BSBLDR401
Communicate effectively as a workplace leader
Release 1

Learner guide

aspire
learning resources

BSBLDR401

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Release 1

Learner guide

Aspire Version 1.1

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Contents

Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBLDR401 Communicate effectively as a workplace leader*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this learner guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples and case studies	Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks and learning checkpoints. Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help
Summary	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	There is a learning checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	• Analyses and evaluates textual information from a range of sources to inform communication processes
Writing	• Plans and prepares workplace documentation for relevant stakeholders according to organisational formats
Oral communication	• Participates in a variety of spoken exchanges with a range of audiences using structure and language to suit the audience
Navigate the world of work	• Adheres to organisational policies and procedures relevant to own role
Interact with others	• Cooperates, collaborates and consults with others to clarify and confirm understanding and seek feedback • Selects and uses appropriate communication conventions and practices to build rapport, seek or present information
Get the work done	• Plans and implements activities and processes to identify and establish communication and record keeping requirements • Uses analytical processes to identify potential problems and generate solutions • Systematically gathers and analyses all relevant information and evaluates options in order to make decisions about communication processes

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Identify the context for communication	1A Identify the reason and context for communication	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1B Identify people relevant to the communication context	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1C Clarify specific environment and personnel factors that may impact on the success of the communication	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1D Identify and clearly understand the desired outcome of the communication	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1E Evaluate available methods of communication against their suitability for the specific communication requirements	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1F Identify potential barriers to effective communication and develop solutions to minimise the impact	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1G Incorporate relevant business policies, procedures, regulations and legislation into communication processes	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 2 Clarify messages and engage in communication	2A Undertake communication using media and formats relevant to the context	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2B Incorporate respectful and positive approaches to communications	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2C Employ two-way processes to ensure a message is received, acknowledged, clarified and understood	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

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Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
	2D Seek feedback on communication processes from all parties	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 3 Take follow-up actions	3A Maintain a record of the communication process and outcomes in line with enterprise policy and procedures	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3B Identify follow-up actions and communicate them to relevant people	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3C Identify and incorporate opportunities to improve leadership communication processes	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

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Topic 1
Identify the context for communication

Effective communication is the most important key to a leader's success. When you communicate effectively, your message is received as you intended. Leaders who understand the importance of effective communication take responsibility for their communication. They are fully aware of the circumstances that surround the communication. This means as a leader you have identified the context for the communication. Context in communication refers to the surrounding physical environment and the framework of related facts and events within which communication takes place.

In this topic you will learn how to:

1A   Identify the reason and context for communication

1B   Identify people relevant to the communication context

1C   Clarify specific environment and personnel factors that may impact on the success of the communication

1D   Identify and clearly understand the desired outcome of the communication

1E   Evaluate available methods of communication against their suitability for the specific communication requirements

1F   Identify potential barriers to effective communication and develop solutions to minimise the impact

1G   Incorporate relevant business policies, procedures, regulations and legislation into communication processes

1A Identify the reason and context for communication

Communication is a complex process involving words, body language, voice, tone and volume. It is a process of gathering and providing information to achieve an outcome, and is a critical factor in the success of any organisation. Effective communication can unite people and help them to work as a team.

Communication happens in a range of situations for a variety of reasons. Effective communicators tune into their environment. They are aware of the context. Different contexts require you to use different types of communication or choose different words to express yourself. You need to be aware of the purpose of your communication, who you are communicating with and what you want to achieve as a result of the communication.

The importance of effective communication

Communication is the act of transferring ideas and information through speaking, writing and nonverbal signals. The word 'communication' comes from the Latin word 'communicare', which means to share or make common. Communication is the process of sharing meaning. We can think of communication as active: a course of action leading to an outcome.

To communicate effectively, someone expresses an idea so that the recipient understands the idea in the same way.

Being an effective communicator does not simply mean being a great talker. You need to be able to read people, tune into signals, be aware of your environment and adapt your communication accordingly. Effective communicators focus on the receiver. They know that the communication is not about the sender; it is about meeting the needs of the receiver.

Reasons for communicating

Communication is a tool we use every day to seek information, give information, understand a situation and persuade others to our way of thinking. It was an effective survival technique for our ancestors, who shared information about food, supplies and weather patterns, and it continues to help us make sense of the world.

Being able to communicate effectively is an important life skill. Effective communication skills are essential to your success in a leadership role.

We communicate to:

- build relationships, to connect with others

- give or receive information and share ideas

- develop ourselves; to learn, to ask questions, to change our thoughts into ideas

- persuade or influence others to do or believe what we want them to

- express our needs or emotions, such as satisfaction or disappointment, joy or sorrow

- enjoy ourselves and socialise

- do or say what is expected as a social ritual; say please or thank you, hello or goodbye, shake someone's hand, smile or wave.

The context for communication

Communication context means the circumstances surrounding the message. Are you communicating something critical, or information that is not urgent? Who needs to have the information? Do the recipients have the language skills to understand your message? Are there formats to use to deliver the information?

To identify the context you can use the 5 Ws process.

Once you have worked out answers to the 5 Ws, you can ask yourself: 'How should I communicate?'

The 5 Ws are:

- **Who** are you communicating with?

- **When** are you communicating?

- **Why** are you communicating?

- **Where** are you communicating?

- **What** are you communicating?

Example: identify the reason and context for communication

Derek is a warehouse manager. The end of financial year is always a busy time due to stocktaking. Last year's stocktake had a lot of errors, so he wants to make sure the same thing does not happen again. He decides to get approval for overtime and introduce a more efficient recording system that will reduce the number of errors. He separates the tasks and takes time out to identify the context for the communication. He decides to use the 5 Ws strategy.

The 5 Ws strategy	
Communication task 1: Get overtime budget approved	**Communication task 2: Introduce the new recording system to staff**
• **Who:** General manager	• **Who:** members of the warehouse team
• **When:** at least four weeks before needed	• **When:** next team meeting
• **Why:** to ensure enough people are available to complete the stocktake in a timely manner	• **Why:** to get the team on board with the new system to avoid mistakes
• **Where:** monthly management meeting	• **Where:** staff room
• **What:** staff required, overtime costings, justification for the budget, volunteers	• **What:** recording procedure; step-by-step guidelines; how to complete forms
• **How:** write a formal proposal and table it at the meeting	• **How:** agenda item to discuss last year's mistakes and discuss new draft guidelines for recording stocktake.

Understand different communication situations

Context includes the situation and the particular combination of people involved in the communication.

Intrapersonal
Intrapersonal communication involves one person; referred to as self-talk. People talk to themselves many times a day.

Small group
Group communication is where a small number of people engage in an exchange of ideas and information. It involves three to 12 people.

Organisational
Organisational communication is the communication that happens within organisations. For example, sending emails, having meetings, announcing plans, interviewing, conducting performance meetings, communicating policies and procedures and providing workplace training.

Public
Public communication means one person speaks to a group of people, or one person writes a message for a large group of people.

Mass
Mass communication involves sending a single message to a group. This involves using a single source to transmit information to a large group of receivers. It usually relates to newspapers, books, magazines, TV, film and social media.

Cultural communication
Cultural communication is when the sender of a message is from a different cultural background from the intended receiver.

Adjust your communication

Each method of communication has advantages and disadvantages. Some work better in one context than in another. Choose the most effective method for your audience and the situation. For example, sending an email covered in emoticons to a new international customer could have a serious negative impact on their decision to do business with your organisation.

It is important to be intentional with the language you use by choosing words appropriate to the context. By taking into account the context, you can give your message the best chance of being received in the way you intended.

If you are engaged in verbal communication, monitor your body language and adapt your nonverbal communication to the situation by considering personal space and eye contact.

Practice task 1

Read the case study, then complete the task that follows.

Case study

Jill is a team leader in a large call centre that has over 1000 staff. She manages a team of 12 sales staff. Each person has weekly sales targets to reach. Part of Jill's role is to provide weekly performance feedback during scheduled one-on-one meetings. Jill always schedules time out on a Friday afternoon to prepare for the meetings. She thinks about the performance of each staff member and looks over their results. She writes notes to summarise her thoughts and uses these notes in the meetings. Jill likes to give specific constructive feedback to each individual team member.

Jill also needs to analyse at least two calls from each person to identify training needs. She uses this information to plan training sessions, which she delivers to the whole group during their monthly sales meetings.

The organisation puts out a quarterly electronic newsletter of good news stories that is sent to all employees. Each team leader is required to email at least two examples for inclusion in the newsletter to the Human Resources Department.

Complete this table by identifying the three different contexts, the audience and the methods of communication appropriate to the context in this case study.

Context for communication	Audience	Method of communication

1B Identify people relevant to the communication context

As a workplace leader, it is important for you to identify the person or people you are going to be communicating with in your day-to-day interactions. By considering your audience's point of view, needs and literacy skills when planning your communication, you are more likely to achieve the outcome you are looking for.

Identify your audience by asking a set of questions. Being aware of your audience helps your effectiveness when delivering your message.

Questions to identify your audience may include:

- What is the communication context?
- Is it only one person who is going to hear the message?
- If only one person is involved, who else might they share the message with?
- Is the message for a large group of people from different departments and management levels?
- How is the message going to impact on the way the situation is viewed?
- Will the audience understand any technical language and jargon used?

Example: identify the communication context

Mark needs to deliver individual feedback to James about the fact his work performance is not up to standard. Mark considers who else may hear about what he says in the performance meeting. James will probably discuss what happens in the meeting with other members of the project team, so Mark needs to consider this when planning his communication. Mark wants to ensure he communicates effectively in his one-on-one meeting with James. He does not want to create any negative feelings within the project team. The goal of his communication is that James leaves the meeting with a renewed positive attitude. Mark also wants James to feel confident that Mark is a supportive leader.

Learn about your audience

As a workplace leader you spend the majority of your time communicating with the people in your team as well as with other team leaders and managers.

Always be aware of the possible impact of your communication on others and be willing to adjust accordingly. For example, be familiar with their requirements when communicating with them. You may need to speak more slowly and clearly, avoid colloquialisms or business jargon; managers may prefer you to make an appointment to speak with them, or provide a written report in addition to a verbal presentation.

Tips for considering your audience

Know each team member well. Be aware of their strengths, preferred working and learning styles, and literary skills, so you can communicate effectively.

Consider who else either intentionally or unintentionally is going to hear or see your message.

If you don't know the person you have to communicate with, find out who to address and the best way to present the information.

Be prepared and make notes on what you are going to say.

Find out whether they prefer you to communicate informally face to face or by email, or formally with an appointment and a written report or form.

Example: identify people relevant to the communication

George needs to put a proposal together and present it to a new senior manager who he has only met once. The context for this communication is organisational. The first step he takes is to use the workplace organisational chart to find out exactly who he will be writing to and how they fit within the organisation. George also uses the intranet to access the person's profile. He uses this information to target his communication. George knows that the time taken to complete this step will be beneficial in getting the results he is looking for.

Practice task 2

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

John reads about a work health and safety (WHS) conference that is taking place in Sydney the following week. In his current role as a team leader, he has WHS responsibilities but does not feel confident applying the relevant legislation or regulations. John decides he wants to attend the conference. It will mean that he will be away for three days, so he needs his workplace to give him leave and pay for his travel, accommodation and the cost of the conference. Even though he is the middle of a major project that involves team leaders from three other departments, he feels this conference will be of major benefit to him in his role. Performance reviews are also coming up with his team members. He thinks he will be able to put off the reviews until a later date so he can attend the conference.

John walks into his manager's office and says the following:

'Morning Mike, I need about $1200 to go to a conference in Sydney next week. I will be away for three days, so we will need to adjust the deadline for the project. I will also need to put the performance reviews back for the team until next month. What do you think?'

1. What was the context for this communication?

2. Identify the people relevant to the context.

3. Do you think John's communication was appropriate for the context and his audience? Why or why not?

1C Clarify specific environment and personnel factors that may impact on the success of the communication

As a leader you are responsible for how your communication is received. Successful communication is possible when people communicate clearly, are empathic and respectful of other people, listen actively and respond appropriately. It is your job to facilitate effective communication by making it easy for the two-way process to occur.

There are other factors that need to be considered. As part of planning and preparing any communication, time needs to be taken to reflect on the physical, environmental and interpersonal relationships that could impact on the success of your communication.

Communication can fail if the sender does not consider these factors when they are communicating.

Environmental factors that may impact on the communication

Environmental factors are external, physical conditions that are present during the communication.

Time	Place and space
Time plays an important role in the communication process. It is important to make the time to listen, prepare your response and give the other person time to respond. It is also important to pick the appropriate time to communicate your message.	Place is where the communication happens. Make sure there is privacy when needed by closing a door, using a barrier screen or going to a separate quiet area. Space refers to the personal space surrounding a person that they believe is theirs. Standing too close to someone or too far away can make a difference to the success of your communication. It is important to note that the level of personal space can vary from culture to culture.

Climate	Noise
Make sure the physical temperature and comfort of the room is appropriate.	Ensure your communication takes place in a quiet area. The amount, level, volume, consistency and type of noise can make it difficult to be heard and understood, especially if a person has a hearing impairment. It may be easy to misunderstand the meaning.

Personnel factors that may impact on the communication

Personnel factors that may affect the success of your communication include people's background and cultural beliefs, their language and literacy skills, the mood they are in and the feelings they have when they communicate.

Culture	Most people bring their own beliefs, values and biases based on their particular culture and background to a discussion, and interpret any message from their unique perspective and circumstance. People with similar world views will find it easier to understand each other's messages. Always communicate with an open mind and be aware of other people's perspectives. This helps you to speak, listen and respond without a preconceived idea of what to expect.
Language	The language used is a prime factor in understanding a message and being understood. Always consider the audience's skills and background when communicating. Use words the other person is familiar with; this may mean Australian colloquialisms, industry jargon and abbreviations delivered in complex sentence structures, or it may mean plain English in simple, basic sentences. Many people find acronyms and technical language intimidating but will not admit they do not understand it. Always respect the other person and use language that is clear and brief, and free of clichés, slang and unfamiliar words.
Emotion	If someone is angry, upset, frustrated or excited, they often find it difficult to pay attention and listen. Instead they may argue and become more upset, making it difficult for them to understand what you are saying, or for you to clarify what they are trying to tell you. Make sure people are calm and focused before you begin to talk.
Position	Your position as team leader may be intimidating to others. Team members may not feel comfortable discussing some situations with you. Make sure you create a relaxed and calm atmosphere in which people are willing to communicate freely. Show them you are interested in what they have to say.

Effective communication characteristics

Effective team leaders understand the importance of communication, and use a range of strategies and techniques to manage their team and ensure the work is understood and that work flow is efficient and meets designated outcomes.

Here is a list of communication characteristics commonly held by effective workplace leaders. These have an impact on the success of communication.

Check which ones you are confident you possess and consider those you may need to improve.

Self-awareness

- Communicate consciously and with intent.
- Each communication, no matter how small, should be thought out and considered. Have a clear picture in your head of your purpose.
- Be aware of factors that can impact on your message.

Well planned

- Know your audience and understand the context of communication, who you are communicating with and what their needs are.
- Organise your thoughts and present ideas and information logically.
- Anticipate the receiver's viewpoint and feelings, and take this into consideration when planning the communication.

Accommodating

- Adjust your style but not the message.
- Express yourself with conviction and communicate in an appropriate way.
- Tune in to your audience and seamlessly adjust, rephrase and tailor the message to meet their needs.

Active listening

- To be an effective communicator, you need to talk less and listen more.
- Maintain your focus and attention on the speaker throughout any exchange.
- Consciously choose to listen in order to understand the other person's point of view.
- Be attentive, pick up on subtle clues, modify and adapt accordingly.

Respectful

- Be courteous and professional in your communication at all times and repeatedly check that the other person or people understand.
- Use language they are familiar with.
- Be empathetic, keep an open mind and think from other people's points of view.

Constructive

- Use positive and inclusive language.
- Facilitate constructive communication.
- Preserve positive relationships while addressing problems.

Example: consider environmental and personnel factors when communicating

Jennifer is furious that her supervisor, David, has called out to her across the room and told her to redo her last report. She is unaware of what she needs to change and feels extremely embarrassed by his communication. David has obviously not considered her feelings, or else he would have arranged to speak to her in private.

Jennifer is not sure what to do next. She knows she needs to speak to David about the rewrite, but she feels uncomfortable and annoyed.

In turn, David is wondering when he is going to get the report. He needs it the following day for his meeting with his manager.

Both Jennifer and David need to consider their communication techniques and how their actions impact on each other.

Practice task 3

Review each of the communication situations listed in this table. Identify any factors that could impact on the success of the communication in each situation.

Communication situation	Factors that could impact on the success of the communication
A new employee recently arrived from Korea is attending a workplace induction.	
The team leader is giving performance feedback in an office that is open to other individuals.	
Someone is speaking to a receptionist in a hospital, who is behind a glass screen, about a health emergency.	
You need to teach someone how to use a piece of equipment five minutes before they are going home.	
You have recently been promoted to a manager's role, and are about to run your first team meeting. You were successful in the internal recruitment process; however, there are two people in the team who were not.	
A major change to the way a task is completed needs to be introduced.	
You need to ask team members to give you feedback on your performance as a leader as part of a team meeting.	

1D Identify and clearly understand the desired outcome of the communication

To make sure communication results in the outcome you want, take time prior to communicating to clearly identify what you want to achieve.

Being clear in your own mind about what you want helps you to make informed choices about how you will communicate. This process helps you to anticipate any issues that may arise during or after the communication, and to adjust the communication as needed.

Be clear about the outcome

An outcome is an observable and measurable result. When communicating effectively, a key element is to plan beforehand using outcome-based thinking. This means knowing your objective before communicating. It is difficult to communicate effectively if you do not know what you want from the communication.

For example, if you are giving instructions, then the outcome should be a correctly completed task; if you are going to explain your disappointment of a team member's actions, then you would want an outcome that confirms they understand you and they feel as if their side of the situation has been heard.

Outcome-based thinking means being able to answer a set of questions.

Questions may include:

- What do I want to get out of this communication?
- What does the other person/s want? (If you don't know, you can anticipate.)
- What problems could come up in the process?
- How can I deal with problems to ensure a successful outcome?

Use outcome-based questions

By asking questions you are able to more thoughtfully structure the message you are about to give. So take the time to think through this process in a logical step-by-step fashion so you become more comfortable in expressing your thoughts.

Another advantage of this process is that it makes you more aware of the wants and needs of others. It is important to consider the desired outcomes of your audience as well as your desired outcomes before communicating. If you get the response you want, this indicates you have communicated effectively. For example, if you are preparing to run a brainstorming session to identify improvements to team processes, the desired outcomes may include active participation by all members, innovative ideas, and suggestions for implementation.

Using outcome-based thinking helps you to be clear about this from the start. The outcomes you are looking for become a reference point for you to evaluate your communication during or after the exchange. You are able to adapt and adjust your message throughout the process.

Example: understand the desired outcome of the communication

Jane ponders over the performance review meeting she is going to have with Sally. Sally has been her second-in-charge for 18 months now. She usually pays close attention to detail and completes tasks within allotted time frames. Lately, however, there have been errors in her reports and she always seems to be asking for extra time. Because of this, Jane's work is suffering. She is getting behind in the strategic planning process for the new year.

Jane wants Sally to get back on track. She needs her to go back to producing the quality work that she had previously been producing. Jane wants to find out if there is anything going on outside work that may be affecting Sally's work. Jane wants to be able to offer Sally any support she needs.

Jane decides to write down the outcomes she is looking for from this performance review meeting. She then considers how she will open the meeting. She asks herself: 'What would be the best way to get Sally talking about how she feels?' Jane writes down some questions she could ask during the meeting. Jane also writes a statement that describes how she wants Sally to respond at the end of the meeting. Jane decides she will use this statement to review the meeting after it is over.

Plan your outcomes

Before you communicate, you need to identify and understand the desired outcome of the communication.

If the situation is complex, involves a number of people, and the outcomes include major decisions, such as changes to policies, changes to organisational procedures, or disciplinary measures, then you need to carefully plan your communication strategies.

Use these strategies.

Develop critical thinking	Take time to carry out this form of disciplined thinking that is clear, open minded, rational and informed by evidence. It will allow you to objectively analyse and evaluate a situation so you can consider your audience, decide on the best way to communicate and identify the best outcome.
Develop a communication plan	From your critical thinking, document a plan that covers: • the purpose of your communication • the audience • communication methods you are going to use • factors that could impact on the communication.
Rehearse	Use the plan to go through the communication exchange in your mind, and observe the potential pitfalls and how hard or easy it could be to reach your desired outcome. Consider the communication that is going to happen from a range of perspectives.

Practice task 4

For each communication situation in this table, identify the desired outcome.

Communication situation	Outcome
The team leader is leading a discussion in a meeting about recent customer complaints that are related to orders being sent out incorrectly.	
A team member is talking privately to the team leader about issues they are having with the amount of work being allocated to them, saying they feel overwhelmed.	
A senior manager sends an email to all staff in the department congratulating them on 100 days without an incident in the workplace.	
The marketing team posts information about a new product launch on the website.	
A customer makes a phone call to the workplace to provide feedback on the service they had received during their last visit. The customer feels frustrated.	

1E Evaluate available methods of communication against their suitability for the specific communication requirements

There are many different ways to communicate, including face to face in a group or individually; electronically using email, social media, or Skype; or through documents such as meeting minutes, reports, notices, survey forms and newsletters.

As communication passes from sender to receiver, there are many opportunities for the original message to change. Different methods suit different situations more than others. It is important to choose a method that helps the message get to its receiver as intended.

Select a communication method that is most effective to convey the message and ensure the desired outcome. The method needs to suit the communication need of the sender and receiver, and be appropriate for the context.

Choosing wisely means you are giving the communication more chance of being successful.

Communication methods

Be familiar with the various types of communication.

Written communication
Written communication is any type of interaction that makes use of the written word to convey a message. It can be paper-based or electronic. Examples of written communication are: • agendas and meeting minutes • letters • feedback • proposals • reports • signs and notices • newsletters • policies and procedures, guidelines, and training materials • web pages and the intranet • emails • text messages.

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Verbal communication

Verbal communication is any type of interaction that makes use of the spoken word to convey a message. Examples of verbal communication are giving and receiving information through:

- attending one-on-one meetings and group meetings
- providing training, coaching and mentoring
- using Skype
- making a presentation
- participating in formal or informal discussions
- giving verbal feedback
- counselling.

Nonverbal communication

Communicating a message through body language is referred to as nonverbal communication. It is often ambiguous, as it can have different meanings depending on the user's personality, background and culture. When your nonverbal signals match the words you are saying, they increase trust, clarity and rapport. Examples of nonverbal communication include:

- facial expressions and gestures
- how close we stand and how much eye contact we make
- posture
- touch
- how fast or how loud we talk and the tone of voice.

Choose a method of communication

Select the best method for communicating by evaluating each method against the specific requirements of the communication.

Use a set of criteria by which you can evaluate the methods.

The situation

Is the context a regular meeting, a report, a presentation, group training or counselling session? The context may clearly dictate the method of communicating, such as a verbal and electronic presentation; a written annual report; a demonstration using written documents, body language and verbal instructions; or a face-to-face private individual performance appraisal or counselling session.

Priority

How urgent is the information? If it is high-priority, it may need to be handled with a phone call or face-to-face conversation with key people, followed up with a clearly written email or memo to others who need to know. If the information is incidental or not critical, then a non-urgent email or even a chat in the lunchroom may be appropriate.

Time

How much time do you have to prepare the communication? Can you prepare a full written report?

How much time does the receiver have to attend to the communication? Will the receiver have time to read a full written report, or is a written or verbal summary more appropriate?

How quickly do you need to communicate this message? If the other person needs to have the information immediately, then a phone call or urgent email may be appropriate.

Audience

Who needs to get the information? Is it just one person or a group? Groups of people are best communicated with at a meeting.

What is their preferred way to receive communication? Consider their access to different communication mediums available; their language and literacy skills; and their role within the organisation.

Response

Do you need the receiver to respond immediately? What action needs to happen as a result of the communication? For example, replying to an email or phone call can be immediate; face-to-face training gives you the opportunity for immediate verbal feedback. If the response is not needed immediately, a written feedback survey may be appropriate.

Availability

What is your availability? Will you be available to respond to a query or a report? It may be inappropriate to email someone if you are available to read their response. If a team member is located away from the office, using Skype makes them easily available.

Prior knowledge

How familiar is the receiver with the information you are communicating? How much information do they need? New ideas, changes to procedures or information relating to changed legislation may need written information followed up by a verbal presentation, whereas a regular team meeting may only require an emailed agenda.

Example: evaluate methods of communication

On Monday morning Dean realises that he needs to inform his team that there will be an emergency evacuation drill on Friday afternoon between 1.00 and 3.00 pm that everyone must participate in.

He thinks about the different communication methods available and the specific communication requirements. He quickly evaluates each method to meet the purpose of the communication (inform team about emergency evacuation drill) and the outcome (all team members complete the drill correctly according to guidelines).

Dean dismisses the idea of a sign on the notice board or a post on the intranet, as he will not be sure everyone has read it. He decides to send a group email to inform the team about the evacuation drill and to include an attachment that explains the process. His team knows they must respond to the email so he knows who has received the information. Dean then organises a group meeting for Wednesday morning so he can go through the procedure and ensure everyone will be in the office at that time.

Advantages of verbal communication

Interpersonal communication not only includes the actual words you are saying; it is also about the unspoken messages expressed through nonverbal communication. This extra layer makes communicating verbally more appropriate for situations that are to do with relationships, because the sender has a multitude of signals at their disposal to use in order to get their message across. Nonverbal

cues can provide you with valuable information that allows you to modify or adjust your verbal communication. By doing this you can make sure your message has been received in the way you intended. Written communication does not have this advantage.

There are many situations when verbal communication is the most appropriate method.

Seeking input	**Establishing a relationship**
Verbal communication allows you to transmit emotions and receive immediate feedback. This form of communication is effective for any situation that requires the input of others.	Face-to-face verbal communication using effective body language is best when your communication requires you to establish a professional relationship based on trust and openness. This includes inductions, first-time instruction, coaching, counselling, delegation and conflict resolution.
Dealing with urgent matters	**Solving problems**
Urgent information is best handled in person to ensure full and immediate attention, or by telephone for an immediate response.	Any situation that needs brainstorming, problem-solving, consultation or negotiation is best addressed using verbal communication.

Advantages of written communication

Written records are permanent and, because most people can remember more through visual recollection, putting it in writing can make a more lasting impression.

If you want to deliver a precise, carefully thought out message, it may be more effective to choose a written communication method. This allows you to write, edit and rewrite your words until they say what you want them to say accurately and comprehensively. This process also allows you to add visual aids such as pictures and diagrams to help with understanding.

There are other advantages to choosing written communication.

Advantages of written communication
Written communication can be a follow-up to verbal communication, to reinforce or confirm something.
If you want your message to be authoritative, putting it in writing can help.
Written communication is useful for sharing factual communication.
Written communication is useful for conveying the same information to a large number of people.
Written communication is useful as a reference; for example, if you are introducing new systems or procedures, providing written material means you have something to refer back to.

Practice task 5

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Matt arrives in the office early one morning. There are a number of issues with his team that he needs to deal with. Two of the team members had a disagreement in the team meeting yesterday that got quite heated. Some things were said that were inappropriate and they left the meeting feeling angry and upset. Matt knows that he has to take some action. He is new to the role of team leader and this will be the first time he must address a conflict situation.

1. What methods of communication should Matt use to address this conflict situation?

2. Explain why this method would be the most effective in meeting the requirements of the communication.

1F Identify potential barriers to effective communication and develop solutions to minimise the impact

A barrier to communication is anything that gets in the way of the message being understood. A communication barrier can obstruct the process without fully stopping the communication. As a result, the message can be misunderstood or misinterpreted by the receiver. The message is not received exactly in the way the sender intended.

This breakdown can be due to a range of events or situations that block the communication process. As a workplace leader you need to be aware of these barriers and use strategies that minimise their impact.

Types of barriers

There are a number of barriers that may affect communication.

Language

Communicating with someone who speaks a different language can create a barrier.

Using technical jargon and abbreviations unfamiliar to the receiver, even if they speak the same language, can lead to communication breakdown.

Physiological

Communicating with someone with a sensory dysfunction; for example, a hearing impairment, speech disorder or vision impairment, can make it difficult for you to be understood.

Psychological

Communicating with someone who is concerned with their emotional state may have a serious impact. For example, a person may be having personal problems, causing them to stress and worry to such an extent they are unable to concentrate and clear their minds in order to receive your message.

Physical

Communicating with people who are not in the same location can limit face-to-face communication, which can impact on the effectiveness of the communication.

Inappropriate layout of the room and levels of privacy can create communication barriers.

Attitudinal

Communicating with someone who has a negative perception that prevents them from taking part in the communication process effectively can limit the success of the communication.

They could be using:

- selective hearing, meaning they only hear what they want to hear
- emotional editing, meaning they can be predisposed to liking or disliking something because of how they feel about it or their past experience with it.

Cultural

Communicating with someone from a different culture who uses different body language cues can limit understanding. For example, in many Asian countries eye contact can be seen as disrespectful or a challenge to authority; whereas in Australia it is considered polite, and an element of effective communication.

Stage of the communication process

- Sender-orientated barriers: lack of planning, improper choice of words and unjustified assumptions
- Receiver-orientated barriers: poor listening, lack of interest and bias
- Method-orientated barriers: poor selection of method of communication not appropriate for the purpose, or issues with technology that prevent communication

The impact of communication barriers

Any communication barrier has the potential to cause communication breakdowns. The impact could vary from a small misunderstanding to a major conflict with long-term repercussions. Communication barriers that are not dealt with have the potential to damage interpersonal relationships, slow down a project, cause clients to move their business elsewhere, waste time and cause stress.

Being aware of the context of the communication can help to identify any potential barriers. When planning any communication, ask yourself questions such as:

- What could go wrong with the communication?
- What can I do to prevent it going wrong?

Minimise the impact of barriers

It is very difficult to eliminate all barriers in every communication context. However, you can take steps to minimise their impact.

Here are some strategies you can use to minimise the impact of communication barriers.

Communication context	Potential barrier	Possible solution
Oral presentation to a group	Physical: background noise, phones and people talking	Locate the presentation in a quieter location
Training employees on a new computer system	Language: use of technical jargon	Provide each person with a glossary of terms that explains terms in plain English
Giving negative feedback to a team member about their performance	Attitudinal: team member displays negative behaviour, does not take feedback well	Use assertive language when providing the feedback and ensure body language is open and positive
Inducting a new arrival from India as a team member	Cultural: team leader has no previous experience working with someone from India and does not know anything about the culture	Research Indian culture to ensure communication is respectful and appropriate

Effective listening as a solution to communication barriers

The ability to listen effectively greatly enhances the communication process and can help to minimise the impact of barriers. Listening effectively means you are listening to the explicit meaning of the words you hear, as well as implicit meanings, unspoken words and nonverbal cues.

Effective listening is often referred to as active listening, which means you make a conscious choice to listen to someone else so you can genuinely understand their point of view.

Most people listen with the intent to reply. As someone else is talking, they are formulating a response in their head. During this time the listener is not giving the sender their full attention. They are not tuned in to all the cues being sent. It is therefore possible to miss the real meaning of someone's message.

Improving your listening skills will minimise the impact of communication barriers on the success of the communication process.

Tips for active listening
• Let the other person know you are listening to them by using body language and other signs that acknowledge the speaker.
• Give the speaker your full attention.
• Put your distracting thoughts aside.
• Avoid being distracted by environmental factors.
• Reflect what the speaker has said by paraphrasing.
• Ask questions to clarify.
• Summarise the speaker's points periodically to show you have understood.
• Allow the speaker to finish their points before asking questions.

Example: identify barriers to effective communication

Hayden works as a team leader at the local council. His team is made up of nine members. Two of the team work part time at a different location to the rest of the team. Hayden has been told by his line manager that there are some major changes coming in the new financial year at the council. It is going to mean significant changes to the way the team operates.

One team member, Brendon, has worked at the council for many years. He has seen many changes in his time and he is usually quite resistant to any changes. Hayden needs to plan carefully how he is going to communicate this information to his team. He knows there are numerous potential barriers to the communication and that if he wants it to be successful he needs to develop solutions to minimise their impact.

Hayden uses the three contingency questions he always uses when planning how he will complete a project assigned to him:

What can go wrong with this communication?

- Team members are not all together to receive the message; this could lead to the initial message being passed on incorrectly.
- Brendon could react negatively to the information, the other team members could follow his lead.
- Team members could be concerned about the security of their position.

What can I do to prevent it going wrong?

- Check everyone's calendar and ensure the meeting is called when everyone is available.
- Organise a one-on-one chat with Brendon to ask his advice on how to present the information, as he has had a lot of experience.
- Make sure I have all the facts so I can honestly answer people's questions and address their concerns.

Hayden feels better about the upcoming communication after identifying the potential barriers and coming up with solutions.

Practice task 6

Complete this table by identifying any potential barriers to effective communication and developing solutions that could minimise the impact.

Context	Potential barriers	Possible solutions
A client has a complaint and asks to speak to the manager. However, the manager is just about to go to a board meeting and is unavailable for a number of hours. The client becomes abusive.		
Ahmed needs all team members to work overtime that night because an emergency order has come in, and it needs to go out first thing in the morning. Ahmed sends an email to everyone telling them they need to make themselves available.		
Jillian is conducting interviews for a new position. She is not able to book a quiet space, so she must conduct the interviews at her desk, which is in an open office. She also needs to stay close to her computer because she is expecting an important email from a client that day and she can't afford to miss it. She notices that one of the applicants has a slight hearing impairment.		

1G Incorporate relevant business policies, procedures, regulations and legislation into communication processes

Communication is a vital part of creating and maintaining a safe and efficient workplace. Policies and procedures provide a framework within which an organisation operates. They define what your organisation does and how it does it. All workplace communication takes place within this framework. Policies and procedures provide an internal control system that clearly defines what people can or cannot do when they are communicating.

Team leader communication responsibilities

The way a team leader handles communication both within their team and the wider organisation can have a major impact on the relationship between them and individual team members, and the effectiveness of the team as a whole.

As a team leader your main job is to get tasks done by using the resources available to you. You set the tone and provide the model for others to follow.

Check that you understand your responsibilities when communicating.

It is your responsibility to do the following:

- Follow organisational procedures for communication.
- Be respectful, courteous, positive, empathetic and professional in your communication at all times.
- Know your audience and understand the context of communication and what people's needs are.
- Consider other people's point of view.
- Pay attention and pick up on subtle clues, then modify and adapt communication accordingly.
- Present your ideas effectively and appropriately by being brief, succinct and clear.
- Be emotionally literate and understand how your emotions may impact on how your communication is received.
- Always follow up communication to confirm understanding.

Follow organisational policies and procedures

It is important to understand the guidelines available for you to use to ensure any communication undertaken meets the organisation's standards, policies and procedures.

Here are some examples of typical workplace policies and procedures, and how they can be incorporated into the communication process.

Policies and procedures and the communication process

Work health and safety

WHS procedures:

- state the legal requirement for employers to consult workers
- give steps to be taken to elect representatives and select the communication channels that will be used to consult employees.

Anti-discrimination

Anti-discrimination procedures:

- state the legal requirement for employers to protect people from harassment and discrimination on the basis of age, sex, gender, disability and race
- give steps to be taken to raise a grievance, and links to codes of conduct that describe how everyone will be treated with respect and professionalism.

Privacy

Privacy procedures:

- state the legal requirements for employers to handle personal information appropriately
- give steps on how to ensure information is kept confidential and stored correctly.

Computer use

Procedures for computer use:

- state the organisation's conditions for use of work computers
- give information on what is appropriate and inappropriate use
- provides guidelines to do with copyright and intellectual property.

Conflict resolution

Conflict resolution procedures:

- state the organisation's commitment to addressing any conflict to the satisfaction of all concerned
- give information on the process to be followed and the documentation to be kept when dealing with conflict.

Email protocols

Email protocols:

- state the organisation's conditions for use of email as a communication channel
- give information on the way emails need to be addressed, closed, stored and copied.

Style guide

The organisational style guide:

- states the organisation's rules for professional consistent written communication
- gives information on the use of templates, writing style, use of company letterhead and logo, spelling, grammar and use of graphics.

Record keeping

Record-keeping procedures:

- state the organisation's expectations around record keeping
- give information on what records need to be kept, the forms to be used and the importance of accuracy and use of objective language.

Example: incorporate business rules and guidelines

Clare is given the task to produce a brochure that explains the features and benefits of a new service that is about to be introduced by the organisation. The brochure will be displayed in the front office area and customers will be encouraged to take one home.

Clare does not have much experience in this area. She decides to ask her manager for some advice. Joshua introduces Clare to the organisation's style guide. This document provides guidelines to employees when they are creating marketing material for customers. The style guide provides clear instructions about the template that needs to be used for creating brochures. It also covers such things as use of photographs and graphics, copyright and use of corporate colours. Clare now feels more confident about starting the task.

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Incorporate legislative and regulatory requirements into communication processes

Every organisation has legal obligations in the areas of equal opportunity, anti-discrimination, work health and safety, employee welfare, confidentiality and records. All communication must comply with any relevant Acts or regulations.

An Act is legislation passed by parliament. Regulations are the guidelines that dictate how the provisions of the Act are applied. For example, the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) states that issues must be resolved, while the Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011 describes the steps that must be taken to resolve an issue and record the outcome.

While it is your responsibility to model correct communication protocols, make sure team members are also aware of their obligations under the various Acts.

Legislation
Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth) and state WHS Acts Consultation is mandatory. Consultation provides an opportunity to share relevant information and participate in meaningful discussions about WHS matters in the workplace. All outcomes must be recorded.
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) All personal information must be kept secure and only available to authorised people. Make sure team members know how you plan to collect, store and use the information.

continued ...

… continued

Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)

There must be no discrimination during recruitment, employment, the termination of employment and when negotiating. Enterprise agreements, advertisements and interview questions must use inclusive language and be non-discriminatory.

Anti-discrimination Acts

Anti-discrimination Acts such as the *Commonwealth Age Discrimination Act 2004*, *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* ensure that all written, verbal and nonverbal interactions are free from derogatory, abusive and harmful words relating to age, race, gender, abilities or sexual orientation. Language must be inclusive and in plain English so they are understood by everyone.

Practice task 7

Read the scenario, then answer the questions that follow.

Scenario

Imagine you are a manager in a large organisation. You walk into the staffroom one afternoon and overhear members of your sales team discussing what they think about the newest member of the team. In the conversation, they are making inappropriate comments about the person's race.

1. What immediate action would you take? Explain your decision.

2. What follow-up action would you take? Explain your decision.

Summary

1. Context in communication refers to the circumstances surrounding the message. Taking the time to identify the context helps to ensure your communication will be effective.

2. Different contexts can require you to communicate in different ways. To be an effective communicator you need to adapt your communication to suit the context.

3. It is very important to know your purpose and audience before communicating. This enables you to target your communication so it is easily received and understood.

4. Environmental and personnel factors can impact the success of the communication. You need to be aware of where the communication is going to happen, and take your perceptions and emotions into account when delivering the message.

5. Communication can either be written, verbal or nonverbal (body language). The methods you choose need to be suitable for the context.

6. By identifying potential barriers in each communication context you can minimise their impact.

7. It is important to take into account relevant business policies, procedures, regulations and legislation when taking part in any communication in the workplace.

Learning checkpoint 1
Identify the context for communication

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in identifying the context for communication.

Part A

1. Explain what is meant by the context for communication and provide two benefits of identifying the context before you communicate.

2. What communication methods would you use to communicate the results of a safety audit to senior managers? Explain why the methods you have identified are appropriate for the industry context and the relevant people.

3. What methods would you use to communicate the results of a safety audit to your team? Explain why you chose these methods.

4. Describe two factors that can impact on the success of your communication.

5. Provide two examples of how you incorporate workplace policies and procedures into communication processes.

6. Describe three potential barriers to effective communication that could exist during a performance review meeting. How could you minimise the impact of these barriers? Use a table similar to this one or make a list of dot points.

Barrier	Action to minimise the barrier

7. Explain three techniques you would use to ensure you listen effectively to your team members during team meetings.

8. List at least four of your communication responsibilities as a leader.

Part B

Read the scenario, then complete the tasks that follow.

> **Scenario**
>
> Your organisation is a long-time customer of Rightlights. Last month you ordered 500 globes for a large building project. The sales representative agreed to give you a discount of 30 per cent because it was such a large order. You requested a quick turnaround because of the tight time lines on the project.
>
> You received the correct number of globes as per the order; however, the order was four days late. This caused a hold-up on the building project, which resulted in loss of profit. The finance department also informed you that the account did not reflect the 30 per cent discount. You need to respond to Rightlights.

1. Identify the context for the communication by using the 5 Ws (who, what, when, where and why) plus how.

2. Select a method to communicate with Rightlights. Create and submit a draft of your communication, including your desired outcome.

3. Explain why you think your chosen method is most suitable for the context.

4. Explain three ways you can ensure your message is clear and understood.

5. Identify two potential barriers to effective communication in this context and explain how you would minimise the impact of these barriers.

6. List four effective management communication characteristics you would use to maintain the professional working relationship with Rightlights.

7. Identify three kinds of workplace policies, procedures, regulations or legislation you would need to incorporate into the communication process.

Topic 2
Clarify messages and engage in communication

A successful message starts with a clear purpose that connects the sender's needs with the audience's needs. Whether you are communicating general day-to-day information or news about major changes, the most effective communication is well planned. Good planning means you create a message that moves logically to a clear conclusion. This important step in the communication process helps workplace leaders to achieve productivity gains, encourage innovation and build effective working relationships.

In this topic you will learn how to:

2A   Undertake communication using media and formats relevant to the context

2B   Incorporate respectful and positive approaches to communications

2C   Employ two-way processes to ensure a message is received, acknowledged, clarified and understood

2D   Seek feedback on communication processes from all parties

2A | Undertake communication using media and formats relevant to the context

Selecting the right media for your message can mean the difference between effective and ineffective communication. Media means the channels through which you choose to communicate your message. Different media suit different circumstances better than others.

Once the method has been decided on, you need to identify the format you will present the information in. Always follow organisational policies and procedures.

Analyse the communication situation

All workplace communications have a general purpose, such as informing, initiating, persuading or collaborating, which can guide you in the overall approach you take to communication.

For a simple routine communication, the purpose and audience is usually straightforward; however, it can be more complex when there are multiple audiences who need to receive the same message or variations of the message.

Always be sure of the audience, the purpose of the communication and the outcome you wish to achieve. If you formulate and deliver your message without any analysis of the situation, you run the risk of sending ineffective messages that are delivered inappropriately. As a result, time may be wasted, team members can become confused and frustrated, and relationships can be damaged.

A comprehensive analysis helps you organise your message so it is clear and meaningful, and determine the appropriate communication channels to choose for the situation.

You will become more proficient with your analysis the more practice you have.

Types of media

Media is the channel through which you choose to communicate your message. Media can be verbal, written or electronic.

Be familiar with the features of these communication methods so you can use the most appropriate one for the context.

Verbal (personal) media

Verbal media includes face-to-face communication during interviews, presentations, training, meetings, counselling and discussions. Being able to see, hear and react to each other can benefit the communication process.

Verbal media:

- provides the opportunity for immediate feedback
- involves nonverbal cues that help with the delivery of the message and understanding
- helps to express the emotion behind the words.

Verbal media is useful for getting people to discuss, ask questions, come to consensus and work together. However, if this is not your purpose, verbal media can reduce the communicator's control of the message and can be time consuming.

Written media

Written media includes memos, reports, letters, brochures, minutes of meetings, policies and procedures. Written media presents the opportunity for planning and controlling your message.

Written media:

- provides a permanent record
- enables you to reach audiences who are not in your location
- minimises the distortion that can accompany verbal messages.

Written media is useful for giving instructions, providing facts that do not need comment and gathering data. However, if this is not your purpose written media can increase the expected response time from your audience.

Electronic (digital) media

Electronic media involves a diverse range of technologies including email, telephones, voicemail, text messages, websites and blogs. Being able to access a large number of people at the same time or getting information out quickly are key advantages of electronic media.

Electronic media:

- delivers messages with speed
- reaches a specific audience
- increases accessibility to individuals within an organisation.

Electronic media is easy to overuse due to the fact that it allows for quick instant communication. Also, because it is quick and easy to use sometimes people do not put the necessary time into planning their communication. Mistakes are easy to make when composing and sending a message quickly.

Choose the appropriate communication media

Consider the context and purpose of your communication and the intended audience before choosing the communication media you are going to use. Individuals who use the appropriate communication media are effective communicators.

The following factors can help you to make the right choice of media.

Media richness	Richness is the media's ability to convey a message through more than one cue (visual, verbal and nonverbal) and to reproduce the information sent over it without loss or distortion. Media is also considered rich if it allows for immediate feedback. The richest media, therefore, is face-to-face communication.
	The leanest media does not provide the opportunity for feedback and is not personalised for the audience. It also generally takes a longer time to convey understanding. Examples of lean media are posters or unaddressed bulk emails.
	Generally speaking, you would use the richest media for more complex messages, to help communicate emotions and facilitate feedback. In contrast, leaner media is more suitable for sending simple, routine messages.
Message formality	our media choice can govern the style and tone of your message. The degree of formality of your message depends on the purpose of your message and the relationship you have with the audience.
	For example, a text message to a friend is less formal than a letter to an employer. Follow the organisation's policy for addressing people correctly according to their position and level of authority.
Media limitations	Every medium has its limitations. For example, although face-to-face communication is a rich media it can be restrictive. This is because the sender and receiver must be in the same place at the same time. Digital tools such as Skype can be used to overcome this barrier.
Sender intentions	What do you want the audience to think about you after they have received the communication? If your desired outcome is that the audience sees you as approachable, you may choose a different media than if you wanted the audience to see you as an authority.

Audience preferences	It is important to consider how your audience likes to receive messages, or which medium they would expect in a given situation. For example, some cultures emphasise written messages, while others prefer oral communication. Some workplaces define appropriate media for different situations by identifying what needs to be put in writing or if there is a particular document that must be used when communicating to a specific audience.
Urgency and cost	Various media have different costs and time requirements. These factors need to be considered when choosing communication media. An email may be quick and inexpensive; however, it may not be the best option for the message, context or audience.

Create and present clear written messages

The goal of communication is to provide clear messages easily understood by the audience.

Important qualities to consider in written communication are clarity, brevity and logic. Make sure you clarify your thoughts, purpose and outcome before you start writing. Decide on a logical order with a strong introduction and ending; for example, if you need to alert people to a potential problem, start with the problem, tell people why it's a problem and then say what you need them to do in order to manage it. Be concise and include only the information readers need to understand in order to act on the message.

Always follow the standard format for the type of document you are writing.

Items to check when preparing written communication:

- Keep to one idea per paragraph, including your main point in the first line.
- Use headings, subheadings and bullet points to make key points stand out.
- Write concisely, using short words and sentences.
- Avoid jargon.
- Use active voice to make it clear who is doing what.
- Use correct grammar and spelling.
- Take time to proofread.

Create and present clear verbal messages

When communicating verbally, choose the best time and place; make the communication clear, brief and logical; and be prepared. If there is detailed or sensitive information to share, you may need to make notes and outline key points in writing so you can maintain a professional approach.

Tips for presenting clear verbal messages:

- Project your voice so you can be heard.
- Avoid a monotonous pitch and tone to promote audience attention.
- Speak at a comfortable pace.
- Pronounce words clearly.
- Make eye contact as appropriate.
- Make use of strategic pauses.
- Use natural gestures and movements to reinforce the verbal message.
- Look for nonverbal cues from your audience, and adjust as required.

Create and present clear digital messages

Sending digital messages or using a website or blog to communicate must be done carefully to ensure the text is concise, the information is accurate and the message is sent to the correct recipients. Always check your work before sending it, especially if you are texting a message. Make sure any attachments are in a format suitable for the receiver, such as compatible software or a zipped file.

If using technology such as Skype, be prepared so the session is conducted efficiently. Speak clearly and perhaps a little slower to be sure all parties understand the information.

When using the telephone, check you have the correct person, speak clearly, and give the person time to assimilate what you have said and provide a response.

Make digital messages clear by:

- writing a succinct subject line to an email
- being brief and to the point
- avoiding ambiguous terms
- avoiding writing whole words in upper case
- ensuring your tone is appropriate for the purpose and audience
- structuring your message logically by grouping ideas
- avoiding sending large attachments
- reading what you have written before you send or publish it online.

Apply a format to your media choice

'Format' means the way you lay out or design the information for presentation. No matter what medium you choose, you need to make decisions about how the message is formatted. Some media, such as email, come with a preset format. Other media require you to make all the decisions about how you will format it. For example, if you are going to deliver your message through a verbal presentation you need to determine how you organise and structure the presentation.

Applying a format can also refer to the actual words you use. Your choice of words has to fit with the purpose of the communication, the expectations of the audience and be appropriate to the medium you have chosen. It is important to present a consistent message that aligns with the overall purpose of the medium used.

Always follow organisational procedures, which may require you to use a particular format. For example, regular reports, agendas or meeting minutes are more easily absorbed if they have the same format each time and are divided into sections so readers can quickly find the key information they need.

Examples of communication formats

Here are some examples of the contexts and advantages of different types of communication formats.

Team meeting

Context: situations that require collaboration and input from the team, such as brainstorming new ideas, gathering feedback and making decisions

Advantages: information can be received by the whole team at the same time; the team leader can expand or clarify ideas; and the team has ownership of decisions

Text message

Context: situations that require short, succinct messages and quick responses from individuals or groups in different locations such as scheduling or confirming appointments

Advantages: information can be sent and received efficiently; a prompt reply can be made; and a record is created

Business email

Context: situations that require longer messages such as responding to a customer or team inquiry, collecting and providing feedback and giving instructions

Advantages: electronic records can be created; attachments can be included; and there is a record of date and time of message for follow-up

Business letter

Context: situations that require a formal response and a professional image such as introducing an organisation to new clients or responding to a customer complaint

Advantages: use of templates saves time; a style guide provides guidance on formatting and layout; and a written record can be retained and referred to by the recipient

Report

Context: situations that require research information to be presented, data to be analysed, proposals and recommendations to be made in a formal setting

Advantages: different software applications can be used to graphically present information; and the document is structured for ease of reference

Presentation

Context: situations that require verbal explanations combined with visual aids; for example, inducting new team members or introducing a new product

Advantages: verbal communication supported by written and visual communication; use of multimedia adds interest and variety; and the presenter can observe the audience response and modify accordingly

Example: use media and format relevant to the context

Anna has a busy week ahead. She needs to write his quarterly report, organise performance review meetings for her team, collate the safety audit data to present to the safety manager and reply to a new customer's request for information on their product range.

Anna accesses a template from the intranet and uses it to write her quarterly report. Next she decides to email all team members about the performance reviews. She attaches a booking sheet to the email and asks each team member to choose a time. She uses a software application on her computer to collate and analyse the data for the safety manager. Finally, she does some research on the new customer's business and tailors the product information sheets to suit the nature of the business. She then formats the information into a brochure and writes a letter to the client that specifically addresses the customer's request.

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Practice task 8

Read the case study, then complete the task that follows.

Case study

Jane takes time out on a Monday morning to plan her week. She writes this list of tasks:

Task list: 1 June – 5 June

- Inform the team about the decisions made at the senior management meeting.
- Organise the team meeting for Wednesday.
- Confirm the numbers for the staff dinner.
- Put a proposal together for the HR Department about employing a new team member.

Complete this table by listing the tasks and then identifying the purpose, audience and media for each of the tasks on Jane's list.

Tasks	Purpose	Audience	Appropriate media (and why)

2B Incorporate respectful and positive approaches to communications

The way we communicate can play a major role in the success of our professional relationships. Words are often a small part in the message we communicate. Other factors like the media we use, the tone of our communication and our body

language all have a significant role in how we come across to others.

Effective communication is respectful. You respect others when you treat them as having true value in their own right. Effective workplace leaders communicate positively; they consider the other person, listen to them attentively and take into account their point of view.

Respectful communication

Communicating respectfully means you are willing to show consideration or appreciation to the person you are communicating with.

As all communication begins from within the sender, you have the power to choose to be respectful. You can therefore plan your communication in such a way that shows others you care.

Respectful communication
• Be mindful of the other person.
• Accept that everyone is different and has the right to be so.
• Value their point of view.
• Be polite, sincere, professional and empathetic.
• Use common courtesies, such as please and thank you; know and use the other person's name.

Positive communication

Positive communication is about choosing words and phrasing that communicates what you want, not what you don't want.

The goal of positive communication is to deliver a message in an uplifting and constructive manner so others feel empowered. Incorporating positive communication techniques into all your messages, no matter if the receiver is going to like them or not, helps to ensure you achieve the outcome you are looking for without damaging the relationship.

If you make a habit of always communicating positively and respectfully, you will minimise misunderstandings and continue to build and maintain effective working relationships. Team members will have the confidence to raise workplace issues if they know their communication will be treated in a positive manner.

How to deal with conflict

Everyone brings different life experiences to a discussion. Because experiences differ, the meaning we attach to something can differ and conflict may occur.

Approach these situations in a respectful, positive manner. The focus is on finding a solution that all parties can live with by exploring options until you find one that is acceptable. During this process you need to think from the other person's point of view, listen to them attentively and maintain open, positive body language. Consider their feelings and how you want the relationship to continue.

Always be professional throughout the communication process no matter which role you are taking.

When you are the sender

- Consider your audience.
- Clarify for yourself the thoughts, ideas, purpose and desired outcomes.
- Plan the communication to convey the content of your communication positively and respectfully.

When you are the receiver

- Attend to the other person.
- Minimise external and internal distractions.
- Listen attentively and paraphrase to show you have understood.
- Don't interrupt.

Effective listening techniques

Listening enables you to build productive relationships with others. Effective listening is a way to show respect for another person. Listening is about trying to understand how other people see situations and events so you can respond appropriately.

Active listening shows the person you value their view and respect their opinion. Listening is essential in gathering and providing sound information. It breaks down communication barriers, and establishes and maintains relationships.

Here are some effective listening techniques.

Face the speaker

Put aside papers and the phone, and look away from your computer screen and other distractions. Give the speaker your undivided attention.

Be attentive

Be present in the moment, and mentally screen out distractions such as background activity, noise and your own thoughts. Do not plan what you are going to say next while the other person is speaking.

Keep an open mind

Listen without judging or mentally criticising the things being said. Avoid jumping to conclusions.

Listen

You need to focus on what is being said. Let the words create a mental picture in your mind. If your thoughts start to wander, refocus immediately. Do not interrupt. Interrupting sends a message that you believe your view is more interesting, accurate and relevant. You need to remain tuned in to the other person until they finish what they have to say.

Ask clarifying questions

If you are unsure of something, wait for the speaker to pause before asking for clarification rather than interrupting. Do not ask questions that will take the speaker off on a tangent. If you notice your question has led the speaker away from their topic, take responsibility for getting it back on track.

Give the speaker feedback

Show you understand where the speaker is coming from by reflecting their feelings. You can also paraphrase the content to show you are listening, or you can simply use nods and smiles to show you are with the speaker and understand where they are coming from.

Pay attention to what is not being said

Take notice of the nonverbal cues like tone of voice, posture and facial expressions. Remember, words only convey part of the message.

Summarise to confirm

Conclude conversations with a summary statement that accurately captures what you have heard and understood so the speaker can confirm you are correct.

Example: respectful and positive approaches to communication

Kyleigh has been asked to mediate for two team members who have been having an ongoing conflict. Jamie feels annoyed and upset because he believes Shelley takes all the credit for the projects they work on together. Shelley doesn't understand the problem, as she believes that people should be more like her and just get on with the job.

Kyleigh wants Jamie and Shelley to reach a win–win solution to the problem. She has worked with them both for a long time and knows that they view things quite differently. Shelley is confident and task orientated. Jamie, on the other hand, needs recognition to help with his confidence and he tends to dwell on things.

Kyleigh wants to ensure her communication is respectful and positive to both of them. She knows that this issue has caused tension in the team and it needs to be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties to get the team back on track.

Kyleigh decides to use a process she learnt about recently called collaborative problem solving. She is confident that by using this process the relationship between Jamie and Shelley will be stronger because they will learn more about how the other person sees the world.

- She asks each person to share their thoughts and feelings on the issue.
- She encourages both of them to actively listen to each other by not interrupting and keeping an open mind.
- When each person has expressed their views, the other person summarises what they have heard and understood.
- This process continues until each person confirms that the other person has understood their viewpoint.
- They brainstorm solutions and she facilitates a discussion that leads to a win–win solution.

Practice task 9

Read the case study, then complete the task that follows.

Case study

Vesna has scheduled a meeting with Travis, the newest member of the team at Anytime Catering. Vesna has received several complaints from clients who feel that the catering package they purchased did not suit their needs. In each case, the clients had purchased a combined food package. They feel that a different package (at a lower price) would have better suited their needs. One client was particularly annoyed, as he claims the full terms and conditions were not made clear when he agreed to this food package.

Vesna is concerned that Travis has pushed the most expensive package without fully understanding the clients' needs. She knows that bad news travels fast. If these clients tell their colleagues about their poor experiences, the result could be further loss of business.

Write a script of the interaction between Vesna and Travis. The purpose of the script is to demonstrate your understanding of respectful and positive communication, effective listening and providing feedback.

2C | Employ two-way processes to ensure a message is received, acknowledged, clarified and understood

Two-way communication means both parties transmit information. One person or group expresses an idea. The other person or group receives and understands the message. Two-way communication includes feedback from the receiver. This feedback information informs the sender that the message has been received as the sender intended.

Effective two-way communications is circular. The sender sends a message and at the same time pays close attention to the messages coming back to them. They use this information to adjust their communication as needed.

Communication is negotiated. The intent of both the sender and receiver is mutual understanding. Both sender and receiver listen to each other, gather information and are willing to make changes to ensure the other party understands. It is a reciprocal process, with both parties being prepared to give and take.

Communication responsibilities

As a workplace leader you need to be accountable for the success of your communication. You should have full control over your message, the communication channels you use, and the amount of time you allow for the receiver to clarify and confirm their understanding.

Check that you understand your communication responsibilities.

Communication responsibilities:

- Communicate clear instructions to team members.
- Listen to team members' feedback.
- Encourage open communication among team members.
- Strive for team consensus and win–win agreements.
- Communicate team views to upper management.
- Motivate and inspire the team.
- Provide opportunities for team members to clarify and confirm their understanding.
- Provide constructive feedback to the team on how it may improve.

Acknowledge a message

To acknowledge a message means you are allowing the other person to have their view and that you recognise and appreciate their perspective. After acknowledging a message you can respond appropriately. This process demonstrates your commitment to understanding the other person's point of view without judgment.

You can acknowledge a message in different ways.

Nonverbal

A smile or a nod sends a clear signal to the other person that you have received the message.

Verbal

Asking a question to clarify, paraphrasing what you have heard back to the sender or summarising the main ideas presented, demonstrates to the sender your intention to understand.

Written

Including words from the sender's email in your reply shows you are aware of their perspective, it demonstrates you have read and understood their written message.

Action

Taking action to complete a request within a designated time line demonstrates your understanding of the message.

Opportunities to clarify and confirm

Providing the opportunity for the receiver to clarify or confirm the information is another part of the communication process that needs planning and consideration. Effective communication is not based on assumptions. There needs to be deliberate action taken that allows the receiver to confirm that they understand the message.

There may be a breakdown in communication if the receiver does not have the opportunity to clarify and confirm their understanding.

Use different methods of communication to clarify and confirm understanding and avoid a communication breakdown.

Methods to confirm understanding

Verbal

Check with the receiver by using open questions that encourage the receiver to provide their complete understanding of your message.

You can use open questions like, 'What do you think about that?' or 'What can I clarify?', rather than a closed question such as 'Do you understand?'

Written

Conclude written communication with a line such as, 'Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further clarification.'

Follow up written communication with a face-to-face meeting or a phone call to provide an opportunity for the receiver to demonstrate their understanding.

Nonverbal

If you notice nonverbal cues indicating the receiver is not understanding, change the way you are communicating, reword your message and ask a question that encourages the other person to share their perspective.

Ask unspoken questions nonverbally by leaning slightly forward and using pauses to encourage the speaker to continue.

Feedback processes to confirm understanding

Communication is not successful until it has been considered and confirmed by the receiver. To do this we use feedback. Feedback is the reaction you get from the receiver. It tells you if your message has been received and understood, and enables you to evaluate the effectiveness of your message.

Feedback serves as a regulating device and makes communication two-way and meaningful. The sender continually adjusts their transmission in response to the feedback. This dialogue becomes the exchange of ideas or opinions with a view to reaching an agreement.

Lack of feedback can lead to frustration, conflict and sometimes long-term damage to professional relationships.

Consider these aspects of feedback.

The timing of feedback
• Feedback can be instant in face-to-face communication. • In other situations feedback can be delayed as the receiver takes time to think or consider the message.
Provide appropriate feedback
• If you are the receiver, it is important to provide appropriate feedback to the sender. • You can do this by maintaining open body language and an appropriate tone in your voice. • By asking questions and summarising you can let the other person know you have understood the message. • Respond to emails in a timely manner or complete tasks assigned to you correctly.
Actively seek feedback
• If you are the sender, you need to actively seek feedback from the receiver. • You can do this by being aware of their nonverbal communication, allowing them sufficient time to process the information before expecting a response and listening to any response you receive. • You can ask them to confirm their understanding either verbally or in writing.
Consider the method of communication
• It is important to consider the method of communication based on the type of feedback needed. • If you have an urgent matter, it is best to communicate verbally so feedback is immediate and you can seek clarification straightaway if necessary. • If face-to-face communication is not possible, telephone or real-time electronic communication are good alternatives.
Written communication
• Written communication should be used when you want to communicate to several people, or in less urgent situations. • Feedback could be the return of a portion of the message to the sender with new information attached to demonstrate understanding. • A follow-up phone call or a personal visit can be used to provide assurance they have received and understood the intended message.

Example: use two-way processes

Simon asks Melissa to write a press release about a new product. Melissa nods and smiles. Simon takes this feedback as an indication that she understands his message. However, he decides he wants to double-check. He has had issues in the past with assuming people have understood, only to find out they have gone down a different track.

Simon continues the conversation by asking Melissa the following question: 'What ideas do you think should be included in the press release?'

Melissa responds with ideas that suit the correct product. Simon concludes the conversation with Melissa, knowing that she has understood his message.

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Practice task 10

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

> ### Case study
>
> Jackson is part of a team investigating a new software program that his department is going to use for managing projects. He needs to get three quotes from different software companies. He receives one quote by email. He responds to the email by the end of the day. In his email, he thanks the company for the information and tells them he will get back to them within two weeks.
>
> Jackson receives another quote over the phone. He concludes the call by summarising the information provided by the sales representative, asking them to confirm all the inclusions, and giving them a time frame for when he will let them know if the quote has been accepted.
>
> The third quote is received in writing during a face-to-face meeting with a sales manager. Jackson notices an installation fee as well as an ongoing maintenance fee is included in the written quote. He asks the sales manager to clarify the charges. Jackson did not ask for this service to be included when he made his original inquiry. The sales manager tells Jackson he will prepare a new quote immediately so Jackson can present it with the other quotes.

1. Explain three feedback processes Jackson used.

continued...

2. Do you think Jackson engaged in effective two-way communication when completing his task? Why or why not?

3. How did Jackson's actions demonstrate that he was taking responsibility for his messages?

2D Seek feedback on communication processes from all parties

Successful workplace leaders know the importance of reviewing their communication in order to improve it. To reflect on the way you communicate it is important to include all parties and take their views into consideration when identifying areas for improvement. Feedback provides useful data and information on the effectiveness of any communication.

By asking for feedback on your communication you set a good example for your team. You are showing them you are accountable for your communication and genuinely interested in their views. Gathering feedback information from all parties means you get a range of perspectives to draw conclusions from. It means you can learn more about how others see things and use this information to tailor any future messages.

Being proactive means you are taking charge of your communication and not leaving it to chance. This process increases your self-awareness. It helps with future decision-making and will improve your communication skills.

Methods for gathering feedback

Feedback is information about reactions to your communication process that is used as a basis for improvement. Be proactive. Effective workplace leaders are aware that communication is one of the most important skills they can develop; they own their communications and take full responsibility for the successful receipt of their messages.

It is crucial that they strive to improve their communication skills by seeking feedback about the processes they use.

Methods for seeking feedback on communication processes

- Ask a peer to observe you running a meeting or giving a presentation and give you specific feedback on how you present your messages.
- Establish a focus group of customers to provide you with ideas on the best ways to keep them informed and up to date.
- Conduct one-on-one interviews with team members to discuss your communication style and choice of communication methods.
- Post draft copies of procedures or guidelines for completing tasks on the intranet and ask for comments.
- Develop email surveys and send them out to stakeholders asking them to rate particular aspects of your communication.
- Review work health and safety data and records to establish if policies and procedures are being followed or training has been effective.
- Review exit interviews to pick up any patterns that link communication to reasons for leaving.

Example: seek feedback on communication processes

Mia has just completed an induction program for a group of 25 new staff members. The induction program consists of three parts.

Part 1: Pre-start section – eLearning package that covers relevant policies and procedures

Part 2: Induction workshop – face-to-face interactive workshops that cover codes of conduct and the organisation's culture and values

Part 3: On-the-job buddy program – each new staff member is paired up with an existing team member to learn about the day-to-day procedures of their job

This is Mia's first time managing an induction program. She decides to collect feedback from all parties about the effectiveness of the communication channels used.

Mia uses the following strategies to collect feedback on her communication skills:

1. Email a survey to all new employees three months after they start to ask their opinion on the usefulness of the induction program.

2. Run a focus group made up of workplace buddies to ask them how prepared they felt and what could be done to improve this part of the program.

3. Do one-on-one interviews with team leaders to discuss how quickly new team members were able to work independently.

Practice task 11

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Grant is the sales manager for a manufacturing company. Recently there have been numerous complaints about the ordering system. Customers seem to be confused about time frames and there are inconsistencies between different teams on how the whole process works. Grant knows that customers receive most of their information from the website and the contracts they sign when they become account customers. He wonders if this information reflects recent changes to the website and ordering system. He also investigates whether teams have had enough time to participate in any training on the new procedures. There seems to be a communication breakdown. Grant takes responsibility for any communication related to the changes. He decides to collect feedback from all parties to see if he can identify areas for improvement in the way he communicates with his department.

1. Identify the parties Grant needs to collect feedback from.

2. Describe methods Grant could use to collect feedback from each party.

3. What could change because of Grant collecting and analysing this feedback?

4. Explain two ways Grant demonstrated his leadership communication responsibilities.

Summary

1. To communicate respectfully means you are willing to show consideration and appreciation to the other person.

2. Effective listening is a way of showing respect to another person. It means you want to understand exactly what the other person means.

3. Effective two-way communication is circular. The sender sends a message while at the same time receiving and interpreting messages from the receiver.

4. Acknowledging a message demonstrates your commitment to understanding the other person's perspective.

5. Always clarify and confirm the message has been received and understood.

6. Use a variety of feedback methods to identify how successful your communication skills and processes are.

Learning checkpoint 2
Clarify messages and engage in communication

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in clarifying messages and engaging in communication.

Part A

1. Complete this table by identifying and giving reasons for appropriate media choices for different contexts.

Context	Media choices	Reason why media choice is appropriate
Setting up an urgent meeting with four people who work in different locations		
Presenting information to a prospective new client		
Ordering stationery from a preferred supplier		
Coaching a team member on telephone sales skills		

2. Explain what you can do as a team leader to keep your communication respectful and positive.

3. Explain how effective listening techniques help to build effective relationships.

4. Two-way communication is cyclical. Explain what this means.

5. Provide an example of how you could ensure the receipt and acknowledgment of the sender's message in each of these situations.

Situation	Ways to acknowledge the sender
A team member shares personal health information	
A customer has emailed expressing their concern about a missing invoice	
Your manager phones and asks for a detailed status update on the current project you are working on	
Your health and safety representative asks for space on your next agenda to discuss an upcoming audit	

6. What role does feedback play in effective communication?

7. If a team leader asks a team member to complete a task and the team member completes it incorrectly, who is responsible for the communication breakdown? Explain your response.

8. Summarise the factors to consider when choosing media. Explain how considering these factors helps to ensure effective two-way communication.

Part B

Read the scenario, then complete the tasks that follow.

Scenario

You have just finished interviewing applicants for a short-term internal position. The vacancy is for a project manager to implement a new marketing campaign across the whole organisation. There were two applicants for the position. They both had to address the following selection criteria in writing.

Demonstrated ability to:

- support teams in the development and delivery of new products
- develop campaign strategies
- prepare and manage detailed project plans
- create and manage a large program of work across multiple teams
- communicate complex issues clearly and concisely to senior management and a variety of audiences.

The written applications showed that both applicants were suitable, so you decide to interview both.

Steven is the first applicant. He has all the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to meet the criteria and presents very well in the interview. In a previous role, part of Steven's responsibility was to present reports at the monthly senior managers meeting.

Michael is the second applicant. He does not have any experience in communicating with senior management and other audiences. In the interview he finds it difficult to discuss his experience clearly and concisely. Michael has similar skills, knowledge and experience to Steven when it comes to the other criteria; however, he does not appear able to present his ideas effectively.

You decide to appoint Steven to the position because he meets all the selection criteria.

When communicating to unsuccessful applicants, you know that you need to follow the relevant policies and procedures. Part of the internal recruitment procedure states that unsuccessful applicants must be informed of the selection decision in a positive respectful way. They need to be given the opportunity to clarify and seek feedback on their performance during the recruitment process via email.

1. Using the following format, write an email to Michael informing him that he is unsuccessful in his application to be the project manager for the new marketing campaign.

    From: david@msg.com.au

    To: michael@msg.com.au

    CC:

    Subject:

    Message:

    Kind regards,

    David Madison

2. The next day you receive the following email from Michael.

    From: michael@msg.com.au

    To: david@msg.com.au

    CC:

    Subject: Marketing Project Manager position

    Good afternoon David,

    I was very disappointed to find out I was not successful. I really believed that I had all the necessary skills and experience needed to take on this role. This is the third time I have applied for an internal position and been unsuccessful. I am feeling quite frustrated. I really want to gain a position in marketing. What can I do to improve my chances in any future internal vacancies?

    Kind regards,

    Michael Lowerson

Write an appropriate response to Michael's email.

Part C

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

> **Case study**
>
> Gemma cannot understand why her team members do not respond positively when she tells them at the end of their team meeting that they will all be moved into small teams, and how the new workflow is to operate. The new processes are designed to save time and take the pressure off some members of the team by spreading the workload more evenly. Gemma tells the team how both the customers and the organisation will benefit. Instead of reacting enthusiastically, the team all sit staring sullenly at the floor. Brian is the only person to speak up and he simply refuses to give the new processes a go. He insists he will continue to complete his tasks as he has always done, as he can see no benefit of the changes. Then he leaves the meeting. Gemma had hoped everyone would get on board and give the new processes a go as early as the following day, as she knows they would save a lot of time. Instead she has created a new set of issues she had not even considered.

1. What did Gemma want to achieve as a result of her communication? How successful was she?

2. Provide at least four ways Gemma could improve her communication with her team.

3. Respectful and positive communication leads to mutual understanding. How could Gemma have made her communication more respectful to her audience?

4. How effective was the two-way communication during the meeting? Explain your response.

5. Brian gave Gemma feedback as he left the meeting. What should Gemma learn from the feedback?

Topic 3
Take follow-up actions

The communication process does not end with sending the message. There needs to be follow-up to ensure understanding and the timely completion of any required action. Follow-up is necessary to ensure the achievement of common goals. A workplace leader cannot send information to the team in an email and hope this will be grasped, understood and acted upon. Deliberate follow-up actions need to be taken to ensure the intended outcome of the communication is achieved.

In this topic you will learn how to:

3A   Maintain a record of the communication process and outcomes in line with enterprise policy and procedures

3B   Identify follow-up actions and communicate them to relevant people

3C   Identify and incorporate opportunities to improve leadership communication processes

3A Maintain a record of communication process and outcomes in line with enterprise policy and procedures

Records of communication processes and outcomes provide you with a reference point to go back to when you are taking follow-up action. Rather than relying on memory, a written record provides a valid, reliable and acceptable representation of events and discussions. It is precise and easily retrieved by all relevant parties for future reference. Written records can help to build common understanding by clearing up any confusion.

Communication records may be kept to:

- satisfy legal requirements
- monitor productivity and projects
- make informed decisions about items such as pay rises and promotions
- manage the performance of employees
- record disciplinary action, including termination
- continuously improve the communication processes used.

What records are kept?

Records provide information that can be acted upon to improve the outcomes of the organisation at all levels. Here are some examples of the types of communication records kept and an explanation of their purpose.

Minutes of meetings

Minutes record main points of discussion and action to be taken, who is responsible and the time frames for the action to be completed.

Performance management

Performance appraisal records detail a person's performance discussion, future training and development to be undertaken, and career planning.

WHS consultation and incidents

It is a legislative requirement for management to consult workers about matters that affect work health or safety. Records of WHS consultation provide evidence that consultation has taken place and what action needs to be taken to address issues. All workplace incidents must be reported and recorded.

Workplace training, coaching and mentoring

Training records provide information on what was covered in the training, who participated, assessment results and evaluation. The records act as a planning tool for future sessions by detailing successes and issues that need to be addressed.

Grievance procedures and complaints

Records from grievance discussions provide a record of who was involved, the action taken, the results of the action and recommendations.

Feedback

Feedback received from customers can be analysed and used for continuous improvement. A record needs also to be kept of the action taken to address customer feedback. Data can be gathered from team members by asking for feedback on the performance of the team.

Requests for resources

Always keep a record of who asked for a resource, when it was requested and why it was needed. A record is also kept of the resources agreed to.

Project updates

Summary reports show the progress of a project in relation to the time lines set out in the original plan. The reports also provide a record of any issues and how they were dealt with.

Anecdotal

Personal notes made by a team leader may cover specific incidents that need to be followed up.

Records storage

Records management is the practice of maintaining records from their creation to their eventual archival or disposal so the required information is available for the right person at the right time to address their needs.

Records of communication processes can be stored using print-based or electronic files. The type of storage method used depends on a number of factors.

Appropriate storage methods
Purpose of the record What is it being kept for and who needs to use it?
Nature of the record Does the record contain sensitive or confidential information that needs to be stored securely?
How often it is used Is the information needed daily, weekly, monthly or yearly?
Storage methods available Does the workplace have space for paper-based files, or are electronic files more appropriate?
Retention Does the record need to be kept for a specific length of time due to legal or organisational requirements?

Follow enterprise policies and procedures when maintaining records

Established policies and procedures ensure the organisation carries out its business in a compliant and consistent way. Most organisations have policies and procedures that relate to the managing of all records of communication. These provide guidance in terms of what information to record, when to record it and how it is to be recorded and stored.

In some instances, the policies are governed by specific legislation such as the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth), which provide direction for record keeping and security.

Examples of records management policy and procedures

Always follow the organisation's records management policy or procedure to ensure the consistency, quality and usefulness of the communication records kept. These policies and procedures can also be used to contest any allegations of legal or regulatory infringements, as they can provide proof of intent. They also help to make the records easy to retrieve by the appropriate person, and can instil a sense of confidence in the team, as they feel assured information about them remains secure and confidential.

Examples of records management policies
• Staff must ensure they create records of all decisions and actions taken in the course of their official business duties.
• Organisational templates must be used for letters, faxes, reports and proposals.
• Formal records must be stored electronically using the file naming convention in the style guide.
• All outgoing communication must contain a reference file number as prompted in the template.
• Hard-copy records should be stored with access restrictions as outlined in the records management procedures.
• The location of each record must be recorded and updated with every movement of the record.

Example: maintain records of communication process and outcomes

Jeff's team meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month. Each person in the team takes turns chairing the meeting and taking the minutes. Jeff provides training for all his team on minute taking. He provides the following template that meets the requirements of the records management policies and procedures.

Minutes of team meeting held on:

Location of meeting:

Chairperson:

Minute taker:

Present:

Apologies:

Topic:

- – Key points
- – Action required
- – Who by
- – Time line

All team members know that minutes need to be emailed to all team members by 5.00 pm the day after the meeting. A hard copy needs to be placed in the team meeting folder and an electronic copy filed on the intranet in a folder titled 'Team Meeting Minutes'. These minutes provide an effective written record of team activities, achievements, issues and concerns. They are often referred to when planning new projects.

Practice task 12

Undertake research to learn about your organisation's policies and procedures for records management.

1. What specific types of records are covered by the policy and procedures?

2. What steps are taken to maintain the security and confidentiality of records?

3. Are there any differences between the way paper-based or electronic records are managed? If so, explain what they are.

3B Identify follow-up actions and communicate them to relevant people

Follow-up actions refer to the sequence of steps taken or the tasks that must be completed for an activity to succeed. Follow-up actions describe what is to be done, who will do it and when it will be done by. Often follow-up action is required to achieve a designated outcome.

The sender of the message is responsible for seeing the communication process through to the end. This includes identifying the required follow-up action and communicating this to the relevant people.

Identify follow-up actions

Follow-up actions are those tasks that arise out of the communication process.

Here are some examples of different communication situations and the follow-up actions that may result.

Team meetings	Actions required to be completed as a result of group discussion on flexible working hours during a team meeting. Example: • 'Joe will survey staff and collate information before the next meeting' is written into the minutes of the meeting.
Requests from others	Actions required to be completed as a result of requests from customers, team members, senior managers and external organisations such as banks, government departments and professional networks. Example: • A customer requests information on the new product range from the sales representative, who then puts time aside in his diary to source the information and send it to the customer the following day.

Performance reviews	Actions required to be completed as a result of completing a performance appraisal. Example: • A manager agrees to a team member attending a training program on project management within the next three months. The manager adds the task of researching suitable programs to his monthly planner and sets a reminder in his electronic calendar to get back to the team member within a month.
Work health and safety meeting	Actions required to be completed as a result of completing a safety audit. Example: • Health and safety representatives for each work group are asked to conduct a training needs analysis for their team in the areas of first aid and manual handling before the next meeting. The representatives set another meeting for the following week to devise the strategies they are going to use to complete the task on time and develop their own action plans.
Performance reviews	Actions required to be completed as a result of completing a performance appraisal. Example: • A manager agrees to a team member attending a training program on project management within the next three months. The manager adds the task of researching suitable programs to his monthly planner and sets a reminder in his electronic calendar to get back to the team member within a month.
Change management	Actions required to be completed after the implementation of a change initiative. Example: • A team leader communicates proposed changes to records management that has come from senior managers. The team leader follows up the initial information session with an email the following day to ask each team member how they feel about the changes and to provide them with the opportunity to express any concerns.

Communication plan

When planning your message and how it is going to be delivered, you can also identify follow-up action that may occur as a result of the communication process. You may wish to use a communication plan to provide a visual representation of the complete communication process, including any follow-up action.

A communication plan sets out:

- the reason for the communication
- the audience
- method of communication
- key message
- required documentation
- follow-up action required.

Example: communication plan model
Communication Plan
What is my purpose?
❑ Inform
❑ Inspire
❑ Persuade
❑ Inquire
❑ Create
❑ Research
❑ Other
What is the desired outcome of the communication?
Who is the audience?
What is the most appropriate form of media to use to communicate to this audience for this purpose?
What are their needs/wants/priorities?
What is the most appropriate time and place for the communication?
What are the key messages I want to get across?
How will the communication be documented and any decisions made recorded?
What follow-up action will result from the communication?

Communicate follow-up actions to relevant people

Most formal workplace communication results in follow-up action being taken. Always follow up any communication you have made to ensure the process is finalised and outcomes are achieved. Identify people you need to contact; this may be to gather further information from them or to provide them with documentation such as results, minutes or reports.

Part of your responsibility and accountability as a team leader may be to inform others of the follow-up actions they need to take and then to monitor them to make sure the actions happen.

Communicate follow-up actions from meetings

Follow-up actions often result from meetings. Everyone involved needs to respect and observe the actions requested and the deadlines set in order to achieve the required results. All meeting documents, including agendas, minutes and supporting documents, should be stored together for future reference.

Follow-up actions can be documented in the minutes of the meeting. They may involve a range of tasks, such as gathering further information, sending information to specific people, arranging further meetings, collecting quotes or preparing a report.

Ensure the minutes are produced and distributed to all attendees the next day. Make sure you clearly identify who is responsible for what action as well as the deadline for completing the actions.

Team leaders need to check to ensure action is taking place as agreed. This could mean checking on progress between meetings by sending an email or making a phone call to individuals who agreed to take follow-up action.

Communicate follow-up actions using email

Email is a convenient way to communicate. Messages move quickly, and information can be readily shared in the body of the email or through attachments. Emails are also easily archived and searched. They can be sent to multiple people and groups for use as a collaboration or project management tool. Using emails means that a record of communication is maintained for future reference. Follow-up action can be documented in emails.

Written text can sound harsher than the spoken word. You should not write an email when you are upset; you may later regret it and there is no way to take it back.

Here are some guidelines for preparing emails that clearly identify follow-up actions.

Subject line	Think of your subject line as the summary of your email; add as much context as possible. For example, instead of writing 'Meeting Notes' in the subject line, write something more descriptive like 'Meeting Notes from strategic planning meeting 10 August', or you could use categories; for example, a subject line like 'Action: Complete survey by Wednesday' alerts the reader that there is an action associated with the email.
Highlight actions	Make sure follow-up actions are clearly articulated. If actions are hidden in text, they stand a risk of being missed. Make sure all action items are clearly identified by noting who is responsible and a deadline. You could put this information in a table in the body of your email. Anyone who has an action item assigned to them should be added to the 'To' field on your email. Do not include individuals who are not involved in the message.
Be brief	Be brief and to the point. Read through your email before you send it and ask yourself: 'Is there any way I could make it shorter?' In some cases you may want to attach a document to the email that provides more details.
Break into sections	If there are multiple parts to the email, break it into sections. You could use the ABC approach, which is: • Action summary – a brief summary of what you expect the reader to do based on the email • Background – this is the body of your email, use dot points or numbers to focus on key points • Close – this is where you can add incidental notes; you can also highlight next steps
Timing	Take timing into consideration when sending emails. For example, important emails sent on a Friday afternoon may be missed by the receiver on Monday morning. Call-to-action emails are best sent earlier in the week and early in the day. Add an automatic reply if you are unable to respond within a reasonable time frame. This enables the sender to contact someone else if they need a quicker response to keep the flow of work going.

Importance of timely follow-up

Timely follow-up helps to detect any problems early on and to ensure time lines are met. It reduces the likelihood and consequences of something going wrong, as it allows time to solve issues or adjust plans. It is a proactive way to ensure goals are met and objectives achieved.

Timely follow-up means you know where each person is up to in their assigned tasks and you know where to put extra resources if required. An effective workplace leader takes responsibility for tracking the progress of any assigned task.

Use a range of strategies to track tasks and plan for timely follow-up.

Use pages in your journal or diary

Set a reminder in your calendar, phone or whatever planning tool you use so you will not forget to follow up.

Note the date and name of the person responsible for the task; the specific actions they have to take; and the date or dates for completion.

Use email folders

Create a folder called 'Work in Progress'. Put a copy of the email that covers the task in the folder. Set reminders to follow up before the due date. You can then forward the original message as a reminder and ask for a progress report. When the task is completed, you can delete it from the folder.

Organise progress meetings

Organise brief progress meetings on a regular basis, either daily or weekly for people to report on where they are up to. Use the information that comes from these meetings for any re-planning and adjustments. Keep those who need to know of any changes to the original task or time line updated.

Provide sufficient time

Give people an appropriate time to respond to the follow-up action. Some actions may be immediate, but some may take time and effort to complete.

Example: communicate follow-up actions to relevant people

Rali organises a lunch meeting with his team. When he gets back to his office, he sends the following email.

From: rali@energyplus.com

To: linda@energyplus.com; rebecka@energyplus.com; john@energyplus.com

Subject: Actions: Team meeting 5 November

Good afternoon,

Thanks for the productive lunch meeting. Here are the follow-up actions we agreed on.

Actions	Owner	Due date
Prepare sales presentation for customer meeting on 17 November	Linda	15 Nov
Investigate options for video streaming	John	10 Nov
Finalise customer case study	Rebeka	15 Nov
Identify five potential new customers	Rali	7 Nov
Send invitations to customers	Rali	12 Nov

Yours sincerely,

Rali Thirthica

Team Leader Customer Service

Practice task 13

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Stephanie is a team leader for an electrical wholesaler. She leads a team that handles accounts payable and receivable. Stephanie holds an impromptu meeting with her team on 2 July to discuss the increase in customer complaints being received about incorrect accounts. The team decides that they need to look at what could be going wrong. Jillian says she will review accounts for the last three months to analyse the types of errors. Tim suggests reviewing the workplace procedures they follow related to data entry and accounts. Dwayne talks about checking with the sales team to get an idea of how they record the information from the customer. Stephanie advises the team that she has to provide a report to senior managers on 11 July with recommendations.

1. Identify the follow-up actions that resulted from this meeting, the people responsible and a suitable deadline for completion of the action.

2. How can Stephanie make sure everyone remembers what they have to do and when they have to do it by?

3. How can Stephanie monitor her team to make sure they are on track?

3C Identify and incorporate opportunities to improve leadership communication processes

Effective communicators own their messages. If there is a communication breakdown they take time to reflect on how they planned the communication, how much they knew about the audience, their choice of communication channel and follow up to see if there is any area they can improve on. If the communication process was successful, they identify what helped to make it successful and ensure they transfer this to similar communication situations.

Team leadership communication processes

Communication is one of the essential elements of leadership. Without effective and timely communication, leaders may struggle to complete tasks.

The goal of any leadership communication process is the acceptance and understanding of the sender's message by the receiver.

The leadership communication process uses the following model.

Sender → Message → Channel → Receiver

Feedback

Sender – the person who intends to communicate

Message – the information to be sent to achieve an outcome

Channel – the chosen method of communication to transmit the message to the team

Receiver – the individual team member or group to whom the message is directed

Feedback – the way of knowing if the communication has been effective or not

Team leader communication skills

The communication processes used by leaders need to be clear, concise, correct and courteous.

Action taken by the team leader during each step of the process influences how effective the communication will be. The team leader needs to be clear on their motivations for sending the message and what they want to achieve. The way a message is formulated can have a positive or negative impact on how it is received. The choice of communication channel can also help the process or cause a barrier. The sender is accountable for giving and receiving feedback to ensure the message intended is the message received. Effective leaders are aware of the steps that make up the communication process and commit the appropriate time and effort to get it right.

Communication processes should result in:

- team members aligning themselves with the organisation's vision and values
- efficient meetings being run and results being achieved
- engaged staff who feel connected to their team and organisation
- high-performing teams that work collaboratively to achieve team goals
- low staff turnover because people have high levels of job satisfaction.

Ways to improve leadership communication processes

Continuous improvement is an approach that systematically seeks to achieve small incremental changes in processes in order to improve results.

Familiarise yourself with a range of methods to identify and incorporate opportunities to improve leadership communication processes.

Communication log	Keep a record of your communication over a set period of time. Document the different communication situations you find yourself in: date; purpose; channel; receiver; effective (why or why not).
	After the set time period is over, take time to analyse the data you have collected and use this to identify areas for improvement. Once you have identified the areas, ask yourself how you are going to improve and write an action plan. Implement the plan and review the results when you have completed it.

After-action review	This is a structured review process for analysing what happened, why it happened and how it could be done better. You can complete an AAR by asking either yourself or your team the following questions after the completion of a project or the implementation of a communication plan.
	• What was supposed to happen?
	• What did happen?
	• Why did that happen?
	• What are the lessons learnt?
	This debriefing procedure can lead to the identification of areas to improve and lead to changes in the communication processes being used.
360-degree feedback	360-degree feedback is a process by which team leaders receive confidential, anonymous feedback from a range of people who work with them. This usually includes a line manager, team members and peers. Those providing the feedback respond to questions that are measured on a rating scale and also provide written comments. The data gathered is collated and organised to show strengths and weaknesses. This process can provide team leaders with an insight into how others perceive their communication processes and an opportunity to develop skills that will improve their performance.
Mentoring	Mentoring is a relationship between two people. The mentor passes on valuable skills, knowledge and insights to another person to help them develop as a leader. You can use a mentoring relationship to improve specific leadership communication processes. For example, you may ask a mentor to help you to improve your presentation skills.
Training	Formal training is structured training provided by your organisation or an external provider. Some training leads to nationally recognised qualifications or statements of attainment. For example, if you identified that you need to improve your business writing skills you may decide to find a suitable formal program that you can attend that will teach you the skills required to present professional business documents.
Journal writing	At the end of each day, set aside 15 minutes to reflect on the leadership communication processes you have used. Identify communication barriers you encountered, reflect on what led to the barriers being there and ask yourself if you could have done anything to prevent it or minimise them. As a result of this reflection, decide on action you can take in the future. These notes will become a valuable resource for the continuous improvement of your leadership communication processes.

Example: identify opportunities to improve leadership communication processes

Arisa sends out reminder emails to her team about confirming appointment times for performance review meetings. She needs to have the responses the following day so she can finalise the schedule. No-one responds.

Arisa has recently started a communication log to collect data on the effectiveness of her communication. She notes that every time she uses email to obtain a confirmation she does not get the response rate she is seeking. She wonders what she can do to improve her reminder emails. Perhaps the subject line could be clearer, or the call to action needs to be written at the beginning of the email.

Arisa asks her colleague Braxton about how he sets out his emails. She has heard him say in their team leader meetings that he has a 100 per cent response rate from his team to any reminder emails he sends out. Arisa asks Braxton for his recommendations on how she can improve her email communication.

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Practice task 14

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Jayden has recently started a mentoring program, as he is new to the team leadership role. His mentor is Peter, a regional manager who has many years of experience in leadership roles. Jayden and Peter get together for their second meeting. Jayden shares with Peter his ideas for keeping the team informed. He explains to Peter that he believes all his team members need to be informed of all organisational issues. He always passes on emails from his supervisor and other departments. In the subject line he notes 'For your information', but he never includes comments, explanations or follow-up actions.

Peter asks Jayden, 'How do you think your team feels about receiving lots of emails with information that does not concern them directly?'

'I don't know,' replies Jayden. 'Maybe I need to ask them.'

Peter explains, 'When I receive an email, it needs to relate to me. It should either give me information that I need to know now or ask me to do something. I use the subject line to organise my emails, so it really helps when the subject line summarises the content of the email. I have always followed these rules when emailing team members that I lead.'

1. What strategies does Jayden use to identify areas for improvement in his leadership communication processes?

... continued

2. Why do you think Jayden needs to rethink the way he passes on information to his team? Explain your response.

3. What steps could Jayden take to improve his leadership communication processes?

Summary

1. Records of communication processes and outcomes provide you with a reference point to go back to when you are taking follow-up action.

2. It is important to follow enterprise policies and procedures to ensure consistency, quality and usefulness of communication records.

3. The sender of the message is responsible for seeing the communication process through to the end, including managing all follow-up action.

4. Communication plans provide a visual representation of the complete communication process and help to identify follow-up action.

5. Team leaders are responsible for communicating follow-up action to relevant people in an appropriate way.

6. It is important to systematically identify and act on any opportunities to improve leadership communication processes.

Learning checkpoint 3
Take follow-up actions

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in taking follow-up actions.

Part A

1. Describe three reasons why it is important to maintain records of the communication process and outcomes in line with enterprise policy and procedures.

2. Complete this table by explaining the purpose of each of the three records listed and the relevant legislation that impact on this type of workplace communication.

Record of communication process	Purpose	Relevant legislation
Hazard forms completed during a safety inspection by all team members		
Minutes from a meeting to deal with a formal grievance involving racial abuse		
Anecdotal records kept by a team leader about workplace incidents involving specific team members		

3. Describe three ways that establishing good communication processes helps to ensure follow-up action is completed by team members in a timely manner.

4. Describe two methods you can use to identify opportunities to improve your leadership communication processes.

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Steven, the team leader, is having a busy week. He has had numerous informal discussions with team members and his line manager. Steven knows he needs to write a 'to do' list to remind himself of the follow-up action he needs to take as a result of these discussions. He also needs to inform relevant team members of the follow-up action they need to complete.

Mark has requested information on the advanced computer course he wants to attend next month. Jill is concerned about the time frame for the new product launch. She asks to organise a review meeting to go over the time line that Steven has agreed to. Peter overhears the discussion and asks if he can attend the meeting, as he has similar concerns. Sarah and Bill have new ideas on how to increase sales. They want this to be included as an item on the next team meeting agenda.

Phil, Steven's line manager, has asked for the completed schedule of the performance appraisal meetings by five o'clock the following day. Steven realises that he does not have confirmation from Mark, Jill, Peter, Bill and Sarah on the time for their meetings. He needs this information to complete the performance appraisal schedule. Steven had emailed all team members over a week ago. He had asked them to get back to him with suitable times as soon as possible. However, only three out of eight team members have responded. Steven finds that he often needs to remind people of follow-up actions that need to be completed.

David has nearly finished the stocktake, and has spoken to Steven and asked him if it is possible to get some extra help from Julie or Thomas to complete the data entry and finalise the reports. Steven tells David he will get back to him by the end of the day to confirm whether the extra help will be available.

1. Write Steven's 'to do' list, indicating the follow-up action he needs to take.

2. Who does Steven need to contact with regard to follow-up activities they have not completed? If Steven uses email to contact the relevant team members, what should be in the subject line?

3. Identify one area Steven has the responsibility to improve in. What could he do differently to achieve better results?