

# Your Guide to Effective Communication in the Workplace

Is to key success in business communication, which is why the right to workplace important get.

Failure to communicate effectively - as demonstrated by the sentence above - can lead to confusion & frustration. This can result in lost productivity, poor morale, and toxic working relationships.

In this guide, we'll:

- Highlight why good communication is important to work culture.
- Explore the different methods of workplace communication.
- Address the barriers to effective communication.
- Advise how to improve communication in your business.
- Give you tips on how to champion good communication in the workplace.

## The importance of workplace communication

We've already highlighted that poor communication leads to confusion. This can result in missed deadlines, mistakes at work, [conflict between teams](#), and failing companies.

The bare minimum you should aim for is not to encounter these problems. Communication isn't just about avoiding mistakes; it's about actively improving morale and how to increase productivity.

This is demonstrated on a micro level when looking at your staff. Employees with communication skills are valuable assets to any organisation. Retaining a talented workforce is essential, and to do so, you must engage in two-way communication on their level.

This isn't the only reason good communication is important. It also helps with:

- Team building – departments will work more effectively with one another and others.
- Gives everyone a voice – staff satisfaction and morale will increase if they feel heard.
- Encourages innovation – allows you to explore and debate ideas, resulting in innovation.
- Encourages growth – having strong communication means growth projects are more effective, and staff are more productive.
- Effective management – communication skills are key to being a good leader, it will give managers the ability to delegate better, manage conflict, and motivate their team.

## Different methods of communication in the workplace

The modern workplace doesn't rely on one method of communication to function. It relies on all of them. If you want to manage communication effectively, you need to have a decent understanding of all methods. These include:

- Electronic communication.
- Non-electronic communication.
- Verbal communication.
- Non Verbal communication.

Let's breakdown how companies use these methods, one by one, starting with: **Electronic Communication**

This includes anything from an email or text message to phone calls and company intranets.

A good rule to follow when using this type of communication is this:

Use it for information purposes only, not for dealing with sensitive issues.

There can be some overlap. For example, our [HR software BrightHR](#) can approve annual leave requests and manage staff rotas. However, if there is an issue with a request, it would be better to discuss this in person, referring back to the information on the software.

Collaboration software and task-management programs could also fall under this definition.

### Non-electronic communication

Face to face meetings and physical documentation come under this definition. While we would encourage going paperless in your business, it is often prudent to keep paper copies of certain documents. If there is a technical issue, or your system is hacked, you will lose access to your documentation. Therefore, it's sensible to fall back on paper copies of essential policies. The rule to follow for non-electronic communication is this:

Use it for dealing with sensitive issues, if used for delivering information, keep it brief.

### Written communication

As above, this includes [documentation](#), letters, and emails. Written communication can save you time and money. Crucially, you will have a written record of whatever was discussed. With this in mind, use written communication to keep your business safe and compliant.

Finally, make sure you have copies of important discussions as well as crucial documentation, such as contracts and policies.

## Verbal communication

Individual and group meetings, informal or otherwise, come under this category. This includes water cooler talk, sharing ideas, and any training you might deliver. Typically, employees exchange information verbally. But, anything that is more serious should incorporate multiple types of communication.

Having good communication skills means using a combination of verbal and written communication when dealing with serious matters or formal procedures.

Reading through these, you might be thinking: "I'm good at some of these, but not the other."

It's true that there are often things that stand in our way of effective communication. For example, you might not be the most tech-savvy person and therefore struggle with digital communication. In this next section, we'll explore all the different ways communication breaks down.

## Barriers to effective communication

It doesn't matter the size of your team, your company, or your industry, there are common issues that lead to ineffective communication. Let's look at some of the most common:

### Excessive jargon

This is common in highly skilled trades or professional roles. A good example of this is the use of legalese in the legal profession. Unless you know the person you are communicating with has a good understanding of legalese, we'd recommend talking using everyday language.

Also, business buzzwords are common in numerous industries. However, this can confuse clients, customers, and new hires or junior employees who have just entered the business.

## Physical blocks

The way your company is set up may create barriers between staff. For example, shift work may result in some employees never verbally communicating, despite the fact that their work affects one another. If your business is international, or has offices some distance apart, this can cause disrupt effective communication.

## Technology

Tech solutions have helped improve communication in the workplace overall. But, while they have a vital role in business success, they can also present barriers. Failing to keep communication tools up to date, for example, can disrupt departments exchanging information with one another. If you fail to keep your staff up to date with the latest communication channels your company uses, a similar problem can occur. Training and retraining is an integral element of managing this, especially among older staff members.

## Workplace culture

If you have built a good company culture, then employee engagement is probably already high, and you'll have strong communication networks. However, a toxic culture can result in effective communication falling apart.

There are many ways a culture can be defined as "toxic". For example, some companies encourage a high performance culture—or competitive work structure—amongst staff. This starts out harmless enough, but quickly develops into staff hurling insults at one another and withholding information to keep a competitive edge.

Or, you may dismiss any concerns when they are raised, causing staff to keep quiet when an issue occurs. If you notice the communication medium you are using leads to breakdowns contact Croner on 0800 141 3807.

## Improving workplace communication

So, we've looked at the different types of communication, and seen what some of the barriers are to effective communication. How do we address these?

We'll break it down into electronic and non-electronic communication channels.

### Electronic

Be mindful of how you're communicating via digital. It can be difficult to convey tone of voice digitally. Some people are less receptive than others to certain types of communication. Make sure you keep your tone consistent and professional when issuing information to staff—even if you're comfortable communicating with them socially.

If you have good working relationships you might be comfortable sending a message via communication tools such as Slack or Microsoft Teams. However, even when you are familiar, it's important to consider your tone, as things can be more easily misconstrued via messaging apps.

### Share important news and company updates

A major part of any effective workplace communication strategy is to share business news. If a team member hears a major update from a colleague instead, they'll feel out of the loop. Keep employees up to date with important occurrences to help them perform their job correctly and improve employee engagement. Often the best method is to utilise electronic and non-electronic methods. Put updates on your company intranet, send out a mass email, and publish a company newsletter.

### Utilise anonymous employee engagement surveys

These surveys don't need to be digital, but it is easier to remain anonymous this way, which will encourage usage of the survey. At first glance, an anonymous survey may not seem like good communication.

But consider that maybe some employees feel they can't step forward with their issues. Honest feedback is an important aspect of communicating effectively, and their voices still need to be heard.

An anonymous survey can help you identify issues in the workplace that may not have been highlighted before.

## Non-electronic

### Take and share meeting minutes

Whether it's a 1-to-1, or a **disciplinary**, meeting minutes are important. Keeping notes is important for legal compliance, as well as effective workplace communication. It will help you improve communication in future meetings by keeping you on topic and allowing you to refer back to important discussion points and ideas raised.

It's also useful to follow up a meeting with notes and expectations. This will help you clarify any points brought up in the meeting and leaves no room for doubt. It also gives attendees the opportunity to ask questions. If you want to go the extra mile, you could assign specific tasks to employees to improve efficiency. Plus, using graphs or images to demonstrate your points is a great way to utilise visual communication.

### Conduct regular 1 to 1s

Effective communication means checking in regularly with your employees, not just as a team, but as individuals. Put regular time in the diary. Try to keep it at a set time, so the employee knows they have a dedicated period to discuss any issues and ask questions. This will help you address issues before they become big problems, as well as discuss priorities.

It's best to keep 1 to 1s somewhat informal. If all you discuss is targets and priorities, an employee may feel unable to raise a personal issue or concern. Asking your employees meaningful questions means they'll be more open.



Just make sure you don't step over the line into asking invasive questions about their home life or a personal condition, for example.

### Conduct regular team meetings

Individual conversations are crucial to good communication in the workplace, but so are team discussions. Effective team communication will improve your department's dynamic and collaboration. A meeting allows staff to highlight any barriers or delays they are experiencing. This will help improve workflow and increase efficiency. Team building activities will also result in better communication between colleagues.

Leaders can communicate company goals and targets in team meetings, which is more efficient than explaining them on a one-to-one basis.

### Final tips for effective communication in the workplace

So far we've discussed practical solutions on how to improve your workplace communication. But, how can companies improve the conversations you have on a daily basis? How do you make it so your staff feel they can approach you when they need to raise a concern? It's good to hold more regular catch ups, but if you're unapproachable, or fail to listen, they won't yield positive results.

Next time you have a conversation with an employee, ask yourself the question:

"Did I listen effectively, and did I engage with them effectively?" If you feel your communication could have gone better, here are some tips on championing an effective communication process in your workplace.

## How to champion workplace communication

### Feedback

Don't wait for feedback. Ask for it. When you get it, act on it. Make it as easy as possible for staff to provide feedback, and show you take it on board. If you don't, staff will stop providing it. Engaged employees will share ideas. Non-engaged employees won't.

### Reconsider workplace communication methods

Question the method you are using to communicate. If you're going over to an employee to talk to them, ask yourself: "Could this be an email?"

If you're writing an email, ask yourself: "Should I really send this information via email, or do I need to discuss this with my employee?"

### Lead by example

"Do as I do" should be your mantra when it comes to workplace communication. Engaged management should be approachable—make it easy for your whole team to speak with you. This will encourage conversations among staff and between employees and managers. This includes observing your body language and tone of voice when having conversations.

### Ask and explain

Don't draw conclusions from one conversation. If you need clarification, ask for it. The inverse is also important. Leaders should explain what is happening to their employees and why. Fully communicate a task, organisational goals, or policies. Provide further clarification if requested and share your own thoughts on the matter.

However, remember that some matters should be kept confidential, such as the reasons why an employee is off sick.

## Get support with communication in the workplace

Good communication is one of the biggest tools in your arsenal when it comes to staff productivity, morale, and motivation. However, the bigger your teams, and the more diverse your workforce, the more voices there are to manage.

This can make workplace communication tough for leaders. Fortunately, you can get support from HR professionals on a daily basis.

Speak to a Croner consultant today to find out how we can support your workplace through staff meetings, team building activities, and even disciplinaries. Call 0800 141 3807 for more information.



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