

# Communicating with Purpose

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Each day, employees must communicate with a variety of people, for a variety of reasons, in a variety of ways. While the topic of “effective communication” is extremely broad, there are basic components for employees to consider in order to communicate with purpose.

## Have an Objective

Understand why you are communicating and what you want to accomplish by delivering your message. Is the purpose of your communication to inform? To persuade? To request action? What is your desired impact of the communication you are planning?

## Consider Your Audience

Take a moment to assume your audience’s perspective and reflect upon why your message is relevant to them. Identify the method of communication that would be most effective in delivering the message to this audience (e.g., email, phone call, meeting, memo). Consider what level of detail is needed for the audience. Consider what concerns or questions the audience may have related to the topic.

## Be Clear

Communicate your message as directly and concisely as possible. Be sure to offer appropriate background so that your audience understands the context of the message, but do not overwhelm them with irrelevant information. Avoid using jargon, unfamiliar acronyms, and ambiguous terminology. For complex communications or presentations, structure your message with a beginning (introduction), middle (detail), and ending (summary). Be specific when requesting action from your audience and make sure you define what/when/how/why you want something.

## Check for Understanding

Whenever possible, make the communication “two-way.” Provide an opportunity for your audience to react to your message and seek clarity, if needed. Solicit feedback from your audience and ask questions to ensure comprehension of your message. If communicating in writing, provide a contact or identify a resource to which your audience can turn for further information.

Now that the basics are defined, here are some best practices in communication:

1. **Develop your listening skills** – focus on the message being received. Avoid mental distractions, making judgments, and preparing your response while someone else is talking.
2. **Pay attention to non-verbal messages** – both those that you send and receive. Make sure that your expressions and gestures support the tone of the message you are trying to convey. Take note of the body language used by others to get an indication of the level of their understanding, agreement, and comfort with your message.
3. **Use positive language** – make sure your message is presented in such a way that it sounds encouraging and positive. Be deliberate in using words and phrases that seek to build connections between you and your audience, rather than create barriers.
4. **Think before you speak** – recognize that it is difficult to retract words once they have left your mouth. Pause a moment before responding to collect your thoughts, calm your emotions, and reflect upon the most courteous way to convey your message.



We can all become better communicators. To help assess your communication effectiveness, consider asking your manager, a trusted colleague, or valued friend what your strongest and weakest communication skills are. Celebrate the skills you have already mastered and set a development plan for those that could use a little polishing. Commit to communicating with purpose ... and see the amazing results you can achieve!



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