

CHAPTER 2

Communicating in Teams and Mastering Listening and Nonverbal Communication

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Improving Your Performance in Teams [pp. 36-41]

- Types of Teams
- Advantages and Disadvantages of Teams
- Characteristics of Effective Teams
- Group Dynamics
 - o Assuming Team Roles
 - o Allowing for Team Evolution
 - o Resolving Conflict
 - o Overcoming Resistance

Collaborating on Communication Efforts [pp. 41-45]

- o Guidelines for Collaborative Writing
- o Technologies for Collaborative Writing
- o Social Networks and Virtual Communities

Making Your Meetings More Productive [pp. 45-51]

- Preparing for Meetings
- Leading and Participating in Meetings
- Using Meeting Technologies

Improving Your Listening Skills [pp. 51-54]

- Recognizing Various Types of Listening
- Understanding the Listening Process
- Overcoming Barriers to Effective Listening

Improving Your Nonverbal Communication Skills [pp. 54-57]

- Recognizing Nonverbal Communication
- Using Nonverbal Communication Effectively

LECTURE NOTES

Improving your Performance in Teams

A **team** is a unit of two or more people who work together to achieve a goal:

- Team members have a shared mission and are collectively responsible for their work.

- Team members may write reports, give oral presentations, produce videos or products, solve problems, and investigate opportunities.

Participative management is the effort to involve employees in a company's decision making.

Types of teams include

- Cross-functional teams
- Quality assurance teams
- Task forces
- Committees
- Virtual teams

OBJECTIVE 1

Explain the advantages and disadvantages of working in teams.

The team approach offers an organization **advantages** such as

- Increased information and knowledge
- Increased diversity of views
- Increased acceptance of a solution
- Higher performance levels

The team approach can also have a number of **disadvantages**:

- Groupthink—members are willing to abandon personal opinions in favour of group cohesion
- Hidden agendas—private motives affect the group's interaction
- Free riders—noncontributing members aren't held individually accountable
- Cost—coordinating group activities costs time and money

Characteristics of effective teams include a strong sense of trust, open and honest communications, reaching decisions by consensus, thinking creatively, and knowing how to resolve conflict.

OBJECTIVE 2

Explain how group dynamics can affect team effectiveness.

Group dynamics are the interactions and processes that take place in a team.

Productive teams tend to develop **norms** (informal standards of conduct that guide member behaviour) that are conducive to business.

Team members can play various roles:

- Self-oriented roles

Team-maintenance roles
Task-facilitating roles

As teams grow and evolve, they generally pass through five phases:

Orientation
Conflict
Brainstorming
Emergence
Reinforcement

Conflict can be

Constructive if it increases the involvement of team members and results in problem solution

Destructive if it diverts energy from more important issues, destroys the morale of team members, or polarizes or divides the team

Conflict can be resolved through

Proaction
Communication
Openness
Research
Flexibility
Fair play
Alliance

Overcoming resistance is achieved through

Expressing understanding
Making people aware of their resistance
Evaluating others' objections fairly
Holding your arguments until the other person is ready for them

OBJECTIVE 3

Outline and effective approach to team communication

Guidelines for collaborative writing:

Select collaborators carefully
Agree on project goals before you start
Give your team time to bond before diving in
Clarify individual responsibilities
Establish clear processes
Avoid writing as a group
Make sure tools and techniques are ready and compatible across the team
Follow up along the way

OBJECTIVE 4

Describe how collaborative technologies can help a team.

Technologies for collaborative writing include

- o Content management systems – organize and control the content for many websites
- o Wikis – a collaborative writing technology that: do not require special technical knowledge; allow new or revised material to be posted instantly; offer the ability to comment on and improve each other's work
- o Groupware –computer-based systems that let people communicate, share files, review message threads, work on documents simultaneously, and connect using social network tools
- o Shared workspaces – online “virtual offices”

Social networking technologies are redefining teamwork and team communication by helping erase geographic constraints and organization boundaries.

OBJECTIVE 5

Describe the key steps needed to ensure productive meetings

Preparing for meetings

1. Clarify your purpose
2. Select participants for the meeting
3. Choose the venue and time
4. Set the agenda

Leading and participating in meetings

1. Keep the discussion on track
2. Follow agreed-upon rules
3. Encourage participation
4. Participate actively
5. Close effectively

Using meeting technologies:

Virtual teams can interact through **virtual meetings**: Instant messaging, tele- and video-conferencing, *telepresence* technologies, *virtual whiteboards*, online *avatars*

Improving your listening skills involves recognizing the following types of listening:

Content listening – the primary goal is to understand and retain the speaker's message

Critical listening – the primary goal is to understand and evaluate the meaning of the speaker's message based on
the logic of the argument
the strength of the evidence
the validity of the conclusions

Empathic listening – the primary goal is to understand the speaker's feelings, needs, and wants

OBJECTIVE 6

Describe the listening process, and explain how good listeners overcome barriers at each stage of the process.

In general, people listen poorly...

- o Remembering only about half of what has been said in a 10-minute conversation
- o Forgetting half of that within 48 hours
- o Mixing up the facts when questioned about material they've just heard

Listening effectively involves five related activities:

1. Receiving
2. Decoding
3. Remembering
4. Evaluating
5. Responding

Good listeners recognize and overcome barriers such as

Selective listening – only tuning in when you hear something that gets your attention

Defensive listening – protecting your self-image by tuning out anything that doesn't confirm your view of yourself

Techniques for storing information in long-term memory:

1. Associate new information with something closely related
2. Categorize new information into logical groups
3. Visualize words and ideas as pictures
4. Create mnemonics such as acronyms or rhymes

OBJECTIVE 7

Clarify the importance of nonverbal communication and list six categories of nonverbal expression.

Nonverbal communication is the interpersonal process of sending and receiving information without using written or spoken language

Nonverbal communication is important because it

- o supplements spoken language – can strengthen or weaken a verbal message, or replace words entirely
- o helps you ascertain the truth of spoken information

Nonverbal communication can be grouped into six general categories:

1. Facial expression
2. Gesture and posture
3. Vocal characteristics
4. Personal appearance

5. Touch
6. Time and space

ON THE JOB SCENARIOS

Performing Communication Tasks at Royal Bank Financial Group

1. The challenge is to help Jane improve her listening skills?
 - a. Not the best answer. Concentrating too much on detailed note-taking can result in a team member not participating in crucial discussions and decisions.
 - b. Probably the best approach to try first. Drawing Jane's attention to the problem and then suggesting an approach for solving the problem should help Jane focus on the topics under discussion and block out distracting thoughts.
 - c. Not the best answer. This solution might be called for if more than one person were having problems concentrating.
 - d. No. This approach takes the responsibility away from Jane and places it squarely on the shoulders of someone who has plenty to do already.
2. The challenge is to overcome one team member's resistance to the suggestions of others.
 - a. Not the best idea. Ignoring anyone in a meeting sets up barriers to communication and can even cause belligerent team members to become even more disruptive.
 - b. Probably not. Direct confrontation could encourage the sales manager to persist and further derail the meeting.
 - c. No. Allowing one team member to garner attention with contrary behaviour could upset other team members and could encourage even more distracting comments from the uncooperative sales manager.
 - d. This is probably the best answer. You are acknowledging that everyone's opinions are being heard, but at the same time, you are sending a clear message about the value of the other opinions being expressed.
3. The district manager has four particular four habits; which is the most negative?
 - a. Not the worst thing he could do, although coming out from behind his desk would create a more open and comfortable atmosphere during meetings.
 - b. This habit is a positive one, showing interest in the material and the person.
 - c. This habit is also a positive one, encouraging people to be honest and to give him both good and bad news.
 - d. Probably the most negative habit. Whether he apologizes or not, interrupting a discussion to take care of other business shows a distinct lack of consideration for the other person, not to mention making it more difficult to maintain the train of thought for both the manager and his visitor.

END-OF-CHAPTER EXERCISES

Test Your Knowledge

1. An organization's decision-making can benefit from teams through (1) increased information and knowledge, (2) increased diversity of views, and (3) increased acceptance of the solution.

2. The listening process consists of receiving (actually hearing the message), decoding (assigning meaning), remembering (storing the message for future reference), evaluating (weighing the ideas), and responding (reacting to the message).
3. An effective agenda answers three questions: (1) what should be accomplished to achieve the organization's goals? (2) What discussions (conversations) will be of greatest importance to all the participants? (3) What information must be available in order to have these conversations?
4. When members play self-oriented roles, they focus on personal needs, so they tend to be less productive. In contrast, members who assume team-maintenance roles help team members work together, so they're generally more productive. Members who play task-facilitating roles are also more productive because they help solve problems or make decisions.
5. Groupthink is the willingness of team members to set aside personal opinions and go along with the rest of the team, because belonging to the group seems more important than making the right decision. Groupthink can lead to poor-quality decisions and ill-advised actions, sometimes inducing people to act unethically.
6. Team members can successfully resolve conflict by proactively dealing with minor conflicts early, facilitating communication among those directly involved in the conflict, bringing feelings out in the open, researching the reasons for the problem, allowing the flexibility to consider different solutions, promoting fair solutions, and encouraging internal alliances to fight "outsiders" instead of "insiders."
7. content listening = listening to understand and retain the speaker's message
critical listening = listening to understand and evaluate meaning
empathic listening = listening to understand the speaker's feelings, needs
8. Wikis give team members the ability to post information without needing to learn the conventional tools and techniques for creating web pages. Information can be added quickly and without waiting for approval. Web-based meeting systems allow members to share information and communicate and revise documents online.
9. Nonverbal communication usually blends with speech to carry part of the message – to augment, reinforce, and clarify a message; but keep in mind that nonverbal clues can be misinterpreted. Nonverbal communication is usually unconscious but when it is used consciously it can often achieve more impact than words alone.
10. The purpose of using parliamentary procedure is to improve the productivity of a meeting by adhering to standard meeting procedures.

Apply Your Knowledge

1. Nonverbal communication can reinforce the points you're trying to make in the meeting (or it can interfere if it clashes with your words). For example, a meeting leader might reinforce a call to order by standing up to say "Let's begin." Other nonverbal signals include using hand gestures and changing voice tone to emphasize topics, nodding to show approval, or raising an eyebrow to indicate reservations. Nonverbal signals also regulate the flow of conversation. For example, to discourage an out-of-turn speaker, depending on the culture, such signals might include facially expressing interest or boredom, covering lips with a finger, or frowning. At the same time, a motion of the hand or widening curious eyes could encourage a speaker to continue.
2. Students should list remarks that take the boss's point of view into consideration and that avoid any confrontational or accusatory statements. Students should draw on what they've learned about message receptivity to phrase everything in a tone and style that will make their comments easy for any boss to hear and accept.
3. Conflict is constructive when it improves the quality of decisions, stimulates creativity and innovation, encourages interest and curiosity among group members, provides a forum for airing problems and releasing tension, and fosters an environment of self-evaluation. In addition, constructive conflict can force important issues into the open, speed up their resolution, and be a catalyst for change. Conflict frequently becomes bad or disruptive when there is a strong polarization of opinions. In this case, conflict can retard communication, reduce group cohesiveness, and stifle the generation and creativity of new ideas. Sometimes a group whose culture is high in avoidance will suppress or avoid conflict. This avoidance can result in poor decisions because they stand unquestioned.
4. One effective way of encouraging others to participate is to divide the larger group into smaller discussion groups. People are more likely to contribute in smaller teams because it's not as easy to hide with fewer people. Teams can be as small as two people. Once the smaller groups rejoin the larger group, have a representative of each team comment on the team's findings. These representatives might also write their ideas on large sheets of paper or on a large board and explain their thinking to the larger group. Another way to discourage dominance by stronger members is to make it clear that you want everyone's input, so start at one side of the room and proceed around the room until everyone has contributed. To make sure everyone gets a turn, try limiting the time each member can speak or the number of ideas each member can discuss.
5. It is important to know the facts. It would be good to discuss the situation with honesty. This should be done privately. If in fact he is running his own business at home, he should be given the choice of actually doing his job as he is paid to do – or quit to pursue other interests. Instant messaging must be free from disruption from anyone.

Running Cases

Student responses will vary. The following are examples of possible acceptable answers.

Case 1

- a) Noreen did not know what was expected of her because, in addition to not taking the time to ensure that she had the required technological resources to participate in the WebEx conference, the team did not take the time to clarify individual responsibilities.
- b) Possible solutions Noreen could have used to reduce the breakdown of communication include: Making sure that tools and techniques are ready and compatible across the team; taking the time to clarify individual responsibilities and ensuring that the entire team is up to speed on the agenda, project goals and work process. The team should have also followed up after the meeting to ensure that nothing was missed or misunderstood.
- c) Noreen should have alerted the other members of the team that her portion was incomplete. Not only is it her ethical responsibility to be honest with team members because their professional reputations can be affected by her work, but doing so would also have provided the opportunity for another team member to help complete her section.
- d) Provided there was sufficient time to complete the project, the team should have completed Noreen's section because the task was appointed to the team as a whole. Management should still have been notified about Noreen's poor performance.
- e) Noreen should have taken the time clarify her individual responsibilities before beginning her portion of the work.

Case 2

- a) A contract would have helped to clarify the expectations and goals of the team and outlined when tasks should be completed and how often team members were expected to communicate with each other.
- b) The group was acting fairly by informing the teacher of Mohamed's lack of participation. They informed the teacher because their own individual scholastic reputations were at risk of being damaged by Mohamed's non-performance.
- c) Mohamed did not wish to work with Gopan again because of how Gopan handled conflict. Gopan was aggressive and non-discreet and confronted Mohamed at a time when Mohamed was not prepared to defend himself.
- d) Gopan could have been less aggressive and vocal about his frustration with Mohamed and spoken with him at a more discreet place. Mohamed could have helped to avoid conflict by keeping in contact with the team and responding to their emails. This would have informed the team of Mohamed's situation and given them the chance to review the contract and consider ways in which Mohamed could have still participated.
- e) Given that Mohamed did not communicate with the team and did his section incorrectly, he would have had little to contribute to the group's presentation. If Mohamed's portion of the work was given to another team member and contributed to the presentation, Mohamed should have been permitted to present with the team.

Practice Your Knowledge

Here is one suggested agenda:

AGENDA

Budget Committee Meeting
December 13, 2010, 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 3

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting
- III. Director Reports
 - A. Greentree Site Director's Report on Cost Overruns
 - B. Finance Director's Report on Quarterly Revenues and Expenses
- IV. New Business
 - A. Discussion of Cost Overrun Issues
 - B. Discussion of Additional Quarterly Budget Issues
 - C. Presentation of Divisional Budget
- V. Announcements
- VI. Adjournment

Exercises

- 2.1. This exercise gives students real-world practice in listening, observing nonverbal communication, and critiquing a group in action. To answer the questions students will have to pay careful attention to a number of things occurring at the meeting. The purpose of comparing notes with a partner is to show students that a person's own background and listening skills influence the type and content of the notes they take. What is obvious to one person may be worth noting to another. Similarly, poor listeners tend to have superficial notes.
- 2.2. Be as inclusive as possible, without making the situation unreasonably uncomfortable. Consider two options: You might ask the speech-impaired person to team up with one or more other employees and let that team report as a unit. Or you might provide an alternative way for this person to communicate during meetings, such as overhead slides or flip charts. Most important, since this communication challenge surely exists outside of formal meetings, work closely with the person to explore ways to help him or her contribute to the department's work flow.
- 2.3. Now that students are familiar with the win-win process for resolving conflict, this question should stimulate discussion of how they might have approached the conflict situation differently and resolved the conflict by considering the other person's needs in addition to their own.
- 2.4. Although this member's response indicates he wants to be seen as playing a task-facilitating role, he actually seems to be playing a self-oriented role. Students may offer a variety of ways to deal with this situation. For example, next time the member calls for a vote prematurely, the student—who is the leader—can politely intervene and suggest that the vote be postponed until all members have had their say.
- 2.5. Student responses will vary, but their submissions should be clear, concise, and useable.

- 2.6. This Web page allows users to each contribute towards a collaborate project with a common goal. For example, effective use of technology means that the participants can focus on the meeting rather than on keeping records or taking notes.
- 2.7. This self-assessment exercise will help students analyze their strengths and weaknesses with regard to listening skills. Encourage them to follow up on areas for improvement by rereading relevant parts of the chapter and looking for opportunities to practice their listening skills.
- 2.8. Students will discuss how nonverbal messages need not be human gestures. They include the appearance of written messages. Students will consider how letter and memo quality is often judged first by overall appearance. You may want to refer students to Appendix A for a discussion of the importance of formatting and laying out business documents.
- 2.9 a) impatience, boredom, discomfort
b) boredom, nervousness
c) boredom, fatigue, disrespect, disinterest
d) disbelief, disrespect
e) discomfort, disinterest
Students should point out that nonverbal meanings typically have more weight than verbal ones.
- 2.10 Student responses will vary. The keys to success here is to have a well-established purpose for the discussion as well as an effective process for allowing people to present their points. Parliamentary procedures could be followed to ensure that no one dominates the discussion. Good listening skills and note taking are also key as participants hear the presentations of others and develop effective arguments to further their own recommendation.