What are some of the characteristics of your group’s communications styles?

In what ways is your communications style sometimes misunderstood by others?

How could others who have different communications styles about your style?
Lesson:  Nonverbal Communication

Essential Question:  Interested in knowing how to read and use nonverbal communication to effectively convey a message?

Primary Learning Objectives:  Students will be able to define the term nonverbal communication, and describe the role of nonverbal communication and the impact this type of communication might have within the workplace as well as everyday life. Understand the use of body language, tone of voice and other nonverbal communication examples.

Class Level:  Workplace training, all proficiency levels, all age groups

Duration:  Approximately 60 to 90 minutes

Materials and Equipment:  Computer with digital projector and speakers, Paper, Pen or Pencil, White Board.

Key Vocabulary:  Eye Contact, Personal Space, Personal Appearance, Facial Expressions, Vocal Characteristics, Body Movements and Gestures

Preparation:  Facilitator should prep the class with discussion of nonverbal communication.  Ask for examples and write the responses in front of the class on a white board.  Then ask the class if anyone has ever made an instant judgment about someone or something but do not answer the question out loud, but silently in their head. Have the class think about their answer as they watch the video. Begin video.

Procedure:  1st Watch the following video:  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOiyD26cJ2A After reviewing this video, write a description of all nonverbal communication identified in the video. 2nd read sections from the article - The Impact of Nonverbal Communications in Organizations: A Survey of Perceptions and discuss in detail types of Nonverbal Cues.  Discuss and analyze the functions of nonverbal communication and the reason of importance.

Review:  How do actions speak louder than words? Ask the group to describe all the nonverbal messages that were displayed in the video. Actions speak louder than words! Revisit the question if anyone has ever made an instant judgment about someone or something, how are your feelings now about this question after watching the video?


Lesson: Constructive Attitude

Essential Question: How to give it and how to take it?

Primary Learning Objectives: To raise awareness of the effects of positive and negative criticism in the work place. Consider how to keep a constructive attitude when receiving criticism. How to give constructive criticism.

Class Level: Workplace training, all proficiency levels, all age groups

Duration: 2 to 3 hours

Materials Required: Article, Computer with digital projector and speakers, Paper, Pen or Pencil, White Board.

Key Vocabulary: Constructive, Attitude, Criticism

Introduction: Class discussion of criticism. Begin with a story of a personal experience dealing with criticism, and describe how it was either a negative or positive experience. Then ask the class if they know of someone who is good at giving constructive criticism. Begin the discussion of what makes criticism constructive.

Procedure: Classroom discussion about constructive attitude. Allow the class some time to read the article handout, then read examples from the article with the class and continue classroom discussion. Watch video: The Arts of Criticism: Giving and Taking http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24-i_RJwjr discuss video and identify advice presented in the video.

Review: Understand concerns, and key issues. Recognizing and receiving feedback is a positive thing. Try to learn from the feedback and how to remain constructive.

References


http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24-i_RJwjrl
Lesson: Resolve Conflict

Essential Question: Why is conflict resolution important to effective communication?

Primary Learning Objectives: Understanding your conflict style. As researchers Trenholm and Jenson (2011) have explained, “Without realizing it, you have probably already developed a negotiation style. Most people have. Some people are overwhelmed by conflict and either walk away from it or give in to keep the peace” (p.316). This lesson plan will define five basic conflict styles and will help the student find solutions to resolve conflict.

Class Level: Workplace training, all proficiency levels, all age groups

Duration: 40 to 60 minutes

Materials Required: Handout

Key Vocabulary: Resolving Conflict, Accommodating, Problem-Solving, Compromising, Avoidance, Competition, Aggressive, Relationship, Personal Goals.

Introduction: Distribute hand out to the class. Tell a story to show the importance of resolving conflict and how it relates to effective communication. Begin to ask questions to get the students thinking about the topic.

Procedure: Think about the various ways of your communication process in your workplace. Review handout and discuss openly what their conflict style might be.

Review: This lesson plan should develop the awareness to the ability to enact on the needed communication style in proper circumstances.

References


Conflict-Handling Styles
Figure 10.6 shows the relationship between these personal and relational goals and conflict styles. There are five common styles of handling conflicts. These styles can be mapped onto a grid that shows the varying degree of cooperation and assertiveness each style entails. Let us look at each in turn. We will begin with Competition in the lower right corner of the quadrant.

**Figure 10.6 Conflict-Handling Styles**

![Conflict-Handling Styles Diagram](image)

**Competition**
We place people in this section whose primary concern is with achieving personal goals, even at the expense of a relationship. For these individuals conflicts are competitive game; they may even enjoy fights – as long they win. David Johnson compares each conflict style to a different animal. He describes those who use competition/aggressive style as sharks.

**Avoidance**
Individuals who fit into the lower left corner of Figure 10.6 try to avoid conflict. For these individuals nothing is worth the hassle of a fight. When faced with disagreement, they use the avoidance style, backing away from conflict both physically and psychologically. They are known to be called “turtles” because they retreat into their shells.

**Accommodation**

In the upper left quadrant is the accommodating style, in which concern for the relationship is high while the need to achieve personal goals is low. People who fit this quadrant try to smooth over all disagreements. If you are the one who give in just to keep the peace, you fill the role of accommodator. Johnson would describe you as a teddy bear.

**Compromise**

The compromising style is a middle-ground style. Johnson compares this style to a fox. These individuals have a moderate concern for personal and relational goals. These individuals often try to cut a deal by the use of compromising style.

**Collaboration/Problem Solving**

Finally, in the upper right-hand quadrant we have individuals who are committed both to personal and relational goals. They seek solutions through which everyone will benefit. Enlightened styles based on the assumptions that conflict are natural in the human experience. Johnson likens people who use this style to wise owls.

**Which Style Is Best?**
Like much of organizational behavior, there is no one “right way” to deal with conflict. Much of the time it will depend on the situation. However, the collaborative style has the potential to be highly effective in many different situations.

We do know that most individuals have a dominant style that they tend to use most frequently. Think of your friend who is always looking for a fight or your coworker who always backs down from a disagreement. Successful individuals are able to match their style to the situation. There are times when avoiding a conflict can be a great choice. For example, when a goal is more important than a relationship, an aggressive style may be called to order. When buying a used car it is important to get a good buy therefore, a shark will do better than a teddy bear in this situation. When there is a lot at stake, it’s a good idea to take time to work things out using problem-solving strategy. For example, serious disagreements with longtime coworkers need this kind of response. The point is that you should develop the ability to enact all these styles in proper circumstances.
Lesson: Cultural Diversity and Communication in the Workplace

Essential Question: How can cultural diversity impact communication?

Primary Learning Objectives: Address core issues and concerns of intercultural communication. Understanding proper skills needed to communicate interculturally.

Class Level: Workplace training, all proficiency levels, all age groups

Duration: 2.5 to 3 hours


Key Vocabulary: Diversity, Intercultural, Communication, Proper Skills, Building Blocks

Introduction: Open with class discussion about the foundations of intercultural communication. Share with the class the four building blocks of intercultural communication: Culture, Communication, Context, and Power.

Procedure: The instructor and class will read and discuss Chapter 2 Intercultural Communication then complete an activity called Cultural values. Complete small activity: Look for advertisements in popular newspapers and magazines. Analyze the ads to see if you can identify the social values that they appeal to.

Review: Set the foundation of intercultural communication and identified some behavior barriers to intercultural communication. Insight to relationships between culture and communication and its complexity because culture influences communication, communication reinforces culture and communication is a way of resisting the dominant culture.

References

Chapter 2: Intercultural Communication (page 29 of textbook)

Building Block 1: Culture

- Culture is learned 32
- Culture involves perception and values 33
- Culture involves feelings 34
- Culture is shared 35
- Culture is expresses as behavior 35
- Culture is dynamic and heterogeneous 36

Building Block 2: Communication

- Communication, cultural worldviews, and values 41
- Communication and cultural rituals 51
- Communication and resistance to the dominant culture 52

Building Block 3: Context 52

Building Block 4: Power 53

Barriers to Intercultural Communication 55

- Ethnocentrism 55
- Stereotyping 56
- Prejudice 59
- Discrimination 62

Activity: Cultural Values

Look for advertisements in popular newspapers and magazines. Analyze the ads to see if you can identify the social values that they appeal to.
Lesson: Skill of Asking Questions

**Essential Question:** Is asking the right question essential to effective communication?

**Primary Learning Objectives:** Gain understanding cooperative communication skills. Learn how to ask the right questions when looking for good answers. Develop feedback skills. Drawing lessons can help improve communication skills.

**Class Level:** Workplace training, all proficiency levels, all age groups

**Duration:** 30 to 40 minutes

**Materials Required:** Paper, Pen or Pencil, Clock or Watch

**Key Vocabulary:** Communication, teamwork, cooperative, art, following directions

**Introduction:** Explain to the class about asking the right question is important when looking for good answers. Inform the students that we will complete an exercise to show the need of effective skills needed when asking questions.

**Procedure:** Form teams of two. Have the students in the formed group sit back to back. Inform the class that one person will be student A and the other will be student B. Have the students pick a letter then write their name with the chosen letter on the right corner of the blank piece of paper.

Next instruct the class that Student A will spend two minutes drawing something on their blank piece of paper. At this time the class will need to be quite. No questions or conversation should take place during these two minutes. Once the two minutes are up, Student A will stop drawing.

Next Student B will pick up their pencils. Student A will instruct student B to draw the same drawing that student A just created by describing their drawing to student B. Student B can only listen to their partner directions, no questions can be asked. Partners need to remain back to back and cannot look at either drawing. Allow two minutes for this step.

Once the two minutes are up, inform the class that they will repeat this exercise but this time, student B is able to ask questions to student A. Allow two minutes for this step.

When the time is up, have to students compare drawings. Ask which exercise was more difficult and why? Take time to discuss the difficulty of competing the drawings
without the use of good questions, then with the use of asking questions. Have the class show their work to the other students.

**Review:** This activity demonstrates that effective communication requires cooperation, asking good questions and clarifying the question, proper feedback and clear instructions. This lesson plan demonstrates the importance of listening and asking the right questions.

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**References**

http://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/how-amazingly-good-asking-questions.html
Effective communication is an art. Developing effective communication skills can be supported with practice. Completing these lesson plans and attending further training can build awareness and help you to understand effective communication and the need for good communication in the workplace. As with any skill, the more you practice, the better off you will be.

Eight Lesson plans

- Basic Communication
- Listening Skills
- Communication Style
- Nonverbal Communication
- Constructive Attitude
- Resolve Conflict
- Workplace Diversity
- Skills of asking Questions

I hope you enjoyed the eight lesson plans created in this project and that these lesson plans will help guide and demonstrate best practices for improving communication within the workplace!