

Talking it over: wise workplace communication

Expectations are unclear, tensions between co-workers are left to fester and 'the grapevine' is your main source of workplace information: poor communication at work can not only leave you feeling lackluster about your job, it can also chip away at your emotional well-being. Great communication, on the other hand, can have amazing results, boosting the health of your relationships, spirit and outlook by helping you to:

- Get along better with management and senior staff
- Work more cohesively with colleagues
- Clarify your individual and team goals and expectations
- Enhance your enjoyment of work and your career prospects
- Avoid toxic workplace relationships

Improve the way you interact with colleagues and lead the way to positive change in your workplace with a few tried and true communication tips.

Share knowledge. It's easy to take for granted what you know and information necessary to complete a task can sometimes slip between the cracks during training. If you're well-versed in a task someone else is learning, offer support and be available for assistance. Take a step back and try to look at the duty from the perspective of an 'outsider.'

Reduce the jargon. Acronyms can be useful in speeding up communication, but only if everyone is aware of their meaning. Don't alienate people by using too much 'insider' talk. Help team members, especially new ones, understand the terms unique to your organization and allow them time to learn the ropes.

Share your personal vision. Not all organizations are the same and practices can vary greatly from one workplace to the next. But whether sharing your goals is in on the schedule or not, ask your employer for an opportunity to talk about them. Having an authentic conversation about where you want to be in the future and how you can get there will give you a target to work towards and will increase job satisfaction within your current role.

Avoid 'toxic talk.' Negative talk is a morale killer, so don't be the reason for someone else's bad work environment. Refuse to take part in negative talk about a project, your team or its members. This is the worst form of communication in the workplace.

Talk your team up. The opposite of 'toxic talk,' communicating individual and team achievements should be a priority on everyone's list. Build morale by sharing the good news of your team's success. You don't need to throw a party (although it can be a great idea), but you can send out an e-mail or announce the achievements at your next meeting. Sharing this information also keeps everyone 'in the loop,' which is crucial to achieving team goals.

Communicate an optimistic 'can do' outlook. A good attitude is contagious. People are naturally drawn to a person who faces challenges with determination and optimism. You'll earn the respect of others and become a natural leader in your willingness to meet with change or a new challenge with confidence.

Leading the Way to Good Rapport

As a manager or people leader, it's up to you to set the tone, style and processes for good communication. Set your team up for success and:

Share your team vision. Having a shared vision is the key to accomplishing long-term goals. Communicate the vision statement for your team, put it in the broader context of the organization's vision statement and make sure it's clear and easy to memorize. Doing so can give your employees a shared understanding of what they are working towards and enable them to make strategic decisions to move in that direction.

Be transparent. You don't have to share everything, but honesty with employees is the best way to foster trust and mutual respect. When you have tough news to share, don't gloss over it. Whether the news is good

or bad, it's vital that you share what's coming down the pipeline with your team so they are not blindsided by change. It also gives them a chance to share in the excitement of new projects and developments. This approach will not only earn the trust and respect of your employees, but also help create a more positive working environment.

Listen to your employees' personal vision. You have a team of skilled people who may or may not be using their top skills in their current positions. Look at talent on your team and seek to place people in positions that make the best use of that talent. Meet with each employee, listen to their career interests and goals and work with them to develop and achieve their objectives.

Effective communication is the cornerstone of a healthy work environment. Whether you're a new employee or a senior manager, you have an integral role in creating a healthy environment that fosters positive personal and professional growth.