The purpose of this Communication handbook is to assist you in communicating effectively.

Definition

Communication is a process whereby information is enclosed in a package and is channeled and imparted by a sender to a receiver via some medium. The receiver then decodes the message and gives the sender a feedback. All forms of communication require a sender, a message, and an intended recipient, however the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication in order for the act of communication to occur. Communication requires that all parties have an area of communicative commonality. There are auditory means, such as speech, song, and tone of voice, and there are nonverbal means, such as body language, sign language, paralanguage, touch, eye contact, through media, i.e., pictures, graphics and sound, and writing. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communication)

The elements of communication

Communication is a two-way process that results in a shared meaning or common understanding between the sender and the reciever. An understanding of how communication works can help us to understand and improve our communication.

The basic communication model consists of five elements of communication: the sender, the receiver, the message, the channel and feedback.

Sender
The sender plays the specific role of initiating communication. To communicate effectively, the sender must use effective verbal as well as nonverbal techniques. Speaking or writing clearly, organizing your points to make them easy to follow and understand, maintaining eye contact, using proper grammar and giving accurate information are all essential in the effectiveness of your message. You will lose your audience if it becomes
aware of obvious oversights on your part. The sender should have some understanding of who the receiver is in order to modify the message to make it more relevant.

**Receiver**
The receiver means the party to whom the sender transmits the message. A receiver can be one person or an entire audience of people. In the basic communication model, the receiver, is directly across from the speaker. The receiver can also communicate verbally and nonverbally. The best way to receive a message is to listen carefully, sitting up straight and making eye contact. Don’t get distracted or try to do something else while you’re listening. Nodding and smiling as you listen to the sender speak demonstrate that you understand the message.

**Message**
The message may be the most crucial element of effective communication. A message can come in many different forms, such as an oral presentation, a written document, an advertisement or just a comment. In the basic communication model, the way from one point to another represents the sender’s message traveling to the receiver. The message isn’t necessarily what the sender intends it to be. Rather, the message is what the receiver perceives the message to be. As a result, the sender must not only compose the message carefully, but also evaluate the ways in which the message can be interpreted.

**Channel**
The message travels from one point to another via a channel of communication. The channel sits between the sender and receiver. Many channels, or types, of communication exist, from the spoken word to radio, television, an Internet site or something written, like a book, letter or magazine. Every channel of communication has its advantages and disadvantages. For example, one disadvantage of the written word, on a computer screen or in a book, is that the receiver cannot evaluate the tone of the message. For this reason, effective communicators word written communications clearly so they don’t rely on a specific tone of voice to convey the message accurately. The advantages of television as a channel for communication include its expansive reach to a wide audience and the sender’s ability to further manipulate the message using editing and special effects.

**Feedback**
The last element of effective communication, feedback, describes the receiver’s response or reaction to the sender’s message. The receiver can transmit feedback through asking questions, making comments or just supporting the message that was delivered. Feedback helps the sender to determine how the receiver interpreted the message and how it can be improved.

(http://www.ehow.com/about_5232701_elements-effective-communication_.html)

**Communication skills**

This competency means that the sender is able to express his ideas and reflections clearly, make contacts with people quickly and to maintain them, provide feedback, be tolerant to different customs and cultures. Communication competency means that the sender is able to look for, find and transfer different, information, coordinate all inner and outer
information that reaches the organization.

**How to be a good communicator**

- express own reflections and ideas clearly
- develop relationships
- provide feedback (answers, reacts)
- be open to others’ feedback (accept others answer without prejudice, references etc.
- respect attitudes and opinions of others
- be tolerant to different customs and cultures
- Give full attention to people while they are talking to you.
- Encourage other people to talk, and ask appropriate questions.
- Present your ideas so that others are receptive to your point of view.
- Treat people fairly and let others know how you want to be treated.
- Value teamwork and know how to build cooperation and commitment.
- Strive to understand other people and to be empathetic.
- Be able to easily win people’s trust and respect.
- Check to make sure you have understood what other people are trying to communicate.
- Follow through on your commitments.
- Be able to work with people you have difficulties with without becoming negative yourself.

**Four keypoints of communication**

1. If you want to convince others with a message, convince them that you are a good person and that you know what you are talking about.
2. Use words that your audience will easily understand and remember.
3. Speak direct, in a conversational way for a better communication.
4. Move away from egocentrism

Communication skills is the set of skills that enables a person to convey information so that it is received and understood. 
The most important in effective communication is to know the following:

- **WHO** you are communicating with (it’s of great importance to know your audience,
who they are, of what age they are, what they already know, how many people will receive your message, etc.)

- WHAT you are communicating – the communication should be adequate to the subject
- WHY - what the goal of your communicate is, what you want to achieve
- WHEN you will communicate the issue
- HOW you will communicate the issue – think about the method you will choose.

How to communicate effectively

Connect
  o Establish bond with people
  o Pay attention to people’s facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice.
  o See things from the other person’s point of view.
  o Adjust your communication style to match theirs.
  o Avoid criticizing, making negative judgments, or saying that the other person is wrong.
  o Show interest in the other person’s interests and concerns.

Listen
  o Encourage people to talk.
  o Show your willingness to listen. Minimize distractions. Attend to the other person with your whole body (your body language, eyes, facial expressions).
  o Nod your head and give verbal cues to communicate that you are paying attention.
  o Ask open-ended questions.
  o Listen to what people are trying to communicate, not just to what they are saying. Listen to their emotions. Listen also to what they want.
  o Check to make sure you understand. Use your own words to reflect what you have heard and noticed.

Communicate
  o Speak with sincerity and conviction.
  o Be sensitive to other people’s communication style.
  o Know what you want to accomplish. Do you want people to understand your position? Lend their support? Approve your request?
  o Listen at least as much as you talk.
  o Attune what you say with how you say it. Keep your message fitting with your tone of voice, facial expression, and body language.

Speak
  o Project confidence.
  o Connect with your audience.
  o Know what you want to accomplish. Do you want people to understand your position? Lend their support? Approve your request?
  o Keep it short and simple. Most communication can accomplish only one objective,
develop three main points, and hold people’s attention only so long.
- Ask for feedback; was the message understood.

( ”Let us give you a hand in communicating effectively” ABB Lunmus Global B.V, The Hague, The Netherlands)

How to win peoples cooperation

1. **Make people feel understood.**
Spend less time trying to make people understand what you want, and more time making them feel understood. In an ideal world people might make decisions, commitments and judgments based on logic and sound reasoning. But in this world people act in response to their preferences, feelings and social influence they might not be even aware of. If they trust you and feel you care about them, they are much more likely to cooperate with you.

2. **Find common ground**
Show people how their needs, values and dreams mesh with yours. To do so, you have to understand their values and concerns. See things from their point of view. Be sympathetic with their feelings. Then show them how cooperating with you can help them achieve what they want.

3. **Listen.**
Listening is the best way to make people feel understood and at the same time to find common ground. Ask open-ended questions, the kind that invite people’s careful consideration and honesty. Try to understand what people mean, without getting hung up on the literal meaning of their words. And acknowledge their thoughts and feelings (which is not the same thing as agreeing with them).

4. **Do not argue.**
The person you defeat in an argument today may be the person whose cooperation you need tomorrow. Arguments make people stake out positions and defend them. And the more you try to prove them wrong, the harder they will resist you. People may feel overwhelmed and stop arguing with you. But that does not mean you have won them over. Most of the time, when you win an argument, you lose an ally.

5. **Care about the people you want to influence.**
If you are concerned about the people you are trying to win over, if you value their needs and dreams, they will know it and they will reciprocate. They will communicate more freely, speaking their mind more openly and listening more attentively. They will give you the benefit of the doubt and they will want to cooperate.

6. **Be open for other’s ideas.**
Do not try to impose your ideas on others only. Listen to and value the ideas of the people that work for you or with whom you work together. Be open minded and feel confident with sharing the ideas with others. Even request for new ideas to gain people’s support and cooperation.

7. **Help people believe the change is possible.**
People often know, although they will not often admit, that they need to change. They feel a vague uneasiness, sensing that things will not pan out the way they
want. But they persist in doing what they have always done, thinking they are doing the best they can. Show them a better way, but more importantly convince them that the change is possible. Do not just give them a solution but offer them confidence.

How to present

Establish rapport/bond with your audience and they become your partners in a dialog, allies in your presentation. They will want you to succeed. They will overlook your nervousness and lack of polish. And they will give you the benefit of the doubt even if they lose thread of your logic.

1. Talk to people before your presentation. 
Introduce yourself as people begin gathering. Ask them about themselves, what they do, and why they are there. Smile.

2. Have your audience’s best interests at heart. 
See your presentation as an opportunity to serve your audience, not to impress or “sell” them.

3. Establish eye contact. 
Look people in the eye one at a time. Hold each person’s gaze for 5 to 10 seconds and then look someone else in the eye. We distrust people who will not look us in the eye. A word of caution – some cultures consider such eye contact intrusive and rude.

4. Speak simply and with conviction. 
Do not give a speech. Have a conversation with your audience. Say “I’, “we” and “you” when appropriate.

5. Approach your presentation from your audience’s perspective – not yours. Address their concerns. Speak to their interests, values and aspirations. Avoid words they might not understand. Cite evidence they find credible. If you have to use words or acronyms they might not understand, explain them immediately.

(“Let us give you a hand in communicating effectively” ABB Lumnus Global B.V, The Hague, The Netherlands)

Effective email

When you compose an email message, there are some simple rules that you can follow to ensure that your emails make a positive impression, and get you the response you want. Email should be constructed and written so that the intended audience can read, understand and act on the message after the first time they read it.

Subject Lines are Headlines
It grabs your attention, and it tells you what the email is about. Use a few well-chosen words, so that the recipient knows at a glance what the email is about.

**Be concise to the point**
Do not make an email longer than it needs to be

**Make One Point per Email**
One of the advantages of email compared with traditional letters is that it doesn't cost any more to send several emails than it does to send one. So, if you need to communicate with someone about a number of different things, consider writing a separate email on each subject. That way, your correspondent can reply to each one individually and in the appropriate time frame. Each individual email should be clear and concise, with the purpose of the message detailed in the very first paragraph. Sentences should be kept short and to the point.

**Specify the Response You Want**
Make sure to include any call to action you want, such as a phone call or follow-up appointment. Then, make sure you include your contact information, including your name, title, and phone numbers. Do this even with internal messages. Remember, the easier you make it for someone else to respond, the more likely they are to do so!

**Be a Good Correspondent**
Make sure that you go through your inbox regularly and respond as appropriate. This is a simple act of courtesy and will also serve to encourage others to reply to your emails in a timely manner. If a detailed response is required to an email, and you don't have the time to pull together the information straight away, send a holding reply saying that you have received the message, and indicating when you will respond fully. Always set your Out of Office agent when you're going to be away from your email for a day or more, whether on leave or because you're at meetings.

Internal Email

**Internal emails**, just like other emails, should not be too informal. Remember, these are written forms of communication that can be printed out and viewed by people other than those for whom they were originally intended!

(http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkll/EmailCommunication.htm)

**Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation**

**Make it personal**
The content of email should be customized.

**Do not attach unnecessary files**

**Use proper structure and layout**
Use short paragraphs and blank lines in between for easier reading from the screen.

**Do not overuse high priority option**
When overused it looses its function. Also might come out as aggressive.

**Do not write in CAPITALS**
IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS LIKE YOU ARE SHOUTING

**Read the email before you send it**
Proof reading will help discover missed mistakes and misspellings, as well as ensure
Do not overuse Reply to All
Only use Reply to All if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message.

How to telephone/skype effectively

- Be prepared, know what you want to achieve, have a pen and paper at hand.
- Speak clearly.
- Do not speak too fast or too slow.
- Smile – people can ‘hear’ you smile.
- Use your first and last names to introduce yourself.
- Be confident and positive, genuinely interested and enthusiastic.

How to have an effective meeting

- Set clear objectives: is a meeting a brainstorm session, informative or decision making, etc.
- Prepare an agenda, distribute it in advance to all the participants and stick to the agenda.
- Assure the meeting is chaired.
- Arrange the location in advance and inform all the participants.
- Ensure that appropriate supporting information is circulated in time to be useful.
- Make sure you are not disturbed (no cell phones).
- Be on time.
- Be prepared.
- Stay focused.
- Assure participation of all participants, avoid dominance.
- Assure accurate recording of meeting’s minutes/notes.
- Take a break for meetings extending 1.5 hours.
- Having an efficient meeting is teamwork.
- Ask questions, there is nothing foolish about it.
- Make sure the meeting has appropriate opening and closing.
- Always end meetings on time and attempt to end on a positive note.
- At the end of the meeting summarize the outcomes, review actions and assignments, and set up the next meeting if necessary.
- Assure the minutes of the meeting are distributed to all the attendants not later than
in the two following days.

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**Intercultural communication**

Communication between people from different cultural groups is one of the most complex areas of human communication.

Culture are defined as the lifestyle of a group, and includes the values, beliefs, ways of behaving and communicating of that group. Culture is acquired or learnt – no one is born with a particular culture.

Some people eat grasshoppers, while others by insecticides to destroy them. Some people adorn their entire bodies with paint and decoration, while others spend a fortune painting just their faces. Some people speak English and others, Finnish. What is the reason for these differences? The answer is that people’s thoughts, feelings, beliefs, behaviour and goals are all moulded by what their culture consider appropriate.

Intercultural communication refers to communication between people who belong to different cultures who thus have different values, beliefs, behaviours and ways to communicating. Because shared or common meaning is essential for communication to occur successfully, people from different cultures need to establish some common ground and cultivate an open, positive attitude towards one another.

The importance of cultivating a sensitivity towards different rules and expectations of people from other cultural groups cannot be overemphasised. The culturally aware person will benefit not only from improved communication but also from bonds formed with people from a wide range of backgrounds.

Openness to the differences existing among people is a vital ingredient for successful intercultural communication. An awareness of different values, attitudes and beliefs, must be cultivated. Empathy by putting oneself in the other person’s shoes enables a communicator to see the world from another perspective. Active listening and recognition that each person has an important role to play in the interaction are important in all communication, but especially so when people from different cultures communicate.
Final tips

- Pay attention to your body language, it can communicate more than you think.
- Do not try to get too many messages across. People do not retain more than three ideas from a presentation or a discussion.
- Use face-to-face communication as much as possible as people generally prefer that type of communication.
- Be aware of the danger of misinterpretation or misunderstanding while communicating in a multicultural environment.
- Effective communication is timely and open.
- Share the thinking not just the conclusion.
- If there are no bad news or issues, it does not mean there is nothing to communicate.
- Communication is a process not a product (information needs interaction).

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