

Tips for confident communication

Confident and effective communication is not just about what and how you communicate, equally important is the way in which you co-operate, connect and interact with others.

The following points capture some of the key features of applying verbal and non-verbal communication skills confidently and professionally for positive impact in the workplace.

- **Be direct:** use short, punchy sentences and clear, concise language appropriate to the context.
- **Take responsibility:** people are more likely to take your view into consideration if you state: “in my opinion ...” as opposed to presenting your opinion as a ‘fact’ or hiding behind a generic statement like “I think everyone feels”.
- **Use positive language:** focus on positive words and messages. For example consider the different impact of the following two statements:
“I’ve considered your views very carefully, but I’ve decided”
“I’ve considered your views very carefully, and I’ve decided”.
- **Give full attention:** focus exclusively on the interaction you are having by listening with respect and interest, by summarising when appropriate, by moving away from your PC/desk, redirecting telephone calls/silencing your mobile devices.
- **Demonstrate equality:** treat all parties as ‘communication peers’ regardless of structural hierarchy and relationships, for example giving equal turns and attention.
- **Use inflection:** in verbal communication emphasise certain words to add meaning to your message, for example to express enthusiasm, and use the full range of your voice.
- **Create ease:** your posture and facial expressions can communicate confidence, for example, holding your head up and maintaining an open stance, arms hanging loosely, hands open and relaxed. Try some relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, before entering a situation that makes you nervous or uncomfortable.
- **Be observant:** read the messages others give out. For example, if they seem distracted, you may offer to arrange another time to speak.
- **Consider your focus:** reflect on the amount of time you spend focusing on yourself during communication (e.g. expressing your opinion, disagreeing with others’ opinions, making proposals, providing information, giving advice, interrupting or talking over others) and on other people (e.g. specifically asking others for their opinions, building on what others’ say, checking understanding, and demonstrating that you value others’ contributions). An ideal ratio is 40% / 60%, though of course it will depend upon your role, the context and nature of the communication.

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