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7 Easy Tips to Overcome Communication Barriers in



Let's Talk



Miscommunication and barriers to understanding in the workplace are a serious problem. Differing personalities, backgrounds, communication styles, ambitions, and agendas get in the way of teammates operating in sync with one another.

According to the [Society of Human Resource Management](#), David Grossman reported in "The Cost of Poor

Communications" that a survey of 400 companies with 100,000 employees each cited an average loss per company of \$62.4 million per year because of inadequate communication to and between employees. Debra Hamilton asserted, in her article "Top Ten Email Blunders that Cost Companies Money," that miscommunication cost even smaller companies of 100 employees an average of \$420,000 per year.

Conversely, when organizations prioritize effective communications and take measures to achieve it, good things happen. According to [a McKinsey report](#), well-connected teams see a productivity increase of 20-25%, and [CMSWire](#) reports that 97% of employees believe communication impacts their ability to work effectively.

If you manage people, it's essential that you have all the tools you need to overcome the physical, emotional, and linguistic communication barriers—between the organization and employees, yourself and your team, and between your employees themselves. Here are seven ways to prevent or resolve communication issues in your workplace:

Tip #1 to Overcome Communication Barriers: Insist on open, direct communication

It should come as no surprise that workplace cultures that

promote effective communication reach this goal more readily than those that don't. Make open, honest, and direct communication a part of your culture; train workers how to listen actively and communicate their needs to teammates. Set an example and an expectation by having an open door policy yourself. In other words, think of the barriers to communications that currently exist in your workplace and tear them down.

Tip #2 to Overcome Communication Barriers: Promote active listening

Active listening involves quietly receiving what the speaker is saying, comprehending, and acknowledging the information being shared. In a one-to-one scenario, it typically involves rephrasing the point(s) so that both parties agree the information has been effectively shared. This is one of the most important tips, because miscommunication occurs often when the receiver *thinks* he or she understands the message, but doesn't, whether it's the fault of the speaker or receiver.

Tip #3 to Overcome Communication Barriers: Use effective communication channels

We've never had so many communication channels at our disposal, including face-to-face, manager-to-group in a

meeting, Zoom meetings, email, DM, and more. Consider whether your intended recipients will have access to the communication, whether the channel is likely to result in full attention, how long a message will take to disseminate, and what kind of response or feedback you are hoping to achieve. Consider that employees often feel overwhelmed by loaded email inboxes, and that individuals have preferences for receiving certain types of messages via particular channels.

Tip #4 to Overcome Communication Barriers: Create a team atmosphere

The idea of a meritocracy is wonderful, but it is taken too far in some organizations. Rigid hierarchies can cause communication breakdowns. When some employees have greater access to information, managers, and teammates than others, inequities in communication arise. An all-for-one and one-for-all mentality is ideal for promoting communication and teamwork.

Tip #5 to Overcome Communication Barriers: Remove physical barriers

Is your workplace set up to optimize communication between teammates, or is it designed to provide quiet places to focus? While both goals are important, the key is to calibrate between these goals. Set up your workspaces in

ways that don't compromise effective communication when it is needed. You may not need an open concept floor plan, but you may need to reduce some of the physical barriers that limit access, such as high cubicle walls.

Tip #6 to Overcome Communication Barriers: Limit communication to what is necessary

We're living in an age of information overload. Often, employees feel overwhelmed by the deluge of information they're getting through a variety of channels. Focus on what is absolutely necessary to communicate. Be clear and concise, especially in digital communications.

Tip #7 to Overcome Communication Barriers: Avoid idiomatic phrases when there is a language barrier

If you have employees who speak English as a second language, instruct your team to avoid speaking in dialectical language or with colloquial expressions that don't translate literally. Demonstrate how ineffective idiomatic phrases can be by using inline translators to show how they muddle the message.

Though communication breakdowns in the workplace are a serious problem, the solutions are often easy to implement.

Try some of these suggestions yourself and share your stories with us on [Facebook](#) as the communication barriers in your workplace start to come down.



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