10 Tips for Communication in the Workplace

► The *Cambridge English Dictionary* defines soft skills as "the ability to communicate with each other and work well together." Understanding how to be more effective communicators in the workplace is important.

The United States Department of Labor lists communication as one of the top soft skills. Employers are looking for people who demonstrate effective communication skills. Effective communication can lead to more productivity.

Following are 10 tips for effective communication.

1. Learn Good Verbal Communication

- Review the "10 Tips for Communication in the Workplace," FCS-2602 on the Alabama Extension website. Make sure your message is clear and concise.

- Be aware of your tone of voice.

- Understand that language and the use of wording can change the meaning of a message.

- Clearly state expectations.

2. Be an Active Listener

- Pay attention to the person talking.

- Focus on the message.

- Understand the message.

- Summarize what you heard.

3. Watch Your Nonverbal Communication

- Be mindful of facial expressions.

- Recognize what your body language is communicating.

- Practice good posture.

- Use direct eye contact.

4. Write Clearly

- Write a clear and concise message.

- Do not use abbreviations.

- Read from the reader's point of view.

- Clearly write expectations.

5. Make Your Message Visually Appealing

- Pay attention to the messages around you.

- Understand the meanings of signs, symbols, and pictures.

- Train employees and colleagues to understand visual messages.

- Make visual messages clear and appealing to the eye.

6. Be Open-Minded

- Be willing to consider others' opinions and ideas.
- Respect others and their strengths.
- Include all team members.
- Be open to changing your mind.

7. Manage Stress

- Pay attention to your triggers.
- Actively monitor your stress levels.
- Practice stress management strategies.
  - Meditate or pray.
  - Exercise.
  - Eat healthy.
  - Talk to a counselor.
- Learn emotional awareness.
  - Identify when you are frustrated or angry.
  - Understand what controls your emotions.
  - Know the negative impact that emotions can have on communication.
- Practice good time management.
  - Set goals.
  - Prioritize.
  - Organize.
  - Take breaks.

8. Know Communication Styles

- Seek communication assessments.
- Understand how you communicate.
- Identify how others communicate.
- Learn how to better communicate with others.

9. Actively Engage

- Look for ways to engage in different types of communication.
- Seek opportunities to improve your skills.
- Learn to receive and send information accurately and quickly.
- Show respect and appreciation to others.

10. Practice Effective Communication

- Role-play scenarios using clear communication.
- Practice giving clear instructions.
- Sum up a message to improve listening skills.
- Continue to improve communication skills.

Understanding barriers to effective communication is also important. People's attitudes and feelings can get in the way of effective communication. Everyone has difficult days, and it's important to understand that experiences can cause distractions. Those distractions can limit understanding and attention to messages. Maintaining focus can be difficult when you are in the middle of a bad day. Practice refocusing when this happens. Also, don't forget that others have bad days too when it is hard to focus. Offering grace during these times can help build workplace relationships and a level of respect. Backgrounds and experiences influence how we send and receive messages.

Be intentional about improving your communication skills. Reference these 10 tips as reminders of how to improve your skills and become a more effective communicator. Identify when communication barriers arise and what you can do to break down those barriers. Set a goal to improve your communication skills and make a plan. Today is a great day to start!

10 Tips for Enthusiasm & Attitude in the Workplace

► **Enthusiasm and attitude play a significant role in getting and keeping a job. Understanding the effects and impact that these have in the workplace is important.**

The *Cambridge English Dictionary* defines enthusiasm as "a feeling of energetic interest in a particular subject or activity and eagerness to be involved in it," and attitude as "a feeling or opinion about something." According to the United States Department of Labor, "Enthusiasm can mean the difference in not just getting a job but succeeding in a job and even advancing in your career."

Following are 10 tips for demonstrating enthusiasm and a positive attitude in the workplace.

1. Communicate Positively

- Nonverbal communication
  - Smile when interacting with others.
  - Sit up straight.
  - Practice direct eye contact.
  - Be mindful of facial expressions.
- Verbal communication
  - Be upbeat.
  - Speak positively of experiences.
  - Refrain from using negative words.

2. Have a Positive Outlook

- Maintain a positive mindset.
- Learn from struggles.
- Never give up.
- Voice positivity.

3. Consider Different Perspectives

- Be willing to listen to others.
- Consider different points of view.
- Realize others may have the answers.
- Welcome different ideas and opinions.

4. Commit to the Job

- Demonstrate a willingness to work hard.
- Be a team player.
- Find ways to stay motivated to reach your goal.
- Look for new ways to bring your best self to the job.

5. Help Produce a Positive Culture

- Respect others.
- Encourage colleagues.
- Serve as a motivator.

6. Help Others

- Teach new employees.
- Offer guidance to colleagues.
- Volunteer to fill a need.
- Be willing to go above and beyond.

7. Spark Innovative Ideas

- Explore new and exciting ideas.
- Research the latest trends.
- Think outside the box and find unconventional approaches.
- Conduct team brainstorming sessions.

8. Appeal to Passions

- Identify your passion.
- Identify coworkers' passions.
- Use passions to increase productivity.
- Offer ownership to team members.

9. Celebrate Accomplishments

- Acknowledge the accomplishments of others.
- Celebrate the success of others.
- Root for each other.
- Encourage others.

10. Have Fun

- Participate in team-building exercises.
- Encourage creativity.
- Join office social gatherings and friendly competitive competitions.
- Incorporate mindfulness activities such as yoga or meditation.

The ways we interact with others in the workplace can influence the workplace environment. Our attitude and enthusiasm can change the workplace environment and affect the workday. Production will increase if the workplace environment is positive. A negative attitude can cause a decrease in the effectiveness and productivity of employees.

Your attitude and enthusiasm also play a role in whether you get a job. A positive and enthusiastic attitude will get you further with prospective employers and increase your interview success. Keep these 10 tips on enthusiasm and attitude as reminders to maintain a positive attitude, demonstrate enthusiasm, and make a positive difference in the lives of others.

10 Tips for Effective Teamwork in the Workplace

► **Teamwork is essential to the success of a company or organization. Individuals have unique personalities, strengths, and weaknesses. They also come from different backgrounds and have different experiences that shape how they send and receive messages.**

These differences can result in workplace conflict. It is important to understand how to communicate with individuals from diverse backgrounds and to understand different personality traits. By recognizing these traits and understanding how to effectively work with others, teams can be efficient, productive, and successful. According to TeamStage project management, "Open communication, common goals, and defined roles are at the heart of an ambitious team."

Following are 10 tips for effective teamwork in the workplace.

1. Practice Good Communication Skills

- Review the "10 Tips for Communication in the Workplace," FCS-2602 on the Alabama Extension website.
- Practice active listening.
- Deliver a clear message.
- Clear up misunderstandings.

2. Work Well with Everyone

- Identify different personalities on the team.
- Learn how to work together.
- Seek to understand team members.
- Respect differences.

3. Clarify Roles, Responsibilities, and Accountabilities

- Identify the roles of each team member.
- Align each member's strengths with their assigned role.
- Give each team member ownership of their role and tasks.
- Respect each other's roles.

4. Set Clear Goals

- Determine a vision for the team collectively.
- Create SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound) goals.
- Periodically evaluate the progress of goals.
- Adjust goals as needed.

5. Value Each Member's Voice

- Respect each team member.
- Be willing to consider other's ideas.
- Allow each team member to contribute to the team.
- Recognize the value of each team member.

6. Have a *Team Mindset* Rather than an *I Mindset*

- Focus on what's best for the team.
- Collaborate with team members.
- Define team goals and expectations.
- Appreciate each team member.

7. Be Supportive of All Team Members.

- Encourage team members.
- Assist team members as needed.
- Share information with team members.
- Supply team members with the tools they need.

8. Recognize the Value of Each Team Member

- Voice appreciation to everyone.
- Recognize individual contributions.
- Do random acts of kindness.
- Say "please" and "thank you."

9. Build Relationships

- Build trusting relationships.
- Be transparent.
- Take time to get to know each other.
- Be available.

10. Break Down Barriers

- Encourage open dialogue.
- Address communication issues.
- Avoid assumptions.
- Be careful of the perceptions you give.

These tips will help build an effective team focused on goals, relationships, and the success of the team. Appreciate team members and recognize their value and contributions to the team's success. Sometimes our perceptions may lead us to the wrong conclusions. Understand that things are not always as they appear. It is important to avoid assumptions. Instead, get a clear understanding of a situation or concern to avoid conflict in the workplace.

Building an effective team takes collaboration, communication, and the willingness to commit to the success of the team. Individual team members should work collectively to achieve the goals the team has identified. TeamStage states, "More than 60% of employees at some point feel work exhaustion but being part of a team eases the effects of it." Recognizing the value of each team member helps to strengthen the work culture and improve employee engagement.

10 Tips for Problem-Solving & Critical Thinking in the Workplace

► The United States Department of Labor describes problem-solving and critical thinking as "the ability to use knowledge, facts, and data to effectively solve problems." Problem-solving and critical thinking play a crucial role in the workplace.

Employees demonstrate the ability to discover solutions, think through issues, and make decisions in a brief time. They demonstrate creativity by thinking out of the box and discovering innovative ways of accomplishing team goals. The United States Department of Labor in their "Skills to Pay the Bills" curriculum states, "Employers say they need a workforce fully equipped with skills beyond the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic to grow their businesses. These skills include critical thinking and problem-solving, according to a 2010 Critical Skills Survey by the American Management Association and others."

Below are 10 tips for problem-solving and critical thinking in the workplace.

1. Understand the Steps in Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

- State the problem or question.
- Gather information.
- Review the information.
- Examine the information gathered.
- Make a decision.
- Share the results with others.

2. Ask Basic Questions

- What is it about?
- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- How did it happen?

3. Practice Self-Awareness

- Understand your biases.
- Question your first instinct.
- Do not jump to conclusions.
- Recognize what you do well and what you need to improve.

4. Think on Your Feet

- Be able to find solutions quickly.
- Think through problems that come up.
- Make decisions.
- Take a step back and evaluate decisions before moving forward.

5. Be Creative

- Try new ideas.
- Find new solutions.
- Look for new ways of doing things.
- Use new methods to solve problems.

6. Make Decisions in Stressful Situations

- Remain alert and calm.
- Reframe the problem.
- Prioritize.
- Move toward the goal.

7. Pay Attention to Detail

- Look at every part of the problem.
- Think through fine points.
- Think of all possible solutions.
- Maintain efficiency.

8. Expand Your Technical Skills

- Take classes to build knowledge.
- Find opportunities to gain experience.
- Talk with professionals.
- Discover volunteer opportunities.

9. Build Critical Thinking Skills

- Play games that require critical thinking skills.
- Put puzzles together.
- Think ahead.
- Actively volunteer to solve problems.

10. Improve Your Knowledge

- Take time to think.
- Read books on improving critical thinking.
- Learn something new every day.
- Focus.

Employers are seeking individuals who possess these skills. Work toward improving your critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Solving issues that arise at work is important in becoming more productive. Employees should be able to work on the job without someone telling them exactly what to do, how to do it, and why they should do it. Problem-solving and critical thinking are essential skills for employees to be successful in the workplace.

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