# Job Savvy

# How to Be a Success at Work

Sixth Edition

# Chapter 5: Communicating in the Workplace

## Video Transcript

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# Title Screen

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# Chapter 5 Communicating in the Workplace

Developing good communication skills will help you find a job. Employers are looking for workers who communicate well. In a job interview you will have more confidence if you can speak clearly and your positive manner will impress an employer, because your success in the workplace depends on your ability to communicate well with coworkers, leaders, and customers in person and through technology.

This chapter will help you organize ideas and articulate thoughts clearly and effectively in written and oral forms to people inside and outside the workplace, practice active listening and understand the impact of nonverbal communication on the professional image you project at work, interpret and effectively respond to verbal messages and other cues, and write thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in letters, reports, emails, and software and apps.

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# Practicing Effective Listening

Studies consistently point out that listening is the communication skill used most frequently in our daily lives. Listening is not a natural skill. Effective listeners have developed certain abilities. You can practice active listening to be a more effective listener with these methods.

(1.) Look at the speaker. In our culture, eye contact is important. Not looking at the speaker is an indication of not listening.

(2.) Use your ears and not your mouth. Talking while another person is speaking is rude. Talking not only interferes with your listening but prevents other listeners from hearing.

(3.) Concentrate on what is being said. Taking notes will reinforce what is being said and don’t multitask while listening.

(4.) Honor the other person’s opinion.

(5.) Allow the speaker to complete his or her thoughts without interrupting. Waiting and not interrupting lets all listeners understand what the speaker is saying and avoids confusion.

(6.) Listen with your eyes as well as your ears. Observe a speaker’s body language, such as hand gestures and body posture.

(7.) Act interested even when you may not be. Make an effort to listen and face the speaker. Lean forward. Concentrate on what is being said.

(8.) Ask questions before you respond. You might ask, “This is what I understand you said…Is that correct?” Let the speaker make any corrections to help you better understand their thoughts. Then you may respond more intelligently.

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# Practicing Effective Listening (continued)

Listening is essential in the workplace. When you’re listening to directions, pay particular attention to what your supervisor says at the beginning and the end. Often, when someone is giving instructions, they state the most important idea at the beginning and then repeat it at the end. Notice words that they stress. Watch for anything they write down. Take notes to help yourself review instructions later.

Avoid multi-tasking, interjecting opposition, acting bored or disinterested, or interrupting the speaker during meetings and other communications. Instead, when the speaker is done ask for any clarification needed before stating your own thoughts.

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# Verbal Communication Skills

Your voice is the primary tool used to communicate. The way you speak influences the listener’s opinion of you. If you speak clearly, at an even rate, and loud enough, you appear confident and capable. Using proper grammar and avoiding slang and cursing when communicating reflects a confident, educated individual. With an increased vocabulary, you have a greater chance of using just the right word to convey your message. With practice you will become more at ease when you communicate verbally.

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# Verbal Communication Skills (continued)

In the workplace, all types of conversation take place. Business talk is the communication about work. During the day, a mixture of business talk and small talk takes place. Small talk plays the important role of forming a bond among workers that builds teamwork.

Assertive communication is used to settle a disagreement in the workplace. In this communication style the participants rely on facts to find a solution.

When you’re communicating in the workplace, think about what you are saying before you speak. Being sensitive to the ideas, feelings, and beliefs of the people you work with will help you succeed on the job. Using offensive terms when referring to races, ethnic groups, or sexual groups is called harassment, and it is illegal.

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# Verbal Communication Skills (continued)

Starting a conversation is easier when you focus on the other person.

Ask appropriate questions. Sometimes it’s easier to identify inappropriate discussions to avoid, such as politics and religion. Avoid extremely personal questions or questions about controversial topics.

Ask open-ended questions, allowing the person to share an opinion or story. This is a good time to also practice your listening skills!

Offer a compliment to start a conversation or discuss a shared interest. If you don’t know about any shared interests, share something about yourself.

Talk about books, movies, or world events. Share a positive work experience or something about yourself with coworkers.

If you know you are going to be in a meeting or social situation with people you don’t know well, plan a few things to talk about.

Remember to be an active listener as well. You don’t have to do all the talking!

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# Communicating Remotely

The first contact a customer has with a business is often an employee, so practicing good phone etiquette is necessary.

Greet the caller in a professional manner and use a friendly, enthusiastic voice.

Identify yourself. Be sure that the listener hears your voice by speaking clearly into the receiver.

Learn how to transfer the caller to a person’s voicemail. Take accurate written phone messages. Record both the first and last name of the caller, the message, the caller’s phone number, and a convenient time to return the call. Repeat the information to the caller. Date and sign the message before you deliver it to the recipient.

When you’re making a business call, remember that the receptionist may be busy with other calls. Allow the phone to ring six to eight times. If you are leaving a voicemail message, include your full name, phone number, title, and a brief message.

End the call professionally. End a call by summarizing it, thanking the caller, and saying goodbye.

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# Communicating Remotely (continued)

When using a cell phone to conduct business, you should inform the listener that you are calling from a cell phone as a courtesy. If there is interference during the call and it is impossible to reconnect, the listener will understand what has happened. Cell phone calls are often made in public places; the listener may not want to talk about private subjects.

Remember to be safe. Many accidents have occurred while drivers were conducting business on cell phones. Some states have made it illegal to use a cell phone while driving. Businesses have issued policies concerning driving and cell phone usage. Be sure to know your company’s policies and respect them.

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# Cell Phones in the Workplace

Ringing cell phones can interrupt meetings. To prevent these disturbances, some companies ask employees to turn off their personal cell phones when entering the business or leave their cell phones at their desks during meetings.

Smart phones allow us to text, read and write emails, access the internet, play games, and run specialized apps. It is important to engage with the person or people you are talking with and not let your phone distract you.

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# Nonverbal Communication Skills

Experts understand the importance of nonverbal communication. A recent study identified nine major categories of nonverbal communication and how it is used in the workplace. The types of nonverbal communication include time, distance, voice tone, touch, appearance, eye movement, body movement, objects, and even smell. Developing people-watching skills and learning to understand nonverbal cues will be helpful as you communicate with others. Because a speaker is usually talking as well as using nonverbal communication, a listener must use both ears and eyes to accurately interpret the speaker’s message.

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# Nonverbal Communication Skills (continued)

Other nonverbal communicators are **proxemics** (the physical space between people) and body posture (the position of the speaker’s body). If a speaker “gets in your face,” you’ll feel uncomfortable and perhaps even threatened.

Eye contact means that the speaker and listener are interested in what is being said. Facial expressions such as frowning, smiling, or scowling can indicate certain emotions. It is important to note cultural differences here. In most Western countries, maintaining direct eye contact when interacting with others means you are paying attention, but in Asia and the Middle East it is considered disrespectful.

An effective communicator considers the cultural influences, context, nonverbal communication, and the verbal message when speaking or interpreting another speaker’s meaning.

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# Nonverbal Communication Skills (continued)

Communicating nonverbally can be confusing since interpretation varies from culture to culture. It’s important to be aware of proxemics and body posture and **paralanguage** when communicating cross-culturally. Paralanguage is not the words that are spoken but rather how they are spoken. It encompasses the tone of the voice, inflection, loudness, speed, and pitch that is used when one is speaking. For example, whispering or yelling the same words communicates a very different message. Speaking loudly in America sometimes communicates confidence, but in other cultures it may be interpreted as rude.

Some other common cultural differences also include gestures and body posture. For example, Americans use the thumbs-up gesture as a way of accepting someone’s message or actions (to indicate OK), but in many countries this gesture is an insult.

While shaking hands is acceptable in most countries, using the left hand to shake hands in the Middle East is taboo. Rather than a handshake, in some parts of Europe people greet each other with a kiss in the air near both cheeks.

While looking directly at another person is rude in some cultures, in the United States eye contact is an indication that an individual is listening to a speaker.

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# Written Communication in the Workplace

Written communication is often used to clarify or formalize verbal communication. Because written communication can be saved, it is often used for reference at a later date. Business correspondence includes letters, memos, notes, and emails.

No matter what form of written communication you use, you need to follow some rules to be effective.

Employ basic writing skills like using proper grammar, correct spelling, correct punctuation and capitalization. Spell check is useful, but check the spelling yourself as backup. Use the format your business prefers and write concisely. Proofread all written correspondence.

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# Communicating Electronically in the Workplace (eCommunication)

Technology has greatly affected the way people communicate in the workplace. Electronic communication, also called **ecommunication**, occurs through emails, phones, texting, videoconferencing, social media, and workplace collaboration apps.

Email has become the leading communication form in the workplace. Understanding how to use email effectively will save work time and avoid problems on the job.

As an employee, be aware of new electronic forms of communication and how to use new technology to do your work. Know the regulations your company has concerning electronic communication. Learn how to effectively use new technology to do your work. Don’t use it for personal communication while on the job. When coworkers spend time sending amusing anecdotes or jokes found on the internet, work time is lost. Also only use the company network in the approved manner. Most companies do not want you to let your family or friends access company network systems. Access is an employee right only.

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# Communicating Electronically (continued)

Each day hundreds of friends share the highlights and trials of their lives via social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Pinterest. Keeping in touch through **social media** sites is convenient and often emotionally positive.

When using social networks, remember that they are not private. If you complain about your supervisor on a social network site, it is possible that a friend or a friend of a friend may read your post. And that person might show the post to your supervisor. A good rule to follow is always think before you post. The same is true if you’re creating your own blog.

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# Communicating Electronically (continued)

Most emails have the same basic parts:

Header

Salutation

Body

Signature Line

Email Attachments

Emails will also occasionally have Out of Office notifications or receipts that let senders know that an email has arrived or has been opened.

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# Communicating Electronically (continued)

In the workplace, managing email can become a problem for workers who receive large numbers of email messages during the day. Spam and email attachments can be a source of computer viruses, so spam should be deleted immediately without opening it and attachments should only be opened from trusted sources if they seem relevant to your work. Normal ways of handling email is to look at the important mail and reply to it within a reasonable time period, and deal with the high-priority mail the same day.

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# Netiquette

Practicing email etiquette, sometimes called netiquette, will help you avoid problems with email usage in the workplace. Follow your company guidelines concerning email. Keep business email professional. Use your own time to check your personal email. When emailing be respectful toward everyone just as though they were in the room and talking directly with you. Don’t use email to vent your anger or frustration, sometimes called flaming. Don’t use email to avoid talking to someone face-to-face or on the phone. Always remember that your email might be forwarded or posted. The message you send could be read by people other than the person you emailed. Avoid writing words in all uppercase because it can be read as shouting.

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# Conclusion

When a team of workers listens and expresses their ideas clearly, productivity increases. You will be a valued employee if you learn to listen. The ability to write a short, clear email is an excellent job skill. Observing body language and other nonverbal forms of communication will enable you to understand what others are telling you. With practice, you will increase your ability to communicate.

The way we communicate is changing as technology changes. It is important to recognize new technologies and learn how to use them as you continue to develop even more communication skills.