Administrative Professional Series

Communication and Social Styles

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Participant Guide
Communication and Social Styles

Goal:
In this seminar, we’ll look at developing communication skills and determine our individual social styles.

Learner Outcomes:
In this program you will:
- Examine a communication model.
- Identify barriers to effective communication.
- Learn active listening techniques to successfully respond to others.
- Recognize the importance of asking questions.
- Discover ways that our perceptions affect communication.
- Complete the social styles inventory to discover your social style and gain insight into your behavioral strengths and weaknesses.
Describe a recent conversation in which there was a miscommunication. This could be at work, home, while shopping, etc.

What you heard…

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What the other person meant…

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What went “wrong?”

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Communication

Why communication is important.

Communication is a necessary tool for understanding. Miscommunication may actually be a cause of conflict, stress, or misunderstandings. The better we communicate, the more effective we are at creating and maintaining good relationships.

Communication is a social function. It is a two-way process (sending and receiving) by which ideas are transmitted from one person to another. In doing so, we try to accomplish four basic things: to be understood, to understand others, to be accepted, and to get something accomplished.

Process of communication: Sending and Receiving Messages
Factors influencing communication

Context – the situation in which the communication takes place. This has a great impact on how we interpret verbal and non-verbal messages.

Interpretation – the receiver determines the intent of the message through the message content. This is often where miscommunication occurs.

Feedback – the roles of sender/receiver reverse many times during any conversation. Feedback is interpreted as a follow-on message which, in turn, creates more feedback.

Barriers – obstructions to effectively getting our message correctly interpreted.

Semantics – the meaning (or an interpretation of the meaning) of words.

Jargon – the vocabulary peculiar to a particular trade, profession, or group.

Acronym – a word formed from the initial letters or groups of letters of words in a phrase.
Active Listening

Active listening is:
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________

Active listeners internalize the speaker’s feelings and try to see things from his or her perspective. Active listeners appreciate both the meaning and the feelings behind what the speaker is saying. By understanding the speaker’s attitudes and feelings, we can better understand his or her point of view.

Verbal communication: The words we hear. The words we say.
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________

Non-verbal communication: What we see. What our body “says” to others.
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________

Para-language: How we say it.
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________

What percent of meaning comes from each?
Verbals   _____%  
Nonverbals  _____%  
Paralanguage  _____%
**Perceptions:** two or more people listening to the same conversation may interpret that conversation differently. Everyone has a way of thinking that shapes what we see and hear. Perceptions are formed by our values, experiences, culture, and expectations.

**Perception and Communication**

People must communicate to get work done. The better the understanding between co-workers, the more efficient, effective, and creative we can become.

Communication is a mutually influencing process. That is, we form beliefs and knowledge about fellow workers based on our interactions and “history” with them. We know what the person is like, what he or she will do in a given situation, and how the person views us. We can predict, to a certain degree, others’ actions or reactions to life’s events.

Similarly, our “reality” affects what we see and hear and (therefore) how we respond to situations. We reject “wrong” information rather than change our beliefs. As an example, if you think someone is unable to handle a difficult assignment, you are likely to see his or her inability to do so. This is the Pygmalion Effect.

**Is Perception Reality?**

Let’s say Al is Mark's supervisor. They are standing near the water cooler and, with loud voices and strong gestures, they are talking to each other. If you don’t hear them, what might you conclude? One may draw an inaccurate conclusion. Perhaps they both came from a culture where loud speaking and constant gesturing is the norm. Be careful about jumping to conclusions based solely on what you see or what you hear. These are incomplete messages. We interpret words and behaviors and draw conclusions based on our perception.
Asking Questions

Questions help us to gain information, insight, and understanding. It is valuable to ask open-ended questions because you gain more information than with closed-ended questions.

Which of the following questions are open-ended?

What concerns do you have?
What’s your view of the situation?
Could you describe what happened when…?
What concerns you about the situation?
Can you tell me what’s been happening?
What might work for you?
What would make this idea work better for you?
Are there things you can do to help resolve this issue?
What other suggestions do you have?
Can you help me understand why…?
What problems might there be with this idea?
Have we covered everything?
Are there any parts of this potential solution you’re not comfortable with?
Can you live with this every day from now on?
Good and Poor Listening Behaviors

______________  ________________  
______________  ________________  
______________  ________________  
______________  ________________  

Sharpen your listening by trying these simple steps:

Communication is difficult and complicated. Therefore, speakers and listeners have responsibilities to each other. The **speaker’s responsibility** is to organize his or her thoughts and communicate them as effectively as possible.

The **listener’s responsibility** is to listen actively to understand. **Listen For “what” and “why.”** That is, try to determine the meaning (what) of the message, as well as the purpose of the communication (why).

**Don’t interrupt the speaker.** Interrupting or arguing with the speaker will guarantee the message does not get across. Interruptions break the speaker’s train of thought and sidetrack the message. We often tend to interrupt when we disagree with the other person and try to refute or counter his or her logic.

**Mirror back the thought.** If we can express others’ ideas in our own words, we can verify we have the intended meaning. If we haven’t interpreted the message as intended, the speaker can repeat or clarify his or her meaning using different words.

**Look for agreement.** When we hear something that is unacceptable, we stop listening and mentally counter what was said. If we listen for points of agreement, many arguments will disappear.
Mixed Messages

The speaker’s words say one thing, but the nonverbals may be interpreted as something completely different. When we sense a mixed message, we tend to attach greater meaning to the nonverbals than to the verbals. In cases like this, simply ask for clarification or reframe the conversation for verification.

Nonverbal Feedback

As a listener, your nonverbals are just as powerful as when you are the speaker. You could be sending mixed messages if you don’t pay attention, face the speaker, and make good eye contact. It is also helpful to use supportive nonverbals, such as nodding or saying “uh-huh.” These interjections show the other person that you are engaged in the conversation.
Social Styles

The Social Styles instrument is designed to help people understand themselves and others better, communicate more effectively, and to develop positive relationships with co-workers. The Social Styles behavioral model allows us to see ourselves and others from a perspective of differing dynamics. Understanding the four styles helps create more effective working relationships.

The four styles are determined by looking at two dimensions...the amount of emotion one is comfortable showing, and the degree of assertiveness one usually exhibits.
The Driver Social Style

Drivers tend to be highly assertive and action oriented. They control their emotions and focus on tasks and results rather than on people and processes. They trust facts and data more than intuition and concentrate more time on getting the job done than on developing relationships. They are quick to assess a situation and prefer getting into the action rather than analyzing in depth and proceeding with caution. When they’ve identified a preferred result or course of action, they are comfortable directing others to ensure the desired results are achieved. Drivers are also comfortable proceeding on assumptions rather than on verified facts and they respond quickly to complex, challenging situations.

Notes:
The Expressive Social Style

Expressives are highly assertive and action oriented. They are energetic and focus on people and generating ideas more than on tasks or results. They trust and use intuition more than facts and data and may concentrate more time on developing relationships than on seeing that the job gets done. They enjoy a creative challenge, and prefer jumping into things quickly rather than planning and analysis. They are highly flexible and spontaneous in responding to the demands of a dynamic situation and create an inspiring, exciting climate for themselves and others. They are comfortable persuading others to support their ideas and enjoy the creative challenge of novel activities or interactions. Expressives can operate quite comfortably on their emotions or intuition and prefer remaining open to possibilities rather than committing to one result or course of action.

Notes:
The Amiable Social Style

Amiables think things through carefully before acting and prefer not to be highly assertive in expressing their ideas and preferences. They generally do not direct others, or impose their opinions on them, and may “ask” rather than “tell” when interacting with others. They are warm and friendly and focus on people and working in harmony rather than on tasks or results. They trust and use intuition more than facts and data and focus on developing relationships as a necessary part of getting the job done. They enjoy situations where performance demands are well paced and reasonable, and where people support each other and work cooperatively. Their relationships have depth and authenticity and are built carefully over time. They are open to others, understanding and supportive, and tuned in to their needs and concerns. They create an accepting, humanistic climate for themselves and others and preserve and protect the present rather than risking the status quo for a potentially improved future. They are dependable and agreeable, and are contributors to the team effort.

Notes:
The Analytical Social Style

Analyticals think things through carefully before acting and prefer not to be highly assertive in expressing their ideas and preferences. They are emotively “controlled” and focus on tasks, results, and an effective process more than on people. They trust data and facts more than intuition and concentrate on getting the job done correctly rather than on developing relationships. They prefer analyzing a situation, gathering relevant data, and planning the best course of action rather than quickly reacting. They generally do not direct others or impose their opinions on them, but are well prepared to respond if asked. They enjoy situations where performance demands are well paced and reasonable and where things are done right the first time. They keep their feelings close and prefer that others do the same. They are self-disciplined, attentive to details, thorough, and persistent in meeting responsibilities. They create an orderly “best practices” environment where individuals can contribute their knowledge, skills, and best thinking to get the highest quality results.

Notes:
Lessons learned

We learn from social styles that we differ in many ways. We differ in the way we make decisions; how we act in meetings; how much faith we have in data and facts versus intuition; whether we have a task or people orientation; or how comfortable we are in taking charge.

We can, once armed with this knowledge of others’ styles, adapt our behavior to accommodate our co-workers.

Notes:
Social style exercise – the New Year's Eve party

Instructions: In this exercise, you are to plan a New Year's Eve party that will appeal to drivers, expressives, amiables, and analyticals. As you proceed with this exercise, reflect on factors we have discussed about the person’s style; specifically needs, orientations, and growth actions. Consider what this group values, the types of interaction they prefer, and what they are concerned about. In doing so, you should consider the following:

1. What kinds of entertainment will you provide?

2. What kind of music will you play?

3. What times will the party begin and end?

4. How should these people dress for the party?

5. What kinds of food will be served? How will the food be served (formally, buffet, finger food, etc)?

6. What kind of beverages will be served? How will beverages be served?

7. What kind of party favor will you give to guests?