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Communicating effectively Good communication is essential for managing relationships with your staff, customers and

stakeholders. Poor communication can ruin relationships, and potentially result in lost sales and reputation damage. Learn about the different types of communication, and how to improve your communication

skills.

On this page What is effective communication Verbal communication Asking questions Listening effectively Non-verbal communication Meeting new people and introducing yourself Phone communications Video calls—Zoom, Teams, FaceTime, webinars

What is effective communication Effective communication is the exchange of information, intention and emotion. It involves clearly transmitting a message and receiving acknowledgment that the message has been

Written communication for business

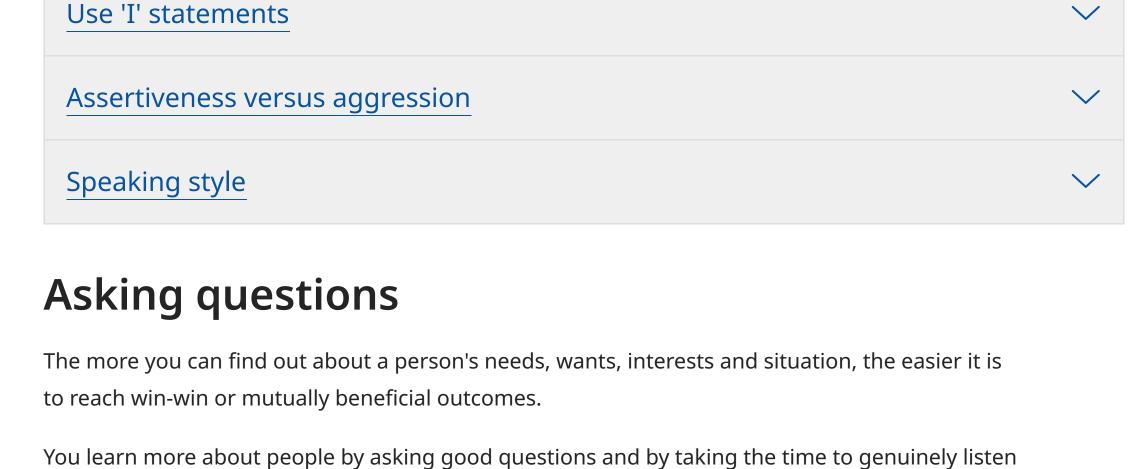
received and understood by your intended audience. Effective communication also means providing acknowledgment to others that ensures they feel heard and understood.

Review these key communication and personal awareness skills that contribute to effective communication.

Key communication skills

Personal awareness skills **Verbal communication** The words you, or your staff, use are important. Poor verbal communication can damage your business and leave customers or stakeholders unhappy or confused.

Use positive language



to their answers. Their responses help you to come up with suitable solutions and also make the

other party feel valued. People also tend to respond well when they feel their opinion is being sought genuinely by

consequences for both parties. Types of questions

another person, particularly in a business situation where conversations can have important

Open questions

Closed questions

Question styles to avoid

anywhere else, can you?"

Probing questions Confirmation questions **** Summary confirmation questions **** Using questions in conversation Generally, you will have the most success when using a range of question types in a conversation. Using open and closed questions together, can help you guide a conversation and encourage the other party to contribute.

Using only closed questions can make it too easy for the answering party to say just yes or no. Because they only encourage a basic response, closed questions are not good rapport builders or conversation starters. Use both types of questions for maximum success and engagement.

Using only open questions can result in digression—a conversation straying off course.

Some types of question do not lend themselves to working towards positive outcomes. These include:

• leading or manipulative questions—"You'll have that done by tomorrow, right?"

These kinds of question can hamper your ability to negotiate efficiently and effectively.

• multiple questions at once—"When will you want it? Or don't you want it? You can't get it

• destructive questions—"So you're saying it's my fault?"

Listening effectively

You can often be distracted by your own thoughts, your next move or what you should say next, or trying to second guess where the other party might be leading you.

It's one thing to ask good questions—it's another to take on board the answers.

Consider these suggestions.

the speaker. Only then can you really hear what they're saying.

Active listening Paying attention

To listen effectively you need to suspend these internal thoughts and give your full attention to

Confirming your understanding Non-verbal communication Much of the way we communicate in a visual situation—face to face, in person or via video occurs through non-verbal cues.

Body language

expressions you use.

Facial expressions

Making a good first impression

Handshaking in Australia

Eye contact

This includes your body language, the way you look at others during conversations and the facial

Meeting new people and introducing yourself

Your first impression can be the difference between starting a successful business relationship or finishing with a one-off meeting. It is very easy to create a negative first impression with someone, often without knowing you've done so. It's much harder to make a positive impression and it's worth putting some effort into your introductions. Open all

Introducing yourself Cultural differences Phone communications A great deal of business communications is completed via phone. The phone works well as it is a personable approach for both parties and can often enhance the working relationship. Phone communication requires active listening skills and asking the right type of questions to

A disadvantage of phone communication is that there isn't a written 'paper trail'. Consider sending an email as a follow up after an important phone call to put in writing the

interrupting them.

name

business or company name

practice).

properly.

experience.

Text messages

damage your credibility.

will appear to be looking directly at them.

to remove or reduce distractions.

• reason for the phone call

• your phone number.

matters discussed. This will help ensure you are both on the same page and allows the opportunity for feedback if something wasn't correct.

Leaving a message If you attempt to phone someone and they don't answer, be prepared to leave a short succinct message with your:

A short friendly text message with the above information is also a good option.

• Reduce distractions around you while you are on the call.

ensure you have heard and understood the message your counterpart wants to share.

Even if you are busy, it is important to allow time for the other person to speak without

Sending a succinct text message encourages the other party to either respond with the answers you need via text or by return call at a time convenient for them. Tips for better phone communications

number when leaving a message.

• Paraphrase to ensure you have heard or understood correctly. • Note that mobile phone calls are prone to disruptions from poor bad service or connectivity issues, particularly while driving. • Assume the other party doesn't know your contact details—always offer your phone

• Note that many people won't answer a call from a 'private' number.

• Listen carefully and talk clearly when the other party has an accent.

Video calls—Zoom, Teams, FaceTime, webinars

• Aim to return someone's call on the same day, or if within 24–48 hours (same day is best

Since the pandemic, business has embraced video calls using Zoom, Teams, FaceTime or similar software. Video calling has created significant efficiencies and cost savings for business, resulting in people prioritising this medium in place of face to face meetings, phone calls, and time-consuming travel. Another benefit of video calling is that you can reach a greater number of people at the same time. The biggest challenges for video calling are lack of data connectivity and bandwidth issues which can cause delays, a lag in audio, and poor video quality. Tips for better video calls

• Test your microphone, audio and video settings before joining the video call meeting.

• Change the name of profile settings to be your first name and business name so the

• Be conscious of how you appear to others—your surroundings behind and beside you

• Ensure you have enough lighting so when people see you, they are able to see your face

other people on the video call know who you are and what business you are representing.

can be seen on the video call. Consider staging, blurring or setting a background image

• Recognise bandwidth issues can often be reduced by turning off your video stream—ask

the people on the call if they mind you turning off your video to improve your listening

• Ensure team or family members are aware you are on a video call and don't interrupt you.

• Mute your microphone if you are not talking. This ensures other parties on the call don't

• Look at the camera when you are talking, rather than at faces on screen. To others, you

Someone walking behind you can distract other people on the video call.

hear your background noise, typing on keyboard or others talking.

• Check your screen before sharing it. Confidential or embarrassing information can

Written communication for business Business communication often involves emails, documents, letters and reports. Many verbal communication skills can also be applied to written communication, such as asking the right questions and using the right tone. Be polite and clear in what you're asking or saying to another party, particularly if your written communication requires follow-up action. Written communication done well usually results in less messages between parties. Consider how the other party may receive and potentially misinterpret your message. Keep written communication friendly and factual, and use an appropriate tone. Always review your writing and correct any spelling or grammar mistakes. Automated spelling and grammar checkers can be turned on in most software. Open all Formal language in written communication Structuring an email or letter **** Rules of writing formally and informally Letter, email or web form

How written communication can be received and misinterpreted

You sent an email to your staff member questioning why they did a particular task in a

When sending written communications for business, you often are not aware of the emotions,

schedule and environment of the person receiving your communications.

Case study: Ways of working

different way to the way you had outlined.

aren't enough hours in the day.

A key step has been left out and it will need doing again. This will cost you time and money. Your email is short, to the point and points out the work will need to be done again. Unknown to you, your staff member has been feeling overwhelmed as they manage a difficult personal situation. When the staff member reads your short email, and as result of their raw emotions, they respond to the email as a personal attack instead of a request for the work to be done again. **Case study: low-season stress** Your business is experiencing a difficult low season. Your accounts are a little behind schedule and the low-season project you'd budgeted days to complete, has become difficult, delayed and expensive. Adding to your day, is the news that your casual employee has called in sick.

You find yourself in a very stressful situation. Even though it's the low season, it feels like there

When a customer email lands in your inbox, you skim it quickly. Another demand for your time and attention. In your stressed frame of mind, you've inadvertently misread the intent of the email. Without the stress, your review of the same email would have been different. The customer's email asks you to replace a faulty product. This is a normal part of your customer service process and a routine part of the business. Instead of showing the customer's email to another person, you react and respond to the email negatively. A few days later, another customer shows you the email. It appears your upset customer posted your negative response on social media. You are left wondering how to manage the impact of this on your business's good reputation, in addition to your low-season stress. Find help to prepare for a reputation incident. When communicating effectively for business, it is recommended that you write deliberately, use empathy where appropriate, and keep a clear view of how written communication can be received and misinterpreted.

Also consider...

• Learn more about improving customer service.

• Explore during and after sales service. • Find tips and advice on finding new customers.

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Queensland Government We pay our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors of this land, their spirits and their legacy. The foundations laid by these ancestors—our First Nations peoples—give strength, inspiration and courage to current and future generations towards creating a better Queensland.

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