



Communication

As a leader, communication skills are vital to all facets of your work. Whether you are facilitating a meeting, attending a meeting, working one-on-one with peers and administrators, or even e-mailing a list-serve, effective communication is of utmost importance. Here you will find information on understanding and controlling your non-verbal cues, the importance of asking questions in the communication process, tips on listening skills and constructive criticism, and also effective ways to communicate electronically. While many other components factor into effective communication, this will hopefully be a good start to understanding how to maximize your success as a communicator!

Non-Verbal Communication Exercise

Most of our communication occurs non-verbally. In face-to-face situations more than 50 percent of the message conveyed comes through various forms of non-verbal communication. Some of these include: gestures, eye contact, body positions and movements, posture, facial expressions, proximity, and even energy level. As a leader, it is crucial that you are aware of how you are portraying your feelings through these non-verbal behaviors so as not to offend, disrespect, or favor anyone in the group. It is also vital to be able to read the non-verbal behavior of other people in your group so you can be as aware of the climate in the group as possible. This activity will help you to discover and pay attention to how you naturally express certain emotions. Keep this in mind next time you are in a meeting or group conversation!

Take turns acting out the emotions listed below with peers or organization members. Use only non-verbal communication and allow the other people present to guess what emotion you are trying to convey. Feel free to add other emotions to the list that you

Openness	Indecision	Defensiveness
Readiness	Fear	Hesitancy
Agreement	Nervousness	Love
Frustration	Annoyance	Relief
Impatience	Happiness	Arrogance
Sadness	Grief	Confusion
Boredom	Anger	Fatigue

Questions to Ponder....

Using questions is a great way to promote openness, productivity, and creativity in both group meetings and one-on-one discussions. They provide effective means to begin productive discussions, clarify understanding, and also to come to closure. Using open-ended questions, those that cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" or by supplying a fact, allows facilitators to draw out a variety of opinions and stimulates further conversation and dialogue.

Below are some examples of open-ended questions that will help you do just this.

- What is your reaction to that?
- How can this process be improved?
- What alternatives do we have?
- What suggestions do you have for...?
- How does that relate to our goal/mission of...?
- What do others in the group think?
- What has worked well in the past?
- Tell me more about....

"Asking the right questions takes as much skill as giving the right answers."



--Robert Half

Quick Tips

For Effective Communication

Listening and Critiquing...

- Listen actively and intently
- Ask questions
- Give constructive feedback
 - ◊ Don't express an opinion as a fact
 - ◊ Explain your reasons
 - ◊ Restate the original idea
 - ◊ Compliment another's idea
 - ◊ Respond, don't react
 - ◊ Don't interrupt
 - ◊ Critique the idea, not the person
 - ◊ Be courteous
 - ◊ Avoid jargon
- Have fun - not everything needs to be serious.

Presenting Ideas...

- Be aware of your Body Language
- Use humor that is project related
- Have patience!

Online Communication...

- Don't write when you're angry
- Re-read your message before sending.
- Use Emoticons and/or emotion words so that your tone is easily conveyed and understood.
- Establish a time limit for replies so that everyone is on the same schedule.
- Recognize that in some situations, like serious disagreements, it may simply be easier to talk in person or on the phone. Not all communication can happen effectively through e-mail or instant-messaging.
- Make sure all group members are available for electronic communication so that each person is receiving the same information.
- Update contact information of group members regularly to ensure easy communication.

Pieces of Leadership
brochures are available on
the following topics:

Budgeting
Communication
Conflict Resolution
Delegation
Facilitation
Goal Setting
Group Dynamics
Ice Breakers/Team Builders
Mission Statements
Motivation
Officer Transition
Peer Supervision
Program Planning
Qualities of a Good Leader
Running a Good Meeting
Stress Management
Time Management
Wellness

*The information provided in this brochure
was adapted from:*

Deming, Vasudha. "The Big Book of
Leadership Games." 2004.
Rees, Fran. "25 Activities for Developing
Team Leaders." 2005.
Penn State, Teaching and Learning Center

For more information on the topics
listed above or to access the
resources in our
Leadership Library,
please visit the

**Office of Student Activities and
Leadership Development**

Located on the
First Floor of the
Usdan University Center
860-685-2460
or check out our website at
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Tips for the Wesleyan Leader

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*Building your Leadership
one piece at a time...*