



Leading from the ground up

For new or renewing leaders



Communication foundations

Communication happens in many places in many ways. Here we look at some basic elements of communication to consider whenever we communicate.

Some goals of communication



Information

Communication is about sharing information. People share facts, feelings, ideas, and hopes.

In organisations, communication is important for productivity. Missing or overlooked information can delay or derail the work people are doing or the decisions they have to make.



Connection

Communication connects people and groups. It builds relationships and trust. Done poorly it can undermine them.

In organisations, leaving people out is felt as social exclusion or a threat. Communicating links people and groups. The small talk around the workplace builds rapport and interpersonal connections.



Understanding

Communication helps people understand issues and each other. This requires listening and open minds.

Making the effort to understand each other opens up new information and insights. Understanding helps us grow. When we make the effort to understand others it builds a sense of value and dignity.

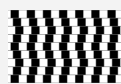
Some basic influences that affect communication



Approachability

Communication happens between people so we need confidence that people are open and trustworthy.

This means we have to listen to each other. We have to have confidence in people and systems. Workplace systems have to be secure. Mistakes or failure are used for learning and ethical conduct upheld.



Context

The context of communication affects what people will include. It affects meaning, emotions and language. Content in one setting can mean something different in another context.

How we talk differs with co-workers, with intimate partners, or in a sports crowd. In some we talk, others we whisper, others we shout.



Structures

Communication is structured through elements like its composition, channels, and social practices. These affect what is shared and how.

Some conversations need private spaces while others are public. We exchange much more information face to face than in a text message. Structure can also affect emotions and behaviour.

A basic structure of communication processes



Craft and Transmit



Use Channels



Listen and Decode

The Sender has to craft their message. Then they have to transmit it to the Listener. To do this they use a communication channel that both the Sender and the Listener participate in. The Listener has to pay attention and listen. Then they have to decode the message and interpret it. Then this flips around and the Listener and Sender swap roles. In a conversation this happens repeatedly.

At the same time, the channel affects what content can be shared and in what ways. It can facilitate the interaction or degrade it, depending on how well it fits the situation. All these choices and actions can happen very quickly as reflex behaviour. Sometimes, for important and sensitive matters, it needs to be slowed down and carefully considered.

