



COMMUNICATION SKILLS TOOLKIT

INTRODUCTION

Good communication skills are essential to success in the business world. Misunderstandings with clients, managers, or coworkers may result in wasted time, wasted resources, or missed opportunities. Good communication is also required to share vision and mission with internal and external stakeholders.

Think about how many verbal and nonverbal messages you exchange in a given day. How much value is there in knowing that the message that you wish to share is the same message that your audience actually receives?

The purpose of this Toolkit is to provide guidelines and tips for improving the effectiveness of your communication skills, as both a message giver and a message receiver, so that you can achieve your desired results.

CONGRUENT VS. INCONGRUENT COMMUNICATION

Does your body language and tone match the words of your message? If not, this is known as **incongruent communication**. Those words lose impact because your nonverbal messages drown out the words you are saying. In this case, you will come across as manipulative or insincere. Achieving congruency should guide your use of this toolkit. As you work through the materials use it to challenge whether you're sending mixed messages.

[How Do You Build Effective Communication? \(Page 2\)](#)

[The Five Cs of Effective Communication \(Page 5\)](#)

[Examining Situational Dynamics \(Page 6\)](#)

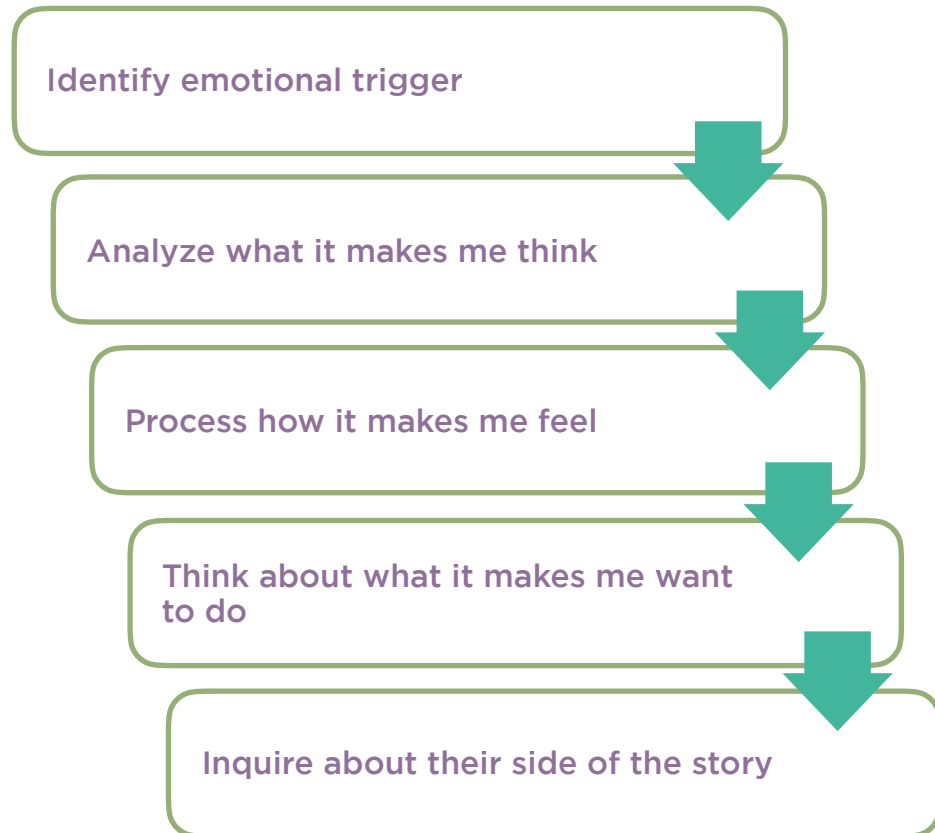
[Job Aid: Interpersonal Skills Self-Reflection \(Page 7\)](#)

[Nonverbal Communication Self-Assessment \(Page 8\)](#)

HOW DO YOU BUILD EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION?

Communication Awareness Model

Five Steps to Effective Communication



Barriers to Effective Communication: Non Empathetic Listening

- Listening: intending to reply
- Filtering: screening everything through your own paradigm or agenda
- Evaluating: determining if you agree or disagree
- Probing: Asking from our frame of reference
- Advising: Giving counsel based on our experience
- Interpreting: Trying to figure people out

MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE BUSINESS WRITING



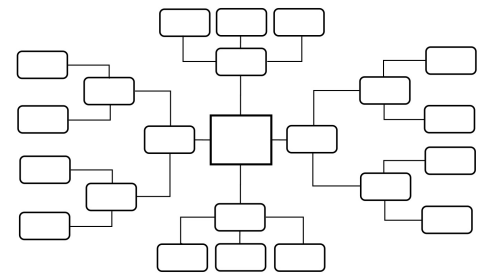
PLAN THE CONTENT

Brainstorming Questions:

- What is the purpose?
- Who is your audience?
- What are their needs?
- What are your expectations (and theirs)?
- What is the core content for your message?

Create a Mind Map

- A tool popularized by author and consultant, Tony Buzan, which uses a two-dimensional structure to reflect thought associations.
- It frees you from the linear thinking often associated with lists.
- It can help you clarify your thinking, organize points into logical categories, and visualize a structure for your message.
- The relative importance of individual points and how to relate to one another is apparent at a glance.



Examine Situational Dynamics. See p. 6

DRAFT THE MESSAGE

DRAFT THE MESSAGE					
5 Cs:	Clear	Concise	Complete	Considerate	Correct



Follow the 5 Cs of Effective Communication (See page 5)

DESIGN THE DOCUMENT

DESIGN THE DOCUMENT			
Format:	White Space	Bullet Points	Bold & Italics



Take time to organize and design the document visually.

DELIVER THE COMMUNICATION

DELIVER THE COMMUNICATION				
Check:	Spelling	Grammar	Recipients	Subject Line

THE 5 Cs OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Clear – Construct Effective Sentences

- Create bullets and highlights for key information.
- Use the right level of language for the audience.
- Use precise and familiar words.
- Check your accuracy.

Concise – Eliminate Wordy Expressions

- Include only relevant material.
- Focus on your purpose.
- Delete anything irrelevant.
- Avoid lengthy explanations.
- Avoid unnecessary repetition.

Complete – Provide all the Necessary Information

- Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?

Considerate – Put Yourself in Your Reader’s Shoes

- Focus on the reader instead of yourself.
- Say “no” by emphasizing what you can do.
- Apologize when necessary.
- Use expressions that show respect.
- Give the reader your complete contact information.

Correct – Be Sure the Message is Accurate, Logical, and Orderly

- Consider the best order to introduce the information.
- Check all of the information and facts for accuracy.
- Ensure flow and tone of the message are consistent.

EXAMINING SITUATIONAL DYNAMICS

Communication doesn't happen in a vacuum. People's frames of reference shaped by their experiences of you, of others, and of the world all contribute to how a message is received. To determine how best to communicate, you need to evaluate the environment surrounding your communication.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Environmental Questions

Ask yourself the following questions to determine how you need to address your audience:

- How much trust and confidence does your audience have in you?
- Is there any part of the key message that the audience might perceive as beneficial?
- Are there ways you can highlight or enhance those benefits?
- What key points resonate most with your advocates?
- How critical is it for your audience to act upon what you're communicating?
- Is there any part of your message that may damage the trust or credibility that you have with your audience?
- Is there any part of the key message that the audience might perceive as threatening?
- Are you able to alleviate the stress from any perceived threats?
- What objections would the strongest opponents to your message raise?
- How do you effectively, preemptively address those objections?

How you answer these questions should shape your **tone**, your **structure**, and your **communication channel**.

If trust is a factor, you may determine that you need a champion, sponsor, or advocate to carry the message for you. You may also determine that you need to bring other voices to weigh in on perceived threats or strong objections.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS SELF-REFLECTION

Instructions: One of the most effective means for you to assess improvement in your communication skills is to complete the following assessment after you have collaborated in a meeting.

1. How have my reactions and responses changed following the meeting?
2. How will this meeting help me achieve greater professional effectiveness?
3. Do I now have a stronger relationship with that person/people I just met?
4. Do I trust them? Do they trust me?
5. Through collaboration, could we achieve success on both sides of our partnership?
6. What leadership lesson have I learned from this interpersonal exchange?

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION SELF-ASSESSMENT

Instructions:

Use this assessment to determine how and where you can improve when you give and receive nonverbal feedback. Place a ✓ in one of the boxes to the right of each item. Please complete the assessment based on how you behave right now and give honest responses; no one will see the results unless you choose to share them.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION BEHAVIORS	To a Great Extent	For the Most Part	To Some Extent	Not at All
When I give nonverbal feedback, I...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1. Adapt my nonverbal response to the situation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Match my verbal communication.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Vary my voice pitch and volume.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Use appropriate gestures to show interest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Keep good eye contact when in conversation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Maintain a professional posture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Vary my facial expressions as appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I receive nonverbal feedback, I...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Check that it matches the verbal message.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Pick up on nonverbal cues quickly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Interpret others' messages correctly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Respond with appropriate feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Consider cultural differences in nonverbal communication signals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Watch the giver's facial expressions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Notice subtle gestures and movement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ANALYSIS

The results of this assessment can help direct your focus on areas of improvement as a giver or receiver of nonverbal feedback. You may find that you score higher as a giver than as a receiver, or that you score higher on particular items in either category.

As a Giver of Nonverbal Feedback:

- If you rated yourself in the “To Some Extent” or “Not At All” areas for items 1, 2, 5, or 6, you should pay particular attention to others’ moods, emotions, and circumstances in the interaction and adapt accordingly.
- If you scored low on items 3, 4, or 7, you may need to try to keep the receiver’s interest through your nonverbal communication.

As a Receiver of Nonverbal Feedback:

- Ratings in the “To Some Extent” or “Not At All” areas for items 8-14 indicate a need to be more sensitive to others’ nonverbal messages and to improve your focus on the meaning of the giver.
- You may also need to pay attention to your own nonverbal responses and find ways to minimize any negative or defensive behaviors.



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