



Respectful Communication

Respectful communication is vital for a healthy work environment. Creating a culture that fosters good, effective, and respectful communication in the workplace can improve productivity, teamwork, and employee engagement. Respectful communication is the responsibility of everyone, at all levels, in all interactions.

Frame Your Communication Positively

When communicating, be honest, open and polite. Positively framing your message can have a powerful impact on the conversation, leaving the other person feeling good at the end of it.

For example, directing a person to stop doing something is focusing on the negative. Requesting them to do an alternative behaviour promotes positivity and respect. Statements such as 'don't leave your dirty dishes in the common area' can be reframed to 'please clear the common area and return dirty dishes to the kitchen'.

Positive and respectful communication reinforces the value of individual abilities, qualities and achievements. Encouraging praise in the workplace and boosting motivation can lead to continuous improvement in teams and individuals.

Ideas Can Improve Businesses

Encouraging individuals to share ideas and opinions can lead to positive change in work environments.

Creating a respectful dialogue can encourage others to express their opinions and ideas, which can bring about new initiatives and create an environment where employees feel respected and valued. However, not all opinions and ideas are aligned. Creating a respectful dialogue is when varying opinions are acknowledged and valued, to work collaboratively.

Speak the Truth, Fairly

Respectful communication is built on honesty and fairness. Adopting a respectful communication approach in interactions will allow all parties to contribute proportionally, creating a dialogue built on fairness.

Communication amongst colleagues includes social dialogue which creates a healthy team cohesion but could also create a culture where gossiping is rife. Gossiping or sharing information without facts may lead to a breakdown in team cohesion and a lack of trust. When sharing information or knowledge, ensure you are confident you are speaking the truth.

Active listening

Active listening is a powerful tool for ensuring respectful communication. Active listening means being engaged in the dialogue and setting aside distractions in our thoughts and environment. While many people attempt to multitask and listen to verbal information, it is impossible to achieve.

Receiving information from others in a respectful way requires stopping what you are doing to give the other person your full attention, not speaking over or interrupting, and using words to encourage the speaker to continue.

Body Language & Non-Verbal Cues

When communicating with others, they receive the information by more than just listening to what you are saying. Non-verbal cues play a key role in effectively conveying your message across and can include aspects such as demeanour, eye contact, open posture, facial expressions, head nodding, smiling, and tone.

To communicate effectively, sit at the individual's level, maintain eye contact, and present an expression that shows you are engaged and actively listening. Movements such as arm crossing, fidgeting, or directing your body away from the individual should be avoided as this can come across as disinterest.

It is also important to be mindful of maintaining appropriate personal space. Communicating in proximity that is too close may be perceived as intimidating or dominant, whilst increased distance shows a lack of engagement and participation.

Inclusive Language

To be respectful means to show courtesy and consideration for others and not to discriminate. When communicating, our language must be free from words that exclude, such as stereotypes that identify or demean people based on disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or gender:

- Use people-centric language that does not classify or label
- Don't make assumptions about others or their characteristics
- Be conscious of the implications of your language.

Final Words

Respectful communication is key to developing relationships and building a positive environment, be it in the workplace or broader community. Each of us shares this responsibility and is dependent on one another to participate, to foster a respectful and inclusive society.

