



## Effective Communication

Web: [www.cseas.per.gov.ie](http://www.cseas.per.gov.ie)

It is impossible not to **Communicate**. We have to spend time communicating in order to go about our daily lives whether at home or at work.

Communication at its best is always **simple, clear** and **authentic**. Differences in age, education, or skills in speaking do not count, what counts are the persons communicating.

### Benefits of Effective Communication

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

### What hinders Effective Communication?

- **Making Assumptions** - when people “mind read”, communication may produce more confusion.
- **Mind-sets** - habits, patterns and routine ways of thinking and behaving are difficult to change. There must be a readiness to reappraise beliefs, be open to the new.
- **Needing to be right. Need for control. Defensiveness** - See yourself as presenting information or a point of

view rather than having to force it on someone.

### What is essential for Effective Communication?

- **Clarity** - if you're not clear about what you mean and what your intention is, others could easily (and sometimes deliberately), misinterpret it. Take responsibility for making your words as clear as possible.
- **Self-awareness** – being aware of our 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 which sound blaming and accusatory.
- **Avoid judgments** - stick with the behaviour, not the person. This 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.
- **Congruence** - matching words with movement, looks and sounds. Saying

“I'm not angry” in a loud, aggressive voice is incongruent. If a person is not angry, s/he won't sound it.

### What facilitates Effective Communication?

Central to all communication is the ability to really listen. **Listening** is not the same as **Hearing**. Listening is a learned skill. The following techniques can be used in everyday situations whether in the workplace or at home.

- **Setting** - find a setting that is nonthreatening and conducive to conversation. Putting the other person at ease creates an atmosphere for open communication.
- **Have no interruptions** - show interest in the speaker, avoid haste or pressure. It's not a timed contest.
- **Be prepared** - your interest will be greater if you are familiar with the issue.
- **Make allowances for the speaker** – good listeners have a higher tolerance than bad ones. Concentrate on what's being said rather than who's saying it.
- **Hear what the speaker says** - are you listening to confirm what you already

think or, to discover something? Mentally editing remarks 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 reminders.

- **Restate what you've heard** - reframe in your own words and feed it back for confirmation. Ask for clarification as lack of clarity causes misunderstanding.

- **Criticism** - it is not easy to admit fault or an error. Try listening to the criticism openly and responding, perhaps by saying: "You have a point. I'll explore it"

- **Listening critically** – means not taking everything said at face value. Be prepared to offer constructive feedback or comment. If it is necessary to challenge, do so from an attitude of openness not 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 listening than speaking.

- **Body posture** - leaning slightly forward communicates interest.

It is important to note that some people are more comfortable with feelings and respond naturally with understanding and empathy, while others are more action orientated. Problems can arise in conversations between a feeling and 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/colleague be aware of this. Indicate with an "I" message your wish to listen and talk supportively about the situation rather than receive or give 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**

In the workplace careful listening conveys a sense of value for your working relationships, creating

bonds of mutual respect and trust that are vital to effective management. Loss of listening ability means loss of power to observe, sense and apprehend change.

Good communication is essential for a harmonious work environment. It's important to keep the lines of communication open so that all parties are kept on the wheel of communication. Lack of or poor communication may lead to:

- False assumptions
- Disillusionment
- 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. Understanding how communication works means you can take responsibility for every stage in the communication cycle:

**Spoken – Heard – Understood – Agreed To – Acted On – Implemented**

Please visit the CSEAS Website [www.cseas.per.gov.ie](http://www.cseas.per.gov.ie) for further information.

Please contact the CSEAS at:

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- to make an appointment with an EAO in any region
- to arrange a telephone consultation with an EAO in any region
- to make a general enquiry

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