

Communication

This handout will cover:

- What is communication?
- Verbal communication
- Non-verbal communication
- Speaking, listening, reading, writing
- Barriers to communication
- Berne's Transactional Analysis theory
- Reading list
- Website list

What is communication?

Communication is a means of passing on information from one person to another. It is a manner of expression, for example your body language, voice, tone and gestures. Communication is also the key to encouraging motivation and helping learning to take place.

The first time you meet your learners they will probably make a subconscious judgement about you, and you will probably make one of them. These judgements often turn out to be wrong; therefore it is important not to make any assumptions before you get to know them.

Example methods of communication include:

- e-mail or text e.g. to quickly pass on information
- face to face e.g. discussions and questions
- intranet or cloud storage e.g. handouts, assignments, policies and procedures
- newsletters e.g. bulletins and updates (hard copy or electronic)
- notice boards e.g. displaying course dates and information
- social media e.g. message forums
- telephone e.g. a call to a colleague to check something
- written e.g. letters, memos, reports and minutes.

You could weigh up the advantages and limitations of the different methods for different situations, and consider if you need any training, for example, using technology.

Verbal communication

When speaking, your tone and manner should always be appropriate and your expression should be professional at all times. This applies whether you are speaking in person, on the telephone or via electronic communications.

Successful communication includes the way you speak when explaining, discussing, questioning and giving feedback. As well as the tone and manner in which you speak, be aware of your voice projection (louder and softer when necessary), and any accent you may have. Use pauses to gain attention or allow thinking time, and try not to use a lot of jargon or acronyms, unless your learners are very familiar with them.

You will need to be aware of your verbal and non-verbal body language, for example, not folding your arms when speaking as this could look defensive. You also need to take into account the way you speak and act, as your mannerisms might be misinterpreted by others.

Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication is your body language i.e. facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, posture, movements, signals and your appearance.

Your personality will show through with your body language, however, there are some aspects you might not be able to control, such as facial flushing, blinking or clearing your throat. There are some you should try and control, such as winking, giving a thumbs-up sign or laughing, which could be perceived as unprofessional.

You not only need to be aware of your own body language, but that of your learners. You will need to sense what they are not saying as well as what they are saying, for example, by the expressions on their faces when you explain something.

Speaking, listening, reading, writing

These are the four main aspects of communication.

You should try and use eye contact when possible, and know when to speak and when to listen. Always watch for signals from your learners such as a furrowed brow if they are unsure of something.

The language you use should reflect equality and inclusiveness, be relevant, not offend anyone in any way and be at the right level for your learners (whether spoken or written).

Effective listening only takes place when the person who receives the information interprets and understands it the way the deliverer intended. It can be easy to say something and think you said it in a way that your learners will understand, only to find them asking you to say it again or to rephrase it.

The way you communicate with your learners might be influenced by your personality. For example, you might prefer to use e-mails rather than the telephone, or online/text messages. Whichever method you use, you will need to make sure that what you convey is understood and acted upon in a professional way.

You will want to be seen as a respected and trusted source of accurate information. You might not be liked by everyone at work, however, you are performing a professional role and you are not there to be everyone's friend. Don't take it personally if you feel someone doesn't like you, it's probably the situation they don't like rather than you as a person.

Skills of communicating effectively include the way you speak, listen and express yourself, for example with non-verbal language, and the way you construct your sentences. Understanding a little about your own personal communication style will help you create a lasting impression upon your learners.

Barriers to communication

Where possible, you need to remove or minimise any possible barriers to learning, to meet an individual learner's needs.

These can include:

- background noise
- seating positions too far away to see or hear
- others talking or whispering
- the way you explain a topic e.g. too complex
- English as a second language
- learners who may have visual or hearing impairments.

Barriers can also include access to technology e.g. if electronic communication needs to take place and it's not accessible.

Try and encourage your learners to ask you questions, no matter how silly they think they are. Probably the person sitting next to them is thinking the same but aren't ask. If you are asked something you don't know the answer to, say you will find out later and then make sure you do.

Berne's Transactional Analysis theory

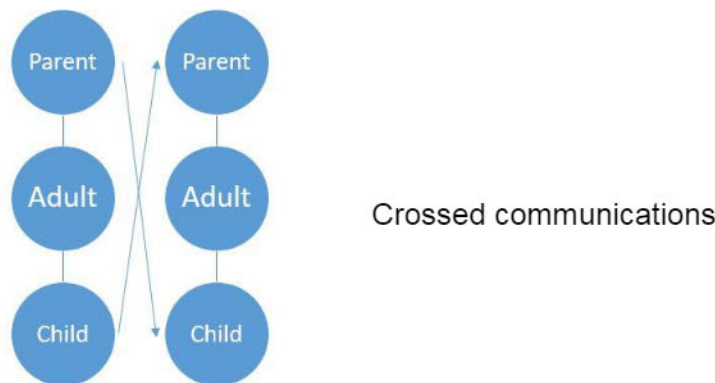
Transactional Analysis is a method of analysing communications between people.

Eric Berne, in the 1950s, identified three personality states within people; the *child*, the *parent* and the *adult* - called *ego states*.

People behave and exist in a mixture of these states due to their past experiences and the situation they are in at the time.

The *transactions* are communications between two people i.e. one speaks and the other listens and responds. If the communication is complementary then the transactions enable the conversation to continue successfully.

If the transactions are *crossed* (because one person takes on a different *ego state*) the conversation may change its nature or come to an end.



Example – child:

If you ever feel like a *child* at work, it may be because your manager is operating in their *parent* ego state and you are responding in your *child* ego state.

Your *child* can make you feel small, afraid, undervalued, demotivated and rebellious, this may make you undermine, withdraw, procrastinate or attempt to please in order to be rewarded. In this *child* ego state, you cannot become a successful professional.

Example – parent:

You may find yourself acting like a *parent* with your learners. You might have learnt this from your parents' responses to you years ago.

The *parent* ego state makes you feel superior, important, detached and impatient. This can make you harden your tone, not listen to people, shout and criticise them more than you appreciate them. The best ego state is to be in the *adult* state.

As an *adult*, you feel good about yourself, respectful of the talents and lives of others, delighted with challenges, proud of accomplishments and expectant of success.

These feelings can make you respond to others by appreciating and listening to them, using respectful language and perceiving the facts.

Transactional Analysis assumes all past events, feelings and experiences are stored within, and can be re-experienced in current situations. You may see this with

colleagues who take on a different ego state, for example, acting like a child asking for help from you, yet acting differently with other colleagues.

Understanding a little about the different ego states of the child, parent and adult, will help you see how others might take on different roles (the ego states) in different situations with different people.

Reading list

Appleyard N & Appleyard K (2010) *Communicating with Learners in the Lifelong Learning Sector* Exeter Learning Matters

Berne E (1973) *Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships* London Penguin Books Ltd

Gravells A (2017) *Principles and Practices of Teaching and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A (2014) *The Award in Education and Training (Revised)* London Learning Matters SAGE

Honey P (2001) *Improve Your People Skills* (2nd Edn) London CIPD

Website list

Communication skills –

<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadcom.html#process>

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/communicating.htm>

Emotional Intelligence –

<http://psychology.about.com/od/personalitydevelopment/a/emotionalintell.htm>

Interpersonal Skills - http://www.skillsyouneed.co.uk/interpersonal_skills.html

Transactional Analysis - <http://www.businessballs.com/transact.htm>