



# COMMUNICATION



**We all know what we think communication means and we all know the basic principles of effective communication, yet it is always part of training and development in management.**

**T**he reason is that for every person on the planet there is a communication system that works for them, all the time. Everyone has their own unique set of variables that work for them in that moment.

Imagine if you knew instantly, and without prompt what that secret formula was for every person you meet. Imagine how easy it would be if everything you communicated to that person was precisely what you meant and they actually responded precisely as you intended.

**Imagine how amazing it would be to have that control over you communication and freedom of response to others.**

While you imagine that, it is worth noting what would need to happen to achieve that level of flexibility. You need to become highly aware of how people communicate and then practice and notice responses to how you communicate. If one approach does not work for that person then remember that you are one approach closer to identifying the response you desire for that person. Just because that approach did not work for them it doesn't mean it won't work for someone else.



**"I am not discouraged because every wrong attempt is another step forward"**

**Thomas Edison**



# Essential Communication Skills

**It is simple to say we are good communicators; I just want you to gather evidence so that you know why and how you communicate well when it is required.**

If you have ever been told in extreme anger by someone, “YOU ARE NOT LISTENING TO ME”, then you will know the importance of continually improving your communication/listening skills. If you have ever failed to influence someone, or have had to deal with angry clients or team members you will know that underneath the issue is a miscommunication.

Communication expertise is about being able to communicate most effectively when the pressure is on. When we are making intensely quick decisions about

those things that are most important to us, it is then that we come into our own with communication.

Having worked with experts in communication for some time, it is clear that getting it wrong is always an opportunity to improve communication because you have identified a technique that does not work in that context, or with that person!

So we need to start with the assumption that there is more than one way to communicate with a person, and what works for one does not work for another.



**“I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”**

**Thomas Edison**



\*(un-sourced quote - in response to questions of failure to find a commercially viable lightbulb in the late 19th Century)

## **The meaning of communication is the response (result) you get**

Usually, when I say “The meaning of communication is the response you get” people look at me as if I come from Mars. “No, really...the meaning of communication is the response you get...yes I do come from Mars, how did you know?”

Still, nothing! How about if I change it a little:

**“If you have not got the intended result with your communication then it is the way you have communicated it.”**

At this stage there are many beliefs, values and all sorts of behaviours that identify people's reasons for not believing that it is up to them to change their communication...here are my favourite reasons for not communicating effectively:

- I haven't asked for it because I know I wouldn't get it
- They will never give me what I want
- Whenever I ask for anything they say no
- They keep saying there is no money in the budget
- They say that I am paid market rate
- My manager says it is not up to him
- My manager says she can't authorise that sort of thing

All these elements bring us to a point that actually what you are communicating is simply not enough.

Whenever someone runs out of ideas as to how to communicate I refer them to Thomas Edison again (see above):

It is this underlying determination that I find useful with my own personal communication. I suppose you could call it a Mantra or Value!

If I do not get what I want then I try something different until I do, or I realise that I don't want it that much after all. I usually find that it is either the way I question or listen that is affecting my communication to get what I want...





# Listening

**Listening skills play a vital part in communication, especially with your new team.**

Listening is not passive, it must be active and these skills often need to be practised.

### **Some tips for Listeners:**

- Look at the person who is speaking - some people need to see that you are attentive, even if you do not need to look at them to hear what they are saying
- Recognise how the speaker feels about the subject
- Listen for points to agree with rather than argue with
- Give a quick summary of what you have heard, every now and again to check that it is correct
- Give your full attention to the person who is talking by
  - Facing them
  - Nodding your head
  - Commenting every now and then
  - Giving verbal nods like "Yes, aha, ok, hmm"

Here are some tips for communicating your preferences with others. You can use this to help you manage the communication of others more efficiently. Over time they will learn what is acceptable language in your presence.

**'What is the relevance of this information to this step?'**

**'Is this relevant to the overall content?'**

**'Is this relevant to this exercise?'**

## Proposing

'Let's finish dealing with one point before we start on another'

'Several issues have been raised by Sam; let's take this one first'

## Giving Information

'I don't think that information is relevant to the present aims'

'The main point we are concerned with now is...'

## Seeking opinions

'How do you see that last point influencing things'

'Do you think this is a key issue here'

## Summarising

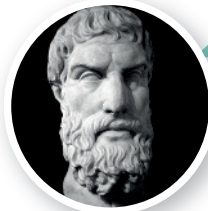
Summarise the relevant points, state the issues being discussed and give a summary of the relevant views.

Summarise the main issues and ask the group/ others to consider the important ones for follow up.

It is important enough to be part of every single communication and style in management and will allow people to feel motivated and valued, because the person that is asking the question is actively listening for the answer.

## The Four Steps of Listening

As well as Verbal, Vocal and Visually communicating, the key to successful communication lies in the ability to listen effectively. If you have misheard or ignored a piece of information you can radically affect your success.



"God gave us two ears and one mouth – we are equipped to listen twice as hard as we speak"

**Epictetus**

### 1. Hearing

Hearing is the first step in the process. At this stage, you simply pay attention to make sure you have heard the message. If your boss says, "Johnson, I need the report on last month's sales," and you can repeat the sentence, then you have heard her.

### 3. Evaluation

During the third step, Evaluation, you decide what to do with the information you have received. For example, when listening to a sales pitch, you have two options: you choose either to believe or to disbelieve the salesperson. The judgements you make in the evaluation stage are a crucial part of the listening process.

### 2. Interpretation

The second step is Interpretation. Failure to interpret the speaker's words correctly frequently leads to misunderstanding. People sometimes interpret words differently because of varying experience, knowledge, vocabulary, culture, background, and attitudes.

A good speaker uses tone of voice, facial expressions, and mannerisms to help make the message clear to the listener. For instance, if your boss speaks loudly, frowns, and puts his / her hands on her hips, you know he / she is probably upset and angry.

### 4. Respond

The final step is to Respond to what you have heard. This is a verbal or visual response that lets the speaker know whether you have received and understood the message and what your reaction is. When you tell the salesperson that you want to place an order, you are showing that you have heard and believe his message.

Effective listening builds trust, self-esteem and leaves the other person with a good feeling about you and your organisation.

# Questioning



**Questions play a vital part in anyone's understanding and are used to clarify, coach, involve and motivate staff.**

Be familiar and practice use of the following questions on a regular basis:

**Who**  
**What**  
**Where**  
**Why**  
**How**



This is just an introduction for now, and there is a whole module on communication including questioning and listening skills, but I want you to notice which one you use most often.

"I keep six honest serving-men  
(They taught me all I knew);

Their names are What and Why  
and When And How and Where  
and Who.

I send them over land and sea,  
I send them east and west; But  
after they have worked for me, I  
give them all a rest

**Rudyard Kipling**

## Questioning

<b>OPEN</b>	Used to open up a conversation and to get the other person talking about ideas and feelings as well as facts	E.g. Who, what, why, when, where and how
<b>Closed</b>	Use to summarise and confirm or establish facts	E.g. Do, did, can, are, is, have and were
<b>Probing</b>	Use to 'dig' deeper, to get to the real facts (e.g. Tell me more about..)	E.g. Tell me more about..
<b>Leading</b>	Suggests the answer you are looking for . This type of question should be used carefully as the other person may simply agree with you, and you therefore haven't found out what they need. It can also be challenging and inappropriate in certain situations.	E.g. So, I assume that your duties in your old job were.....
<b>Reflective</b>	Use to reverse a statement or question by re-phrasing and sending it back to the other person without bias. It will then encourage the other person to expand on the subject	E.g. You feel, you think
<b>Request and Command</b>	Use to give the other person a direct request to tell you something specific. Don't be too aggressive but these questions can be useful when you are up against a rambler.	E.g. Tell me what happened when you went back to the store Ms Conley"

Ultimately, leading a team is about how you engage with them, and the foundation for understanding that is explained as part of motivation:





# Verbal (Informal Conversational) Communication



**The psychologist Maslov stated that under certain circumstances, our unconsciousness (lack of awareness) of knowledge (or application of knowledge), equates to a lack of knowledge. To illustrate this, consider whether you could pass a driving test today.**



## Maslov's Stairs of Consciousness

At six months old, did you know how to drive? Were you aware that you did not know? A car was a big, noisy thing that made the countryside go by very fast... Maslov termed this stage 'unknowing unconscious'. You were not even aware you did not know how to drive.

At eight years old, did you know how to drive? Were you aware that you did not know? What has changed since six months of age? (You have observed other people driving, know what the steering wheel is for, etc.). Maslov termed this stage 'unknowing conscious'. You were aware you did not know how to drive.

### Verbal (Informal Conversational) Communication

The psychologist Maslov stated that under certain circumstances, our unconsciousness (lack of awareness) of knowledge (or application of knowledge), equates to a lack of knowledge. To illustrate this, consider whether you could pass a driving test today.

At age 17, you pass your test. Do you now know how to drive? Are you aware of the knowledge of how to drive? Do you remember the colour of the Highway Code book? Maslov termed this stage 'knowing conscious'. You were consciously aware of your driving skills.

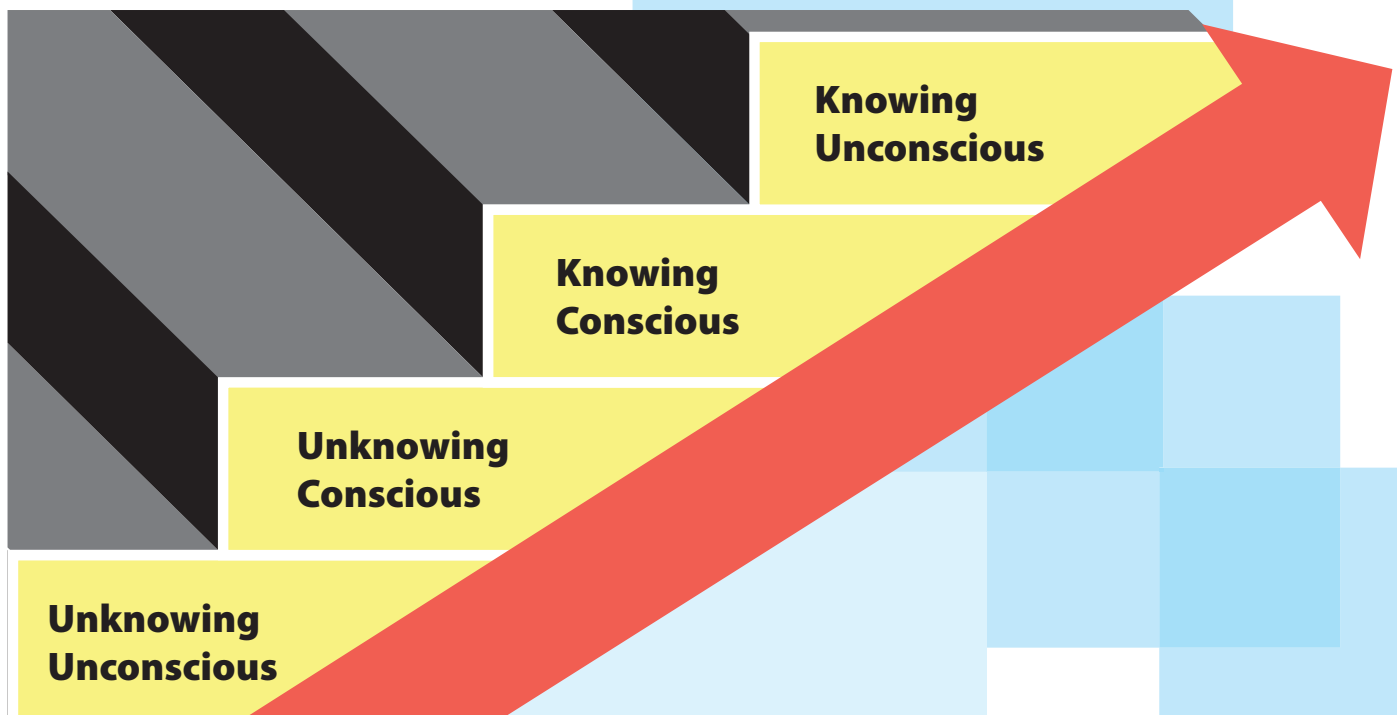
Right now, do you know how to drive? Are you conscious of how you drive? What is the colour of the Highway Code book now? Maslov termed this stage 'knowing unconscious'. Driving is now something you do without

thinking about it - however advanced driving techniques require that we think consciously how we drive from moment to moment.

### So which is the best stage to be at?

For us to develop skills to manage others we need to be at the third stage – 'knowing conscious' and to be able to respond and then develop the ability to be able to communicate all the time without thinking about it you would be at 'knowing, unconscious'. Training is about making knowing conscious and then practicing and practicing...and more practice will help you achieve 'knowing unconscious'.

### Diagram - Maslov's Stairs of Consciousness



When it comes to managing your team you also have a role to play in raising behaviours or performance to their conscious mind so they know what you want them to repeat doing. A lot of what we do is at an unconscious level and by feeding back to someone you can raise it to their awareness.



# Feedback

## What is “Feedback”?

“Feedback”, in essence, is just information. When feedback is provided, the person receiving it can choose either to use it or to disregard that information according to their own assessment of its value.

## There is no Failure only Feedback

The art of giving feedback actually comes from the ability to receive it as readily as you give it.

The ability to choose how to use the information is at the heart of feedback. If the receiver has no choice but to comply with the suggestions made, then it is instruction rather than feedback that they have received.

Carrying on the theme from Maslow “Your driving is awful, and the way you park, well it’s as if you have no idea what perspective is.” This statement gives no option but to feel defensive or hurt. Either way there is no way out but to have a negative reaction.

Instead try giving feedback constructively so it avoids embarrassment or discomfort from the other person and gives people help with the way they do it. You can also use it as an opportunity to educate them.

**“I noticed you use the right mirror to park, that’s interesting because I normally use the left to judge distance”**

Or, get them to show you how they do it:

**“You handled that very well, can you show me how to do it?”**

Here you give the option for the person to say no, but as you are requesting assistance invariably people will jump at the chance. It also sets the relationship to a level of mutual respect. Often I use this to help people who work for me feel that they are contributing to the team. By helping them feel like an expert in a particular area and referring to them for support in that area they gain regular recognition.

This method is based on a sandwich model of feedback and allows the person a clear way out if they do not want your advice or feedback. Also, because you have given them the option to refuse, you don’t feel so bad if they choose not to take it, after all if you give them the choice sometimes you have to be prepared for people to say no.

## Serving the Sandwich

The “Feedback Sandwich” is an effective technique for maximising the likelihood of your feedback having a positive impact on the person receiving it. It offers a framework for you to construct your feedback into the most palatable form possible to the receiver.

A good way to start is with a specific observable event and to use evidence that they themselves have also observed. This can be done by asking a question or making a statement, but either way it is important to make it simple and easy for someone to know exactly where and when you are talking about.

### SPECIFIC

You can begin by explaining, clearly and precisely what you have observed, with specific evidence for each point that you make. It is important that the person receiving the feedback can confirm the validity of your comments with reference to observable events.

**“Remember yesterday when we were in the canteen talking about the football...”**

This statement allows easy access to the event and then pulls on the memory. If this recognition is not there, and sometimes people have very short memories, then you may have to set the scene by describing what happened first. Once you have that recognition, then you can go onto the next step.

### STRETCH

The stretch is the bit where you allow them to grow and learn from what you are feeding back. It's called a stretch because it allows people to stretch their skills and better accommodate your preferred style.

In the stretch you provide something that will enable the person to grow.

**“...When you did that it made me feel really good about myself...”**

This allows the person to reinforce the behaviour in their map of the world and it also gives them information about what it is you enjoy.

If you have identified lots of areas for someone to change or improve their approach to a particular situation then focus on small achievable gains rather than bombarding the person with everything at once. One or two items are enough for most people.

### SUMMARY

Then remember the final stage.

To conclude, focus positively on how you think of the person or on what they are usually like, or summarise everything that you have said. Be careful to keep the overall tone positive and emphasise why you believe that the person is capable of making the improvements you have suggested. Alternatively offer your support if they need it, and make sure you give your support if its requested.

**“...It's not like you to say things like that and I usually have such a good time with you. I know you can behave more professionally and if you need any support I am here to help.”**

So the feedback sandwich looks like this:

**SPECIFIC**

**STRETCH**

**SUMMARY**

## Example:

**“When you did your presentation yesterday ...**  
I enjoyed your professional approach to the group  
and your eye contact with the audience because you  
made me feel welcome and part of the group. Overall  
I am pleased to have been part of your group”



# Face to face Communication

When we communicate with people on a face to face basis, we 'analyse' the message coming to us in three different ways. Albert Mehrabian came up with the following model of face to face communication.

**Visual (Non verbal signals -our behaviour)**

**58%** of a 'message' is received and analysed through visual and non-verbal signals such as facial expression, body language, gestures, mannerisms etc. These signals often communicate our attitude.



**Vocal (Tone voice)**

**35%** of a 'message' is received and analysed through the tone of the voice. Tone usually communicates our feelings.

**Verbal (Words or content)**

**7%** of a 'message' is received and analysed through the actual words spoken! Words communicate the facts, thoughts & ideas.

# Effective Use of the Voice

The following sentence has at least 7 different meanings:

**I never told you I phoned my wife!**

Try saying it emphasising just one word, then another.

**I** never told you I phoned my wife!

I **never** told you I phoned my wife!

I never **told** you I phoned my wife!

I never told **you** I phoned my wife!

I never told you **I** phoned my wife!

I never told you I **phoned** my wife!

I never told you I phoned **my** wife!

I never told you I phoned my **wife**!

It's not what we say, **it's the way we say it!**

To ensure we use our voices effectively, we need to adopt the following methods:

## Energy/Enthusiasm

Sound cheerful and interested. Make your greetings and the first thirty seconds or so after that more energetic to welcome the other person and to mentally boost yourself. Do not try to maintain it throughout as it will drain you and appear insincere. Towards the end of the sentence increase the energy again to send the other person off on a high note and feeling good.

## Pace

Mirror the other person in the speed at which you talk. A top professional in a multi-million pound enterprise will not have much time to talk to you. Adapt your pace accordingly and be prepared to slow down or speed up when the other person does.

## Pitch

Try not to let your voice go up at the end of a sentence as this denotes nervousness or uncertainty in what you are saying. Do not however have a monotone voice which is devoid of enthusiasm. Your voice is a tool, use it wisely.

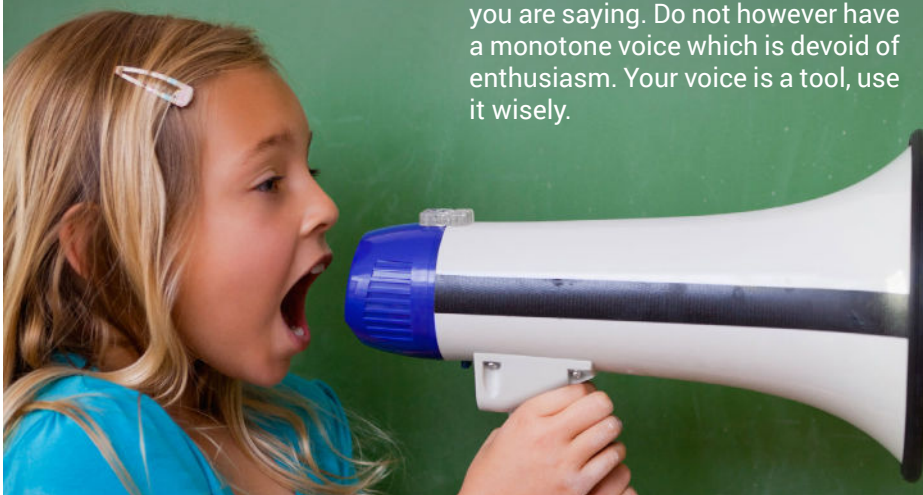
## Power

Give instructions in a clear, calm manner and state disagreements in a neutral tone.

## Volume/Emphasis

Speak clearly and with confidence at an acceptable volume.

Be aware of your tone as this portrays your feelings and emotions. Tone reflects enthusiasm, boredom, happiness, disinterest, anger, frustration, confidence etc.



# Telephone Communication

In understanding this breakdown, it's easy to appreciate why we can get so frustrated using the telephone - we've lost half of our ability to receive, filter and analyse the message that's being sent to us.

So, when we work on the phone, we have to focus on sound by:

- Using our voices to maximum advantage
- Choosing our words and 'colouring' our conversation
- Listening effectively

## The Words We Use



"Handle them carefully, for words have more power than atom bombs."

Pearl Strachan Hurd

The choice of words that we use is also an important skill to develop. We often use words that are unnecessary to fill in a sentence (E.g. Basically, obviously – it's not obvious to some people, otherwise they wouldn't be asking!)

We also need to be aware of using negative phrases and jargon. Our language is more important than we think and especially over the phone you must start to take control of what you say, or don't say it.

A few words to avoid:

<b>Basically</b>	<b>We think</b>	<b>But</b>	<b>Errr</b>
<b>Obviously</b>	<b>However</b>	<b>Try</b>	<b>Profanity</b>

These words have different implied meanings in their useage, can you spot what they are?



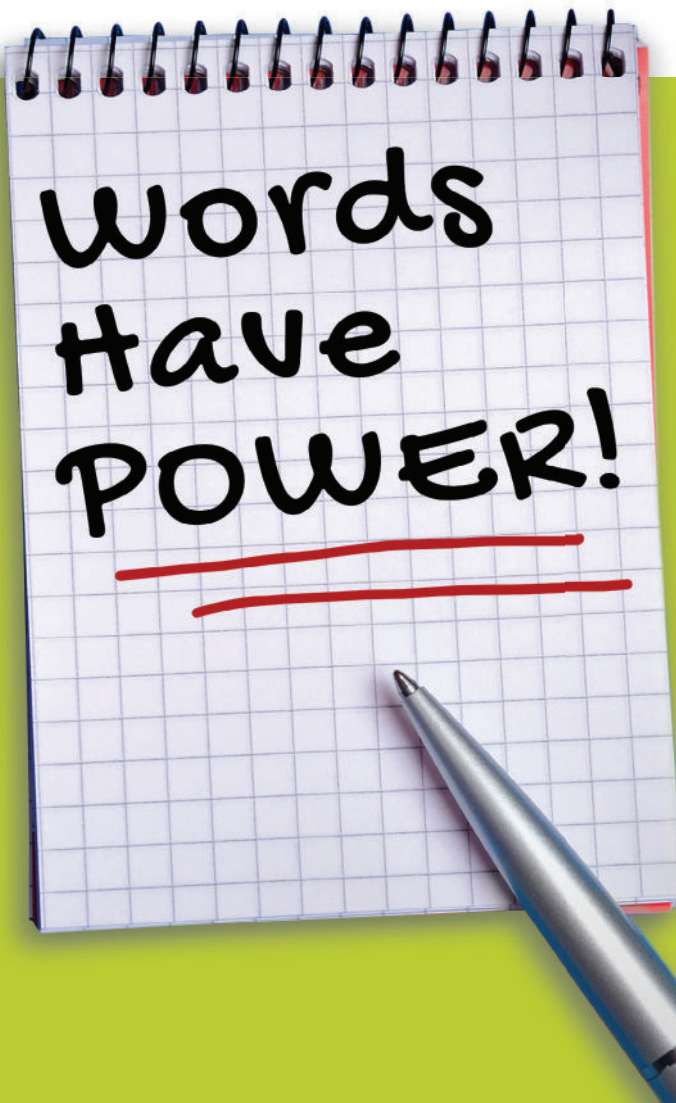
# Written Communication

## Causes of miscommunication

Even though the dictionary is a good source for word meanings, the real meaning of what we write is not in the words (or symbols) themselves but in the mind of the writer. If successful communication is to occur, the words used in the message must stand for the same thing in the minds of both the writer and the reader.



This task is complicated because the perceptions of individuals differ. Think of an accident witnessed by five people. Will everyone give the same report about the accident? Probably not. We cannot see or perceive everything that is happening at any one time in our sensory world, and what we do see is affected by our specific location and our own experiences and knowledge base. How, then, can we reduce the chance of miscommunication?



## Principles of adaptation

Adaptation means fitting the symbols (the words used in a written message) to the specific reader or readers. Try to visualise your reader. What do you know about him or her? If you can estimate age, educational background, possible experiences, familiarity with the topic of the message, and so on, you can choose wisely the words you use to communicate your message. Two medical specialists discussing a case, for example, will use different words than the physician who explains the treatment to the patient.

Another hint that will help with the principle of adaptation is to put yourself in the reader's place. How would you like to have this message written if you were the reader? Would you understand? Did you explain everything clearly, or did you take too much for granted?



**You got it!**

## **Objectives of business writing**

Each written communication has two objectives, a primary objective and a secondary objective. The primary objective is to accomplish the specific goal or purpose of the message. Why are you writing the message? Are you explaining a procedure, announcing a change in benefits, requesting information, or evaluating an employee's performance? Be sure the message is orderly, clear, and complete. The secondary objective is the public relations goal or the goodwill factor. This objective means that the tone of the message should gain the trust and credibility of the reader. The tone should be warm and sincere.

**Communicating clearly and completely the specific goal of the message**

**Projecting the goodwill aspect of the writer and the company through the tone and phrasing of the chosen words**

Care in word choice helps us adapt the message to the reader and reduces the chance of miscommunication.

***Remember:***

**Meaning is in the mind and not in the symbols (words).**



# Communication Through Presentation

The art of presentation is important to success as a manager, not only to brief and present information to your team, but also to deliver proposals or projects to the management team for approval. It's also a great time to practice your confidence and assertiveness so that those around you feel confident in what you are delivering and therefore want to be part of it.

**“A good leader is able to present, and inspire others to follow”**

So often people think that the most important part of a presentation is the content, but as you know from earlier in the module, the verbal content is only 7% of what you actually communicate when you are presenting.

## The Preparation

Whilst as a presenter you might not always have control over where you get to deliver the presentation, you still have the opportunity to determine how you use the space that you have.

Your use of the space, and the setting that confronts the attendees when you begin will have impact on what your attendees will expect and the level of participation that is required.

## Your Body Language

If you are to be effective in getting the attendees to participate fully in your presenting, it is important that they believe that you are enthusiastic and committed to your subject. Use body language to convey your confidence and enthusiasm.

## Some basic rules of public speaking:

If you are wearing a jacket, keep it buttoned. An open jacket moves too much and can cause people to focus on your jacket rather than your subject

Avoid distracting physical mannerisms – don't toy with pens or other accessories as you talk to people, keep still without being a statue

Use gestures by all means but use them with care. Waving your arms all over the place will draw attention from what you are saying



# Some useful Presentation Methods

These are techniques used to aid learning rather than share information through different styles of presentation. The following methods are relevant to our aims. You do not have to use all of the methods but a variation of style often aids learning. You may use other methods but don't forget to whom you are presenting.

## Demonstration Method

This is where you actually do the action before letting the group practice it. I.e. Build something in front of the group, demonstrate how a particular skill is used, dismantle a PC and demonstrate any hardware idiosyncrasies, and areas of interest in the build.

## Question and Answer Method

This is used to bring out interaction from the group and help them feel part of the presentation process. I.e. "What do you know about the listening process John?" This can be followed up with more searching questions and backed up with facts and figures.

## Simulation Method

Similar to demonstrating, this is where you role-play or simulate a real environment. It has the advantage of allowing people to practice but some excuse its value because "Its not real".

## Straight Lecture

This is where you talk or present to the group. This method can be boring and reduce the involvement of the group. However in some circumstances it is the preferred method. It is typically used in Universities although they tend to back up this style with group tuition.

## Chalk and Talk

This is where you discuss areas with the group and summarise the main points on the white board. A good Training style, it has the advantage of flexibility and fun. It is not necessarily appropriate for proposing to a board meeting, but works well in training and briefing sessions.

## PowerPoint

This can be used as a Method of displaying the important points during the presentation. Focus on no more than 7 items on each slide which should be no more than a few words each.

Traditionally this method is improperly used as a style, with people focussing entirely on the visual superlatives which distract from the message they are trying to deliver. It could take you several hours to get the sounds and motion sliding and whizzing around the screen when all the audience needs to know is the facts. Remember to check your audience, does this style appeal?



# Presentation Structure

## INTRO

**Interest:** Stimulate interest with relevant anecdotes or topical event etc.

**Need:** State why this presenting session is relevant to the attendees

**Title:** You might like to start with this...)

**Range:** Outline what will be covered to meet the objectives and where the presenting session “fits in” from the Attendee’s viewpoint

**Objectives:** Explain what you are hoping to achieve with the presenting event



## Presentation Content

The actual content you wish to discuss, possibly with interactive examples and researched evidence.

## The Presentation Summary

- The end of the presentation needs to be as carefully planned as the start. Do not be tempted to hurry the ending or the attendees will feel short-changed, even though they are glad to get away on time. If necessary agree to continue another time, or ask if the group minds overrunning.
- Check understanding has taken place and that all objectives have been met.
- The end of the presentation should encourage the attendees to take their new knowledge back to the workplace and use it straight away. Even if you are tired at this point, you need to energise the group for the last time.
- Structure is crucial to the learning process. A well-structured event improves the Attendee’s recall. Very often there will be a number of directions you may take. It will be up to you to decide which part of the event you need to stress most.
- Sequence material
- When written, take out all unnecessary material
- Check your facts and be ready for questions





# Barriers to Communications



"To effectively communicate, we must realise that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others."

**Anthony Robbins**

It is easy to think that we are all effective communicators, however in practice the process can easily breakdown for a variety of reasons. To communicate effectively, we need to be responsible for both the giving and receiving of information.

## Barriers to Sending

### Physical

Background noise, feeling ill, incorrect use of equipment, legislation, time pressures

### Psychological

Lack of interest, negative attitude, preconceived ideas, not prepared, generalising, assumptions, fatigue, prejudice, peripheral thoughts (thinking about other things).

### Language

Jargon, accent, tone, intention.

## Barriers to Receiving

### Physical

Disabilities, selecting what we want to hear, noise.

### Psychological

Generalisation, distortion, frustration, anger.

### Language

Swearing, threatening, aggression, accent.

The barriers experienced by both the sender and the receiver are generally the same. However we have a responsibility to try and overcome these barriers to ensure effective communication takes place.



