

Communication Skills

Tips and Best Practice



Inter-personal

- Greet your colleagues daily, smile regularly, and find time for the “small talk”.
- Commit to becoming an effective listener. Learn how to “hear” what people are saying to you.
- Conduct regular one-to-one meetings with people that work with you.
- Seek feedback from your staff about your own communications (e.g. at one-to-ones).
- Make eye contact with the person or persons with whom you are communicating
- Inform all those who need to know, not just a selected few
- Communicate with enough notice. On many issues staff will need time to consider and prepare.
- Ensure confidentiality where it is required.
- Never “hijack” staff to attend meetings under false pretences, especially when you have to give bad news.

The organisation

- Consider undertaking a communications audit
- Look at how your organisation’s structure impacts on communication. Direct messages are more effective than handed down ones
- Work with staff to agree how communication can be more effective.

Group meetings

- Don’t hold meetings unless there is a proper purpose (i.e. to give relevant information, to collect ideas, to reach agreement).
- Avoid long meetings - stick to an agreed time limit.

- Don't discuss issues that are only relevant to a minority of participants – speak to them separately.
- Keep minutes short. Restrict them to the decisions taken and action agreed.
- Appoint a good chair. The group needs to be kept focused; and everyone must have an opportunity to contribute.

When chairing a meeting

- try not to let people repeat the same points, waffle, or digress.
- don't be afraid to bring discussion to an end if nothing important is being said.
- look for consensus or ask for proposals.
- invite those who haven't spoken to make a contribution
- don't allow more than one person to speak at a time.

E-mail

- Keep emails short and friendly, and use plain English.
- Review what you have written before pressing send.
- Don't communicate through email with colleagues at the next desk or next office. Get up and talk to them.
- Make a phone call if a discussion is needed or likely.
- Use sub-folders and rules to sort incoming messages

Presentations

- Prepare properly. Know your audience and your topic.
- Stick to three or four key points
- Keep slides short on words and few in number
- Always finish before your allotted time