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Communication & the Workplace

Communicate face-to-face whenever possible - Companies have been relying on electronic correspondence for some time. Email as the primary method of communication has been popular for the last decade. However, this type of communication can have come with pitfalls and may wind up effecting a business relationship in a negative way. How many times have you sent an email to a co-worker or supervisor that was perhaps taken the wrong way? Even if you had good intentions, electronic communication is often misinterpreted. Since the majority of meaning during a conversation comes from nonverbal gestures and facial expressions, it is easier to decipher the meaning behind what a person says when communicating face-to-face. When tone and non-verbal cues are taken out of the equation, recipients can get the wrong idea. Zoom and other platforms have improved communication in the professional world but sometimes you just need to pay an in-person office visit your supervisor or co-worker when you have something important to review.

Provide clear & concise information

Sharing information with colleagues is a daily necessity. If you do not communicate clearly, efficiently, and accurately, it can cause confusion instead of clarity. Plan your communication to ensure that you are passing along the correct information and pay attention to the length of your message so that what you intended to communicate comes out clearly. Be as brief as possible so it can be read quickly as often is done as everyone multi-tasks their day. Avoid emails written in haste and always plan what you want to say before speaking to avoid miscommunication.

Combine verbal and nonverbal communication

If you want to become a more effective communicator, you need to understand the importance of nonverbal communication. Be careful that your verbal and nonverbal messages are cohesive and that your movements and facial expressions match your message. If you are trying to convey approval of something your co-worker has said then ensure that your nonverbal gestures complement your words. Your positive nonverbal reflection, such as head-nodding when the other person is talking accompanied by open body posture help the conversation flow smoothly.

Don't just hear....listen

Listening is such an important communication skill that many people find difficult. Most conflicts are a result of poor listening. To share information with another person, you must hear what is being communicated. If you're thinking about your next meeting or planning dinner for tonight during the conversation, you're not paying attention. To display how you are actively listening you may want to paraphrase what was said to show that you are listening and to verify accuracy. This will reduce the likelihood of conflict and will help you become a more effective communicator. Try to keep a mental checklist of all the important points the person make.



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Communication in the Workplace (*continued*)

Ask questions

Asking questions not only shows you are listening, but also confirms that you understood the other person. You can also use questions to gather more information and help you better understand the conversation. Make sure your questions relate specifically to what is being said. Don't change the subject by asking a question about a totally different topic.

Handle conflicts with diplomacy

If you feel someone misunderstood something you communicated, talk to him or her about it as soon as possible. Doing so can prevent unnecessary resentment and loss of productivity. To prevent a small misunderstanding from turning into a major issue, handle it immediately. When handling a conflict, respond with an open-mind, calm tone and refrain from personal attacks. Ask questions and listen carefully to the responses so you can understand where the other person is coming from. Doing this will increase the likelihood that you reach a resolution that is acceptable to everyone.

Refrain from gossip

If your co-workers have a habit of gossiping about others in the office, simply listen and smile, and get back to work. Gossiping gives people a negative impression of you and can cause problems down the road. Gossip also gets in the way of effective workplace communication because it has a negative impact on relationships with co-workers. You will earn the respect of your co-workers if you refrain from engaging in gossip and you will be viewed with more credibility.

Avoid being too personal with your co-workers

Be aware of disclosing too much personal information to the people you work with. Aim to be friendly, yet professional. If you become too personal with co-workers, you'll risk the likelihood of being perceived as less credible when communicating about something important. Controlling your emotions is also very important.

Avoid discussing controversial topics

Try to keep the topic of conversation in the workplace neutral. Refrain from discussing politics or other controversial topics in the office to prevent offending anyone. While it's a great idea to talk to the people you work with and get to know them, it's best to avoid these controversial subjects.

Offer positive feedback

If your co-worker performs a task well, tell him or her. Providing positive feedback is a great way to improve workplace communication. It also helps people view you more favorably and encourages open communication. Having a positive attitude in general at work will open the door for effective communication prompting people to respond more favorably to you and contribute to a more rewarding work environment.

