

OPINION PIECE

Article



The importance of communication skills in the workplace

Do you find it difficult to articulate yourself well or talking more than you should be listening? Well, you surely aren't alone. You should actively be working on improving your communication skills. Good communication skills in the workplace not only stimulates great working relationships but is the foundation of good personal relationships.

Observation is one of the biggest teachers of both bad and good communications skills. From childhood we observed our parent's communication skills and emulated them. At school we observed our teachers' communicate and this cycle continued in our adolescent years straight into adulthood where we now observe our colleagues, supervisors and managers. The question is, how do we know what to filter from these observations in order to absorb or trash some of these learnings? At university it was ingrained in us that communication has what I'll term as 7 "Laws" also known as the seven C's of communication namely: clarity, correctness, conciseness, courtesy, concreteness, consideration and completeness. On paper, this looks easy to comply with, but in our day-to-day lives how do we abide by this? Below are two of my greatest communication lessons.

Speaking the best English, or being talkative and being the loudest in the room doesn't equate to being the smartest in the room. What does matter is the following: thinking before you talk, being tactful, being assertive, asking questions when you don't understand, not being condescending and ensuring that your non-verbal communication skills also correlate with how you communicate verbally. It is vital to note that communication is a two-way street, it is reciprocal so when it's the other person's turn to talk accord them the respect they deserve by listening.

An unknown author once said "The biggest communication problem is we do not listen to understand but we listen to reply". How often do you listen to a person when in conversation? No, not the silence while awaiting your turn to speak but actively listening to understand what the person is saying and conceptualize the point they are trying to bring across?

Try this, next time you engage in a conversation, listen attentively and reciprocate the person's energy by asking questions relating to the conversation. This gesture will not only encourage future communication among you but will encourage an open-door policy which will ultimately result in cohesion among you and stimulate teamwork.

In conclusion, take time to be introspective about how effective your communication has been, identify your strengths and weaknesses, unlearn bad communication skills taught through observation throughout the years and eliminate barriers to effective communication. Be receptive of legitimate negative feedback about your communication skills and make efforts towards change as this will not only benefit you in your workplace but in your personal life as well.

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