Communication at work

Communication is an important part of our daily life. We use communication to let other people know our thoughts and feelings and to convey messages. To have a co-operative, positive working environment, communication must be effective and efficient.

People use many different ways to communicate with each other in the workplace.

It is important to understand:

1. How daily work is organised within the workplace
2. How communication happens within the workplace
3. How you can communicate effectively in your workplace

Activity 1

1. What do the following words mean to you?
   
a. Thoughts
   b. Feelings
   c. Messages
   d. Co-operative
   e. Environment
   f. Effective
   g. Efficient
2. What does the word communication mean to you?

Activity 2
1. Why is communication important at work?

2. How are things communicated to you at your workplace?

3. How do you communicate information at your workplace?

4. What problems do you have with communicating information?
Activity 3

On page 4 you will find a copy of the 'Guest Registration Form'.

Read through the form and think about the following questions:

1. Is it easy to understand?

2. Who might have difficulties with understanding it?

3. Does the guest have to do much writing?

4. What information do they have to give?

5. Read the fine print do you think that a guest would be able to understand it? Why/Why not?

6. With your partner can you re write the fine print in simple English

Assessment task 1:

Your teacher will observe you while you are assisting a guest filling in the Guest Registration Form.
Guest Registration Form

Sheraton Towers
Southgate
Melbourne

Mrs. □ Mr. □ Ms □ Other ______________

Surname: _________________ First name: __________ Initial ________

Home address: ___________________________________________________________

City: ________________ Country: __________ Post code: __________

Company: ______________________________ Home phone no: __________

Work phone no: __________

SPG _________________ or Frequent flyer no: __________

My account will be settled by:

☐ American Express  ☐ VISA  ☐ T/A Voucher  ☐ Other (specify)
☐ Bank card  ☐ Diners  ☐ JCB
☐ Master card  ☐ Cash  ☐ Traveler's Cheque

Signature _____________________________________

To the above Hotel I acknowledge that I am jointly and severally liable with the foregoing person, company or association (and if more than one of all of them) for payment of the costs and charges payable or incurred in connection with all services provided by you under this registration and I hereby authorise your Hotel to debit any outstanding charges to my credit card. Money, Jewels and other valuables must be placed in a Hotel safety deposit box; otherwise the management will not be responsible for any loss.

I authorise the Sheraton to use this information for any purpose associated with the operation or marketing of their hotels or operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account no</th>
<th>Arrival Date</th>
<th>Arrival Time</th>
<th>Departure Date</th>
<th>Departure Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily rate</td>
<td>Number of guests</td>
<td>Advance Deposit</td>
<td>Room Type</td>
<td>Room Type</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Consequences of poor communication

1. Time may be lost as instructions may be misunderstood and jobs may have to be repeated

2. Frustration may develop, as people are not sure of what to do or how to do a task

3. Product may be wasted if it is not handled correctly

4. People may feel left out if communication is not open and effective

5. Messages may be misinterpreted or misunderstood causing bad feelings

6. People’s safety may be at risk.

Activity 4

1. Can you think of 6 situations of poor communication at work?
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________

2. How could these situations be avoided?
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   _______________________________________________________
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   _______________________________________________________
Case Study - The House Keeper

Julie works at the Sheraton Towers in Melbourne. At the Sheraton she works in the Housekeeping department.

Her role within the department is to train all new staff in general housekeeping skills.

Today she is training a new staff member Anna, on how to clean and maintain the mini bar in guestrooms.

Anna who has just recently arrived from Fiji finds that Julie’s Australian accent is quite difficult to understand.

She has asked Julie to repeat her instructions for cleaning and restocking the mini bar, and she is still unable to understand her. So she decides to complete the task her way before moving on to another room where she repeats the same task.

After Anna has completed cleaning and restocking all the mini bars that she was assigned, Julie checks to see that the tasks were completed to job specification.

Julie quickly discovers that Anna has not completed the task as she was instructed to. She wonders how this could happen when she has instructed Anna over and over again.

As Anna is about to go home Julie catches up with her and asks Anna to redo the mini bars. Anna can’t understand why Julie wants her to do this again, when the afternoon housekeeping staff is now on duty.

Anna tells Julie that she has to go home now, and is unable to stay back tonight. Julie can’t believe what she’s hearing and tells Anna that she must finish her job before she goes home, and if she doesn’t do this, then she will report her to the House Keeping Manager and Human Resource Manager.
1. Why has communication failed here?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

1. How can communication be improved between Anna and Julie?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. What methods should Julie have used to check for understanding?

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________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. Consider a situation in which you have experienced similar poor communication. What happened? Write down your experiences here and we will discuss your experience in the training session.

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________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Barriers to effective communication

Many things may interfere with or block communication. These might include people using different languages, cultural differences interfering with understanding, people experiencing physical discomfort and therefore not concentrating or people having different levels of understanding about the requirements of a job. Noise levels can also impede hearing and concentration that could act as a barrier to communication. Additionally, if people do not have a common language, communication can be impaired.

Activity 5

1. What do the following mean to you?
   a. Interfere
   b. Cultural differences
   c. Physical discomfort

2. List 6 Barriers to Communication.

3. In the Case Study – the House Keeper, what other things can you think of that may have added to Julie and Anna’s communication problems.

4. Can you think of how to resolve their communication problem?
Communication within Organisations

All workplaces are organised differently. The way communication happens within workplace is influenced by the structure of the organisation.

Example of an Organisational Chart

Activity 6

1. What does the term 'modes of communication' mean? Write your responses below.
2. What do you think are the most common 'modes of communication' used by the following people? For example memos, faxes, face to face, telephone and e-mail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication within an Organisation</th>
<th>Modes of communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource Manager and Training Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Manager and House keeping associate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry Supervisor and Supervisor Stewarding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate and Associate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House-keeping Manager and Front of House Supervisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Use the chart below to identify the people you communicate with on a daily basis in the workplace - Write their names and job titles.

[Blank boxes for names and job titles]
4. Show a class mate your diagram and tell your classmates about:
   a) a situation where communication with one of the people you wrote above has been good. Explain why?

   b) a situation where communications with one of these has been poor. Explain why.

   Discuss with each other what were the key factors that contributed to the good and bad communication. Then report to the class.

Make notes as required:

Assessment Task 2

1. How well do you know your workplace?
   Fill in the names of the people under their job titles in the organisational chart on the following page.
2. Getting to know people in your workplace.

From the Organisational Chart of your workplace, you are now required to interview one of the people within your workplace and ask them the following questions.

1. What is your full name?

2. How many years have you lived in Australia?

3. What training do you have in hospitality?

4. Where did you do the training?

5. What are your hobbies?

6. How long have you worked at The Sheraton?

7. What is your job at The Sheraton?

8. Do you enjoy working at The Sheraton? Why?

9. How many people work in your area/section?

10. Who do you communicate with everyday?

11. What communication issues are you faced with when dealing with the general public or with people you work with?
Non Verbal Communication (body language)

When people use spoken languages to communicate, they do not just listen to what is said in order to understand the message. They also look at the person who is speaking to see what their body is doing, and listen to the way they are saying the words to understand their full message.

**Activity 7**

Look at the following Pie Graph.

Studies have been done that show us the percentage of understanding that is gained from the spoken word. It is considerably less than the meaning that people gain from listening to a person’s tone of voice and looking at their non-verbal communication.

- 7% Spoken words
- 38% Tone of voice
- 55% Non Verbal
1. Does the chart surprise you? Why/Why not?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. What does the word gesture mean?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. Make a list of up to 5 gestures and give meanings.

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________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

4. Are there any gestures that are culturally offensive for you? If so what are they? Why are they offensive? Share them with the rest of the group.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
What is Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication refers to the messages we give and receive through body language and facial expressions. Non-verbal messages often convey more meaning than the spoken word as we saw illustrated on the pie chart on page 14.

Voice

The Tone of voice used can tell us a lot about another person. Words can mean many different things, depending on the way they are said. We are able to tell if a person is angry, happy or nervous by their tone of voice.

Facial expressions

Our faces can show many of our feelings. For example, a frown or a smile shows a very clear message depending on how and when it is used.

Gestures

The gestures that people use also convey meanings, for example:

- waving means saying hello or goodbye,
- making a fist means you're angry
- thumbs up means OK
- and pointing means showing something

These are some simple gestures that are not always understood and misunderstandings do occur because of these gestures. It is important to understand that gestures mean different things in different cultures. Sometimes gestures can be rude in one culture, but okay in another. In Australia, most people think pointing is a little bit rude and pointing at a person is very rude.

Posture

The way that we stand or sit gives information about how we are feeling. A person sitting slumped in a chair with arms firmly crossed and head turned away can give a negative message. This may be a barrier to communication.
The following two examples of Non-verbal communication are culturally specific.

Eye contact

Maintaining appropriate eye contact when speaking with others helps communication. Avoiding eye contact may make others think that you do not want to communicate, or that you may be telling a lie. Staring or excessive eye contact may scare people and make them feel uncomfortable. Eye contact for several seconds is good. It shows interest without being too scary.

Personal space

Most people feel uncomfortable when somebody stands or sits either too close or too far away from them. When this situation happens, people may feel uncomfortable and it can make communication difficult.

Activity 8

1. Why is maintaining positive body language important while working with customers and colleagues?

2. Why do you think that 'eye contact' and 'personal space' are culturally specific? Give examples.
Assessment task 3

You are required to serve a guest who is ordering from the menu.
While you are doing this task your trainer will be observing your performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menu - The Restaurant</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Starters</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyster Soup, (crispy Queensland prawns and red pepper coulis)</td>
<td>$14.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barossa Smoked Chicken Terrine, (asparagus salad, pinot noir dressing)</td>
<td>$17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravioli of Pumpkin, Fresh Ginger and Mascapone, (roma tomato sauce)</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Caesar Salad, (shaven Parmesan, freshly baked garlic croutons)</td>
<td>$16.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumpkin Soup</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguini, (sauced with napolitaine, bolognaise or carbonara)</td>
<td>$13.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia Chicken Curry, (hand-blended &amp; roasted spices, steamed rice &amp; rou)</td>
<td>$23.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Beef or Chicken Fillet Burger, (bacon, matured cheddar, onion, fried egg &amp; Beetroot)</td>
<td>$19.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Main Courses</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roast Loin of Lamb, (asparagus mousse, wrapped in prosciutto, sweet mashed potato, sage jus)</td>
<td>$28.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A special &quot;Salad Nicoise&quot;, (grilled tuna steak, poached quail eggs, truffle potato, lemon olive oil dressing)</td>
<td>$27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan-fried Salmon, (candied ginger, hokkien noodles, sweet Asian sauce)</td>
<td>$29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan-fried Denver Venison, (sauteed honey parsnip, crispy bacon, vanilla infusion, chocolate jus)</td>
<td>$35.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable Strudel, (creamy wild mushroom risotto)</td>
<td>$21.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Angus Sirloin, (home style hand cut fried, chorion sauce)</td>
<td>$36.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marinated Barbecue Chicken Breast, (thick baton chips, herb salad, lime cream fraiche, pesto dressing)</td>
<td>$26.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gippsland Rack of Lamb, (pomery mashed potato, caramelised garlic &amp; shallots)</td>
<td>$27.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Desserts</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine Apple Tart, (green apple sorbet, caramel red wine sauce)</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Sticky Date and Toffee Pudding, (butterscotch sauce, double cream)</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Cappuccino Tiramisu Cup, (bitter chocolate sauce)</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Farmhouse Cheese, (antipasto, quince chutney)</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palette of Ice-cream and Sorbet, (fresh coulis)</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Berries Cheesecake, (lime syrup, crispy wafer)</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. What part of the menu could be difficult to understand? Give examples.

2. Did the guest have any problems reading the menu? Explain.

3. How did you overcome these difficulties? Explain.

4. Explain what your reaction was when you first read the menu. Did you know all the dishes? How did you find out about them? How did you learn the menu? Then share this with the rest of your training group.
Case Study – The Concierge

Damien Watson works as the Concierge at the Sheraton Hotel. Each day he greets guests, answers their queries, and arranges tours, transport and other activities for the guests while they are staying at the hotel.

Today Damien has come to work with a splitting headache. He knows that he should have stayed at home but he has used up all of his sick leave days. He was hoping that today would be a quiet day because he was not in the mood to deal with too many queries.

As he was resting his head on the front desk while sitting down, Lisa Smart a guest at the hotel came to his desk. She had heard all about the Melbourne Flower Show and wanted to know how to get there. After breakfast she went up to the Concierge’s desk and asked Damien for his assistance.

Damien was not very attentive to Lisa’s request for assistance. His head was pounding away and he wished she would go away. His face showed his annoyance as he gave her a brochure on Melbourne and a map of the city, without uttering a single word.

When Lisa asked him what tram to catch he pointed to a MET timetable. Lisa was very annoyed by Damien’s lack of assistance and told him so, as she moved behind the desk to confront him.

During Lisa’s outburst Damien picked up ringing telephone and turned his back on her, blocking her entry by placing his chair in front of her.

Lisa couldn’t believe Damien’s attitude and told him that she would take this matter up further with management.
1. Describe Damien’s non-verbal communication (tone of voice, gestures, posture, eye contact, appearance, and use of personal space).

2. What parts of the Case Study show us examples of poor communication?

3. How could this situation be rectified?

4. Share your responses with the rest of your training group.
Active listening and questioning – Two Way Conversation

Two-way conversations can only happen effectively when two people listen to each other and show signs that they understand each other's message.

Good two-way communication happens when feedback is given for example: nodding, smiling, shaking your head, asking questions maintaining eye contact, turntaking etc.

Activity 9

Communication Activity - Pair work

Student A

You are to help your partner draw the following illustration by telling him or her what to draw and where to draw it. You can not look at your partner's paper.
Communication Activity - Pair work

Student B

Your partner has an illustration and he/she will you how to draw it. You are allowed to ask him/her questions, but you mustn’t look at your partner’s drawing.
With your partner you are to discuss and take down notes concerning the following items:

1. The problems you encountered while giving instructions

   

2. How you checked for understanding?

   

3. Go back to the case study - The Concierge, did Damien and Lisa have an effective two-way conversation? Why/Why not, please explain your answer.

   

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