



# newsletter

## content summary

### featured article

This month's article looks into communication and in particular what it is by definition, a brief overview of the history of communication and the specific skills required to become an effective communicator. By the end of this article it is hoped that the reader can begin to put into practice the skills discussed if they are not using them already!

### notice board

Our latest company announcements appear on the notice board. If you have any comments about the newsletter or content/topics that you would like to see in future issues, please let us know!

### time for a change

Bored? Fed up? Why not take some time out and challenge yourself with this month's, just for fun, crossword and trivia quiz.

Welcome to the sixth edition of our newsletter. This article looks into communication and in particular what it is by definition, a brief overview of the history of communication and the specific skills required to become an effective communicator. By the end of this article it is hoped that the reader can begin to put into practice the skills discussed if they are not using them already!



## Effective Communication

In the business world today and indeed life in general, the art of clear and effective communicating is becoming more and more important. The extent to which a person or employee can communicate with another person or persons can go some way in determining the success that they can expect in relation to building rapport and achieving their goal of the communication. But what exactly is communication and are you what would be considered an **Effective Communicator**?

### What is communication?

So what exactly do we mean by communication? To quote the dictionary:-

"Any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person's needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or affective states. Communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or non-linguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes"

It is clear from this somewhat longwinded definition that there are many different forms of communication. Fortunately for us humans today, we have many tools for communicating at our disposal. Choosing the right form though isn't so easy and we should think carefully about how and when we communicate in relation to our circumstances.

### History of Communication

As human beings, we are sociable creatures and have, with evolution, developed the most complex forms of communication known on planet earth. There are many different languages spoken, various alphabets, visual language, Braille, codes and of course body language. Communicating is a major part of everyday life and without it the world today would be a very different place. That said, with all the forms of communication available to us, many of us still don't communicate effectively.

**"When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen"**

*Ernest Hemingway*

It has taken centuries to arrive at the point at which we are at today and no doubt the rapid advancement, particularly in recent years, in communication techniques will continue. The development of audible tones eventually taking a pattern and forming language was the starting point. This was followed by forms of written communication. Cavemen grunting and beating chests to warn competitors was one of the earliest forms of communication. The Egyptians in 3000BC began using Hieroglyphics followed later by the Chinese who began using paper and ink in 105AD.

## Effective Communication.....

Carvings on walls of caves illustrate a written communication technique but this form of communication is only effective to those stood in front of it and capable of understanding the message. What about communicating a message over distance? An early example of this was the smoke signals used by American Indians. Obviously this kind of message's content would be very simplistic and pre-arranged such as 'danger' or 'attack'!

The last two centuries have seen major technological advancements in communication beginning with the telephone invented in 1876 by Alexander Graham Bell. Television followed with the first broadcast being in London in 1941 and soon after the computer arrived. There is some debate about who actually invented the computer but nevertheless this latest invention has revolutionised the way the entire world communicates. Imagine a world without the internet, without email, without television, without telephones, how would the world communicate? We have come a long way since our ancestor's grunts and thumps or at least some of us have!

### Effective Communications Skills

Effective communication is at the core of a company's potential for success. This needs to be addressed at interpersonal, organisational and external levels. There are many different reasons why we may need to communicate during our working day whether it be to talk one to one with a colleague, present to a group, write a report or to show approval or disapproval non-verbally. The purpose of such communication is usually to maintain relationships, form a new relationship, teach, learn, request information or answer a question. The point is that there are many ways to communicate depending on the purpose and the situation and need to consider the most appropriate for a given situation.

By communicating in the right manner we can work more effectively thus reducing stress, boost our self esteem, advance our careers and maintain good working relationships. If we are understood and understand others, life in general is far more fulfilling and we can accomplish far more.

There are two major forms of communication namely verbal and non-verbal. The non-verbal element is a major factor when communicating a message as more meaning can be associated with this aspect.

The most important part of communicating with another person is the ability to listen and the specific set of skills this actually entails. It is important to listen to what the other person is saying but also be aware of what they are not saying.

Quite often people will not express their true feelings in their words but can give clues non-verbally. It is easy for the mind to wander when we are listening to another person for a length of time so concentration is a must. Try not to think of your response to the person whilst they are still talking as you may miss an important message. If you find your concentration and interest wavering try to focus on the other person's body language to keep you actively engaged with that person. Consider each component of the cycle in [Figure 1](#). The ability to listen is the core skill from which other interpersonal skills can then be used and developed.

*"We take communication for granted because we do it so frequently, but it's actually a complex process"*

*Joseph Sommerville*

**Empathy** is a quality that many of us fail to show during a conversation but by listening closely to the other person and mentally putting ourselves in their position we become far more able to respond and offer advice in a sympathetic non judgemental manner.

**Respect** of one another is a major factor in developing trusting relationships. If we can respect the other person's opinion, even if we disagree with them, we can go some way to gaining their respect which will then often be reciprocated.

**Recognition** of the other person comprises of being aware of individual differences. Consider gender, cultural, occupational and behavioural differences when recognising the person you are communicating with. This skill may require some adaptation on your style of communication in order to minimise misunderstanding and maintain understanding.

**Summarising** in a brief friendly manner can often lead to increasing your own understanding of the content of the conversation as well as giving the other person the chance to correct you if you have misunderstood. This is an important skill to use as often the meaning and content of a conversation can be 'lost in translation'.

Finally **reflect** on what has been said, by doing so shows that you have listened attentively and have thought about what the other person has said. Reflect on both content and emotions.

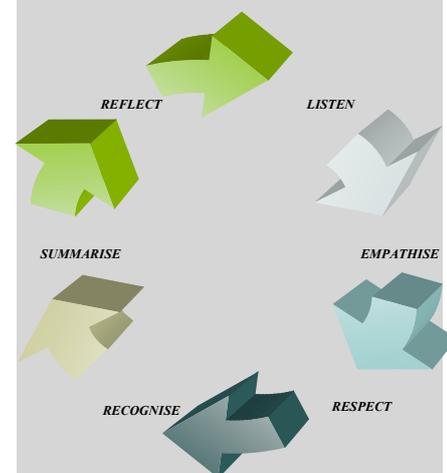


Figure 1: Effective Communication Cycle



**Effective Communication.....**

To become an effective listener you need to be an open and receptive individual who people would feel comfortable approaching. Be assertive but also friendly so as not to overpower the other person. Are you comprehending what the person is saying to you? There is little point in listening attentively but then have no idea about what the other person is trying to say. Ask questions if you're unsure what they have said and paraphrase to check your own understanding. Once they have finished talking clarify what they have said. Throughout the conversation show interest and enthusiasm even in the most 'challenging' of situations.

Once you have listened decide on follow up action, by acting you have shown that you have listened and understood. It is a good idea to 'mirror' the other person in their actions as research suggests that this can help build rapport.

If the person you are talking to is maintaining eye contact and is acting in a relaxed manner mirror this in your own actions and speech. Also mirror them by speaking at the same tempo, rhythm and tone.

**Non-Verbal Communication**

By understanding and adapting your technique to take into account non verbal communication you are becoming a skillful and effective communicator. The meaning we derive from direct communication with other people actually comes from non verbal actions. Although through spoken words a person could be conveying a message this message may be totally contradicted by the way they use body language or vocal intonation. There are three main parts to consider within non verbal communication, namely vocal, visual and tactile.

The tone of voice used to speak can totally change the actual meaning of the words spoken. This is something that is lost when emailing. The visual aspect is how you interpret the other person's body language including their facial expression, gestures, posture and whether they are able to hold eye contact. A lot can be read into a person's body language when speaking.

Some examples would include a lack of eye contact being interpreted as a lack of confidence. Arms folded in front of chest are often interpreted as defensiveness whereas a relaxed posture indicates an air of confidence. Tactile is by way in which people use touch during conversation. An arm of comfort around the shoulder, a pat on the back to offer encouragement and or approval, this can be used to increase the impact of a message. These are all subtle ways in which we communicate non-verbally.

**Summary**

By changing the style and manner with which you communicate to match that of the person you are communicating with we can become more effective communicators. Developing a few key skills based around listening and observing the other person we can improve our understanding of our colleagues and hence form more productive working relationships. Our lives can in turn be improved as we can feel more satisfaction and fulfilment in the knowledge we are understood and can understand.

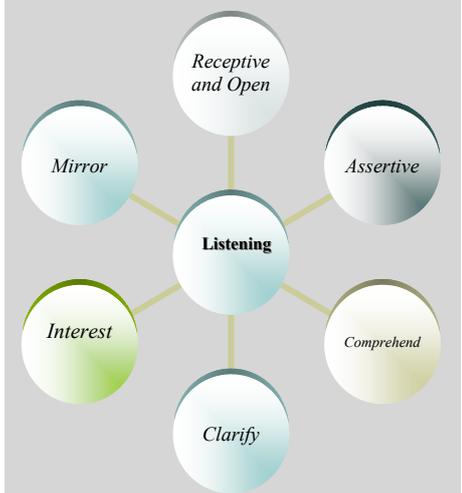


Figure 2: Listening skills



## notice board

### Welcome to the kendra notice board

- Our Business Optimisation Model (BOM) has recently been approved as a registered trademark. The Model forms the basis of our methodology, focusing on People, Processes and Tools within organisations. Please refer to our website for further details: [www.kendra.co.uk](http://www.kendra.co.uk)
- Due to our increased workload coupled with the need to retain focus on our priorities we have reluctantly decided to produce the our newsletter on a quarterly basis. With this in mind the next edition will be released in **September 2007**.

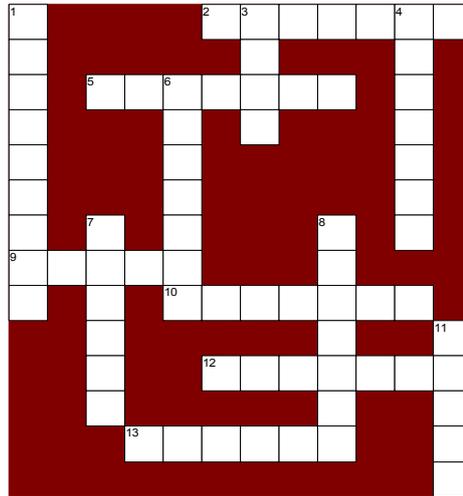


# time for a change

## words work

### Across

- 2. To think carefully, especially about opinions or possibilities (7)
- 5. To feel or show admiration to someone (7)
- 9. An ability to do a job or activity well (5)
- 10. A short clear description that gives the main facts or ideas (7)
- 12. Past events considered together (7)
- 13. To be very similar to something (6)



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### Down

- 1. To be able to understand how someone else feels (9)
- 3. What you see with (4)
- 4. To make something clearer and easier to understand (7)
- 6. To make a movement that tells others what to do (7)
- 7. To give attention to someone in order to hear them (6)
- 8. One of four equal parts of something (7)
- 11. One in a series of movements that a machine performs (5)

## cranium central

- 1. What colour was Coca-Cola originally?
- 2. What is the birthstone for the month of June?
- 3. What did Britain's roads first acquire in 1914?
- 4. If you were born on June 1st, what star sign would you be?
- 5. What football club did Sir Matt Busby sign for at the age of 17?
- 6. Which comedian played the lead character in 'The Man Who Sued God'?

Why not have a go at our topical crossword or test your general knowledge with this months posers. Answers for the crossword and quiz are revealed on our website at: [www.kendra.co.uk/solutionsjune07.htm](http://www.kendra.co.uk/solutionsjune07.htm)

## and finally.....

