Verbal and Non Verbal Communication at Work

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Effective Verbal Communication
Verbal Communication

Verbal communication skills are among some of the more valued skills within the workplace because they typically indicate a conscientious and effective employee.
What are verbal communication skills?

Verbal communication requires a specific set of skills that focus on utilizing words to convey information to those around you. Though the term refers to both written and spoken communication, it is primarily used when describing communicating through speech. The element in this type of communication that quantifies it as being verbal centers around an individual's choice of words as well as how they are received and eventually interpreted.

To be an effective verbal communicator, it takes more than simply speaking. Verbal skills are comprised of how you deliver information as well as how you receive messages from others.
Examples of verbal communication skills

There are two major aspects that you must excel in: effective speaking and active listening.
**Word choice:**

The appropriate word choices will vary with different situations, topics and audiences. For example, you would speak very differently to a colleague than you would a conference room full of clients. Additionally, the subject matter would likely be very different. Regardless of the scenario, words should always be chosen carefully.
Delivery:

The way in which you deliver information can have a huge impact on the message you're trying to convey. You should be aware of the pace and tone of your voice when communicating with others to ensure that you are delivering your words intentionally.
Reinforcement:

Though we are focusing on verbal skills, non-verbal communication plays a major role in effectively speaking. The cues that you send through your body language affect how your audience perceives the information you're delivering. For example, you can indicate through movements and facial expressions if you are anxious, committed, interested or bored so be sure that your non-verbal communication matches the words you are saying as well as your intent.
Active listening

It can be easy to become focused on planning your response rather than listening to the other person when having a conversation. However, in order to be a truly effective verbal communicator, you must also be a good listener. Here are a few ways to practice and improve your active listening:
Active listening

Focus on the speaker and what they are saying. Wait to formulate your reply until after they have finished talking.

Maintain an open mind. It's imperative that you truly hear their message before making snap judgments based on prejudices or stereotypes.

Avoid concentrating on certain aspects of the speaker's message exclusively. Instead, attempt to understand their overall message as well as their primary points.

Keep distractions at a minimum. If necessary, suggest moving to a quieter area or turn your phone on silent.
How to improve your verbal communication skills

Here are a few things you can do to improve this set of skills:

1. Use reinforcement
2. Ask questions
3. Check for clarification
4. Summarize the main points
1. Use reinforcement

You can improve your verbal communication by consciously encouraging others during a conversation. Show the other person that you are listening. This can be accomplished with verbal and non-verbal cues alike. Some of the non-verbal gestures you can use to reinforce others include maintaining eye contact, smiling and nodding your head.
2. Ask questions

Questioning can be a great way to obtain clarification, test one's understanding of something or reach out for support. However, it's also a useful tool to show interest, initiate a conversation or entice others to join a conversation.
Periodically checking with the other person to make sure that you are understanding what they are saying is called reflecting and is a skill often employed in counseling. The process usually involves paraphrasing the feelings as well as the message and then repeating them back to the other person. Aside from providing clarity, here are some of its other advantages:

- It shows the other person that you are trying to understand things from their perspective
- It demonstrates respect and genuine interest in what they have to say
- It allows the speaker to explain or expound on the topic if they'd like
4. Summarize the main points

Though similar to reflecting, summarizing is more focused on reviewing the information discussed in order to reach an agreement and ensure that all parties involved understand the expectations or next steps. This technique is often used after a meeting and provides an overview of the major issues that were discussed.
Tips

Be observant: Non-verbal cues can be extremely communicative, so practice being aware of how both you and your coworkers are using body language. It's important to pay attention to what you may be saying with your movements and facial expressions whether it's intentionally or subconsciously.

Remain calm: Ideally, you would be able to avoid conflict while at work. However, disagreements do occur so try your best to refrain from allowing your communications to become emotional. By maintaining an even tone and calm body language, it will increase the likelihood that you will be able to reach a solution.
**Tips**

**Empathize:** Empathy is a powerful tool that will enrich the relationships in every aspect of your life. By attempting to understand the goals, ideas and feelings of your coworkers, you will be able to communicate with them more effectively.

**Be clear and concise:** There are times when providing context is both necessary and beneficial. However, it can improve the efficiency and understanding of both you and your coworkers to practice consolidating your message into its core meaning. In turn, this will reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings, aid the ability of others to grasp goals and increase productivity.
Nonverbal Communication
What is nonverbal communication?

Nonverbal communication is the method of communicating with others using actions rather than words. This can include communication using hand gestures, eye contact, body language, appearance, touch and tone of voice. Nonverbal communication can be one of the strongest forms of communication between employees and supervisors. It can take place in many workplace situations including during meetings, interviews or casual conversations.

Nonverbal communication is a way for people to express their thoughts or emotions without words. With nonverbal communication, people can express happiness, engagement, concern, gratitude and confidence throughout their workday.
Why is nonverbal communication important?

By interpreting the nonverbal cues of other coworkers, you can gain a better understanding of their feelings, emotions and attitudes toward certain situations. Once you gain this understanding, you can develop strong relationships with employees and supervisors. These stronger relationships can help increase collaboration with team members which may boost productivity, enhance engagement and increase company culture.

Being aware of your own nonverbal communication skills can also help you convey your feelings on various subject matters or situations. It can also help you exude confidence when talking with supervisors or express sympathy when trying to show your sympathy and understanding to a coworker.
Nonverbal communication examples in the workplace

To help you better understand when nonverbal communication is happening in the workplace, here are a few nonverbal communication cues you may notice throughout the day.
1. Maintaining regular eye contact

Coworkers will often feel valued and appreciated if they know they’re being heard. You can help them feel this way by showing eye contact while they’re speaking. For example, if a coworker approaches you with an idea to increase collaboration in your department, show you’re listening by displaying eye contact and nodding. You can also respond and contribute your own ideas while still maintaining eye contact.

Keeping your eyes on the person you’re speaking with rather than on your computer, paperwork or cell phone lets them you’re listening to their input. Maintaining eye contact while you’re replying to them also keeps the conversation engaging and builds more of a relationship between coworkers.
2. Positive vocal tone

Though the act of speaking is a part of verbal communication, the way you’re speaking can be considered nonverbal communication. Maintaining a positive tone while talking with a coworker or supervisor can affect the energy of your whole conversation.

For example, if an employee is giving a presentation to leadership proposing a new employee engagement plan, an energetic and positive tone can communicate their excitement for the project. This may increase chances of leadership approving this proposal as they notice the employee express excitement and passion for the project.
3. Strong presentation and appearance

The way you present yourself can often express more than words. Proper grooming and professional attire such as business suits or blazers can express your seriousness or professionalism you bring to the company. For example, if you’re hoping to speak with a supervisor to request a raise or promotion, you may choose to dress in business professional attire to showcase your dedication to both the position and professionalism in the workplace.
4. Keeping an upright posture

The way you stand or sit in a workplace can often display your attitude toward certain situations. Sitting or standing upright can show you’re engaged in the current matter while also portraying a confident appearance. For example, if you’re explaining a new idea to your supervisor and want to express confidence in your plan, you can sit or stand straight to portray how confident you are about your idea and why you believe it will benefit the company.
5. Expressing kindness or professionalism through touch

Communicating through touch happens if you’re trying to express friendliness or sympathy for a coworker. A slight touch on the arm or pat on the back can be a way to show your support or encouragement without vocally expressing it. Handshakes can also be a common form of communication. For example, shaking a person’s hand firmly without aggression is a way to show respect or that you’re pleased to meet them.
6. Displaying engaging facial expressions

As people communicate with you, they will often be looking directly at your face. Your face can communicate what you’re feeling or thinking without using any words. Smiling, nodding along and using your eyebrows as expression can help you best showcase a positive reaction when having a conversation. For example, if a coworker is telling you about their recent vacation, you can smile and nod along while you listen to the story to show you’re having a pleasant time listening to them.
7. Providing enough space to maintain a conversation

During conversations, you may stand closer to a person rather than far apart. This shows the other person you want to hear them clearly and are engaged in what they are saying.

For example, if you’re sitting down before a meeting with a large group of people and notice a coworker interested in talking, you can get up and sit next to them. This proves you’re interested in having a conversation and want to hear them clearly. Try to make sure you’re allowing enough space between you two to maintain a comfortable environment.
8. Using hand gestures to express feeling

Where you place your hands throughout situations or conversations can convey to others how you’re feeling. If you move your hands to build expression throughout stories, people can become more engaged in what you’re saying.

Hand gestures can also express friendliness or appreciation, like waving to someone from across the room to greet them or giving them a thumbs up to express a job well done after a presentation.
9. Showing feeling through body movement

Your overall body movement can showcase your feelings throughout a meeting or professional conversation. Standing with your hands at your sides while talking expresses openness and a willingness to listen. You can also express politeness and undistracted attention by holding still and refraining from fidgeting or distraction.

Your body language can also express how engaged you are throughout a conversation. For example, if you’re watching a coworker give a presentation and are sitting with your arms on the table or down at your side, rather than crossed on your chest, this can show you’re engaged in their presentation.