

The High Cost of Poor Communication:



How to Improve Productivity and Empower Employees through Effective Communication

Many employers believe the ability to communicate effectively is an essential job skill, even going so far as listing it in their job requirements. Recent surveys, however, reveal that communication is still an unresolved issue for many companies. SIS International Research discovered that 70% of small to mid-size businesses claim that ineffective communication is their primary problem. Communication issues are not just annoying; they are also costly. A business with 100 employees spends an average downtime of 17 hours a week clarifying communication. This translates to an annual cost of \$ 528,443. It is not possible to underestimate the importance of effective communication skills, especially at the managerial level.

Formal communication training is often overlooked when training new managers. Seventy-one percent of employees feel that their managers do not spend enough time explaining goals and plans. On the other hand, many leaders avoid necessary communication because they fear negative results. For example, it was recently discovered that 38% of performance feedback actually hinders employee performance. This statistic could easily change if companies would invest in basic communication skills training for their managers. The principles taught and materials presented by 360Solutions help leaders understand and remove communication barriers.



Personal Barriers

1. How managers feel about the subject matter, employees and themselves affects the accuracy of their messages. Be aware of any personal frustration and address the issues beforehand.
2. Close-minded leaders who cut off feedback will damage relationships and messages. Avoid shutting out employee feedback.
3. Speaking in anger fosters negative feelings in the audience. It is important to put feelings aside in order to communicate effectively.
4. Hidden agendas and preoccupation with other issues diminish the presentation of information. Speak clearly and with purpose.
5. Negative body language and semantics can create misunderstandings and barriers. Be aware of body language and avoid highly charged words.

Environmental Barriers

1. Interruptions can distort any message. It is important to acknowledge an interruption and repeat what was last said.
2. Hot buttons can be words, issues, situations and personality differences. The use of hot buttons will cause people to prejudge or distort a message. It is important to identify and control personal hot buttons.

Eliminating these communication barriers allows managers to give effective feedback.

Feedback connects people and their behavior to the world around them. It gives everyone the chance to realize how their behavior influences the success of their organization. Effective feedback will reinforce positive behavior and correct negative behavior. The ability to give and receive feedback is a must for leaders who wish to have honest and direct relationships with employees.





The Characteristics of Effective Feedback

Effective feedback focuses on description and not on judgment: All critiques should be constructive.

Feedback should focus on behavior rather than personality: Refer to specific actions instead of personal perceptions.

One should always consider the needs of their listener: Feedback should be helpful and not vindictive.

Effective feedback is directed toward issues over which the recipient has control: Do not address personal shortcomings or physical flaws.

Feedback should be solicited rather than imposed: Ask before giving feedback this usually makes it easier to accept.

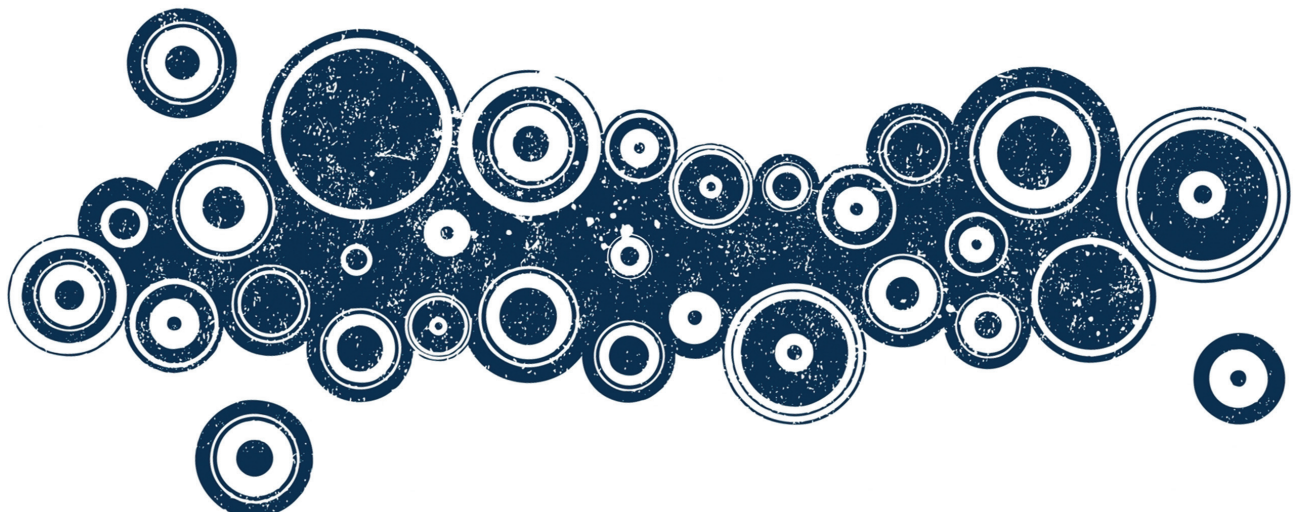
Effective feedback involves the sharing of ideas and information: Let others decide how to implement personal changes.

Effective feedback is well timed: Address any problems as early as possible.

One should consider the amount of information the receiver can actually use: Do not overload people with information.

Be concerned with what and how things are said and done.

Concentrate with what is seen and not with what is inferred.



Feedback is essential for personal and professional growth. The manner in which a leader provides feedback is crucial. Listening is the best way to accomplish this.

Reflection and paraphrasing help facilitate feedback and prevent miscommunications. Listening carefully, reflecting back to the speaker and paraphrasing what was said, tells them that you understand the message. This should be done without judgment, inference or persuasion. Simply echoing the words of another prevents misunderstandings before they start. It is an easy yet effective tool for providing feedback.

Poor communication is frustrating on many levels. The financial costs caused by ineffective communication are high but easily avoided. Both parties in feedback situations need to be on the same page. The in-depth training provided in 360Solutions' Effective Communication course equips leaders to inspire employees to action. By investing in the communication skills of managers, companies will not only increase productivity and decrease costs. They will also create a positive work environment, which benefits everybody.



Works Consulted

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