

Part II Communicating Effectively In Your Team

Workshop Objectives

By the end of this workshop you will be able to:

- Discuss how relational communication affects your workgroup
- Identify your personal conflict-handling style
- Identify your personal communication styles
- Explain how to survive the ten most common communication mistakes
- Describe the seven listening sins and virtues
- Explain the nature of change and how it can be communicated more effectively in your team
- Explain innovativeness and how it affects teams in the workplace

Introduction

“People have formed work groups in order to accomplish goals and tasks since the beginning of human history. The group whose members work collaboratively for their mutual benefit or survival, is the oldest form of social organization. Groups have played a major role in both the survival of human beings and the development of human culture. Some would argue that our ability to work together was, and is, the key to human survival and advancement. Work groups have a long and remarkable track record of success. From the beginning of human history, people have used work groups to generate new ideas, get things done, and nurture individuals.”

Susan Wheelan

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3 Communication Norms

For your group, develop a set of communication norms that includes at least five guidelines or rules that members should follow in order to communicate effectively.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

COMMUNICATION AND PERSONALITY ISSUES FOR TEAMS

Communication Styles: *Communication style is defined as the way we use verbal and nonverbal communicative behaviors to indicate how literal a message should be taken or understood. There are no preferred attributes over others. There will be times when using a friendly style might be preferred over a contentious style, or vice-versa.*

Communicator Style Measure

This questionnaire contains statements about your communicative behaviors. Indicate how often each statement is true for you personally according to the following scale:

If the statement is **almost always true**, write a **5** in the blank.

If the statement is **often true**, write a **4** in the blank.

If the statement is **occasionally true**, write a **3** in the blank.

If the statement is **rarely true**, write a **2** in the blank.

If the statement is **almost never true**, write a **1** in the blank.

1. _____ I am comfortable with all varieties of people.
2. _____ I laugh easily.
3. _____ I readily express admiration for others.
4. _____ What I say usually leaves an impression on people.
5. _____ I leave people with an impression of me that they definitely tend to remember.
6. _____ To be friendly, I verbally acknowledge others' contributions.
7. _____ I am a very good communicator.
8. _____ I have some nervous mannerisms in my speech.
9. _____ I am a very relaxed communicator.
10. _____ When I disagree with others, I am very quick to challenge them.
11. _____ I can always repeat back to a person exactly what he or she meant.
12. _____ The sound of my voice is very easy to recognize.
13. _____ I am a very precise communicator.

14. _____ I leave a definite impression on people.
15. _____ The rhythm or flow of my speech is sometimes affected by nervousness.
16. _____ Under pressure, I come across as a relaxed speaker.
17. _____ My eyes reflect exactly what I am feeling when I communicate.
18. _____ I dramatize a lot.
19. _____ I always find it very easy to communicate on a one-to-one basis with people I do not know very well.
20. _____ Usually, I deliberately react in such a way that people know I am listening to them.
21. _____ Usually, I do not tell people much about myself until I get to know them well.
22. _____ I tell jokes, anecdotes, and stories when I communicate.
23. _____ I tend to constantly gesture when I communicate.
24. _____ I am an extremely open communicator.
25. _____ I am a vocally loud communicator.
26. _____ In a small group of people I do not know very well, I am a very good communicator.
27. _____ In arguments or differences of opinion, I insist upon very precise definitions.
28. _____ In most situations, I speak very frequently.
29. _____ I find it extremely easy to maintain a conversation with a member of the opposite sex.
30. _____ I like to be strictly accurate when I communicate.
31. _____ Because I have a loud voice, I can easily break into a conversation.
32. _____ Often I physically and vocally act out when I communicate.
33. _____ I have an assertive voice.
34. _____ I readily reveal personal things about myself.
35. _____ I am dominant in conversations.
36. _____ I am very argumentative.
37. _____ Once I get wound up in a heated conversation, I have a hard time stopping myself.

38. _____ I am an extremely friendly communicator.
39. _____ I really like to listen very carefully to people.
40. _____ I insist that other people document or present some kind of proof for what they are arguing.
41. _____ I try to take charge of things when I am with people.
42. _____ It bothers me to drop an argument that is not resolved.
43. _____ In most situations, I tend to come on strong.
44. _____ I am very expressive nonverbally.
45. _____ The way I say something usually leaves an impression on people.
46. _____ Whenever I communicate, I tend to be very encouraging to people.
47. _____ I actively use a lot of facial expressions when I communicate.
48. _____ I verbally exaggerate to emphasize a point.
49. _____ I am an extremely attentive communicator.
50. _____ As a rule, I openly express my feelings and emotions.

Scoring: reverse code items 8, 15, and 21 (if you put a 5 for item 8, change this score to 1; if 4, change this score to 2; if 2, change this score to 4; if 1, change this score to 5).

1. Add your scores for items 3, 6, 38, and 46. This is your **friendly** score.
2. Add your scores for items 4, 5, 14, and 45. This is your **impression leaving** score.
3. Add your scores for items 8, 9, 15, and 16. This is your **relaxed** score.
4. Add your scores for items 10, 36, 37, and 42. This is your **contentious** score.
5. Add your scores for items 11, 20, 39, and 49. This is your **attentive** score.
6. Add your scores for items 13, 27, 30, and 40. This is your **precise** score.
7. Add your scores for items 17, 23, 44, and 47. This is your **animated** score.
8. Add your scores for items 18, 22, 32, and 48. This is your **dramatic** score.
9. Add your scores for items 21, 24, 34, and 50. This is your **open** score.
10. Add your scores for items 28, 35, 41, and 43. This is your **dominant** score.

Communicator Style Definitions

Communicator Style is defined as the way an individual uses verbal and nonverbal communicative behaviors to indicate how literal a message should be taken or understood. This style may be comprised of any combination of these ten attributes. Generally, we each use several of these at the same time. This creates our “communication style cluster.”

The 10 communicator style attributes are as follows:

1. **Friendly** people recognize others in a positive way and are generally considered to be kind and caring.
2. **Impression leaving** communicators have a memorable style, which depends on their affiliative expressiveness and use of information-seeking behaviors.
3. **Relaxed** communicators are anxiety-free and remain calm and at ease when engaged in interactions with others.
4. **Contentious** individuals will argue, and may get somewhat hostile, quarrelsome, or belligerent.
5. **Attentive** communicators are alert and are good listeners who are concerned with understanding others.
6. **Precise** communicators try to be strictly accurate, using well-defined arguments and specific proof or evidence to clarify their positions.
7. **Animated** communicators use eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body movement, and posture to exaggerate content.
8. **Dramatic** communicators use stylistic devices (exaggerations, voice, rhythm, stories) to underscore content.
9. **Open** communicators are extroverted, unreserved, and straightforward; they do not have problems directly communicating their thoughts or emotions.
10. **Dominant** communicators “take charge” of the situation by talking louder, longer, and more frequently than others.

We look at these scores in “clusters.” Take your top three scores and these may be the most descriptive of your general style of communication.

Researchers have found that:

- Employees prefer their superiors to use the relaxed, friendly, and attentive attributes.
 - Charismatic leaders tend to use the attentive, relaxed, friendly and dominant attributes.
 - Strong public speakers are dominant, animated, open, friendly, dramatic, and attentive.
- **Argumentativeness:** This is your ability to defend your position on a controversial issue while simultaneously attempting to refute another person’s position on the same issue. This does not mean **fighting**. It is simply debating an issue. This is a positive trait to have. We make better decision when we are able to argue the points with others, as we may find out new information or points of view.

- **Verbal Aggressiveness:** while argumentativeness is considered to be a constructive communication trait, verbal aggressiveness is not. It is defined as the tendency for an individual to attack the self-concept of another person for the purpose of inflicting psychological harm and is considered to be a form of symbolic aggression. A verbally aggressive person does not attack the issue, he attacks the **person**. This could take the form of teasing, character attacks, ridicule, insults, profanity, threats, background attacks, physical appearance attacks. These can result in hurt feelings, anger, irritation, embarrassment, deterioration of relationships, termination of relationships, and even physical violence. To say the least, this is not how we should be communicating in the workplace.
- **Machiavellianism:** Machiavelli was a sixteenth century writer who offered advice on how to influence people and exert power over others. We refer to a person's ability to manipulate a situation in order to influence and control the situation for his own purposes as Machiavellian. People who are more so, are harder to influence, view interactions as social competitions, are often ideologically neutral, have little emotional involvement in their interpersonal relationships, and will shift their commitments when it is to their advantage to do so.
- **Willingness to communicate:** think about how an employee's unwillingness to communicate might affect your team. Some people have very low levels of willingness to communicate. This makes it difficult for them when they have to do so and it becomes difficult for others who must communicate with them.

Willingness To Communicate (WTC)

Willingness to communicate is the most basic orientation toward communication. Almost anyone is likely to respond to a direct question, but many will not continue or initiate interaction. This instrument measures a person's willingness to *initiate* communication.

Directions: Below are 20 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate the percentage of times you would choose to communicate in each type of situation. Indicate in the space at the left of the item what percent of the time you would choose to communicate.

(0 = Never to 100 = Always)

- _____ 1. Talk with a service station attendant.
- _____ 2. Talk with a physician.
- _____ 3. Present a talk to a group of strangers.
- _____ 4. Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line.
- _____ 5. Talk with a salesperson in a store.
- _____ 6. Talk in a large meeting of friends.
- _____ 7. Talk with a police officer.
- _____ 8. Talk in a small group of strangers.
- _____ 9. Talk with a friend while standing in line.
- _____ 10. Talk with a waiter/waitress in a restaurant.
- _____ 11. Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.
- _____ 12. Talk with a stranger while standing in line.
- _____ 13. Talk with a secretary.
- _____ 14. Present a talk to a group of friends.

- _____ 15. Talk in a small group of acquaintances.
 - _____ 16. Talk with a garbage collector.
 - _____ 17. Talk in a large meeting of strangers.
 - _____ 18. Talk with a spouse (or girl/boyfriend).
 - _____ 19. Talk in a small group of friends.
 - _____ 20. Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.
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Sources:

McCroskey, J. C. (1992). Reliability and validity of the willingness to communicate scale. *Communication Quarterly*, 40, 16-25.

McCroskey, J. C., & Richmond, V. P. (1987). Willingness to communicate. In J. C. McCroskey & J. A. Daly (Eds.), *Personality and interpersonal communication* (pp. 119-131). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Barriers to Effective Communication

Our **communication climate** is a major factor in communication. We have a few types that have been identified.

Understanding Communication Climate

*For each question, answer **yes** or **no**.*

1. Do group members inform you about their true feelings, opinions, and suggestions for completing group tasks?
2. Do you become nervous when you make suggestions to group members?
3. Does your group typically leave a meeting feeling energized and supplied with clear information about how to complete a task?
4. Do you often find yourself at a loss for words when you talk with your group?
5. Do you seek feedback from group members on your effectiveness as a communicator?
6. Do you choose to communicate with group members via the telephone or e-mail rather than face-to-face?
7. Are you able to present ideas to group members in a fashion that fosters cooperation?
8. Does your group keep you informed about the group task on a need-to-know basis?

Scoring: If you answered yes to the odd-numbered questions, your group is experiencing a supportive communication climate. If you answered no to the even-numbered questions, your group is experiencing a defensive communication climate.

Dehumanizing climate (We tend to see the de-humanizing climates in the private sector; the other group is more represented in nonprofits or government. Neither of these climates is desirable.)

- ***“Happiness for Lunch Bunch.”***
- ***Open climate***
- ***Status***
- ***Communication overload***
- ***Communication under-load***

- ***Defensiveness***
- ***Evaluated or judged***
- ***Change your behavior***
- ***Manipulation***
- ***Being Ignored***

These types of messages are seen as barriers to effective communication because they are seen as barriers to trust, feelings of support, or understanding. They can create hostility and anxiety and cause people to be less willing to communicate. What we now know is that the messages themselves do not cause the problems. It is our perception of the messages that causes the problems. If an individual is insecure with low self-concept, (s)he may be likely to feel threatened by others at work. When this does happen, such people become defensive and highly unreasonable in their reactions to others.

So what is the best way to deal with defensive people? Ignore them and stay out of their way. Whatever you say is likely to be taken the wrong way, so it's best to say nothing. The only kinds of communication they can handle are deference and agreement.

CONFLICT HANDLING STYLES

AVOIDING – people who use this style are neither cooperative nor assertive when confronting conflict. This person may appear uninterested in conflict because it is viewed as hopeless, useless, or punishing. It may be that he views the issues surrounding the conflict as trivial. Avoiders will not take sides in a group and may physically leave the situation. They might also appear apathetic, which may or may not be an accurate perception made by others.

COMPETING – people who use this style place a high priority on group tasks rather than relationships. These people are usually very assertive and not very cooperative. They see conflict as a nuisance partly because they see losing conflict as a weakness. Because winning gives some people a sense of exhilaration and excitement, they may hide their true motives and withhold information that might weaken their positions.

COMPROMISING – These people agree to be agreeable and strive to find middle ground between assertiveness and cooperativeness. They will alternate between satisfying their own needs and satisfying the needs of group members.

ACCOMMODATING – these people are highly concerned with the welfare of other group members. They are highly cooperative but low in assertiveness, tend to be highly flexible, desires to be accepted by other members and does not like to be confrontational because they're afraid that other group members' feelings may be hurt.

COLLABORATING – these people are high in both cooperativeness and assertiveness. They work toward a solution that satisfies the needs of all members and promote a candid exchange of logic and emotion. They consider conflict to be natural, helpful, and they refuse to sacrifice the needs of other members for the good of the group.

TIPS FOR HANDLING CONFLICT

- Group conflict can result in decreased affect, or liking, for the group. When we experience little conflict, we see more positive feelings about each other than we see in groups that report moderate or high amounts of conflict. We also see more negative feelings toward the group when the issues are over evaluating ideas, feelings, or procedures. We are less likely to quit a group when the conflict over feelings is low.
- Conflict can occur over issues such as struggles for leadership, perceived unequal workloads, group member personality differences, procedural issues, differences in group goals, and differences in ideology. The biggest source of conflict is based on misunderstandings among group members, which they consider to be a communication failure. Conflict may also arise when members engage in deviant behaviors which violate

group norms. Some examples are: not participating in group discussions, missing group meetings, fighting for leadership, “testing” members’ opinions, and forming coalitions. When we see these types of behaviors, conflict will not be far behind.

Stress may also trigger conflict. The stress itself may not be that important, but how we handle or try to reduce the stress. Some ways we can do that are: remaining centered on our tasks while stressing teamwork at the same time, finding humor in tense situations, and being sensitive to each other’s concerns.

- The collaborating style is preferable to the other styles because it produces higher quality outcomes, is regarded as the most effective style, and results in more group member satisfaction. Compromising is the least-effective style, as one group member must give up something for it to be successful at all.

Avoiding is more effective when others can resolve the conflict more effectively. When we need a quick and decisive decision, the competing style is best. You can compromise when collaboration is unsuccessful. Sometimes other members of the group need to learn from their own mistakes, so you might use accommodating for these situations. How many times do parents let their children make their own decisions in order for them to learn from the mistakes that sometimes result? When you want to combine the insights and varying perspectives of all group members, use the collaborating style.

- Some group conflict may be unresolvable. There may be times when resolution is simply not possible. Breakdowns in communication can create rifts which cannot be repaired. If we are involved in a group where a member is disagreeable or difficult, no amount of interaction can change this member’s lack of willingness to resolve conflict. Verbally aggressive people are more likely to approach a conflict situation in a controlling manner and are less likely to approach in a non-confrontational manner. Rather than wasting time, energy, and group resources in trying to resolve conflict in these situations, it’s best if group members recognize that some conflict is unresolvable and focus their energy elsewhere.
 - There can actually be benefits to conflict. In the short-term, the benefits of conflict include coping with the immediate issue and arriving at a decision or solution that satisfies group members. In the long-term, the benefits of conflict include establishing norms and procedures for group members to consider in conflict situations.
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FIVE QUESTIONS TO MAKE CONFLICT AS CONSTRUCTIVE AS POSSIBLE:

By answering these questions, you may gain a different perspective of the conflict.

1. What perceived loss or threat of loss has led you to perceive conflict?
 2. How do you define the conflict issue?
 3. What issues impact your choice of conflict-handling style?
 4. How is your behavior influenced by the behavior of other group members?
 5. What are the short-and-long term consequences of this group conflict?
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PREVENTING CONFLICT

1. If we can communicate similar attitudes about the topic of issue at hand while at the same time expressing some difference of opinion, we may reduce the potential for conflict.
 2. If we already have mutual liking for each other the differences in opinion that will occur in communication about the issue will most likely remain at a disagreement level rather than move into conflict.
 3. If you know that there are some topics that someone finds unpleasant or dislikes discussing, try to avoid bringing these topics into discussion.
 4. Do not constantly remind others of their past failures, particularly in front of their colleagues.
 5. When you feel an argument arising, try to stay objective and keep an open mind.
 6. the issues you want to argue about and pursue them. Do not argue for the sake of argument.
 7. A method of preventing conflict from occurring is to raise your level of tolerance for disagreement. This may be more difficult than some other methods of preventing conflict; however, it will allow you to be more accepting of other people's views and reduce the potential for conflict.
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Disagreement vs. Conflict

Disagreement is defined as a difference of opinion between persons. Conflict in the work situation is the process that occurs when a group, due to their interdependence, their real and perceived differences, and their emotions, engage in an expressed *struggle* that impedes task accomplishment.

Disagreement is then not a negative thing. It can be quite functional and positive and is probably good for the growth of an organization. We can disagree and still maintain a good working relationship. Although disagreement does not necessarily lead to conflict, in any situation where people are disagreeing the potential exists for conflict to raise its ugly head.

It takes only one person, not two, in a relationship to perceive conflict, and if one perceives it, it exists. Conflict, unlike disagreement, has no positive outcomes. It should be avoided in organizations. As it grows, it festers and finally spreads. Good working relationships are destroyed, it can escalate to involve many people, and it can permanently damage the group's reputation and the people within the group can have their reputations damaged, is not destroyed.

Whereas disagreements can be resolved and the relationships still be intact, *conflicts cannot be resolved, only managed*. The way a person habitually deals with disagreement has more to do with whether or not the disagreement will lead to conflict than with the simple presence or absence of disagreement itself. People differ in the extent to which they can tolerate disagreement and avoid entering into conflict.

TOLERANCE FOR DISAGREEMENT SCALE (TFD)

The tolerance for disagreement scale is designed to measure the degree to which an individual can tolerate other people disagreeing with what the individual believes to be true. This conceptualization is similar to that of argumentativeness. People with high argumentativeness are likely to be able to deal with more disagreement than those people who are low in argumentativeness. Alpha reliability estimates for the TFD scale can be expected to be in the neighborhood of .85.

Strongly Disagree ①	Disagree ②	Neutral ③	Agree ④	Strongly Agree ⑤
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- _____ 1. It is more fun to be involved in a discussion where there is a lot of disagreement.
- _____ 2. I enjoy talking to people with points of view different than mine.
- _____ 3. I don't like to be in situations where people are in disagreement.
- _____ 4. I prefer being in groups where everyone's beliefs are the same as mine.
- _____ 5. Disagreements are generally helpful.
- _____ 6. I prefer to change the topic of discussion when disagreement occurs.
- _____ 7. I tend to create disagreements in conversations because it serves a useful purpose.
- _____ 8. I enjoy arguing with other people about things on which we disagree.
- _____ 9. I would prefer to work independently rather than to work with other people and have disagreements.
- _____ 10. I would prefer joining a group where no disagreements occur.
- _____ 11. I don't like to disagree with other people.
- _____ 12. Given a choice, I would leave a conversation rather than continue a disagreement.
- _____ 13. I avoid talking with people who I think will disagree with me.
- _____ 14. I enjoy disagreeing with others.
- _____ 15. Disagreement stimulates a conversation and causes me to communicate more.

From:

Teven, J.J., Richmond, V.P., & McCroskey, J.C. (1998). Measuring tolerance for disagreement. *Communication Research Reports*, 15, 209-217.

Why Some Do Not Survive: Ten Common Communication Mistakes

Employees Themselves Often Create Horrible Working Conditions: **DOAs** (Dead On Arrival)

DOAs hold supervisors solely responsible for their growth and motivation.

DOAs often think they know it all and refuse assistance from other employees and their supervisors.

DOAs make statements about how behind the times the organization is and how out of touch the organization is.

DOAs want all the rewards available in the system without paying any dues or putting in the time to earn them.

DOAs often deviate from the organizational norms.

DOAs enjoy arguing over insignificant issues simply to get attention.

DOAs are constantly “poking their noses” into other peoples’ business.

DOAs usually step on the toes of the people in the good old boys/girls clubs.

DOAs usually will talk negatively about their boss and their co-workers behind their backs at social gatherings or other functions outside the immediate work unit.

DOAs try to get things accomplished without following the proper communication channels in the organization.

Communicating Change Effectively In Your Team

Five reasons why we resist change:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Stage of the Adoption Process

Stage 1 -Knowledge Stage

Stage 2 – Persuasion Stage

Stage 3 – Decision Stage

Stage 4 – Implementation Stage

Stage 5 – Confirmation Stage

Factors That Affect Success of Change

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

INNOVATIVENESS

What does innovativeness mean for us? It means that the rate at which people adopt new ideas or products can influence how quickly a change is diffused through an organization. All are present in any organization and some will stimulate change and others will impede it.

Individual Innovativeness (II)

An innovation is an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption (like an organization). People and organizations vary a great deal in their "innovativeness." Innovativeness has to do with how early in the process of adoption of new ideas, practices, etc. that the individual or organization is likely to accept a change.

The individual innovativeness scale was designed to measure individuals' orientations toward change. Research has indicated that this orientation is associated with several communication variables. The II instrument has been found to be highly reliable and the predictive validity is good.

Directions: People respond to their environment in different ways. The statements below refer to some of the ways people can respond. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

Strongly Disagree ①	Disagree ②	Neutral ③	Agree ④	Strongly Agree ⑤
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- _____ 1. My peers often ask me for advice or information.
- _____ 2. I enjoy trying new ideas.
- _____ 3. I seek out new ways to do things.
- _____ 4. I am generally cautious about accepting new ideas.
- _____ 5. I frequently improvise methods for solving a problem when an answer is not apparent.
- _____ 6. I am suspicious of new inventions and new ways of thinking.

- _____ 7. I rarely trust new ideas until I can see whether the vast majority of people around me accept them.
- _____ 8. I feel that I am an influential member of my peer group.
- _____ 9. I consider myself to be creative and original in my thinking and behavior.
- _____ 10. I am aware that I am usually one of the last people in my group to accept something new.
- _____ 11. I am an inventive kind of person.
- _____ 12. I enjoy taking part in the leadership responsibilities of the group I belong to.
- _____ 13. I am reluctant about adopting new ways of doing things until I see them working for people around me.
- _____ 14. I find it stimulating to be original in my thinking and behavior.
- _____ 15. I tend to feel that the old way of living and doing things is the best way.
- _____ 16. I am challenged by ambiguities and unsolved problems.
- _____ 17. I must see other people using new innovations before I will consider them.
- _____ 18. I am receptive to new ideas.
- _____ 19. I am challenged by unanswered questions.
- _____ 20. I often find myself skeptical of new ideas.

Hurt, H. T., Joseph, K., & Cook, C. D. (1977). Scales for the measurement of innovativeness. *Human Communication Research*, 4, 58-65.

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University of Missouri <http://web.missouri.edu/~campbellr/Leadership/chapter5.htm>