Communication Skills for Success

Student Success Workshop
Sauk Valley Community College
Goals of Communication

- To inform – you are providing information for use in decision making
- To persuade – to reinforce or change a belief about a topic
- To build relationships – some messages that you send may have the goal of building good will between you and the other person.
Barriers to Communication

- One person has no interest in the conversation.
- You are not able to participate in the discussion due to lack of knowledge on the subject.
- Jumping to conclusions without waiting for the whole message.
- Fear of offending the other person by expressing your opinions.
- You not feel comfortable sharing your feelings with the other person.
Barriers to Communication

- Messages do not come across to the listener in the way you intended.
- Not listening to the other person by allowing thoughts to wander, listening only to what you have to, filtering out what is not important to you, planning a response before the other person has finished speaking.
- Spending more time arguing or debating along with put-downs and sarcasm.
Ways to Improve Communication

- Encourage feedback - Listen to what others have to say, good or bad
- Listen - Make an effort to listen to what the other person is saying
- Reduce misunderstandings - Meanings are not in words, but in people – consider the message in relation to its source. Different words mean different things to people. Keep this in mind when communicating with others.
Ways to Improve Communication

Understanding is the KEY to communication.

Understanding requires active listening.
Active Listening Skills

- Concentrate on what is being said, not the delivery of the message.
- Be open to whatever is being said, without judgment - don't form an opinion, just listen.
- Restate what has been said helps the speaker know that you understand.
- Summarize the important messages so that you and the speaker recognize what was important during the conversation.
Active Listening Skills

- Avoiding distractions that pull your attention away from the speaker.

- Make sure you understand what the speaker means:
  - I think what you said was …,
  - What I hear you saying is …,
  - What did you mean when you said/talked about …,
  - Are you saying …
Increase Understanding

Be Specific

- Useful – “I think it is good because …”
- Not useful – “That is good.”

Focus on Behavior NOT the Person

- Useful – “I think this report needs to focus more on …”
- Not useful – “You really have done a poor job.”

Focus on the Timeliness of the Feedback

- Only give feedback when the person is receptive to hearing it, or is seeking feedback.
Increase Understanding

Share Information / Experience

- Share what, not only why something could have been done differently.

Do Not Overload

- Too much information, especially negative, can be overwhelming

Check that the Person Does Understand

- Ask…”What did you understand from what was said?”

Remember, Feedback is Given to Help, not Hurt

- Balance positive to negative feedback by giving 2 positive comments for 1 negative comment
Increase Understanding

Open and Closed Questions - In order to gain more information, ask questions that require more than a one word answer.

- A closed question allows a single word answer, for example YES, NO or OK
- An open question keeps the communication going.

Open and Closed Questions - Examples:

Closed Question - Did you enjoy the dinner?

Open Question - What did you enjoy about the meal?

Closed Questions – Are you feeling okay?

Open Questions - You seem a bit tired, what’s up?
Thank you for attending!

Information retrieved from:

- *Improving Your Interpersonal Skills, Effective Communication - The Art, Science, and Practice*
- [http://online.nmit.vic.edu.au/police/comms/ohs/1_15.htm](http://online.nmit.vic.edu.au/police/comms/ohs/1_15.htm)
- [http://matrix.scranton.edu/humanresources/communication-styles-handout-leadership.pdf](http://matrix.scranton.edu/humanresources/communication-styles-handout-leadership.pdf)