



COMMUNICATION

Tool 3: Exploring Diverse Types of
Communication

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Delivery and Approaches to Communications

2 Communication Examples

3 Nonverbal Communication Delivery

4 References

DELIVERY AND APPROACHES TO COMMUNICATIONS

Delivery and Approaches to Communications

Communication is an interactive, two-way process that includes both understanding and being understood. Communication involves a range of communication methods in face-to-face interactions, over the telephone, online and via reading and writing.

Communication methods include speech, gestures, body language, writing, drawing, pictures, symbol and letter boards, speech-generating devices, as well as human services such as ASL/LSQ/ISL interpreting, captioning in real time, as well as informal and formal communication assistance. [1]

There are two types of communication:

- Verbal communication: verbal communication is spoken word
- Nonverbal communication: nonverbal communication provides the context to the verbal component

Communication is an integral part of facilitating accessibility and inclusion in the workplace. Failing to ensure all forms of workplace communication are accessible and inclusive results in barriers to workplace participation for people with disabilities.

“It’s not always what you say, but how you say it”



Volume & Tone



Talking Speed



Plain Language



DELIVERY AND APPROACHES TO COMMUNICATIONS

	Tone of Voice	Use of Volume
Description	Tone of voice is all about the attitude behind what you are saying. Your voice does not change, but the way you speak to someone does. [2]	Volume is the auditory power of your voice. It refers to the degree of loudness or softness of your voice when communicating, which could affect perceptions of intended meaning. Volume can emphasize a particular word or sentence and be used to manipulate or control the conversation.
Example	The tone of voice provides valuable information about a speaker's mood or intent. Being mindful of tone can be especially important when interacting with employees with disabilities, such as those with Autism. For example, a person with living with Autism might find it challenging in interpreting jokes, sarcastic tones, and any indirect meaning conveyed through tone instead of direct wording.	Though an employee who is blind may hear your voice many times a day, to avoid confusion, you should identify yourself when speaking to them, especially in group settings. For example, "Hi Alicia, its Samuel from accounting – do you have that invoice from our new vendor?" There is no need to speak louder than normal, unless the employee is hard of hearing, or they ask you to repeat yourself.
What to Do	- The tone of voice and the words an employer uses provide valuable information. But how do you accomplish this? [2] - Use positive language – eliminate words and phrases like "we can't" and "you need to" and replace with "I can" and "we will." - Remember you are talking to another human being. Engage with compassion and interest. - Keep it casual and friendly but assess each conversation separately.	- When trying to figure out the appropriate volume for any given conversation, consider: [2] - Is this information confidential? - If yes, take the conversation somewhere private, and speak directly to the employee to best accommodate their preference of communication - Maintain your volume regardless of emotional context - Keep eye contact



DELIVERY AND APPROACHES TO COMMUNICATIONS

Talking Speed [2]

Volume and tone are integral pieces of communication delivery, but pace plays an essential role as well. For instance, when an employer speaks too rapidly, some employees may find their speech hard to follow. Additionally, employees who require ASL interpreters or Video Relay Services communicate through third-party representatives. These third-party interpretation services need sufficient time to listen, translate, and relay or communicate the content to the employee with a disability in such a way that the individual can keep pace with the conversation. Rapid speech can limit comprehension and productivity, and thus lead to more questions.

To help adjust the pace of communication:

- Take a deep breath, give a moment to re-evaluate the pace and adjust accordingly.
- Ask! Collaborate with your employees and other parties, such as interpreters, if you are going too quickly or slowly.
- Be mindful of your nonverbal cues, as employees with cognitive disabilities may take longer to understand context of conversations.
- Paying attention to the enunciation of each word is great way to adjust pace.
- Follow punctuation cues, such as by pausing at the end of sentences.

Speaking Using Plain Language

- Use action verbs instead of nouns (i.e., “I authorized the transfer yesterday” vs. “The manager decided to authorize the transfer yesterday.”)
- Choose simple and familiar words. As there are no parameters to plain language, consult with HR to create your audience-specific plain language guide.
- Use simple sentences
- Limit each paragraph to one idea, and keep it short
- Minimize the amount of information the employee must process at all once
- Use direct statements
- Use an active voice and positive form
- Explain references to any legal jargon or legislation



NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION DELIVERY

Nonverbal Communication Delivery: [3]

Nonverbal cues are considered more important than verbal communication because they help express what the speaker truly means. Nonverbal communication includes:



Facial Expressions

Include smiles, frowns, wrinkled foreheads and eye rolls to help read other's expressions and interpretations



Speaking Voice

Directly relays information that is coming across



Gestures

Involve obvious and subtle physical movements to convey information



Posture

Refers to body position to signify energy, mood and level of attentiveness



Eye Movement

A consideration of engagement, focus and respect. Very important in an interview setting



Body Language

A combination of all non-verbal cues



NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION DELIVERY

When interpreting body language and environmental cues, do not assume awkwardness and/or facial expressions indicate aloofness or rudeness. Allow employees with disabilities to write their responses before verbally presenting. To help with interpretation, keep in mind:

- To stand or sit in front the speaker to help understand their cues and body language
- Refrain from pointing or directing at physical signs and symptoms of disability
- Always be flexible, patient, and open-minded and provide support assistance when asked
- Move to quieter areas without distractions, and well-lit rooms to help communication to flow smoother

“End the Awkward”

Do you feel like you do not know how to interact with people with disabilities? This amusing and funny disability awareness video from the District of Columbia’s Office of Disability Rights shows you how. <https://www.youtube.com/embed/Gv1aDEFIXq8?feature=oembed>

How to use nonverbal communication in the workplace?

You are certainly using nonverbal communication in all your interpersonal interactions. However, learning how to specifically utilize nonverbal communication with your employees can have a significant impact on the efficacy of your professional communication. The following page highlights some steps to using nonverbal communication in the workplace:



NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION DELIVERY

Be Self Aware	Be Empathetic	Be Intentional
Be self-aware of the messages you send. It is likely that you already have certain nonverbal habits that you use every day. Being aware of your own communication can also help you learn to interpret others.	In order to accurately interpret your employee's signals, you may need to consider the context and empathize accordingly.	If you are intentional of your own automatic physical reactions and responses, you can adjust them to convey messages more accurately and efficiently. This includes being mindful of reflexive reactions and bringing a level of awareness to manage and improve communication
Eg. When speaking to employees who are Deaf or hard of hearing, it can be easy to communicate to the interpreter. Be aware that your eye movement and posture demonstrates where you are paying attention to.	Eg. By taking the time to listen and learn from your employees who may be struggling with mental health, you communicate in a profound way what your organizational culture stands for and are present to support your employees.	Eg. An employee who uses a screen reader may not be able to access all communication methods. Ensure all the right materials are available in advance in appropriate, accessible means.

REFERENCES

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