

**Simple Rules for
Effective
Business
Communication**

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Simple Rules for Effective Business Communication
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Simple Rules for Effective Business Communication

To be able to implement some simple rules for effective business communication, there are some basics which must first be considered, and which can be identified using the 'What, Where, When, Why and How' type of question.

The first thing to be comfortable with is a definition of what communication actually is.

Question: What is communication?

Answer: Getting the message across. Not just sending it, but sending it in such a way that the receiver understands what you're sending.

You can send out a message in Morse Code, or give a speech in Italian to an audience of Japanese native speakers, but if your audience doesn't understand Morse Code or Italian, then are you really communicating?

You can answer a question sarcastically, but if your audience doesn't see your facial expression or hear it in your voice, will they understand what you're *really* saying?

So it's more than just about the words, and the language, it's about the *meaning*.

It's about ***getting the message across***.

Question: Why do we communicate?

Answer: To get a result that we want. Quite simply, it's a form of manipulation.

From the moment we are born, we use communication to get what we want – a baby cries to indicate that it needs food, a nappy change, or simply just a little comforting.

Every communication we make is a form of manipulation. Not necessarily the bad kind, it can be as simple as a smile to make someone feel better, but every communication we make is to an attempt in some way to get someone else to think or do something that we want them to do.

Question: When and how do we communicate in business?

Answer: As well as with every letter, email or telephone call, we communicate every time we open our mouths, put on our uniforms, drive our branded cars, roll our eyes or lean forward in conversation – every miniscule item of our behaviour is a form of communication.

A roll of the eyes when uttering something sarcastic communicates that the words are not to be taken literally.

Navy drill trousers and a blue shirt with insignias and a radio communicates someone in authority – a police officer, transit police, etc. while a white lab coat communicates someone working in a medical field.

The language we use communicates our level or lack of education, our level or lack of respect for our audience.

The way we drive or park our branded car communicates our respect for community and the law, or lack of it!

In the 21st century, business communication takes many forms:

- ◆ Telephone calls/SMS or texts
- ◆ Face to face/talking
- ◆ Emails, letters, reports

- ◆ Marketing materials – brochures, newsletters, websites,
- ◆ Social networking, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube videos
- ◆ Presentations, stalls, marketing activities
- ◆ Products and services
- ◆ Branding on uniforms, vehicles, in the workplace
- ◆ General appearance – ours and our workplace's

RULE 1: START WITH THE END IN MIND

- ◆ What are you trying to achieve?
- ◆ What do you want to happen as a result of your communication? Do you want your audience to actually do something, or are you just hoping to inform?
- ◆ There are times when you should not wish too hard for what you *think* you want. Think through the possible consequences, particularly when creating communication in conflict.

RULE 2: YOUR COMMUNICATIONS ARE A TOOL FOR PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS

- ◆ Use your logo, your colours, your fonts, your 'business personality' – in other words, use your 'brand'.
- ◆ Maintain a standard.
- ◆ Get your staff to adopt your standards.
- ◆ Decide how you want people to view your business – honest, great for bargains, high end, innovative etc.
- ◆ This is where driving that branded car within the speed limits communicates that your business respects the law and the other users on the road! Same goes for leaving it in the disabled parking spot while you pop in for a loaf of bread.

RULE 3: KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS!

- ◆ If you don't know how to build a sentence using five syllable words, then don't!

- ◆ If you don't know the meaning of a word, don't use it. Use something you understand.
- ◆ If your spelling, punctuation and grammar aren't the best, get someone else to polish your work up before going to print. If you don't have someone inhouse who can do this efficiently for you, then engage an editor, especially if getting it wrong could lose you a contract, a client or a court case!

RULE 4: KISS

- ◆ Keep It Simple, Stupid!
- ◆ Don't digress or sidetrack your audience.
- ◆ Don't try to build really long, convoluted sentences or concepts – keep it logical and shorten the sentences. One or two concepts per sentence is more than enough.
- ◆ If there's no prerequisite for lots of five syllable words – then keep it to two, three and four syllable ones!

RULE 5: KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

- ◆ If they aren't going to be able to understand a word or sentence or concept you plan to use, then simplify. Use smaller, more direct words, or shorter sentences.
- ◆ Avoid industry specific jargon unless writing specifically for your industry.
- ◆ Think about what you want them to do as a result of your communication, and then try work out what you would need to say to get them to do that willingly. GET INSIDE THEIR HEADS! What is their education? Their socio-economic or age demographic? What are their expectations? Their morals? What do you have to do to manipulate them into seeing it your way?

Who is in your audience?

- ◆ Clients
- ◆ Staff

- ◆ Prospects
- ◆ Other businesses
- ◆ Affiliates
- ◆ Government or other authorities

RULE 6: THE NITTY GRITTY

- ◆ Use your spell checker. Your spell checker won't catch everything, but at least it's a good start.
- ◆ Get someone else to check your written work, preferably someone with better language skills and knowledge. A sign saying 'Apologies for any Incontinence' will NOT be picked up by your spell checker!
- ◆ If in doubt, send it out to a professional to check. Editors and proofreaders can be found at www.editorsnsw.com or you can contact Mosher's Business Support. Rates across the industry vary from \$30 to \$80 per hour – and you will often get what you pay for.
- ◆ Check the 'Common Mistakes' page on www.moshers.com.au.

RULE 7: LEARN FROM OTHERS

- ◆ If you see or hear an example of what you feel is good communication, remember it for future use.
- ◆ Likewise, if you notice an example of what you feel is bad communication, remember that – then steer clear of it!

RULE 8: CONSIDER THE LANGUAGE APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR COMMUNICATION

- ◆ Formal
- ◆ Plain English
- ◆ Conversational
- ◆ Ext/SMS/Gangsta/Colloquial and Slang

These days, Plain English is the Australian government recommended standard for everyday commercial use.

Formal language is now generally reserved for legal documents, and even these days many legal documents are being re-written in Plain English so that they are more accessible to more people.

If you're creating a business document, whether a letter, email or marketing material, a mix of Plain English and Conversational should cover your needs. You can still be polite and efficient if required, but don't need to resort to long-winded sentences with rarely-used words.

If you're communicating with your audience using social media, be careful to avoid offensive language and ideas, and don't use text abbreviations such as wtf—bear in mind that many in your audience are likely to be of a generation where certain words are still not used in business communication!

RULE 9: CONSIDER THE EMOTIONS IN YOUR COMMUNICATION – YOURS AND THE EMOTION YOU'RE TRYING TO INVOKE IN THE RECIPIENT

- ◆ Think about what you want the recipient to do. Why are you communicating about this issue? Is it a communication so that *you* feel better? Or so that the *recipient* feels better – or worse?
- ◆ If you're angry, think about your motivation. Why are you angry? Is it possible that you're angry with yourself? Did you bring about the situation by not being clear enough, or by delivering a service or produce that wasn't up to standard? Look in the mirror – are you sure none of the blame is yours?
- ◆ Can you afford to ruin this relationship? Do you want to free yourself from this relationship? Or do you want the relationship to continue? Be careful about what you choose!
- ◆ If it's a non-anger issue, are you communicating for the recipient, or for your own self-esteem? For example, are you sending a sympathy card to someone you don't know well in the hope that they'll become more aware of you? Or simply because you feel for them in their pain? Don't let your own self-esteem issues creep into your motivation! And don't use others' personal issues as an opportunity for marketing.

RULE 10: OBSERVE THE BASIC OUTLINE OF MOST COMMUNICATIONS

1. Beginning or introduction
 2. Middle or bulk of information
 3. End or wrap up
- ◆ Every formal communication, including phone calls, should somehow have a *Beginning*, a *Middle* and an *End*.
 - ◆ Plan your communication logically.
 - ◆ If you're having trouble, make dot points, get them in order, delete the unnecessary ones, then flesh out what's left. Add an introduction and a wrap up and, hopefully, voila!

TEN SIMPLE STEPS FOR YOUR NEXT COMMUNICATION:

1. Who are you targeting?
2. What do you want them to do?
3. What emotion do you want to express, if any?
4. What sort of language should you be using?
5. Make notes of the things you wish to express or discuss.
6. Sort your notes into a logical order.
7. Create the body of your communication by padding out the notes into sentences and paragraphs.
8. Write your introduction and your wrap-up.
9. Check it – once, twice, three times.
10. Send!

Need help at any stage?

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