

Business Class

WEEK 7 - COMMUNICATION
BEST PRACTICES



Welcome to Class!

TODAY'S AGENDA

- Surprising statistics
- What is good/effective communication?
- Reasons of ineffective communication
- Results of bad communication
- Communication strategy
- Best practices
- Crisis communication
- Communication with customers



Class Objectives

EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOMES

★ Objectives:

- In today's lesson, you're going to learn the obstacles to effective communication and how to avoid them.
- By the end of this lesson today, you'll know how make your message reach its recipient and achieve your goal.



Lesson for Today

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

- Today, workplace communication is not just about informing people about things. It is also about creating dialog, improving collaboration and as a result driving people's engagement.
- No matter the company, without proper communication there is no good performance and business success.
- It can be difficult to really know where to start to improve the communication. But as you will see there are several things employees and managers or executives can do to start the development of the business communication skills. Maybe you will never be perfect, however removing all known barriers can get you to success.



Surprising statistics



37%

of managers are uncomfortable having to give direct feedback about their employees' performance if they think the employee might respond negatively to the feedback (Harvard Business Review)

57%

of employees report not being given clear directions (HR Technologist)

69%

of managers are not comfortable communicating with employees (HR Technologist)

90%

More than 90% of employees would rather hear bad news than no news (Jostle)

What is good/effective communication?

This simply means that receiver understood the message the way you intended to. Of course, even if you did all you needed to deliver the information correctly, very often people hear what they want to hear. Or listen selectively or are distracted and the information is not reaching them as it should. However, there are things you can do to improve on your side, leaving very little for the other side's interpretation.

Good communication is a skill and as such can be learned. It requires practice and good feedback as well as – ways to measure it.



Why communication skills are important?

Source: <https://blog.smarp.com/top-5-communication-skills-and-how-to-improve-them>



Reasons for ineffective communication

- Lack of consistent and comprehensive communication strategy
- Email overload
- Time consuming and unproductive meetings
- Inappropriate language used (too formal or not formal enough)
- Incorrect channels used for communication
- Delays in sharing the information
- Sugarcoating of the information in case of sharing the bad news, challenges or company's difficulties (instead of telling the truth) [sugarcoat – lukrować lub osładzać]

IT CAN CAUSE:

- Staff turnover
- Bad customer service (in result - the companies' trust decrease)
- Time loss when searching for information
- Poor employees performance
- Project failures
- Internal conflicts and decrease in morale
- "Telephone game" result – people sharing incorrect or misinterpreted information
- Missed opportunities (missed clients, contracts etc)
- Difficulties in implementing any innovative solutions or any changes in the company (people won't welcome any changes if they don't understand what is going to change)



How to build good communication strategy?

THERE ARE SEVERAL BEST PRACTICES USED IN BUSINESS WORLD WHICH CAN IMPROVE COMPANY'S COMMUNICATION, IN ALL FIELDS.

Best practices for effective communication in the workplace:



Best practice

PREPARE – THINK BEFORE YOU SHARE

This about the purpose of your communication and the result you want to achieve. Your communication strategy should be clearly defined, with a specific goal. You want to provide employees, your team mates or your manager with clear information they need, exactly when they need it.

SPEAK THE OTHER'S PERSON LANGUAGE

Mind the audience, that also means – mind the generation! And the cultural differences. Depends on what you share and with whom you need to adjust the language used and the driver of your message – should it be email? Or should it be company's newsletter or short video message? Or maybe you need to prepare yearly financial report for company's executives? Adjust the communication campaign to the audience and your message will be better understood.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TOOL FOR COMMUNICATION

Technology is your friend but can also be your worst enemy. If you send everything over email, and people are flooded with emails, eventually they will stop reading them. What is more, you may need different tools to communicate with teams that are office based and with the ones working remotely. There are so many tools these days that you can really select the ones best for you: emails, newsletters, printed newsletters, posters, chat software, social media, power point presentations, conference calls, internal company websites, cloud technology. Do not avoid personal meetings though, when needed some information should be shared face-to-face.



Best practice

MAKE THE COMMUNICATION ENTERTAINING

People are more willing to digest the information if they have fun doing it. There is no law that would say workplace communication can't be fun as well. When things are entertaining, people engage their emotions. Being emotionally engaged means being part of the company, which really drives the productivity.

LISTEN MORE AND BE APPROACHABLE

Communication is not only about telling other people things they should know, but also listening to what they share and being easy to approach – people should be able to access you easily if they want to tell you something. Or should feel free to send you an email or drop a short message on internal communicator. This is also called an “open door” policy. One of the other ways of being approachable is to reach out to people by their first name and allowing them to do so too. While there may be companies where work titles are a must to be used, where possible try to create friendly environment at work.

THINK ABOUT THE TIMING AND PLACE

Communication not always means sharing good news. Sometimes the information that needs to be shared is not pleasant. It may be information about temporary company's financial difficulties or information for the employee that his job contract is going to end. You should know that some news needs to be told or shared personally, definitely not at the open space of the office. Mind the place and time depending on what you are going to share.



Best practice

ESTABLISH CLEAR COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

People working at the company should know exactly what kind of information they are allowed to share in emails or instant communicators. They should be told what is allowed to be shared externally, what is sensitive data. Everyone at the organization should also know what communicator channels there are and what kind of information they can find there. For example – company’s newsletter is sent every quarter. Financial results are shared end of the year. Posters at the office inform about team activities and achievements.

ASK FOR FEEDBACK AND DISCUSS (CONSTANTLY)

If you want to know if you are doing it right, ask the people you are working with. One-way communication is really the old way. Now, the most important thing is to be open for dialog. Employees should have a place to share their feedback freely, even if needed – anonymously. Or as a manager you can create surveys sent to everyone at your team or department. It may happen that no one is reading the newsletter because it is too long and its form should be changed. Or emails with most important results of the company are too complex for employees to really understand and what they need to know is “how this impacts me?”. Ask people you communicate with what they would like to change to get the message better and you will succeed. And this leads to next point, which is...



Best practice

COMPLEX THINGS SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED IN A SIMPLE WAY

Even if you want to be completely honest and open with communicating your business achievements, sharing long financial reports is not the way. People are busy and what they need is the short message with most important data. Use videos, pictures and infographics and everyone will digest it.

ORGANIZE EASY ACCESS TO MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Make sure people understand clearly most important aspects of the company's goals, mission, vision etc. People should know where to find essential documents and files, so if they need anything, they don't waste time searching for it. Also this is extremely important to have a clear onboarding strategy for new employees. Onboarding means not only training people what they will do at their job on daily basis, but at the beginning this is mostly communicating and informing them about the company, its vision and strategy, where to find information etc. All this should be included in the onboarding process.

ORGANIZE CLEAR STRUCTURE FOR SHARING INFORMATION

Who shares what and to whom the questions should be asked. People need to know what information they can get from their manager, what they can expect to be sent from HR and what other departments may share. This also allows them to reach the right person if they have any questions.



Best practice

DON'T SUGARCOAT BAD NEWS

Telling the truth is the only way to gain trust. No matter what crisis the company is going through, if you share it correctly, people will help your organization to go through it.

SHARE BETWEEN TEAMS AND DIFFERENT ORGANIZATION STRUCTURES

Especially in big companies, with many teams and departments, communication seems to be shut in so called silos. Teams are not sharing information among themselves and managers tend to inform specific departments selectively. This lack of sharing between teams may cause work disruptions such as: doubled effort for same projects, projects which are in contra to each other etc.

MIND YOUR BODY LANGUAGE AND CONTROL YOUR EMOTION

Raised voice, folded arms, rolled eyes or pointing fingers, all of this can cause a damage to your communication. People really mind the body language and if you are angry and your body shows that, what you tell won't matter as much as what your body shows.



Best practice

REMOVE LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Working in international environment, where companies have offices around the world, or virtual teams working from every possible country – may require communication to be sent in several languages. Even if everyone speaks English, some really important news should be shared in people's native language to make sure things are correctly understood.

DO NOT NEGLECT ONE-TO-ONE

In the business world, where everything happens fast and we have tendency to communicate mostly via specific tools (phone, emails etc) – we should remember not to neglect the one to one conversations. Team meetings are never going to have some people to share their ideas or thoughts freely, simply because they are shy or afraid of speaking in large groups or they are just introverts.

COMMUNICATION TRAININGS

This is an investment for the company and time investment for employee, but benefits are huge. Trainings should be tailored for specific groups and teams, depending on their job. People who learn how to communicate, also learn how important the communication is and are more open to listen to other people and what they share. Employees will be able to share more easily and honestly their feedback, gain better verbal, written and listening communication skills. Customer facing teams will be able to provide better customer interactions. Managers can learn how to communicate better with their employees.



Best practice

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL MESSAGE MUST BE ALIGNED

There is no way in business world that you can tell your customers different things than to your employees. Aligned communication builds trust. This also assures you that if one day your former employee gets hired at your customer's office – there's no "shocking news" he can share. Digital era, and world of social media we live in allows people to check the information and share them so easily. This is why external and internal communication must be the same.

MAKE LIFE EASIER FOR EVERYONE

The only way to avoid the information overload is to deliver only the messages that specific parties really need. Tailored communication works best. However, there is a very thin line between overloading with information and not communicating enough, this is why when you are in doubts if your message reached the recipients – it is better to over-communicate.

MEASURE THE RESULTS

If you have built the strategy around company's communication, you need to know if this works. It is not easy, as building KPI's around the communication results is a tough thing, however without checking if your strategy works, you won't know what to change. Worse – you also won't know if you succeeded! You can measure your results by productivity increase or decrease or by using employee satisfaction surveys. What is important is to measure it systematically so you can compare the results and adjust your communication strategy as necessary.



What to avoid?



THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS WHY EVEN BEST STRATEGY CAN STILL FAIL. YOU SHOULD AVOID BELOW IN YOUR COMMUNICATION, NO MATTER THE CHANNEL USED:

LACK OF SPECIFICS

People tend to give vague and general terms, even if they actually know the specific dates, times or requirements. Try to avoid using terms like: “we can meet anytime”, “call me when you are free”, “we will talk tomorrow” or “we can finish this as at your convenience”. There is no date and time and for some people this may mean that things are not as important as they may seem, so – why not postponing it to forever? Also if you hear a sentences or business request which has no clear instructions – best is to ask and clarify. You will avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.

NEGATIVES SENTENCES

Instead of telling others what they do wrong or what they should not do, it is better to tell them what to do and how. Positive instructions and guidelines bring better results.

What to avoid?



'BUT' SENTENCES

Telling someone he did a great job, but.... Very often such sentence causes people to hear only the negative side, things that are after "but". Instead of using the 'but' sentences try to replace this with 'and'. "You did great on this project, and...." . If you need to communicate something negative to someone, just do it (in respectful way of course).

LACK OF FOCUS

If you have conversation with someone, be there fully. Do not multitask and give people your attention. If someone speaking with you is also multi-tasking, you don't feel important, don't you? So, attention and focus is the key. You can also demand that full attention from others. And if someone is not giving this to you, don't be afraid to mention it. You can always ask "is this a good time for conversation, or should we reschedule it?". This way you show respect to other's people time but also make it clear that conversation is important to you and you need a full attention.

“Houston we have a problem!”

COMMUNICATION IN THE TIME OF CRISIS

CRISIS SITUATION

For organization it can be anything from emergencies caused by weather, terrorist attack or natural disaster, to economic problems (including bankruptcy, restructuring or staff redundancies).

EMPLOYEES SHOULD ALWAYS BE INFORMED

...in many different ways, via many different means, so they feel up to date and same time secured about their future. In case of emergencies organizations should have the contingency plans to keep the companies running and same time ensure the safety of their employees. Every single crisis situation may require different types of communication and none of the emergency situations can go without proper communication.

Communication with clients

Client communication is a term that really means “any type of interaction with client”. Communication with client can be written, spoken, personal or via specific platforms (websites or social media). This also includes documentation, anything from sales sheets to client onboarding forms. Any interaction is really building a relationship which is a core to your business.

Having good relationship with your customers often means successful business. Best methods for client communication are not very different from the ones for the employees and organization ones.

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PRINCIPLES:

- Be polite and respectful
- Know your customer and create relationship
- Always tell your clients the truth
- Speak their language (simplify things or avoid technical jargon)
- Listen actively and respond to their needs
- Know your product or service
- Have clear customer service strategy
- Be active on social media (and be responsive)
- Be flexible (customers may require reporting or other type of information on how they cooperate with your company)
- Choose the right channel(s) for communication
- Learn to say “No” when necessary
- If mistaken, accept it and learn to apologize
- Keep in touch (do not only wait for your client, reach out and ask them how they are doing from time to time)
- Ask for feedback



Summary of Today's Class

RECAP 1

Communication is as much about information as it is about collaboration.

RECAP 2

There are proven strategies to make it work for you.

RECAP 3

Pay special attention to communication in crisis.

RECAP 4

Customers deserve to be informed in a similar way to your colleagues.



Thank You

FOR JOINING TODAY'S CLASS

Please have a look at the tasks I have prepared for you.
See you next week!



Tasks for you

I HAVE DONE MY JOB, SO IT IS TIME FOR YOU ;-)

★ Zadanie 1

Dziś wrzucam całą playlistę. Dużo wartościowego materiału:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFpsDakL_p51AWpfWsgeQyWEr0lhEJJbF



★ Zadanie 2

Z naszego podręcznika strony 138-149 :-)

Konieczniesz skorzystaj z plików audio - odsłuchaj i powtarzaj na głos.

★ Zadanie 3

Poinformuj swojego pracownika o koniecznej obniżce wynagrodzenia.

Przećwicz na głos - idealnie, gdyby udało Ci się nagrać tę wypowiedź!

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