
EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Learn How To Master Business Communication Skills Using Proven Techniques



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We started with a single goal: to teach authentic performance. When speakers in Southern California began asking Fia Fasbinder for help with the skills she'd learned at the prestigious NYU Tisch School of the Arts, the need was clear. Fia's husband Gregg Fasbinder—entrepreneur and Fortune 100 executive—saw how better training could meet that need.

Every day the team they've built—which includes award-winning actors, renowned writers, designers, and entrepreneurs—creates transformation, from the TED stage to the C-suites of Fortune 500 firms.

Our background means we approach presentations differently.

THE MOXIE INSTITUTE KNOWS HOW TO TAKE YOUR PRESENTATIONS FROM BORING TO **BRAVO.**

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Our acting experience made us experts in stage presence



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You'll find all that experience in each line we write, each slide we design, and every minute of our famous trainings.

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01

CHAPTER

EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION SKILLS

"What we have here is failure to communicate. Some men you just can't reach"

-Cool Hand Luke (1967)



According to the Project Management Institute, 1/5 of projects fail due to poor communication resulting in significant loss to both a business's reputation and its bottom line.

You've seen it. You've experienced it. You've gotten gray hair over it.

Seemingly set-up-for-success projects in the workplace have resulted in disaster with entire departments burning the midnight oil doing damage control to meet the deadline.

But then there are those other projects. The type where there are clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Clearly defined timelines. And "surprisingly" everything is done on time, within budget, and to a beautiful standard.

This guide will teach you the path to achieving the latter.

By the time we're done here, you'll know how to:

- 1** Communicate with minimal "noise" and as little room for misunderstanding as possible.
- 2** Orchestrate win-win situations for you and others
- 3** Speak assertively to build bridges of communication and understanding with others
- 4** Be an all-round fantastic person to work with and for
 - ▶ *Seriously, learning to be a good listener and communicator is worth more than you can possibly imagine.*

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS—TAKE IT APART

The prefix, *inter*, means between. Interpersonal, therefore, means *between people*. So the skills that you pick up in this guide are specific to managing your interactions *between yourself and others*.

Perhaps you consider yourself capable of (or terrible at) communicating with others. Maybe you've been described as the social butterfly, having the gift of gab, or being a wallflower. No matter your social prowess, this guide is still essential reading for everyone. No one is perfect at anything, and there are always better and smarter ways to communicate.

Talking to people is one thing. Talking to people so as to influence them, manage them, and/or affect a certain outcome is entirely another. And it's that "other" that this guide addresses.

So you're not reading a handbook exclusively for people that feel awkward with basic interpersonal communication (although this guide is for people that feel that way as well.)

Please note that there's no substitute for a professional communication coach. This guide will give you a solid foundation and a head start, but in order to truly have the leading edge, communications skills training cannot be neglected. But that's another discussion for later.

Let's break the whole concept down into something easier to digest.

All interpersonal communication fits into three main categories:

- ① Verbal
- ② Nonverbal
- ③ Relationship Maintenance



02

CHAPTER

VERBAL INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

THE POWER OF LANGUAGE



When we think of destruction, it's almost always physical. Hurricanes destroying homes. Volcanoes raining fire from the sky. Thermonuclear bombs wiping out entire cities.

But there's another destructive force that all of us wield with abandon— our words.

Dangerous. Subversive. Intrusive. Risky. Life-changing. Life-threatening.

Those are some pretty heavy-duty words. And each of them has recently been used to describe either the internet or popular sites and platforms on the internet.

Which is really something when you consider that **the internet is almost entirely words—typed or spoken.**

And yet we all know that words alone can change the way you see. The way you think. They can change the way you view people. The way you view yourself.

This means that words and language can do things a nuclear warhead can't, for all its destructive powers it doesn't have the power to reach inside someone's mind and heart.

Whoever coined the old saying of *sticks and stones* didn't think it through.

So the words and the way with words that you employ in your interpersonal communication skills carry great power—and call upon you to wield them with great responsibility.

The results of your use of words, for better or for worse, can be nuclear.

CLARITY: NUCLEAR, CLEAR AND UNCLEAR

So you want *nuclear* results—the good kind—to come out of your interactions with others. Who doesn't? Many professionals dream of seeing “explosive” growth and action after speaking into the microphone or sending out a deliverable.

Let's be real—the average result of opening our mouths ain't so dramatic. Why? The reason is hidden inside the word *nuclear* itself. If you aren't getting *nuclear* results, it could be because you're being *unclear*.

Clever anagrams aside, clear communication answers the *who, what, where, and when*. These are among the first things learned in any communication skills training. If you send out an email saying “The client wasn't happy with the last set of deliverables,” your colleagues are going to reply with an email asking for a *minimum* of one if not all of those qualifiers.

Questions to consider for clear communication:

- ① Who was the client?
- ② What were the deliverables?
- ③ Where is the client's specific feedback?
- ④ When are they expecting improved deliverables?

Hit those beats *the first time* when *the first email* goes out and you've saved yourself (and everyone else) an insane amount of time. Specifically, the amount of time it takes to read and write four emails, and the turnaround on making the client happy is also reduced.

Yes, we know that clients sometimes forget their original request or just change their minds entirely, that can't be helped.

But more often than not, the majority of issues you experience in projects can be avoided from the very beginning by taking the time to really outline *everything*.

The incentive? If communication in the workplace is *unclear*, the results won't be *nuclear*.

But just getting the details from clients and colleagues won't cut it. There's one more aspect to what makes communication *clear*.

NOW WHAT: MAKE IT ACTIONABLE

Especially in the workplace, when some form of communication lands, it's vital that the listeners know what they should do next.

Leaving the next actions to guesswork is what gets you the messes and quandaries that waste time and money. You wouldn't blindfold a new employee and then just tell them "Hey, get a drink of water from the water cooler." Not unless you want a huge mess and a lot of soggy desks.

If you have a meeting about how sales have dipped, the no-brainer is that it's time to bring more sales strategies to the fore... but the exact way to do that isn't going to automatically occur to your listeners. Unless you want people to fall back on guesswork, specific instructions should be spelled out and agreed upon.

Instructions to consider for eliminating guesswork:

- ① What are the *specific* next steps?
- ② Who is responsible for what?
- ③ What are the expectations and deadlines?
- ④ What does a successful outcome look like?
- ⑤ Who should be contacted in the event of a problem?

Many of these may seem obvious to you. But fantastic projects have ended in disaster because no one bothered to communicate effectively and ensure everyone was on the same page from beginning to end.

People make assumptions. People are afraid to ask for help. People pretend they've done more work than they actually have.

When you provide clear and actionable steps every time, there is no ambiguity, everyone knows what to do and by when, and projects have a much higher success rate.

Exactly how this translates into your personal work environment you can be taught by a communications coach who will help you navigate nuances and optimize your situation.

THIS IS SPARTA! COMMUNICATION THROUGH VOCAL QUALITY



Come on. Even if you haven't seen the movie, you know that you've heard the line. Bearded and grizzly, Leonidas roared the famous line into society's consciousness

It also might not have been as memorable if he had the voice of Mickey Mouse.

But no—his voice was something of a mix of a deep bark, a clap of thunder, and Bigfoot gargling gravel. Therefore it's embedded in our memories like shrapnel.

So other than your exact choice of words, another way to give them weight is to work on the quality of your voice.

And the good news is you don't need to have a certain *kind* of voice, like the rumbling violence delivered by King Leonidas.

Voices of all types have been conveying power and motivation just the same. Richard Simmons and Maya Angelou sound calm and softly spoken by comparison—but they have brought people to tears with their message through their natural voice.

All you're aiming for is a voice that is clear and compelling. This comes down to three characteristics we at Moxie call the three Ps: **Pace, Pitch, and Power.**

► #1 — **Pace** (*The speed at which you speak.*)

This can be controlled by simply pausing more often, other than merely changing how quickly you spit out words of course. Speaking quickly isn't a taboo and it has value. It can ramp up urgency, infuse excitement, or summarize information that listeners don't need to waste their energy on.

But if it's your only speed it loses its effectiveness. Speaking slowly can allow vital information to sink in. A longer-than-usual pause after making a point allows your listeners a moment to digest what they just heard in silence. It can add impact and drama. A great communicator deliberately varies their pace for effect which keeps listeners enthralled and along for the ride.

► #2 — **Pitch** (*The highs and lows of your voice.*)

Not to be confused with volume. Think of a piano and the high-pitched keys on the right versus the deep low keys on the left. Many people are so afraid of going too far in either direction that they make the worst decision which is to stay in the middle. Imagine a song with one note—*only* one note. The pace of the song changes, but the note doesn't. Kinda painful just to imagine.

Well, that's what it sounds like when a speaker never modulates the pitch of their voice. Their voice is either so annoying or so boring, that the message in the words never gets through. Here's an easy way to remember this warning: **Monotone speakers sound monotonous.**

So to ensure you stay clear of sounding drab, add some melody to your voice with modulation! Convey urgency or passion with a rising pitch. Anger, intensity, severity, and even gentleness can be put across with lower tones. Experiment and find out what works best for you in different situations.

► #3 — **Power** (*This is how loudly or softly you're speaking.*)

There are moments for being loud, but you don't want to be loud all the time. Constant shouting an appealing speaker does not make. People will wince at the sight of you as if they're anticipating a shotgun blast to the face. You'll find that quietness can project just as much, if not more strength than shouting at key moments.

A great way to see the three P's in action is to study some famous TED Talks or panel discussions and take note of the moments and the ways they practiced changing their voices to great effect.

And it may sound odd but it's true, any communicator or speaker you respect has practiced how they speak and sound in speeches and conversations. Any skill can be improved, even the ones we think we already mastered. If you want to learn more on this topic, click the YouTube video link below:

 **Click here to watch our YouTube video — 5 Tips For Vocal Executive Presence**

HOW TO PROJECT CONFIDENCE VERBALLY

People will take your information at face value if they can tell that you believe in it yourself.

As an example, which inspires more confidence?

- 1 You ask someone for driving directions and they say, "Sure, just take a left three lights down! You can't miss it!"
- 2 What if the same person said "Well, I mean, there are several ways to get there and I'm still figuring out the best one, but you'll do fine if you take a left... is it a left? Yeah, it's a left three lights down from here."

It sounds like they don't even believe their own directions. When you communicate with others, it will save both of you time if they can see your confidence in your own words. Here are a few ways to do that:

► Don't Overuse Questions

If you phrase everything as a question, you'll gradually start to sound doubtful to others. You could be doing this by accident if your voice tends to rise upward at the end of a sentence. You want to finish some sentences with a solid period, not a question mark.

So pay attention to your tone of voice so you don't sound like you're missing information or looking for approval for your idea or decision. Did we explain that right? We hope so? It would be embarrassing if we didn't? Let's move on?

► Leave Out Caveats And Filler Words

Natural speech is rife with these, so you might be tempted to include them to sound conversational. The truth is that they undermine your image of confidence.

These are phrases like "Sorry," "Like", "Well," "This is just my opinion," "I mean," and so many other phrases that sound like disclaimers. "I think it's time to take this pitch in a different direction," is going to go further than "Well, sorry but this pitch needs to go in a different direction, but, I mean, I'm still figuring out the best way to take."

► Silence Is Your Friend

There are people that dread even a second of silence during conversation. This gives us speakers that talk breathlessly, for fear that they forget an important idea or lose their train of thought. Whether in a meeting or a conversation, people need strategic pauses for key bits of information to stick with them.

Plus, when they see that a moment of silence doesn't make you uncomfortable, the more confident you'll look. The difference between intentional and accidental silence will be imperceptible.

03

CHAPTER

I SEE YOU

HOW TO TALK TO PEOPLE



What's the opposite of talking TO someone? Talking AT someone.

Remember when telemarketing was like the untamed wild west? You answered the phone, a stranger introduced themselves, and then they started giving you a spiel.

Even though you couldn't see them, you knew pretty quickly that they were reading a script to you. This was surely a part of why you hung up. You didn't matter to them, so they didn't matter to you.

People are able to easily detect if you're truly speaking to them to understand and exchange ideas versus just forcing your opinion into the conversation. That's when you lose them and you won't get them back.

Why? They feel invisible. Like their opinion doesn't matter.

This is one of the greatest failures of many leaders—they don't listen to others. You would be amazed how even bad ideas and poorly expressed thoughts, when given true consideration, can lead to some of the most incredible insights and solutions.

If you can make others feel seen, then they'll stay engaged, enjoy working with you, and most importantly, feel comfortable sharing thoughts with you that could turn into spectacular success.

Whether you're just speaking with a person one on one or to an entire team, there are effective approaches to make this happen.

► Ask Curious Questions

Want to know what's important to the people you talk to every day? Ask them.

Pose candid questions during lunch or a coffee break. Post questions on your company's online chat group. If it's a touchy subject matter, pose your questions in private messages.

As long as you have clear reasons for your questions and your intention is to listen and learn then it won't hurt you if you're in a position of authority. If anything, it will strengthen your role as a leader.

Employees dream about a boss that cares about what they think.

Asking the right questions lets others know you're thinking of them and care about their perspective.

That's where curious questions come in.

They aren't questions with a 'yes' or 'no' answer. They're open and are followed by questions that go deeper.

For example, here's a bad communicator and leader who doesn't care or want to know what's going on:

BOSS: *"Hey! Having a good day?"*

EMPLOYEE: *"Not really. I'm a bit stressed to be honest."*

BOSS: *"Is it because of the meeting?"*

EMPLOYEE: *"No not the meeting, the project."*

BOSS: *"The project?"*

EMPLOYEE: *"Yeah the client is being unreasonable and demanding I hit the initial deadline even though they caused a huge delay."*

BOSS: *"Are you not able to do the work? Should I reassign it?"*

EMPLOYEE: *"No I can do the work but the deadline is unrealistic."*

BOSS: *"Well we agreed to it so just make it happen."*

Yikes. Compare that to a great leader who cares and thus, gets more information and fantastic insight:

BOSS: *"Hey! How is everything going today?"*

EMPLOYEE: *"It's a bit stressful to be honest."*

BOSS: *"Oh, why?"*

EMPLOYEE: *"Yeah the client is being unreasonable and demanding I hit the initial deadline even though they caused a huge delay."*

BOSS: *"They caused it? What happened?"*

EMPLOYEE: *"They missed the deadline for feedback twice so now we only have a few days versus two weeks."*

BOSS: *"That sucks, what can I do to help?"*

EMPLOYEE: *"Can we push the due date back? Otherwise, I'd need at least two more people on the team to turn this around."*

BOSS: *"Sorry no, our contract specifies that date. But I'll definitely talk with the project manager to get others to step in and help you."*

EMPLOYEE: *"Thank you, I'd really appreciate that."*

BOSS: *"How often does this happen?"*

EMPLOYEE: *"Honestly this has happened with quite a few of my clients and it's pretty draining."*

BOSS: *"That's not good. I'll also speak with legal to change our contracts to include flexibility on due dates if clients miss deadlines and add rush fees if they still insist on not changing them."*

EMPLOYEE: *"That would be amazing thank you!"*

BOSS: *"No problem!"*

► Don't Multitask

Ours is the age of multitasking. Some of us excel at it. You could very well be hearing everything that someone is saying to you when you have your nose in your phone.

But if your eyes aren't on the person speaking, they're going to think that your mind isn't either. They will feel ignored and devalued and they won't feel the need to express themselves openly. So when you're getting someone to open up to you in conversation, be completely present for them. This shows appreciation for what they have to say.

► Use Reflective Statements

This was demonstrated in the above conversation. The leader that cared didn't just throw out random questions. They used questions and phrases that clearly flagged them as being dialed into what the other person was saying.

- ▶ "I hear what you are saying."
- ▶ "I can see how that must have made you feel."

Plus occasionally paraphrasing what the other person is saying. It all adds up to showing the other person that you care about them and the message they have inside of them. Which makes them open up and be receptive to what you have to say.

► But Above All...

Be yourself.

Okay, that sounds like something from a bargain bin Hallmark knockoff. But there's only one of you, and there's only one person qualified to be the best you there is. What's more, people connect with people.

So if you're communicating with your audience or your peers as an authentic one-of-a-kind person, then you're offering a connection that cannot be had anywhere else.

The "persona" that people show in public is awkwardly superhuman. Unflappable, unstoppable, low occurrence of mistakes. So... not really human. Not really authentic. A persona without a personality. Authenticity puts you in a position of being very human.

It gives you a (safe) degree of vulnerability. It projects you as being brave enough to be what everyone else is afraid of being in public. It's as if you're quietly inviting others to come out of their own shells.

"Don't worry, it's ok. I won't tread on you for being yourself."

All kinds of things happen when people can tell that they have permission to be themselves and they've no need to fear being judged for it.

Moxie has an entire methodology around being your authentic self, but here a few points:

- 1 Tell a story about yourself or an experience of yours
- 2 Get in touch with your values and your patterns of emotions
- 3 Don't be afraid of letting your passion or enthusiasm bleed into your words
- 4 Uncover your biases and work to change them

To be candid, it's important to put your ego aside and accept that you could communicate better. That you have areas to improve and refine.

It's worth it.

You don't just talk at work. You communicate with friends, family members, loved ones, etc.

You plan trips, do projects together, and discuss opinions and ideas. If any of these descend into arguments and hurt feelings then it's a sign there's plenty to work on.

It's a skill that will have a profound impact in your life and elevate every interaction you have, forever.

Naturally, working with a coach on these skills gets you the best results in the shortest time frame. From CEOs to Olympic athletes, personalized and tailored feedback from a respected expert is the gold standard for personal and professional development.



04

CHAPTER

I CAN READ YOUR MIME

NONVERBAL INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS



What if movies were just the actors sitting around reading their scripts behind a wall?

Hollywood talent could probably kill it with the voice acting, no problem. But there would still be something missing. The movement. The sharp camera angles. The facial expressions. A lot of the things that make a movie a movie.

Think of this the next time you don't think that your body language matters.

If body language can make or break a blockbuster movie, it can also make or break your message when you're communicating.

In fact, pull up any of our client's TEDx Talk videos and you'll notice that the speaker isn't just a speaker. There's a wide range of motions and stances that they go through as they deliver their message.

And that isn't limited to the stage or screens. The way you move while you talk has a bearing on how you move others that listen to you when you communicate in the everyday setting.

How do you get nonverbal communication right? Much depends on who you ask. But there are definite ways of getting it wrong. Let's clear those out of the way first.

► Pitiful Posture

How do you feel when you see someone who is hunched over like a butler in a B-grade horror movie? (We've been expeeeeecting yooooou!)

That's just it... you feel uncomfortable as if you were watching a B-grade horror movie. Any stance or posture that communicates uncertainty, anxiety, or fear is going to affect how much credibility the listener gives you. To put it succinctly:

How you stand determines your standing with others.

For a quick postural repositioning, try this exercise:

- Pretend that there's a string attached to the top of your head. It's a marionette string being controlled by your more confident self. It's being pulled taut so that your feet dangle off the floor only a smidge.

What's your posture going to look like then? You're going to be tall, straight, and far less creepy butler-like. You might even make it to the end of the day without being roped into helping a mad scientist.

► Doing Everything in Your Power to Avoid Eye Contact

To be fair, there are ways that this can sneak up on you, especially when you're in a group setting with all eyes on you.

You may find yourself burying your eyes in your notes or gluing your gaze to the screen during a presentation.

Speaking one-on-one, the eye-contact-outs are far less graceful. Staring at a ball of fuzz on the carpet or gazing at the popcorn ceiling tiles—these are things that make you look downright dishonest.

Are you going to trust my ideas and suggestions if I can't look you in the eye while I'm giving them? Didn't think so.

If you're in a meeting or group conversation, make it a point to make eye contact with different people as you talk.

This will make them feel more connected and engaged with what you're saying.

► **Throwing Up Physical Barriers To Your Listeners**

This is one taboo that takes many shapes.

But each shape creates a visible barricade between you and who you're talking to.

Crossed arms are the most common. Next up is wringing your hands, or gesturing excessively. To make your listener feel welcomed by you, you're going to have to open up your personal space to them.

You communicate this by finding ways to leave your chest area open. That can be as simple as having your hands by your sides as you speak. It can be as complex as gesturing in ways that have your arms moving outward or forward.

This is a primal, instinctual signal that you're not hostile.

Your pets likely signal to you the same way that you're welcome by exposing their bellies, such as rolling onto their backs.

► **Not Using The Space Around You**

If the only thing you're moving is your mouth, guess what? You look uncomfortable. Or like you're talking to your drill sergeant.

At ease, soldier. Don't be afraid to move.

Take a few steps forward. Take a few back. Move in whatever natural way expresses the point you are making.

► **Negative Nonverbal Feedback**

There are all kinds of ways to scream "GO AWAY" without actually saying it.

Sharp, rapid nods. Irritated blinking. Pointing at colleagues during meetings as if you're stabbing them. And so forth.

Repellent body language isn't difficult to pick up on. But neither is positive body language.

If you want to learn more on this topic, click the YouTube video link below:



Click here to watch our YouTube video — 7 Deadly Sins Of Nonverbal Communication

LIKE A LION: PROJECTING CONFIDENCE NONVERBALLY

You might have noticed that we primed you for this section with the previous one—by knowing what not to do, we're closer to knowing what we should do. More specifically:

▶ **Stand Tall With a Champion's Wide Stance**

What's with all this advice about standing tall? The effect is twofold. Function follows form. If you look more confident, you'll feel confident. Second, people will automatically take you for a winner if you carry yourself like one. One of our Moxie staff was asked by a cashier if he was ex-military. He wasn't. The cashier explained that she observed that he carried himself like he was. Carry yourself like you're confident and people will assume you have something to be confident about.

▶ **Chin Up**

A level head isn't just for looks. Sure, you look like you know what you're doing, but your speaking voice is improved. Keeping your eyes to the floor restricts your vocal capabilities—and makes you look passive and vulnerable, or even guilty.

▶ **Show Some Hands**

All those adults that told you to keep your hands out of your pockets were preparing you for your professional career, whether they knew it or not. When people can see your hands, they're more likely to befriend you. Don't look bored or nervous by hiding your paws in your pockets.

▶ **Look Into My Eyes**

About that point on eye contact—how do you know how much to have? Too much eye contact can be as bad as too little. A good rule of thumb is to make eye contact for around 3 seconds each time you look at someone. That way you're not dodging and you're not staring either.

▶ **Have Some Facial Expressions**

Your mouth isn't the only part of your face that communicates emotions. A willingness to show your thoughts and feelings through your face shows your listener that you're not shy about communicating. This aids in projecting your confidence.

▶ **Use Gestures That Match What You Say**

Does that sound odd? What's even more odd are gestures that just don't line up with the words coming out of your mouth. Some people focus so much on gestures that they memorize these oddball movements and go through them like an animatronic. It's distracting and it detracts from your authenticity. Practicing gesturing naturally.

Which is to say, practice not feeling self-conscious about gesturing—i.e. holding yourself back—and allow what comes to you naturally. You'll notice that natural gestures vary from person to person. A qualified communications coach can help you refine your own style of gesturing and make your interpersonal communication skills feel more personal.

It's one thing to study your own nonverbal communication. But what about studying that of others?

HOW TO READ A ROOM—OR AN INDIVIDUAL

You step into a room and the vibe hits you as “off.” You take a phone call and somehow you know if it’s going to be good or bad news. If you’ve had either of these experiences, then you have an idea of what’s involved in reading others.

It’s not always 100% reliable. It doesn’t guarantee a certain outcome. But developing your people radar can pay rich dividends

Here are just some of the benefits:

- 1 Reading both verbal and nonverbal cues **improves communication overall**
- 2 You’ll be **more likely to win over clients or close deals** if you can tell how a conversation is going
- 3 It will show if you’re truly paying attention to someone, and this makes them feel heard and respected, which will make them **like you more**
- 4 Your listeners will **invest more energy in paying attention** if they can tell you’re paying attention to them
- 5 You’ll be able to **avoid disaster** by pivoting if you can tell when an interaction has entered a tailspin



So you've started speaking. Your listeners may be an audience of one or they may be one hundred.

Regardless, there are three things you're trying to gauge to find out where you are with your listeners and where you could be headed.

▶ **#1 — How attentive are they?**

Someone that's paying attention usually has their eyes on you and isn't doing much else.

Someone that is uninterested may have all kinds of nervous-in-place behavior like yawning, multitasking, fidgeting, or just plain zoning out.

▶ **#2 — How engaged are they?**

We've all faked engagement before, but the truth ultimately comes out.

If your listener is engaged with you, phones are down and, if possible, they're asking you questions.

If they're multitasking, you're somewhere on the back burner of their mind.

▶ **#3 — What does their sentiment seem to be?**

People won't always tell you outright if they agree or disagree with you. But you'll be able to get a clue from how they react to you as you speak.

This can be tricky.

Some of the body language that is expressed as discomfort with a person is the same body language that is expressed as discomfort with an environment.

The room may be too hot or too cold, the lighting may be bad, or there may be too much to process at the moment.

Even if you're doing everything right, you could be getting bad signals just because your listener is tired or hungry.

That or your own emotions, biases, and assumptions could be influencing your perception.

So while they are a valuable reference, don't let nonverbal cues alone be your ultimate guide.

05

CHAPTER

KEEPING CONNECTIONS

BEING ASSERTIVE AND
MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

There are plenty of people that you will only talk to once. And then there are the people that are constantly in your orbit: Your superiors. Your coworkers. Friends and family. Sometimes your workplace relationships are more active than your familial ones.

So maintaining good relationships in the workplace means an efficient and enjoyable workplace. The workplace, by its nature, isn't the perfect place for cozy relationships. Business is the top priority and people's careers hinge on getting *their* workload done. Not to mention the fact that many are looking for opportunities to climb the ladder.

So the work environment naturally encourages a focus on self, regardless of how nice or selfless your peers may be. If you're too passive, you could be swept under by those that aren't. This would be detrimental to both your career and your friendships.

So what's the key to both getting things done and keeping peace with those around you?

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION 101

When most people hear "Be more assertive," they hear "Be more aggressive." But they aren't mutually exclusive ideas. In practice, assertiveness can *feel* like aggression, but the *effect* is much different.

Assertive Communication Examples:	Aggressive Communication Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Cares about the interests of others as much as they care about their own▶ Wants everyone involved to win▶ Is respectful, clear, and firm▶ Listens to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Only cares about the needs of "Number One"▶ Doesn't listen, often resorts to shouting, interrupting, or talking over others.▶ Uses language that damages relationships and hurts feelings▶ Makes demands, especially ones that ignore others' needs▶ Calls themselves an "alpha" or some other lame title that screams insecurity

Assertive communication allows you to present your own needs and feelings in a way that is healthy, and balanced without bulldozing the needs and feelings of others. What does this look like in practice?

► **Stick To The Facts**

There's no limit to the opinions that can be brought into play during a discussion.

But the anchor for your case is always the facts. No amount of personal preference can change the facts about a matter.

Jack says roses are better than violets. Jill says violets are better than roses. You say that both are flowers appreciated by many, and neither Jack nor Jill will be able to refute this.

They also may realize their common interest in flowers is a more productive and enjoyable conversation than debating subjective opinions.

Apply this logic to any typical business meeting and you'll see how useful this can be.

► **It's Not You, It's Me—Even If It Is You**

What's your natural reaction when something impacts you negatively?

"What you said was rude."

"What you did was mean."

Even if that's the truth, it makes the other person feel like there's a red bullseye on their back. They will feel attacked and they'll bring all their energy up to defend themselves.

How do you make them more open to hearing you out?

► **With "I" statements**

"I have some difficult feelings about what you said."

"You probably didn't mean it, but I've been affected by what you did."

Now the focus has shifted from them to you. This puts the other person in a better position to listen to what you have to say.

This also shows that you're willing to take ownership of your own feelings and needs, and it puts polite pressure on the other party to do the same.

▶ **Thou Shalt Not Beat Around The Bush**

Be clear and direct. Anything else tells others that you're not really sure about what you're concerned about. People aren't going to be concerned about something you're barely backing yourself.

▶ **Same Song and Dance**

Sometimes you won't get what you need if you only stand up for yourself once.

You may have to be a "broken record" and express your needs and wants repeatedly. Don't be reticent about it.

Do it as many times as it takes until you get the respect and acknowledgment you need. It's perfectly possible to do this without being aggressive. Just be firm and consistent.



Follow these tips and you're sure to be heard and taken seriously. But that's only half of the equation, isn't it?

You're surrounded by people that want to be heard and taken seriously as well. How do you do that for them *and* let them know you're that person who sees them?

If you want to learn more on this topic, click the YouTube video link below:

 **[Click here to watch our YouTube video – 7 Tips For Assertive Communication](#)**

06

CHAPTER

LOUD AND CLEAR

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is exactly what the name suggests. You're a real-time participant. You're not listening passively like you might with a radio or television in the background.

You're glued to who's talking and you're trying to extract the meaning of their words and discern the intentions behind them.

Active listening takes mental energy and stamina. Like a muscle, you will build it with practice.

In a nutshell, you're turning everything you just learned inside out—instead of being the source of vocal presence and nonverbal cues, you're now trying to be a receiver for such things. But let's not oversimplify.

To practice active listening:

▶ **Be Fully Present**

This means getting all your senses involved.

Your eyes, ears, and mind are 100% engaged with the other person. This means putting away any electronics or thoughts that will get in the way.

Your peers will feel seen and heard when they actually are.

▶ **The Art Of Reading Nonverbal Cues**

Roles are reversed. Now you're watching for how the speaker's body language enhances their spoken message.

But that's not the end of what you can do. Your own body language can signal that you're keeping pace with them.

Nodding when appropriate, smiling, leaning in, and refraining from crossing your arms are your way of giving a thumbs up and letting the other person know you're keeping up.

▶ **Eye Contact: Still Important**

At this point it almost seems pedantic to keep mentioning eye contact, but it's that vital to interpersonal communication skills.

If your eyes are off the speaker long enough, they'll notice and they won't think you're interested.

► Use Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions have more room for self-expression than yes or no questions. Yes or no questions give you answers in strictly two flavors.

Open-ended questions will give the other person permission to go into deep dives.

Just like the great leader showed in the example conversation earlier, they also demonstrate how invested you are in what someone is saying.

No surprise that mental health therapists heavily rely on open-ended questions. A professional that used binary-only questions wouldn't develop much of a rapport with their patients.

Exercise using questions like:

- 1 Can you tell me more about that?
- 2 What do you think is the best path forward?
- 3 How do you think that could have been done differently?
- 4 What did you think of that?

Notice how each question draws attention to the other person's thoughts and feelings.

► Sound It Back

At appropriate moments, repeat the essence of what you were just told back to the one speaking.

This benefits both of you.

For you, it's a mechanism of active listening that ensures you've comprehended what was said and it helps you remember. For the speaker, it gives them concrete proof that you've been listening closely.

► Exercise Patience

Some folks are just plain long-winded. Their piece may not be as succinct as you expected or hoped.

The temptation may arise to interrupt, finish their sentences for them, change the subject, or interject some of your own stories.

Resist this temptation.

By letting them finish what they are saying, you're letting them know that you value *everything* they have to say—even if they've got a lot to unpack.

This also implies that you aren't listening in such a way as to merely plan what you're going to say. Rather, you're listening to understand.

And if you feel like doing this is a waste of your time, think beyond the short term.

In the long term, you'll have built a relationship on mutual respect and cooperation that ensures whenever you need them to listen to you, they'll be more than happy to.

► Don't Judge

People share when they feel safe. People feel safe when they know they aren't going to be judged or rejected.

When people discover that speaking to you is an experience free of shame, criticism, blame, or negativity in general, they will value your conversations more and more.

Do your best to replace blame, shame, and criticism with empathy—even if you're quite certain that the other person is wrong in some aspect.

Often, reality is far less extreme than our initial assumptions. And by listening to people, you'll almost always find they have a rational and logical reason for their actions.

There are few things greater for your career and reputation than being known for fostering win-win situations and solutions. Listening, expressing yourself clearly, and working towards ensuring everyone feels heard and respected is the hallmark of an exceptional leader—both in and outside the workplace.

The knowledge we've shared with you is just the tip of the iceberg. The next step is to start putting it into practice and seeing the incredible results for yourself!

ARE YOU GETTING THROUGH NOW THAT WE'RE THROUGH?

Now that you're properly primed on the world of effective business communication skills, you're bound to cut down on the friction of bad or unclear communication.

Your colleagues and personal relationships will treasure the way you make them feel when they speak to you. They'll appreciate the clarity of your ideas and directions.

Your superiors will love the way that virtually nothing is lost in translation when they work with you. But there's so much more, dear reader. There's so much more.

And there's several ways of getting it. You can have the personalization that comes with a coach. You can have the convenience that comes with a class.

However you'd like to engage with us at Moxie, we appreciate you and look forward to helping you become great at effective business communication!



To continue to elevate your professional skills and accelerate your career goals or to just learn more about our industry-leading training and services, you can visit our website, send us an email or give us a call!

We look forward to supporting you on your journey!



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