

Leadership Bites: Effective Communication

LEADERSHIP LEARNING IN 20 MINUTES



Leadership Academy

South East

Introduction

This guide is designed to help those who want to know how to communicate more effectively - it will take you through some things to consider and give you some practical tips to use in the workplace. Communication is at the heart of everything we do and helps us not only to build relationships with others but it's also key to us working collaboratively and productively to achieve the organisation's core purpose and goals.

Albert Mehrabian's research indicates that when communicating face to face:

- How we look or act when saying something (our Body language) has the most impact **(55%)**
- How we say something (our Vocal behaviours) also has a high impact **(38%)**
- Perhaps surprisingly, the words (Content) we use counts for just **7% of impact**

So, if you are agreeing with a proposal made in a meeting but your body language contradicts what you are saying, because body language has a higher impact, the person is likely to act upon what your body language is saying instead of your words.

And, when communicating over the phone, the situation changes because the other person can't see your body language – the impact between vocal and content moves instead to:

- **70% vocal**
- **30% content**

It's therefore important to give some thought to how you demonstrate the appropriate vocal behaviours (tone, pace etc.) when you are giving information over the phone so that the person receiving your information leaves the conversation feeling clear and confident in your message.

For the meetings and conference calls you either host or dial into as a participant, take a moment to think about your impact and how you can perhaps use this insight when considering how you communicate with your team, peers, line manager and stakeholders?

Give some thought too to the methods you use for communicating key messages – phone, face to face, video conferencing, Skype – are they appropriate or could you mix things up a little to make them have more impact?

Rapport

An important element of communicating is gaining understanding of the other person and a skill that supports this is creating rapport. The dictionary meaning of the word rapport is 'a relation marked by harmony, conformity, accord or affinity' and generally you will tend to create rapport more easily with people who are like yourself – whether that be in terms of behaviour, values & beliefs, interests etc.

Generally, you'll perceive a certain level of comfort; a shared understanding with the other person. You may also find it easier to get what you want when you have rapport with somebody because there is a greater sense of trust between you. Let's be clear though, sometimes it doesn't happen naturally and when that's the case you can use certain skills to create it; it just requires responsiveness on your part – it doesn't depend on you necessarily liking someone or agreeing with them.

Rapport becomes easier once you know their favourite mode of communication. For example, those with a visual preference, may say things like “I see that”, “I can picture that”, those with an auditory preference are more likely to say things like “that sounds good” or “I hear that”, and those with a feeling preference might instead say “I can handle that”, “that really impresses me” or “I feel comfortable with that.” People use all modes – the important thing is to notice their preference and adapt your language and approach accordingly. Also, consider how you might appeal to multiple preferences in your broader communications to a wider team.

Some top tips:

- ✓ Flexibility - your ability to move your own style closer to that of the person you are with. For example, matching tone, pace and language used.

- ✓ Sensory acuity - your ability to sense the style and manner with which the other person communicates. We humans use our senses to process information. Experiences are coded in our brains in pictures, sounds, feelings, smells and tastes. These perceptions are our contact points with the world and our senses are like doors or windows which we open to gather information about the outside world.

Listening

Think about how it feels when you're not being listened to, when someone interrupts or assumes that they know what you're about to say. It can be distracting, disengaging and sometimes the message you're trying to get across can be misinterpreted. It's therefore important to display active listening with others so that:

- People feel valued and talk openly
- Rapport is built quicker
- You can improve your chances of influencing
- You can build trust more easily
- Better Performance is driven

Some top tips

- ✓ Develop your desire to listen – actively (i.e. full attention) rather than passively (distracted). Every time someone speaks to you, ask yourself this question:
“Do I understand what they really mean by what they have just said?”
This will condition you to think about what they have just said and not what you are about to say.

- ✓ When listening to someone, play back what they have said and then acknowledge it so that they know you have listened.

- ✓ Get plenty of practice and seek feedback

Give it a go

Take note of the ‘Top Tips’ provided in this guide and try something different. Whatever it is that you choose to do differently, give yourself an opportunity to review your interactions and understand the impact that your change in approach had on the situation – what can you do more/less of?

Ask for feedback on your style of communication to give you more awareness of the impact you have. Be mindful that if you ask for honest feedback you need to be open to the information you receive so that you continue to encourage the exchange of information; it's not personal, it's someone's observation of your behaviour.

Further learning ...

For further information and learning, as well as suggested activities, feel free to visit the People.NHS.uk website or our [South East Leadership Academy site](#).



Time to reflect...



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Take some time to note down your thoughts on what you've learned;

What resonated?

What has made you curious?

What small changes could you make to start having an impact differently and quickly?

What might you need to share with your team, and commit to 'testing and learning' together?

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for writing reflection notes.