

Effective Communication

There is an extensive amount of information which is publicly available regarding effective communication. This is a compilation of information which is derived from a variety of sources and is intended to provide helpful tools for effective communication.

Definition - Effective Communication

Effective communication is about more than just exchanging information. It's about understanding the emotion and intentions behind the information. As well as being able to clearly convey a message, you need to also listen in a way that gains the full meaning of what's being said and makes the other person feel heard and understood.ⁱ

Common Barriers to Effective Communication

1. Physical barriers: poor or outdated equipment used during communications, background noise, poor lighting, temperatures that are too hot or too cold.
2. Attitudes: emotions like anger or sadness can taint objectivity. Being extremely nervous, having a personal agenda or "needing to be right no matter what" can make communications less than effective. This is also known as "Emotional Noise".
3. Language: this can seem like an easy one, but even people speaking the same language can have difficulty understanding each other if they are from different generations. Slang, professional jargon and regional colloquialisms can even hurt communicators with the best intentions.
4. Physiological barriers: ill health, poor eyesight or hearing difficulties, pain.
5. Problems with structure design: companies or institutions can have organization structures that are not clear, which can make communications difficult...also lack of supervision or training of the people involved.
6. Cultural noise: making stereotypical assumptions about others based on their cultural background.
7. Lack of common experience: it's a great idea to use examples or stories to explain a point that is being discussed. However, if the speaker and the audience cannot relate to these examples because they do not have the same knowledge or have not shared the same experiences then this tool will be ineffective.
8. Ambiguity and abstractions overuse: leaving things half-said, using too many generalizations, proverbs or sayings, can all lead to communications that are not clear and that can lend themselves to misinterpretations.

9. Information overload: it takes time to process a lot of information and too many details can overwhelm and distract the audience from the important topics. Keep it Simple.

10. Assumptions and jumping to conclusions: This can make someone reach a decision about something before listening to all the facts.ⁱⁱ

Characteristics of Effective Communication

Clear message: The message which the sender wants to convey must be simple, easy to understand and systematically framed to retain its meaningfulness.

Correct message: The information communicated must not be vague or false in any sense; it must be free from errors and grammatical mistakes.

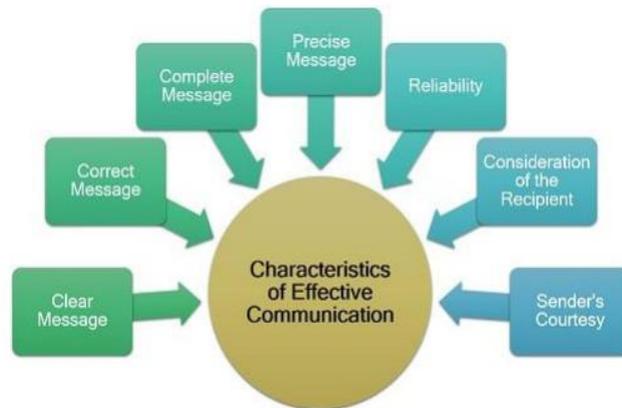
Complete message: Communication is the base for decision making. If the information is incomplete, it may lead to wrong decisions.

Precise message: The message sent must be short and concise to facilitate straightforward interpretation and take the desired steps.

Reliability: The sender must be sure from his end that whatever he is conveying is right by his knowledge. Even the receiver must have trust on the sender and can rely on the message sent.

Consideration of the recipient: The medium of communication and other physical settings must be planned, keeping in mind the attitude, language, knowledge, education level and position of the receiver.

Sender's courtesy: The message so drafted must reflect the sender's courtesy, humbleness and respect towards the receiver.ⁱⁱⁱ



Communication Styles in the Workplace



1. Passive communication style – passive communicators are typically quiet and don't seek attention. They may act indifferent during debates and rarely take a strong stance or assert themselves. They don't usually share their needs or express their feelings, so it may be

difficult to know when they are uncomfortable or need help. Passive communicators have these tendencies:

- Inability to say no
- Poor posture
- Easy-going attitude
- Lack of eye contact
- Soft voice
- Apologetic demeanor
- Fidgeting

When dealing with a passive communicator, take a direct approach, ask for their opinions, and use broad language i.e., avoid asking yes or no questions that can be answered with little elaboration. Stay patient with long silences, as passive individuals often take their time thinking through a response.

If you're a passive communicator, work on your communication skills. Seek out opportunities where you feel you can comfortably speak up. If you're uncomfortable in group settings, seek out personal meetings. If you prefer writing over talking, try communication via email instead of in person. Over time, you'll see that openly sharing your thoughts creates opportunities for positive interactions.

2. Aggressive communication style – aggressive communicators frequently express their thoughts and feelings and tend to dominate conversations, often at the expense of others. An aggressive communicator may also react before thinking which can negatively affect relationships and decrease productivity in the workplace. While an aggressive communication style might command respect in certain leadership situations, it's often intimidating to those who respond better to a calm approach. Aggressive communicators:

- Interrupt people while they're speaking
- Invade person spaces
- Present an overbearing posture
- Using aggressive gestures
- Maintain intense eye contact

When working with an aggressive communicator: be calm and assertive, keep conversations professional and know when to walk away.

If you have an aggressive communication style, you may find that you struggle to form strong relationships at work. Learning more positive communication techniques may help overcome aggressive tendencies. Reduce stress in your life by engaging in physical activity, practicing mindfulness and meditation.

3. Passive-aggressive communication style – passive-aggressive communicators appear passive on the surface but often have more aggressive motivations driving their actions. While their words might sound agreeable, their actions don't always align with what they say. Passive-aggressive communicators can quietly manipulate a situation into one that benefits them. Some passive-aggressive communicators use this approach because they feel powerless or manipulated, though that isn't necessarily the case. Passive-aggressive communicators may use the following approaches:

- Muttering

- Sarcasm
- Denial
- Presenting a happy face when they are clearly upset
- Giving the silent treatment

When dealing with a passive-aggressive communicator, you might find that they undermine your efforts even after giving you verbal assurances. Consider the following approaches:

- Make clear requests. Try not to leave room for misinterpretation or confusion.
- Confront negative behaviour
- Ask for their feedback in one-on-one situations to try to elicit honest communication.

If you have passive-aggressive tendencies, look for opportunities to communicate your thoughts and needs openly. Find a way to pursue clear and honest lines of communication to ensure you feel heard and are taking active steps to directly address a situation.

4. Assertive communication style – the assertive style is the most respectful and productive type of communication in the workplace. Assertive communicators share their thoughts and ideas confidently, but they're always respectful and polite. They readily take on challenges but know how to say "no" when it's required. These individuals understand their own limits and protect their boundaries without active overly aggressive or defensive. When with an assertive communicator, you'll notice their ability to make others feel comfortable. They're the ones that you seek out because you know they can easily facilitate a productive discussion. Assertive behaviour exhibits these tendencies:
 - Expansive gestures
 - Collaborative and sharing tendencies
 - Healthy expression of ideas and feelings
 - Good posture
 - A clear voice
 - Friendly eye contact

If you have assertive communicators on your team, encourage them to share their ideas, place them in positions of leadership and enlist their help dealing with passive, passive-aggressive and aggressive communication styles.^{iv}

ⁱ [Effective Communication - HelpGuide.org](https://www.helpguide.org/). Retrieved March 25, 2022.

ⁱⁱ [Barriers to Effective Communication \(effectivecommunicationadvice.com\)](https://www.effectivecommunicationadvice.com/). Retrieved March 25, 2022.

ⁱⁱⁱ [Psychology_RS_BARRIERS-TO-EFFECTIVE-COMMUNICATION-and-MANAGING-COMMUNICATION.pdf \(ntgc.in\)](https://www.ntgc.in/psychology/rs-barriers-to-effective-communication-and-managing-communication.pdf). Retrieved March 25, 2022.

^{iv} [The 4 Main Communication Styles You'll Find in the Workplace | Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/the-4-main-communication-styles-youll-find-in-the-workplace). Retrieved March 25, 2022.