



Work/Life Services Newsletter October 2018

Business Communication

Email Privacy

Email may feel like a private, one-to-one conversation safe from prying eyes, but email is about as confidential as whispering at the White House. Your messages can be intercepted and read anywhere in transit, or reconstructed and read off of backup devices, for a potentially infinite period of time.

If you're sending email at work, your boss can legally monitor it, and if your company becomes involved in a lawsuit, your adversary has the legal right to review it. If you send email from home, anonymous hackers can intercept it, and if you are suspected of a crime, law enforcement officials with a warrant can seize your electronic correspondence. Even your Internet service provider may legally be able to scrutinize your email.

What all this amounts to is simple: Unless you take affirmative steps to encrypt your messages -- a process that uses sophisticated software to garble your words and then allow the recipient to unscramble and read them -- don't count on email as a confidential method of transmitting information.

Keys to Effective Communication

In order to connect with people and help them understand where you're coming from, you have to do more than just state your point. Communication is complex and often learning how to communicate effectively requires practice and skill. Fortunately, there are specific things that you can do to build your communication tool box; follow the suggestions below to learn some of the key techniques.

Create an Atmosphere of Trust

- When speaking in a group, show others that you are a good communicator. Listen openly to each person; this will show people that you won't embarrass them or twist their words.
- Try to avoid judgment or unnecessary criticism. If you do have to provide criticism, make it constructive.
- Give praise and positive feedback.

Get Your Thoughts Together

- Do research beforehand. Create notes, know the pros and cons of what you are presenting, and do your homework on the subject.
- If necessary, use visual tools or documents that can help your audience understand.
- Be specific, accurate, and honest about the subject.

Adjust to Your Audience

- Consider what the other person already knows.
- If you reach a point where communicating becomes difficult, try to keep communication lines open so everyone can come to a level of understanding.
- Try not to use jargon or terms that are too technical; only use language that your listeners can understand.
- Pick an appropriate place to talk. If the subject is personal, pick a private place.

Invite Feedback

- Ask your listener what he thinks of a subject, how he just interpreted what was said, and how he feels about the issue. Invite feedback, constructive criticism, and ask about the pros and the cons of the idea at stake.

Use Appropriate Tones of Voice and Body Language

- Adjust tone and body language as needed, as these two things can influence what the listener hears.
- Note if you sound urgent, hesitant, angry, pleased, calm, or belligerent. Only use tones that are appropriate.
- Check your body language. If you are avoiding eye contact, crossing your arms, fidgeting, or leaning in too close to the listener, you may not be sending an effective message.

Written by Life Advantages - Author Delvina Miremadi ©2015

The Power of Communication

An effective manager knows that good personal communication isn't the oil that lubricates the business machine; it's the nuts and bolts that hold the whole thing together.

"Managers need to focus intently on the flow of information -- both up and down the organizational ladder -- in order to be successful," says Robert Crittendon, author of *The New Manager's Starter Kit*.

Mr. Crittendon offers the following recommendations on in-house communications:

- Don't overlook people who may be outside the inner circle. Keep the secretary and receptionist informed, as well.
- If the team is large enough, maintain an active electronic or printed work schedule. The schedule shows which projects and actions are in progress, who's doing what and when the action is due.

- Express yourself in clear and specific terms -- and expect others to do the same. For example, when someone says a job will be done as soon as possible, ask for a specific date.
- To ensure a message's effectiveness, ask yourself these questions before sending a memo or e-mail: Who needs to know? What information do I need to convey? When do they need to receive it? How should it best be presented so it will be understood? What action do I want them to take as a result of this contact?
- Be sensitive to misinterpretation in your writing. For example, beware of e-mail you may take casually but the recipient takes seriously. Give each message a second reading to avoid misunderstandings.
- Be honest in your communication. Don't say things you can't back up. And don't make excuses to cover your mistakes.
- Keep your communications as positive as possible.

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