

Oral Communication

Competency Development Activities

Competency Definition

Makes clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals or groups; listens effectively and clarifies information as needed; facilitates an open exchange of ideas and fosters atmosphere of open communication.

Developmental Activity Levels

All (A)

Applies to all competency levels

Beginner-Basic Knowledge (B)

A person at the Beginner-Basic Knowledge level has limited experience applying the competency. He/she applies general knowledge in common situations but has limited practical experience in applying the competency in a work environment presenting more complex situations.

Mid-level (M)

A person with mid-level proficiency has applied the competency repeatedly and successfully in the performance of his/her job but still has much to learn about the advanced aspects or behaviors associated with the competency. A person at this level can usually apply the competency on his/her own.

High (H)

A person at the High level has extensive knowledge of and experience with this competency and can apply the competency exceptionally well on the job without assistance. At this level one is an expert and has enough experience to teach the competency to others.

Articles, Books, and Websites

A Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler, Stephen R. Covey Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High, McGraw-Hill, June, 2002.

This book offers readers a seven-point strategy for achieving their goals in emotionally, psychologically, or legally charged situations that can arise in their professional and personal lives. It teaches techniques geared toward getting people to lower their defenses, create mutual respect and understanding, increase emotional safety, and encourage freedom of expression.

A Blundel, Richard, Effective Business Communication: Principles and Practice for the Information Age, Prentice Hall Press, January, 1998. ASIN: 0137427018

Coverage includes: how to overcome "noise" to get your message across; effective ways to use

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language and images; the power of persuasion; and special issues surrounding communication in an organization. The book focuses on communication in practice, covering forms and questionnaires, business letters and direct mail, reports, memos, briefings, presentations, meetings, negotiation, advertising, news releases, interviewing, listening skills, and much more.

B Kling, Jim, "[Want to Communicate Better?: Try Role Playing](#)", Harvard Management Communication Letter, March, 2000.

The best communication happens when each person understands the other's perceptions and biases. And a great way to get inside other people's heads is through role playing, a technique borrowed from the theater that allows participants to act out situations from various perspectives. Here are some tips on using role play--with others and by yourself--to become a better communicator.

B/M Arredondo, Lani, Communicating Effectively, McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing, 2000.

This book shows readers how to combine proven techniques and strategies with the latest technologies for successful, results-directed interaction. Included are techniques for shaping positive perceptions, tips for giving instructions and corrective feedback, strategies for making your points in presentations and e-communications, and more.

B/M Griffin, Jack Griffin, Power, Tom (Editor), How to Say It at Work: Putting Yourself Across With Power Words, Phrases, Convincing Body Language and Communication Secrets, Prentice Hall Press, May, 1998.

This book offers practical advice for communicating with supervisors, colleagues, subordinates, clients, vendors, and everyone else you may come in contact with while on the job. Part 1 has a self-test for evaluating your current skills and includes a toolkit for improving your overall communication at work. Part 2 lists specifics for dealing with key individuals and includes helpful (and harmful) words, phrases, body-language strategies and other techniques that can help you be a better communicator at work.

B/M Roebuck, Chris, Effective Communication, AMACOM, April, 1999.

Success at work isn't just about working harder. It means thinking and working smarter. Effective Communication addresses how to: improve your communication skills using a simple, effective program. It includes getting your message across to your boss, your team, and your peers; making written reports; and learning not only how to communicate your ideas to others, but also how to get them to communicate effectively with you.

B/M Gilbert, Matthew, Gallagher, B. J., Communication Miracles at Work: Effective Tools and Tips for Getting the Most from Your Work Relationships, Conari PR, July, 2002.

The author teaches communication skills that can help anyone improve relationships with coworkers, managers, and customers. Readers learn to recognize obstacles to communicating

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well, break bad communication habits, and communicate effectively to achieve workplace harmony.

M Jay, Joelle, [“On communicating well: use these five strategies to enhance your managerial communication skills”](#), HR Magazine, June, 2005.

This article tells how managers can enhance their communication skills with commitment and practice using a few key strategies that will help determine what, when and how to communicate effectively.

H Booher, Dianna, [Communicate With Confidence!](#), McGraw-Hill, July, 1994.

In this book you will find a compilation of 1,042 tips, all with explanations, directed toward better governance with words, both written and oral. Language of all kinds, from appropriate body language to the effective use of silence is included in the 23 sections of this book, ranging from small talk and gender communications to the best ways to criticize, apologize, and negotiate.

H Adler, Ronald B. and Marquardt Elmhorst, Jeanne, [Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Business and the Professions](#) (7th Edition), McGraw-Hill, September, 1998.

This book takes a pragmatic approach that features a strong multicultural focus, a heavy emphasis on effective presentations, and a pedagogical program that is designed to encourage group activities and skill building.

H Kenton, Sherron B., Valentine, Deborah (Contributor), [Crosstalk: Communicating in a Multicultural Workplace](#), Prentice Hall Press; September, 1996.

This book helps define the different aspects of communication as viewed from the perspectives of different ethnic groups such as the European, African, Asian and Latin employees.

H Noonan, Peggy, Collins, Harper, [Simply Speaking: How to Communicate Your Ideas With Style, Substance, and Clarity](#), 1998.

In her book, Noonan offers clear and simple advice on how to communicate effectively with others. She provides lessons she has learned, as well as examples from famous speakers like Lincoln, Churchill, Reagan and more.

M/H Wallington, Patricia, ["You Don't Say: Communication is Critical to Good Leadership, but It's not as Easy as It May Seem"](#), CIO, October, 2000.

It's happened to the best of us. You communicate something and it gets misunderstood or goes unheard by your audience, and you thought it was perfectly clear. This article provides tips for individuals at all levels of an organization on how to be the facilitator of effective communication.

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H Ribbink, Kim, “Seven Ways to Better Communicate in Today's Diverse Workplace”, Harvard Management Communication Letter, November, 2002. HMCL 0211C

Immigrants have always been an important part of the U.S. workforce; they bring with them a wealth of knowledge and expertise that are invaluable. The challenge is to prevent miscommunication problems from occurring between managers and this very diverse group of employees. This article will show you seven steps to take to meet this challenge.

Activities

A Take part in a role playing scenario where good listening skills are critical. Verbalize what you heard your colleague say and compare what you heard with what they were trying to say. Did you get their message? If not, what did you miss out on? Discuss what you might do better in the future to improve your listening skills.

B Ask for the responsibility of presenting a new work process or procedure to co-workers.

B/M Volunteer to make an oral presentation on an emerging topic to leaders or peer groups in your organization.

M Volunteer to design and deliver a presentation to your co-workers on a work-related subject or topic for which you have expertise.

M/H Arrange with a coworker ahead of your next oral presentation to provide you with constructive feedback immediately following the presentation.

M/H Seek opportunities to interact and communicate with diverse audiences (e.g., executive, technical, internal, external).

H Be a spokesperson for your organization to stakeholders and/or the public.

H Establish a routine of visiting and talking with people at all levels of your organization. Try informal walk-about, visits/

> lunch in the break room, monthly breakfast meetings in different locations, or "town meetings" for employees.

H Observe and learn from the speeches and presentations made by your organization's leaders or experienced peers.

H Observe effective presenters in your organization, in public forums, and on television. Analyze the practices and behaviors that make them effective and identify how to incorporate them into your own presentations.

H Practice your oral communication skills by volunteering to speak in front of groups. Opportunities in your community can be good practice. Join a public speaking club such as

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Toastmasters.

H When preparing for significant speeches and presentations, take time to practice your delivery beforehand, preferably in front of another person(s) who can provide feedback. If possible, practice before a video camera and ask for someone to view it with you and give you feedback. Create an outline which includes your overall goal and the key points you wish to get across.

Coaching Suggestions for Managers

M Attend meetings in which you communicate to a variety of people. Debrief the meeting with them afterwards, focusing on what you wanted to communicate to each person, what your strategy was, what you actually did and said, and what the results were.

M Have your team members consider the technical knowledge of your customers (e.g., airline passengers). Encourage them to try not to use technical jargon with a less technical audience. Be sensitive and flexible in the way that you deliver the message.

H Ask staff members to assess the effectiveness of oral communication methods that they and others in their work group use (e.g., voice mail, speeches, hallway conversations). Have them identify changes that will improve the overall impact of communication within their group.

H Ask staff members to discuss with their team the situations in which communication gaps occur and the potential problems which they create. Have them focus on identifying what would help prevent or close these communication gaps. Encourage them to develop a set of communication principles or ground rules with their team to maximize the effectiveness of their communications with each other.

H Ask staff members to think about one of their communication strengths and to reflect on how they developed it. Did a class, practice, feedback or a good role model help them to learn? Ask them to share their lessons learned with others that are seeking development in that particular area.

H Assign an employee the task of having to make a formal presentation. Coach the person during preparation and dry-run rehearsals of the presentation to ensure success. You can also debrief him/her after the presentation to discuss what went well and what needed improvement. Make sure you provide concrete feedback when addressing the content and delivery of the information.

H Identify a colleague that you or others feel could use improvement in communications. Offer to watch that person conduct dry runs of presentations. Give them feedback on how they could clarify, simplify, or otherwise communicate their messages more effectively. Also, review drafts of written reports, documents, etc. Encourage them to both use your suggestions and try to find their own style.

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