



Improving the Capabilities of the HR Workforce

DCPAS VIRTUAL BENEFITS SYMPOSIUM

**Building Connection Through
Communication Strategies for Success**

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Objectives

- Define communication
- Communicating with confidence
- Improve listening skills
- Work and communicate effectively with difficult people
- Communicate with different generations in the workplace



What is Communication?

- Communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts and feelings between individuals and groups through verbal, non-verbal, written or visual means.
- Effective communication is essential for building relationships, fostering understanding and achieving common goals.



Communicate with Confidence

Consider the type of impact you want to have - how do you want to sound when you communicate?

- Assertive
- Competent
- Confident
- Capable

Be concise and direct but remember – tone and delivery directly affect how the message will be received



Communicate with Confidence

Word choice matters

Avoid words such as “just”

- “Just” diminishes your value and makes you sound apologetic
- You have something meaningful and valid to share – say it!
- “I’m just checking in” versus “I’m checking in”



Communicate with Confidence

Stop apologizing

- Women apologize 37% more often than men
 - Say “Thank you for your patience” versus “I’m sorry I was late”
 - “Thank you for noticing that error” versus “I’m sorry I missed that”
 - “Excuse me...” versus “I’m sorry to bother you”
 - “Unfortunately, I am not able to attend” versus “I’m sorry I can’t make it”



Communicate with Confidence

Lessen the use of emotive language

- Emotive language is defined as words or phrases intended to elicit an emotional response
- Often used in advertising with the intent to persuade
- Women use emotive language more frequently than men
 - “The team poured their hearts and souls into this project” versus “The team worked hard on this project”



Communicate with Confidence

Eliminate disclaimers

- Disclaimers diminish your worth
- Your audience will tune you out and question your credibility
 - “I’m no expert but...”
 - “This may not work but...”
 - “Just my two cents...”



Communicate with Confidence

Remove filler words and needless phrases

- Words such as “um,” “like,” “right,” “actually,” are said out of habit
- Phrases such as “in my opinion,” and “that being said,” add no value to the conversation
- Silence and pauses are acceptable in conversations and presentations



Communicate with Confidence

Limit the use of punctuation and emojis

- Women use exclamation points more often than men – limit to one or two
- Use emojis carefully and sparingly – there can be generational differences in the way these are interpreted
 - Older generations use the thumbs up emoji to signal agreement younger generations have a different interpretation of this emoji



Communicating with Difficult People

• Types of difficult behavior

- Steamroller – nasty, aggressive, want to get their own way, controlling
- Sniper – uses nasty, undercutting remarks “disguised” as a joke
- Firework – “goes off” easily, unpredictable
- Downer – always negative
- Pleaser – overcommits to make others happy – afraid to say “no”



Communicating with Difficult People

People can be difficult for many reasons

- Seldom is it the person's character, it is more often their behavior in that moment
- Difficult behavior is context specific - it may be due to a lack of skills, or it may be stress-induced
 - Do your best to take the high road and give the benefit of the doubt



Communicating with Difficult People

Seek first to understand

- Ask meaningful questions to gain an understanding of what precipitated the behavior
- Maintain your dignity and self-respect and in turn, that will help the difficult person maintain theirs
- Discuss their behavior not their character or personality



Communicating with Difficult People

Control your emotions

- Emotional responses impede effective communication
- You do not need to “win” – you need to create a good outcome
- Separate your thoughts and feelings from your actions – you are entitled to your feelings, but you should not act on them
- Choose your words carefully – do not use inflammatory language
- Monitor your body language
- Step away or pause the conversation if you need to get control of your emotions
 - Ensure you set a time to come back and resume the conversation



Communicating with difficult people

Use the **ASSUME** strategy

- Assess the situation
- Stop wishing they were different
- Step back and listen
- Understand their point of view
- Master the situation
- Expect to have to do it again and again



Essential Communication Skills

“Never use two words when one word will do.” – Thomas Jefferson

- Be concise – brevity makes you sound more like a leader
- Figure out your main idea and say it in one or two sentences
- Stick to three main points
- Seek to add value to every conversation
 - Be a problem solver, not a critic
 - Set a positive tone



Essential Communication Skills

Good listening skills are essential for building connections and enhancing relationships

- Good listening skills show people that they matter
- Listen to understand, not to respond
- Ask specific and thoughtful questions
- Take a genuine interest in others and make the effort to learn more about them



Communicating across generations

Defining generations

- Baby Boomers – born 1946 to 1964
- Generation X – born 1965 to 1979
- Millennial – born 1980 to 1994
- Generation Z – born 1995 to 2012



Communicating Across Generations

Boomer traits in the workplace

- Pride in their work
- Competitive
- Equate authority with experience
- Associate self-worth with their jobs
- Believe hard work and long hours are the only way to be successful



COMMUNICATING ACROSS GENERATIONS

Generation X traits in the workplace

- Independent and resourceful
- Value work-life balance
- Strong time management skills
- Focused on the end product versus the process
- Technologically proficient but not necessarily savvy



Communicating Across Generations

Millennial traits in the workplace

- Represent a majority of the workforce
- First generation to have grown up with the internet – embrace technology
- Value collaboration and teamwork
- Desire purpose-driven work
- Appreciate diversity and inclusion



Communicating Across Generations

Generation Z traits in the workplace

- Want ownership over their career – 48% have a side hustle
- Value alignment is important
- Technologically savvy and prefer the latest technology
- Their mental health is a priority
- Desire work-life balance



Communicating Across Generations

Embracing generational diversity enhances the workplace

- Build teams with mixed ages
- Be aware of communication preferences
- Understand the value of intergenerational relationships
- Dismantle stereotypes
- Emphasize shared purpose, mission and goals
- Communicate with respect



Points to Remember

- No one is born a great communicator
- Effective communication is a skill that can be learned
- Choose one skill and work on that until mastery and then choose another skill
- The more you practice the better you will become
- Convey your thoughts and ideas with kindness and respect in all situations
- Strong communication builds strong connection



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Success

