

YOUR SOURCE Balancing Work, Family & Life

Communicating Effectively in the Workplace

The dean of Harvard's Business School is quoted as saying, "Communication is the real work of leadership." Anyone who manages employees knows how true this is. Log on to access "*Communicating Effectively in the Workplace*" in the Spotlight section. In this issue you'll:

- Find assessment tools that define your communication style and help you put it to best use with your employees.
- Learn how to develop effective communication skills. It's easier than you think!
- Get back to basics with Communication 101.

Podcast: "Effective Communication in a Diverse Workplace"

Managers often face the challenge of building a harmonious and productive work environment among employees from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Communication is the key to success. The podcast is available on the website under *Tools, On Demand Learning, Webinar Recordings and Podcasts*.

Log on to check it out online

Log on to your program's website to access "*Communicating Effectively in the Workplace*" and other helpful resources in the *Spotlight* section.

We are all different in the way we perceive the world. And that extends to the workplace. By knowing this and learning some tips on how to communicate better with your employees, you will reap the benefits of a more satisfied workforce.



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What is the shortest word in the English language that contains the letters: abcdef?

Check your answer on the bottom.

Now That's an Idea!

Practice Your Non-Verbal Communication

Verbal communication accounts for less than 10 percent of how a message is interpreted by another. People communicate through body language, words and tone of voice. The clearest communication occurs when all three elements send the same message.

Tune into your body language as you speak with others:

- Friendly, open and relaxed body language makes employees feel comfortable and receptive to your ideas.
- Crossed arms and a clenched jaw is unfriendly body language that puts employees on the defensive, making them less open to your suggestions.
- Even in the most trying of situations, keep an upbeat, positive tone in your voice.

Seven Words to Avoid with Your Employees

As a manager, you are the person who sets the tone at work. The words you choose with employees can have a big impact. It's not so much what you say as how you say it. Here are seven common words that can create unintended, negative impressions:

1. **“But”** negates everything that precedes it. For instance, “I like you, but...” “Instead, replace “but” with “and” to make both sides of your sentence true: “I like you and...” “
2. **“Try”** reveals a lack of commitment. There's a big difference between trying to do your best and doing your best.
3. **“Should”** whether said in reference to you or when telling others what they should do, comes across as judgmental and negative. Eliminate it.
4. **“Have to.”** Adults don't like to be told what they have to do. The natural response is to resist. If you want cooperation, offer options and suggestions instead.
5. **“Always”** is rarely an accurate description of a person or situation. It sounds extreme. It's better to use words like “sometimes,” “occasionally” or “usually.”
6. **“Never”** is extreme language that categorically shuts down the other side, as in, “I never see you help out.” Instead, give specific examples, or replace it with “sometimes” or “occasionally,” as in, “I feel that sometimes you could help out more.”
7. **“Obviously”** can come across as arrogant. What's obvious to you may not be true for others. Instead of making generalizations, own your message, such as, “Based on what I've noticed, it appears to me...”

SUCCESSING REQUIRES PEOPLE SKILLS

The former head of Ford Motor Company once said the number one reason individuals succeed in business, or fail, is because of their people skills: in other words, their ability to get along and communicate with a wide range of people. Here are five basic people skills to use in the workplace:

- Don't pre-judge people based on appearances or on what somebody else has told you. Give everyone a chance to define him/herself.
- Be a great listener. Commit to listening two thirds or more of the time. Others will appreciate it. And you just might learn something!
- Avoid using extreme language. Sound moderate by saying, “I think,” “perhaps” or “possibly” instead of “I know” and “definitely.”
- Thank people...and then thank them again. Show your appreciation as often as possible.
- Praise the good and offer a solution if you're going to identify a problem. Do away with the complaining and negativity.

These skills are a great basis for communication. You may find that putting them to work does more for you as a manager than any technical information you have at hand.

