
Course Learning Outcomes for Unit V

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

5. Summarize techniques used to promote positive relationships in the workplace.
 - 5.1 Explain ways to effectively communicate in person and via email.
 - 5.2 Describe the challenges that can arise through gossip and false information.

Course/Unit Learning Outcomes	Learning Activity
5.1	Unit Lesson Chapter 9 Chapter 10 Unit V Assignment
5.2	Unit Lesson Chapter 9 Chapter 10 Unit V Assignment

Required Unit Resources

Chapter 9: Communication

Chapter 10: Electronic Communications

Unit Lesson

We continue the course by analyzing different techniques that promote effective communication, accountability, and harmonious, positive relationships within job-related tasks and the work environment.

Communication

There are various channels of communication in the workplace. Anderson and Bolt (2016) outline three communication channels to include formal communication, informal communication (or the grapevine), and gossip, as outlined below.

Formal Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official and often communicated through the leadership of the organization through meetings or email
Informal Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very common in the workplace; although, it is not always reliable. • Often shared through conversation and can be based off rumors or information passed through the grapevine
Gossip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tricky and dangerous way for information to be shared • Very rarely true and can be hurtful

Communication channels
(Anderson & Bolt, 2016)

The communication process is the common exchange of information. Before we explore deeper into communication, stop for a minute to think about communication as a process. Unlike a transaction, a process usually involves a series of steps or tasks. For example, if two colleagues are having a conversation, both of them must be active participants within the process for the message to completely transfer. So, being an active participant within the communication process is important, as all parties must do their part. At times, workers can demonstrate frustration or impatience during an exchange of communication. Immediately, it might seem as if the worker is frustrated with the messenger; however, the worker is likely to be frustrated with him or herself as he or she determines the appropriate words for what he or she wants to say. Knowing that, be patient as you communicate with others, and do what you can to help them.

Communication Challenges

One of the most important items you can learn from this unit is that communicating ineffectively can be very damaging to the workplace. When a receiver fails to make any effort to hear or understand the sender's message, he or she is in non-listening mode and is allowing emotions, noise, or preconceptions to impede communication. If you are a first responder, for example, and you are not getting the all the important facts through communication, this could lead to poor response times or, even worse, lead you into a bad situation.

Employees need a basic understanding of appropriate communication. To move beyond a basic understanding, it can be beneficial to know not only how to communicate but also how to take advantage of the communication process. By utilizing effective communication techniques, you can make positive impressions in the workplace, and such a practice of professionalism is likely to propel your career, goals, and objectives forward.

Effective Communication Through Listening

In order for any communication to take place and be effective, a critical component is listening. Practicing proficient listening skills can have positive effects, such as increasing productivity, meeting goals, and fostering a congenial relationship among workers. One way to improve your listening proficiency is to train yourself to listen for details by focusing on the words to reduce misunderstanding. Another way to be a more effective listener is to be sincere in your outreach and concern for others. Leaders can have an open-door policy and encourage others to take the time to listen to one another by showing concern and empathy.

Having proficient listening skills can result in faster production rates. Have you ever heard the saying, “A happy worker is a productive worker?” There appears to be a definite correlation between happiness and productivity.

Additionally, good listeners seem to be more proficient in the requirements of the job, and studies have indicated that they spend less time on revisions. Keep in mind, listening is not the same as hearing. Adults spend an average of 70% of their time engaged in some sort of communication. Within the 70%, an average of 45% of the time is spent listening, compared to speaking for 30% of the time, reading for 16% of the time, and writing for 9% of the time (Adler, Rosenfeld, & Proctor, 2001).

Listening is imperative and a major part of the communication process; however, there must be accountability and responsibility for our exchanges in communication. Please know that communication is challenging. With all the means (e.g. technology) of communication, one would assume it is easier more now than ever; however, the opposite is actually true. Some of the concerns include the misuse of electronic communication tools, the lack of (or poor) phone etiquette, and the numerous unprofessional uses of mobile devices, such as texting, social media, videos, and teleconferences.

Today, workers have the ability to connect to one another via virtual venues. Some might even say that we rely too heavily on virtual communication techniques. Since we tend to rely on virtual communication (connectivity is through a virtual venue), it is predictable that a lack of listening and/or a block in the communication process can lead to misunderstandings. If we are not effective listeners, it can be very easy to misinterpret the intended message from a colleague. With a multitude of devices ranging from email, texting, and blogs to wikis, it is no wonder messages are getting lost and distorted. Regardless of how you communicate, be sure to embrace the process, and work with your colleagues to ensure the messages and goals are clear.

Electronic Communication

Imagine that you are working with a client who does not live in your immediate area. You have been emailing with the client for several weeks, but you are unsure if the two of you are in agreement. Your client is asking the same questions repeatedly, and you do not feel that progress is being made. How should you handle this situation? While electronic communication can be an asset, it also comes with its own unique challenges. For example, it is difficult to identify the tone of an email and determine whether or not the other party understands your point. In these cases, it may be helpful to arrange a phone call so you can connect on a personal level.

Be sure that you have a solid understanding of the latest policies and etiquette of electronic communication. The basic guideline is to keep it simple—treat others how you want to be treated. Always be polite, courteous, and graceful to demonstrate professionalism through communication. Within any type of workplace, one skill that can help you avoid unnecessary frustration is to know when a face-



Benefits of proficient listening
(Adapted from Anderson & Bolt, 2016)



Electronic communication
(Melpomenem, n.d.)

to-face conversation will be much more productive than an email. Perhaps a phone call could be a better communication method than an email.

When you cannot communicate in person, be sure to avoid using all caps in emails, as it can appear to be yelling. Additionally, keep the message professional by maintaining a business-like sense while avoiding irregular symbols such as smiley faces, personal slangs, abbreviations, and improper salutations. End your email communication with contact information, and, before clicking send, review your message for clarity and mistakes.

Communicating While Upset

If possible, try to avoid communicating when you are upset. While upset, you may say something unprofessional because you may not be thinking clearly. At those moments when you are upset, step away and take a break. Then, after settling down, you can come back and respond in a professional manner. After you send an email, it is not always possible to take it back. In other words, your message is out there for others to interpret and potentially share. So, be sure that your email contains the message that you want to share. If you have doubts about sending an email, it might be best to think it over before sending it. After thinking about it for a bit, you might realize how you can revise the email to more accurately reflect the message you would like to send.

Conclusion

The reading in this unit addresses many aspects of professionalism and concludes with positive relationships at work by sharing a bit about yourself and who you are. For many, this will be an exciting opportunity to reach out to others. Present yourself as an approachable person by making connections with others—identify what you have in common to build your network. Also, when you speak about others, always do so by only saying positive things about them. By staying positive, you can prevent yourself from being the cause of any workplace gossip before it has the chance to begin.

Next, make a connection through supportiveness. If a worker is in need of assistance or is struggling, ask him or her if you can help. Again, this will help the relationship by making another connection and allowing you and your colleague to work well together. Next, if you are very interested in networking and building strong professional relationships, get involved. Identify ways that you can get involved with others by participating in the same activities. Just as you reach out to offer assistance to others, do not hesitate to ask for assistance with your own work. Remember, a team is more productive than a party of one. Another gesture of creating a more positive relationship at work is to write random thank-you notes and letters of acknowledgement. Keep it fun and interesting by delivering the notes in a variety of ways, such as a hand delivered note or greeting card, an email, or a voicemail.

Another way to bond is by initiating a conversation by asking simple yet sincere questions. Then, after you ask the question, you will have the perfect opportunity to practice your listening skills by listening to the answer(s). If you would like to build an even stronger bond with a colleague, you can consider joining an extracurricular activity that occurs outside of the workplace. Something as simple as going to lunch can also be a great way to build stronger workplace relationships. When building any workplace relationship, the core of it all begins with effective communication.

References

- Adler, R. B., Rosenfeld, L. B., & Proctor, R. F. (2001). *Interplay: The process of interpersonal communication*. (8th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt.
- Anderson, L. E., & Bolt, S. B. (2016). *Professionalism: Skills for workplace success* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Melpomenem. (n.d.). *ID 129674197* [Image]. Retrieved from <https://www.dreamstime.com/communication-woman-using-tablet-communication-business-woman-using-tablet-computer-image129674197>

Suggested Unit Resources

In order to access the following resources, click the links below.

The following article provide thoughtful insight into effective communication in the workplace as well as barriers to effective communication,

Contreras, M. (n.d.). [Effective communication in the workplace](http://effectivecommunicationadvice.com/workplace). Retrieved from <http://effectivecommunicationadvice.com/workplace>

The below video segment explains ways to increase open communication and sharing in the workplace through respect.

ClickView Pty Limited (Producer). (2001). [Facilitate open communication](https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?auth=CAS&url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPI/aylists.aspx?wID=273866&xtid=49907&luid=170709) (Segment 2 of 6) [Video]. In *Making Teams Work Brilliantly*. Films on Demand. <https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?auth=CAS&url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPI/aylists.aspx?wID=273866&xtid=49907&luid=170709>

The transcript for this video can be found by clicking the “Transcript” tab to the right of the video in the Films on Demand database.

Learning Activities (Nongraded)

Nongraded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.

[A Worksheet to Practice Critical Thinking](#): As you work through the material for this unit, consider completing a practicing critical thinking toward communication worksheet.