

- **Restate what you've heard** - reframe in your own words and feed it back for confirmation. Never be afraid to ask for clarification, lack of clarity causes misunderstanding.
- **Criticism** - it is not easy to admit fault, especially an error. The best way is to listen to the criticism openly and respond, perhaps by saying: "Yes you have a point there. I'll explore it"
- **Listening critically** - means that you do not take everything that is being said at face value. Be prepared to offer constructive feedback or comment. If challenge is necessary, challenge from an attitude of openness not from an attitude of stubbornness or inflexibility.
- **Eye contact** - looking at someone when they talk lets them know that you are listening and interested. Appropriate eye contact entails looking more when you are listening and less when speaking.
- **Body posture** - leaning slightly forward communicates interest.

In the workplace careful listening conveys a sense of value for your working relationship with other people, creating bonds of mutual respect and trust that are vital to effective management. The loss of listening ability means the loss of power to observe, sense and apprehend change.

It is important to note that some people are more comfortable with feelings and respond naturally with understanding and empathy, while others tend to be more action orientated. Be mindful of the problems in a conversation between a feeling-oriented person and an action-oriented person.

Both individuals may arrive at the same conclusion, but the approach is different. If you are having problems communicating with your supervisor or colleague be aware of this difference. Indicate with an "I" message that you wish to listen and talk supportively about the situation rather than receive or give specific solutions.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

The physical contact we make, the postures we adopt, the gestures we use and our facial expression can convey messages. All these channels of sending messages are what we call non-verbal communication.

WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

Good communication in the workplace is essential for a harmonious work environment. It is important to keep the lines of communication open so that all concerned are kept on the wheel of communication. In this instance the lack of or, poor communication, may lead to:

- False assumptions
- Disillusionment
- Speculation
- Unease
- Perceived exclusion
- General anxiety
- Use of the grapevine - which leads to gossip

Never leave communication to chance, raise your awareness and develop your skills. Having an understanding of how communication works means you can take responsibility for every stage in the communication cycle:

Spoken - Heard - Understood - Agreed To - Acted On - Implemented

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE (CSEAS)

Seirbhís Chúnaimh
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MISSION STATEMENT

To offer a quality resource and support service for all staff which positively affects both individual health and well-being and organisational effectiveness

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EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

It is impossible not to **Communicate**. We spend much of our time having to communicate in order to go about our daily lives whether at home or at work. Communication at its best is always **simple, clear** and **authentic**. It is a personal exchange between two people. One who reveals and one who responds. One who talks personally and one who listens carefully. Differences in age, education, or skills in speaking do not count, what counts are the persons who are communicating.

BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Reduces conflict
- Builds self-confidence
- Enhances personal and working relationships
- Saves time in undoing listening mistakes

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION?

- **Making Assumptions** - when people “mind read”, make assumptions not based on fact, communication may produce more confusion than clarity.
- **Mind-sets** - habits, patterns and routine ways of thinking and behaving are difficult to change. There must be a readiness to reappraise all belief systems, be open to the new.
- **Needing to be right. Need for control. Defensiveness** - let go of the need to be right. See yourself as presenting information or a point of view rather than having to force your idea on someone else.

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION?

- **Clarity** - if you are not clear about what you mean and what your intention is, the other person (or people) could easily (and sometimes deliberately), misinterpret what you mean. We must therefore take responsibility for making our words as clear as possible.
- **Self-awareness** - being aware of our own perceptions, interpretations, projections, feelings and desires.
- **Avoid blaming or belittling** - the person you're addressing. Express your feelings with “I” statements, such as, “I feel upset”, rather than with “you” statements. “You” statements sound blaming and accusatory.
- **Avoid judgments** - stick with the behaviour, not the person. Refraining from judging others will greatly increase the likelihood of their hearing you out.
- **Assertiveness** - involves asking for what you want (or saying “no”) in a simple, direct way that does not negate, attack, or manipulate anyone else. Others feel comfortable when you're assertive because they know where you stand.
- **Congruence** - matching words with movement, looks and sounds. Saying “I'm not angry” in a loud and aggressive voice is incongruent. If a person is not angry, s/he won't sound angry. Be aware that there may be double messages given.

THE ART OF LISTENING - TECHNIQUES FOR LISTENING

Central to all communication is the ability to really listen. **Listening** is not the same as **Hearing**. Listening is a learned skill. You have to work at it. You must concentrate. Here are some techniques for listening. These can be used in everyday situations whether in the workplace or at home.

- **Setting** - find a setting that is non-threatening and conducive to conversation. By putting the other person at ease you create an atmosphere where open communication can take place.
- **Have no interruptions** - show interest in the speaker and avoid haste or pressure. It's not a timed contest.
- **Be prepared** - your interest will be greater if you have some familiarity with the issue.
- **Make allowances for the speaker** - good listeners have a higher tolerance than bad ones. Don't prejudge a person on speech, mannerisms or even their clothes. It's best to concentrate on what's being said rather than who's saying it.
- **Hear what the speaker says** - are you listening, in order to confirm what you already think or, are you listening in order to discover something new? Mentally editing remarks you don't like, or distorting meanings to avoid unpleasant points, leads to poor or failed communication.
- **Mentally summarise the basic facts** - do not concentrate on your response while the other person is talking. If necessary, jot down a word or two as reminders.