

Communicating Effectively
by Lani Arredondo
A Briefcase Book published by McGraw-Hill
Discussion Guide

The following is designed to facilitate the use of *Communicating Effectively* by Lani Arredondo (McGraw-Hill, 2000) in a training course or organizational communication seminar.

Chapter 1. It's All About Communication

Chapter Purpose

To establish a foundation of understanding the relational nature of management , and why interpersonal communication skills are a “must” for anyone who hopes to succeed in a management role.

Chapter Objectives

Upon completion of Chapter 1, you will be able to:

- define “management” and diagram its primary functions
- contrast contemporary and “old-order” organizations, and describe why interpersonal skills are increasingly important in contemporary organizations
- distinguish between “constructive” and “destructive” communications
- name the “ABC’s” of constructive communication

Discussion Questions

1. What results do you want to produce through the performance of the people you manage?
2. Based on your experience – both as an employee reporting to a manager and as someone who manages others—what types of constructive communications encourage people to produce better results? What types of destructive communications inhibit or undermine people’s performance?
3. Complete the “Smart Managing” exercise suggested on page 18. To build trust, what can you be counted on to do when you interact with employees? with peers? with your boss?
4. With the people you manage, what discussions or activities can you initiate in order to create a greater a sense of commonality among the members of your team or work group?

Chapter 2. The Part Perceptions Play

Chapter Purpose

To gain insight into the power of perceptions, how to communicate to foster favorable impressions, and how to minimize misperceptions.

Chapter Objectives

Upon completion of Chapter 2, you'll be able to:

- identify the factors involved in the formation of a person's perceptions
- name the three categories of communication cues that influence people's impressions
- give examples of cues to avoid and cues to use
- list methods to manage your perceptions

Discussion Questions

1. What situation have you dealt with in which a problem occurred largely because of inaccurate or negative perceptions? Reflecting on that experience, what could be done differently to reduce the likelihood of such a problem?
2. What do you communicate verbally that makes a positive impression? that may fuel negative perceptions?
3. Vocally, what tones of voice trigger a negative reaction from you? from others?
4. Visually, what do you project? and how do your visual cues affect others' perceptions of you?
5. How do you want to be perceived by the people you manage? by your peers? by your boss? To promote these perceptions, what improvements do you think you need to make in the verbal, vocal, and/or visual cues you convey?

Chapter 3. Profiles and Preferences

Chapter Purpose

To better understand where various people are “coming from” in terms of their manner of thinking and communicating, and discover ways to adapt to differences in style and approach.

Chapter Objectives

Upon completion of Chapter 3, you’ll be able to:

- describe the differences between the three styles of communication: expressive, passive, and aggressive
- describe the differences between concrete and conceptual thinking
- identify the characteristics of and “clues” to each of the four communication profiles
- list ideas for interacting more effectively with each of the communication profiles

Discussion Questions

1. Based on the insights you gained from Chapter 3, what’s your communication profile?
2. What do you think is the predominant profile of each of the people you manage? of your boss?
3. When you have on the same team or in the same workgroup people whose communication profiles differ from one another, what problems can occur? What are the advantages to this kind of diversity?
4. Pick one of the people you manage whose profile is different from your own. What difficulties have you experienced interacting with them? What can you do to customize your communication to *their* profile and preferences?

Chapter 4. Building Blocks of Effective Interactions

Chapter Purpose

To ascertain the qualities and communication skills that are *essential* to build positive relationships with people—a precursor to motivating performance that produces desired results.

Chapter Objectives

Upon completion of Chapter 4, you will be able to:

- define rapport and relate ideas for how to build rapport with others
- name the three characteristics that are crucial to gain respect
- define the terms “low-readiness” and “high-readiness” as they pertain to employees, and identify guidelines for communicating with each type
- list steps that improve the likelihood that a message will be clearly communicated and accurately interpreted
- express an example of how to clarify another person’s intent
- cite advantages to asking open-ended questions
- describe the “dos” and “don’ts” for listening attentively

Discussion Questions

1. Call to mind an occasion when a “breakdown in communication” occurred between you and an employee or employees you manage? Of the factors addressed in Chapter 4, which ones contributed to the problem? What qualities or communication skills would help to prevent a similar problem in the future?
2. Suppose you’re leading a problem-solving discussion. You want to elicit information and ideas from employees. What open-ended questions would you ask?
3. What three things will you do, specifically, to listen more attentively?

Chapter 5. Communicating So They Get It Right

Chapter Purpose

To acquire skills and confidence for dealing effectively with three critical aspects of managing performance and results: giving instructions, confronting performance problems, and providing positive feedback.

Chapter Objectives

Upon completion of Chapter 5, you'll be able to:

- list reasons employees don't produce desired results
- formulate instructions for completing a task by answering "who, what, when, where, why" and "how"
- identify the five guidelines to apply when giving corrective feedback
- follow a six-step format to express corrective feedback—constructively
- name the four common reactions to receiving corrective feedback, and relate how to respond to each one
- describe why and how to give positive feedback

Discussion Questions

1. Of the employees you manage, are there any who don't perform as you'd prefer? Of the four reasons that explain why people don't produce results (outlined on page 98), which apply to this/these employee(s)? What communication skills can you use to address the situation?
2. How do you feel about confronting a performance problem? What have you learned from Chapter 5 that will be helpful to you in this respect?
3. Call to mind an employee who exhibits inappropriate or unacceptable behavior. How will you express corrective feedback to them? What reaction would you anticipate from this employee? How will you respond to such a reaction?
4. Which employees on your team are deserving of positive feedback? How will you express it to them?

Chapter 6. Dealing with Counterproductive Communications

Chapter Purpose

To learn how to calmly and competently handle behaviors that, if not dealt with, can derail discussions, raise stress, and strain working relationships.

Chapter Objectives

Upon completion of Chapter 6, you'll be able to:

- use techniques to alleviate tangents and tears
- list dos and don'ts for dealing with aggressive and passive communicators
- describe steps for resolving co-worker complaints and conflicts

Discussion Questions

1. Of the counterproductive communication behaviors discussed in Chapter 6, which one(s) have you dealt with?
2. When the situation occurred, how did you handle it?
3. If you found yourself facing a similar situation now, what skills or techniques have you learned that you'd use to deal with the counterproductive communication?

Chapter 7. Making the Most of Meetings

Chapter Purpose

To pick up pointers on how to make meetings more effective – to capitalize on the time and effort that goes into them.

Chapter Objectives

Upon completion of Chapter 7, you will be able to:

- complete a Cost/Benefit Ratio to determine whether or not to schedule a meeting
- state the purpose and prepare an agenda for a meeting
- name the roles that commonly occur in meetings
- list measures for keeping meetings on time and on track
- develop ground rules for meetings
- describe the skills of an effective meeting leader/facilitator

Discussion Questions

1. From your experience attending meetings, what have you found makes a meeting effective? when is a meeting not effective?
2. For the next meeting you schedule, what roles will you assign? What will you do to encourage participation by everyone involved?
3. Put yourself in the place of the employees you manage. What ground rules do you think they'd come up with for meetings?
4. What methods or processes have you used for brainstorming and problem-solving meetings?
5. Using an evaluation form like the one shown on page 164, how would you rate most of the meetings you hold? How do you think employees would rate them? Based on what you've learned from Chapter 7, what improvements might be made to make your meetings more effective?

Chapter 8. Steps to Successful Presentations

Chapter Purpose

To speed and simplify the process of preparing a presentation, improve delivery skills, and learn how to respond to questions.

Chapter Objectives

Upon completion of Chapter 8, you'll be able to:

- name the three stages for preparing a presentation
- cite key questions to ask to ascertain the perspective of the audience
- list in order the six steps to compose the content of a well-structured message and use, at each step, techniques to make a message more meaningful and memorable to the audience
- identify the characteristics of well-prepared visual aids and handouts
- describe verbal, vocal, and visual communication skills to use when delivering a presentation
- apply techniques to answer questions credibly

Discussion Questions

1. From the presentations you've heard and observed (as a member of the audience), what makes for a poor presentation? What makes a presentation excellent?
2. On page 167, the author suggests, "Memorize this phrase: 'It's not about me. It's about *them*'" (the audience). For what reasons is it useful and important for a presenter to keep in mind and focus on the audience?
3. What verbal, vocal, and visual cues do skillful presenters use? How can you further develop these delivery skills yourself?

Chapter 9. E-Communications

Chapter Purpose

To add clarity, credibility, and courtesy to business communications transmitted electronically.

Chapter Objectives

Upon completion of Chapter 9, you will be able to:

- determine the preferred form of communication to use in a given situation
- format and write effective e-mail messages
- cite the “cautions” that apply to e-mail
- follow the steps to communicate clear and concise voice-mail messages
- list points to bear in mind when sending faxes

Discussion Questions

1. What impact has e-mail had on your job?
2. What are the characteristics of an easily-readable e-mail message? What are your “pet peeves” with some e-mails you receive?
3. If you were conducting a class on the use of voice-mail, what would you teach new users?

Chapter 10. Finishing Touches

Chapter Purpose

To gain insights and ideas for interacting with the boss and peers, and learn additional skills and techniques for further enhancing communications with everyone in the workplace.

Chapter Objectives

Upon completion of Chapter 10, you'll be able to:

- identify four factors to consider with respect to building a better relationship with your boss
- name three roles you want to look to your peers to fill
- describe ways to tap into the grapevine
- list the four common reactions to change and the four questions employees want answered when change occurs – and relate how to respond to both
- cite the advantages to stories and humor
- define MBM

Discussion Questions

1. What ideas did you gain from Chapter 10 for interacting with your boss? with your peers?
2. How do you (or could you) make use of stories? of humor?
3. What do you (or will you) do, specifically, to practice MBM?