



Communication, Feedback & Coaching

PARTICIPANT GUIDE



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Improving Communication

Communication Facts

69% of managers say they're uncomfortable communicating with employees.

- *Harvard Business Review 2016*

Supervisors may be involved in communication for 75% or more of their workday.

- *Organizational Behavior Solutions for Management, Sweeney and McFarlin*

It's estimated that 80% of serious medical errors involve miscommunication between caregivers during the transfer of patients.

- *Joint Commission International*

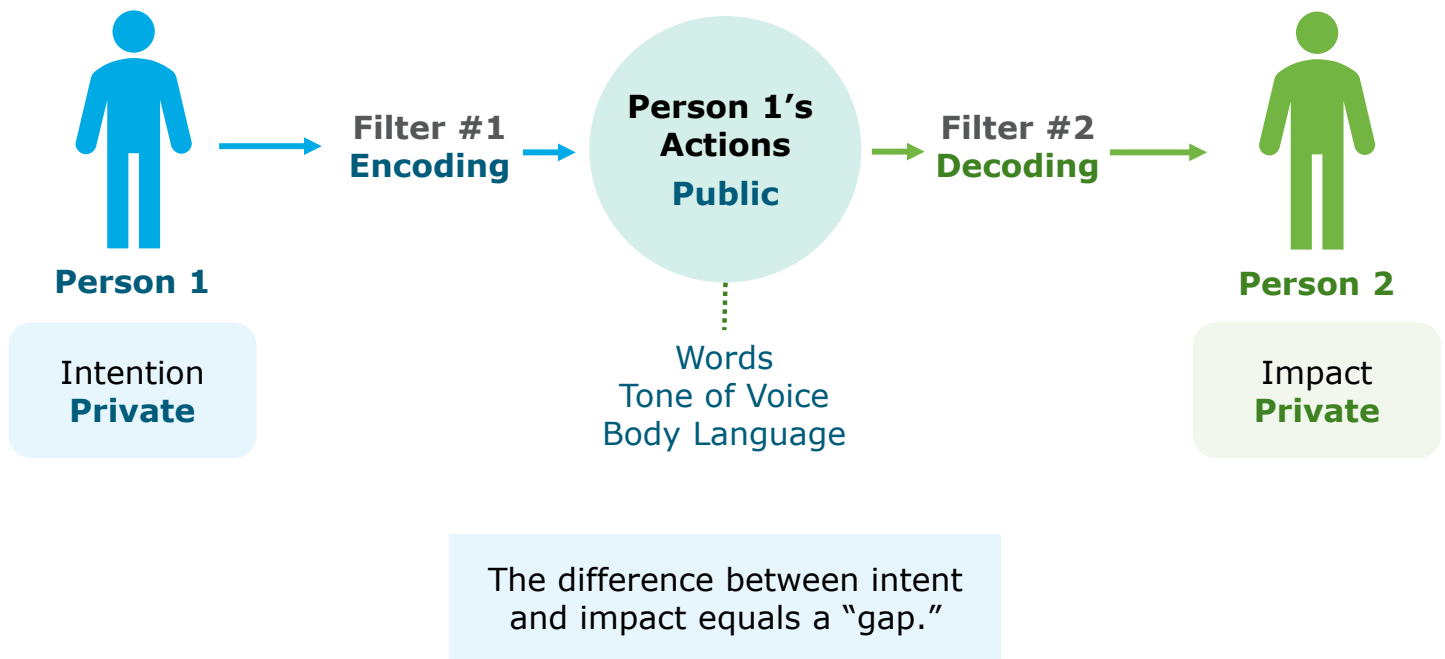
The average person talks at a rate of about 125-175 words per minute, while we can listen at a rate of up to 450 words per minute.

- *Carver, Johnson & Friedman*

Immediately after a 10 minute presentation, the average listener has heard, understood and retained only 50% of what was said. That drops to 25% within 48 hours.

- *University of Missouri*

Why Is Communication So Hard?



Model based on The Interpersonal Gap by John L. Wallen

Be Attentive

Make Eye Contact

Eye contact is an important communication tool. The amount of eye contact varies by culture and community, and can be a way to demonstrate respect and attention.

Face the Speaker

This could be standing or sitting. The position of your body can offer an invitation, confirming your attention and interest.

Engage and Encourage

Your facial expression can tell the speaker if you're following the story. Your verbal cues support that rapport. You're listening for understanding, rather than to offer agreement or disagreement, so words of encouragement can invite further explanation.

Ignore Potential Distractions

Humans are built to pay attention to many things to make sure we're safe. If at all possible, choose to offer your attention to the person or moment at hand vs. those stimuli that seem to make themselves important, such as electronics or texts.

Elements of Active Listening

- Ask Questions
- Paraphrase
- Express Empathy

Asking Questions

The listener seeks to understand the substance of what the other person is saying. They capture ideas, ask questions, and restate issues to confirm their understanding is correct. How you use questions can have a tremendous impact on building communication and trust. We want to highlight two types of questions: closed-ended and open-ended questions. Both are important.

Closed-ended questions:

- Can be answered in one or two words
- Are useful to confirm information or clarify your understanding
- Lead to specific answers

Example: "Did we meet the safety compliance requirements every day last week?"

Open-ended questions:

- Could have many answers or variants
- Invite explanation and further inquiry
- Tend to begin with "what," "how," "tell me," "describe," or "explain"

Example: "In what ways do you think we might improve retention?"

Example: "Given what you've learned so far, what would you like to try next?"

Examples of closed-ended and open-ended questions

Closed	Open
How many units did you complete today?	What factors do you think are contributing to the slip in productivity?
Can we schedule another meeting?	What do we need to do next to move this project forward?
Is everything going OK for you here?	What do you like about your job?

Paraphrase To Increase Accuracy and Understanding

A paraphrase is a concise summary which grasps the essence of what the speaker is trying to convey. When a paraphrase is “on target,” the speaker feels heard. You might get an emphatic, “yes,” “right,” or “exactly” that lets you know you got it.

The essential elements of paraphrasing are:

1. Condensed

Concise but maintains the underlying meaning of the speaker

2. Includes the essential information

Focuses on what is central to the speaker’s message

3. Stated in your own words

The listener summarizes their understanding in roughly the speaker’s words without “parroting,” which could be perceived as condescending

Making the effort to paraphrase sends a clear message that...

- You want to understand what they’re trying to convey.
- You value their effort and time.
- You want to verify and make sure you’re really “getting it.”
- You respect them.

Examples of paraphrasing

Speaker: The accounting team met with Ellis repeatedly, highlighting our very competitive pricing. There is no disagreement. How could there be?! We’re offering a fantastic price! But our last two shipments to them were both over two weeks late, and I know they’re shopping around. Not sure we’ll get this sale.

Example paraphrase: In other words, their hot button is not just price, but service.

Express Empathy

Empathy is the identification with and understanding of another's situation and emotions, even if not in agreement with them. It's acknowledging, validating, and offering support in a nonjudgmental way -- and it's an essential skill for supervisors.

Stephen Covey's Habit 5 from his best seller *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* is "Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood." Covey writes,

"Empathic listening is so powerful because it gives you accurate data to work with. Instead of projecting your own autobiography and assuming thoughts, feelings, motives and interpretation, you're dealing with the reality inside another person's head and heart. You're listening to understand. [...]"

When you listen with empathy to another person, you give that person psychological air. And after that vital need is met, you can then focus on influencing or problem solving. This need for psychological air impacts communication in every area of life."

Empathy shows another person you care and are truly listening.

Giving Feedback

What Is Feedback?

Feedback is an important supervisor tool used to inform performance that doesn't meet expectations or acknowledge performance that meets or exceeds expectations.

Is Feedback the Right Tool?

Think of an employee who is not meeting performance or behavior expectations. Consider the following questions with that employee in mind to see if giving feedback might solve the problem.

	Yes	No
1. Has the employee been given a clear explanation of their role and responsibilities?		
2. Has the employee been given clear expectations of the specific task?		
3. Can the employee summarize these expectations?		
4. Does the employee have the necessary skills?		
5. Are employees held accountable for poor performance?		
6. Are employees praised or rewarded for good performance?		
7. Have barriers to performance been removed?		

If all boxes are checked "yes," you are likely in a good position to give feedback. If not, you may need to correct what's being missed before putting that responsibility on the employee.

Change Feedback (Template)

Change Feedback	
1. Topic (neutral)	<i>I'd like to talk with you about... (usually one word)</i>
2. Specific example (when, where, saw, heard)	3. Impact (negative)
<i>I noticed... (facts and/or process)</i>	<i>This resulted in... (negative business impact)</i>
4. Expected behavior (a consistent standard)	5. Expected impact (positive)
<i>Instead, I'd like you to...*</i>	<i>This will result in... (positive business impact)</i>

*When using this feedback model with a peer, customer, or your boss, you might want to phrase this step as a question such as...

- Would you be willing to...
- Could you (please)...
- Would it work for you to...

Positive Feedback (Template)

While offering a “good job” may result in a smile, this model will deliver a powerful message.

Positive Feedback	
1. Topic	<i>I'd like to talk with you about... (usually one word or phrase)</i>
2. Specific example (when, where, saw, heard)	3. Impact (positive)
<i>I noticed... (facts and process)</i>	<i>This resulted in... (business impact)</i>

“Be as specific and thorough with praise as with criticism. Go deep into the details.”

- Kim Scott, *Radical Candor*

Coaching

Feedback vs. Coaching

Feedback is an important supervisor tool used daily to change performance that isn't meeting standards or acknowledge performance that meets or exceeds expectations.

Coaching is a collaboration between two people and relies more on asking than telling. It is used to increase performance and productivity, develop leadership abilities, and increase specific skills.

In feedback, the supervisor delivers a specific message. In coaching, the supervisor invites an employee to wear the "expert hat" and figure out how, why, and what might be beneficial to change. Successful supervisors use a combination of feedback and coaching to ensure their direct reports are consistently performing at their best.

Use feedback when...

- There is one way to do something and you need to inform an employee
- You know the exact outcome you want and do not want to generate other options
- In order to reinforce a specific positive behavior

Use coaching when...

- There is more than one solution or possible path forward
- You want to increase the ability of the employee to act confidently on their own
- You want to help the employee develop

"Research shows that 85 percent of highly disengaged employees don't receive enough coaching from their boss."

- *Quantum Workplace eBook, "Employee Development Planning", 2014*

Benefits of Coaching

As a rule, people are not resistant to change, but resistant to being changed. Coaching is an effective way to increase trust and rapport with employees by empowering them to develop and lead next steps to improve individual or team challenges.

“80% of people who receive coaching report increased self-confidence, and over 70% benefit from improved work performance, relationships, and more effective communication skills. 86% of companies report that they recouped their investment on coaching and more.”

- *International Coach Federation 2009*

“Training improved performance of their teams by 22%. When coaching was added to the training program, improvement in day to day work performance increased by 88%.”

- *The International Personnel Management Association, January 2001*

“Rapid, constant, and disruptive change is now the norm, and what succeeded in the past is no longer a guide to what will succeed in the future. Twenty-first-century managers simply don’t (and can’t!) have all the right answers. To cope with this new reality, companies are moving away from traditional command-and-control practices and toward something very different. The role of the manager, in short, is becoming that of a Coach.”

- *Harvard Business Review, November 2019*

In what ways might your direct reports benefit from coaching?

Finding “Coachable Moments”

“Coaching is not merely a technique to be wheeled out and rigidly applied in certain prescribed circumstances. It is a way of managing, a way of treating people, a way of thinking, a way of being.”

- Sir John Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance*

One-on-one formal coaching sessions are highly effective, but few have time to do that regularly. But people often reveal goals, needs, frustrations, and desires in casual conversation and those tidbits can open the door to brief “coachable moments” that can be woven into daily work.

Elements of Coaching

- Be attentive
- Use active listening skills
- Explore motivators and barriers
- Leverage previous success

Coaching Is Not...

- Giving directions or advice too soon
- Solving the problem yourself

An employee might cue a coachable moment by:

- Asking for feedback (directly or indirectly)
- Showing frustration within their present job
- Seeking out personal or professional development opportunities
- Speaking of a new interest or using a new skill
- Investigating a different career path within the organization
- Demonstrating defensiveness
- Displaying a lack of confidence

Supervisors need to actively look for opportunities to coach employees, so they can equip them to be better problem solvers, help them feel more supported, and encourage them to grow!

Coaching Conversation Planner (Template, pg 1)

Step 1: Open the Conversation

- Welcome employee with sincerity
- State the purpose and topic of the conversation

Step 2: Ask Employee to Evaluate Their Performance

- Ask for their “read” on their performance
- Determine what they think has gone well
- Identify barriers and other concerns
- Question assumptions
- Listen and learn about challenges they’re experiencing

Step 3: Ask Employee to Identify Impacts

- Ask employee to identify the business impact of their performance
- Ask employee to identify the benefits of changing or developing a new skill

Coaching Conversation Planner (Template, pg 2)

Step 4: Ask Employee to Develop Next Steps

- Ask employee for a next step in moving this forward
- Ask them what kind of support they would need
- Jointly decide on best course of action
- Ask employee how ready, willing, and able they are to take action
- Confirm when you'll reconvene
- Solicit feedback on the coaching session

Additional Resources

Books

Kaye, Beverly. Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go: Career Conversations Employees Want. Berrett-Koehler Publishers. 2019.

Landsberg, Max. The Tao of Coaching: Boost Your Effectiveness at Work by Inspiring and Developing Those Around You. Profile books, 2015.

Dungy, Tony; and Whitaker, Nathan. The Mentor Leader: Secrets to Building People and Teams That Win Consistently. Tyndale Momentum. 2011.

Alda, Alan. If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look on My Face? My Adventures in the Art and Science of Relating and Communicating. Random House. 2017.

Goleman, Daniel; Boyatzis, Richard; and McKee, Annie. Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence. Harvard Business Review Press, 2013.

Rock, David. Your Brain at Work, Revised and Updated: Strategies for Overcoming Distraction, Regaining Focus, and Working Smarter All Day Long. Harper Business, 2020.

Ariely, Dan. Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions. HarperCollins, 2009.

Adams, Marilee and Adams, Marshall. Change Your Questions, Change Your Life: 12 Powerful Tools for Leadership, Coaching, and Life. Berrett-Koehler, 2016.

Articles

“The Leader as Coach” by Herminia Ibarra and Anne Scoular in Harvard Business Review. December 2019. (17 min read) <https://hbr.org/2019/11/the-leader-as-coach>

“Want to Help Your Employees Succeed? Try a Coach Approach to Giving Feedback” by Joe Hirsch on Inc.com (3 min read) <https://www.inc.com/joe-hirsch/this-coach-approach-to-developing-employees-will-change-your-relationship-with-feedback.html>