Communication Skills for Effective Laboratory Management

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Outline

• Learning Objectives
• Introduction
• Awareness of Your Personal Style
• Skillful Listening
• Expressing Yourself
• Impact of Emotions
What is Communication

- The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behaviour.
Elements of Communication

- Spoken words 10%
- Tone of voice 30%
- Body language 60%
- We tend to believe body language over verbal messages when they don’t match

- All behaviour is a form of communication
The ability to effectively communicate with others is one of the most powerful tools for personal and/or professional success.

Most people are challenged by the many day-to-day interactions with co-workers, family, and friends.

Emotion, communication and conflict are present in all human interactions and affects each of us in different ways.

Everyone manages emotion, communication and conflict from habit – patterns and styles developed early in life and over time.

80% of problems in the workplace are communication related.
• One of the quickest ways to alienate yourself from other people is to communicate unsuccessfully.

• Effective communication empowers you to influence others.

• Your capacity to communicate is often seen as an indicator of your ability and intelligence.
Awareness of your personal style

• Communication doesn’t just happen; your style is based on your experiences that over time have developed into a pattern of attitudes and actions.

• It is a continuous cycle. Your experiences influence your thoughts. Your thoughts, over time, become your attitudes. These attitudes become the blueprint for new experiences, which develop into patterns of behaviour.

• An awareness of your personal style is critical to begin to transform negative attitudes and behaviours into positive ones.

• It is key to empowering you to establish personal responsibility and accountability in the midst of changing your behaviour. Remember, the only person you can ever really control or change is yourself.
Skilful Listening

Nine Steps to Effective Listening

• Face the speaker and maintain eye contact.
• Be attentive, yet relaxed.
• Keep an open mind to the speaker’s message – try to feel what the speaker is feeling.
• Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.
• Do not interrupt and do not impose your "solutions."
• Wait for the speaker to pause to ask clarifying questions - ask questions only to ensure understanding of something that has been said (avoiding questions that disrupt the speaker's train of thought).
• Give the speaker regular feedback, e.g., summarize, reflect feelings, or simply say "uh huh."
• Pay attention to nonverbal cues -- to feelings, tone of voice, inflection, facial expressions, gestures, posture.
• Be aware of potential barriers that impact your ability to listen effectively.
Barriers to Listening

• Sometimes people have a barrier that impedes their listening skills. Awareness of a barrier is the first step in being able to overcome it.

Barriers to listening include:
• past experiences that influence our reaction to the speaker or the message
• worry, fear, anger, grief and depression
• individual bias and prejudice
• semantics and language differences
• noise and verbal "clutter"
• preoccupation, boredom and shrinking attention spans
Active Listening

• Stay active by asking mental questions.
• Some questions you can ask yourself as you listen are:
  • What key point is the speaker making?
  • How does this fit with what I know from experience?
  • How can this information benefit me?
Looking and Acting Like a Good Listener

- Non-Verbal Communication

- Turn your body and tilt your face toward the speaker.

- Use other parts of your body besides your ears to receive the message:
  - Look at the speaker to pick up nonverbal signals or cues
  - Your eyes will also send signals to the speaker
  - When the speaker sees a receptive audience they are motivated to work harder to communicate their message
  - React to the speaker by nodding your head.
Acknowledgement

• Listen and acknowledge what you hear the speaker saying, even if you don't agree with it. At this point do not express your point of view.

• Acknowledging the speakers thoughts and feelings does not mean that you approve of or agree with the speaker’s opinions or actions.

• Your ability to listen and then acknowledge what the speaker said allows the speaker to feel a sense of satisfaction of being understood.
Expressing Yourself

• Briefly explain the intention of your conversation.

• The other person(s) will attend better if they have a basic understanding of the time and effort they will be bringing to the conversation.

• Use “I” statements to communicate your feelings, and what you have personally seen, heard, need, or expect.

• Do not engage in verbal attacks on the other person. If you need to criticize, describe the behaviour or actions of the other person that bother you.

• State what you need or expect in positive terms.
Five Components of Your Message

- Your communication should include these five important components:
  - What you are seeing – have seen
  - What you are hearing – have heard
  - What you are feeling – have felt about the issue
  - What you need or want
  - What the positive result will be from receiving/acting on your request
Manage your emotions

- Recognize what you are feeling. Are you angry, embarrassed, or hurt?

- Simplify your feelings. Select one or two words to describe how you feel. Be specific.

- Do not act on your feelings right away. Don’t make a decision, enter into a discussion, or send an email in anger or frustration.

- Choose an appropriate time and place to communicate.

- Accept that you are responsible for your emotions; Use “I” statements. Say “I feel angry when...” rather than “You make me mad...”
Manage a conflict

• Keep yourself calm by breathing slowly and deeply. Remember that this is only one temporary moment in your life.

• Concentrate on what you need to move forward rather than dwell on the other person’s mistakes.

• Summarize the other person’s feelings to make sure that you understand what they are communicating.

• Give affirmation to the other person about what they may be feeling.

• Acknowledge and apologize for any mistakes you may have made.

• Focus on positive results and make specific requests that will enable the achievement of those goals.
Effective Communication in the Workplace

In any aspect of your life, communication is key. Think of how many times miscommunication negatively impacted your day, whether with your spouse, kids, friends, or at work. Proper communication ensures everyone is on the same page and things flow a little easier. That’s why you want to make sure you are getting your message across as clearly as possible.
The ability to communicate in a professional manner can take you a long way in your career and in your personal life. You may not even realize how much communication impacts your day to day, but it does. That’s why it is so important that you learn to communicate at work.

Even the aspect of how you communicate with your colleagues needs careful consideration sometimes. For instance, are you using the right medium to communicate? Meaning, should you send an email, call, or stop by their office? Are you communicating too much information? Or not enough information?
Careers Where Effective Communications Strategies are Vital

• Careers such as Business Management, Organizational Leadership, Healthcare Administration and Management, Human Resource Management, Project Management and Public Management rely heavily on strong communication skills. These are fields where traits such as the ability to build culture, manage policy, resolve conflict, and maximizing employee performance will take you far. All of which involve being a skilled communicator.
• Other more obvious careers requiring skilled communicators are Communications and Marketing. These are fields where it is vital to learn messaging techniques and communication best practices.

• Clear messaging is very important to any organization’s overall success.

• You need to master oral and written communication to be an effective communicator for your organization. And it goes beyond writing and speaking.
Tips for Developing your Communication Skills

• Listen: Communication isn’t all just about you doing the talking. A great deal of communication involves you listening to other people.

• One mistake people make is that when someone else is talking they tend to only be thinking about what they want to say when it’s their turn to talk again, and therefore they are not fully listening to what is being said to them. That’s when key information is missed.
• Pay Attention to What You Are Saying Without Saying It: Here’s another great example as to how communication is not just about talking.
• A great deal of it is not done verbally.
• We communicate so much just with the expression on our faces, the gestures we make, and the way that we stand or sit.
• When interacting with others, always put your best self forward.
• Make direct eye contact, stand tall or sit up straight, and give firm handshakes.
• Know Your Audience: Have you ever taken notice as to what communication method provides you with the best response?
• For instance, does your boss not respond to your emails but gives you instant feedback when you stop by her office?
• Or maybe you have a colleague that takes forever to look at the drafts you email them.
• Have you thought about printing the materials and giving him a hard copy to look at?
• Figure out how your co-workers like to receive information, you’ll find things move along more smoothly.
• Remember The Message Sent Isn’t Always The Message Received: Everyone is their own filter, and not everything comes out how we intend it.
• Many negative situations can arise from making incorrect assumptions, especially in an email or a text message.
• In these situations, we often find ourselves determining a tone of voice when there is none.
• Take a step back and ask for clarification face-to-face if you need to so you don’t end up making something out of nothing.
• Get to the Point: Just as you are probably extremely busy with your daily tasks, so are your colleagues. 
• Sometimes a little more background information is needed; other times, it isn’t. 
• Make sure you are concise and clear in what your expectations are in your messaging and you will see a quick turn around in the results. 
• In addition to being direct, keep tips 3 and 4 in mind with this one. Some people might appreciate a little more small talk or respond better with a change in tone.
• By mastering these five simple communication strategies you can ensure that you are a key communicator in your office.
• By listening fully, watching for non-verbal cues and not making assumptions, you will be able to go a long way to show that you are a reliable, respectable, and indispensable employee.
Seven practices for effective communication

Watson Wyatt 2012

- Helping employees understand the business
- Providing information on organisational performance and financial objectives to employees
- Educating employees about organisational culture and values
- Integrating new employees into the organisation
- Communicating to employees how their actions affect the customer
- Providing individuals with information about the true value of their compensation package
- Asking for rapid feedback from employees about their opinions on the company
Goal of Communication

We communicate for an outcome

Think   Head
Feel    Heart
Do      Hands
Value of Communication

• 57% better return from good communication
• Percentage higher shareholder return in companies with effective communication compared to norm over 5 year period (Watson Wyatt 2006 Study - now Towers Watson)
Types of Communication

- Intrapersonal Communication
- Interpersonal Communication
- Group Communication
- Communication in organisations
- Mass Communication
7 Steps to a communication plan

• State the business needs
• Define the communication objectives
• Set out the measures
• Understand and segment audiences
• Develop key messages
• Develop approaches and tactics
• Define roles and responsibilities
Strategies for Communication

- Non Verbal
- Gain Attention
- Active listening (ears and eyes)
- Warm and calm (pleasant)
- Tone of voice
- Face to face
- Facial expressions and gestures
- Don’t talk above or around the person, or shout
- Never argue and watch the position of your body
Culturally Sensitive Strategies

- Don’t stereotype
- Learn about the culture - ask!
- Respect traditions
- Develop links & partnerships
- Learn some words
- Learn non verbal norms
- Use aids
- Use interpreters
Conclusion

• Good communication is vital if strategic initiatives and plans of the organizations are to be achieved