



Communication for Trainers

ETEY 2016 Pesaro

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PARTICIPANTS HAND-OUT

0 Introduction

Most of our projects and activities need a certain degree of interaction with other human to be turned into reality. Mastering communication increases the chances that you reach great results interacting with your surroundings.

This training session aims at providing you with the elements for developing your understanding about communication, your listening skills and for capitalizing on feedback.

By the end of the session, participants are expected:

- to understand what can influence effective communication;
- to be able to improve communication with purpose;
- to develop listening for training environment;
- to start using feedback as a personal development tool.

The content of this document has been designed to support the development of the participants of TEJO Training Day 1 – Communication for Trainers. For further information, please do contact the trainers.



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2 Communication basics

Whether we are writing or speaking, trying to persuade, inform, entertain, explain, convince or educate or any other objective behind the particular communication task we are engaged in, we always have four general objectives:

- To be received (heard or read)
- To be understood
- To be accepted
- To get action (change of behaviour or attitude)

2.1 Intention

Often communication systems are missing one key component to having any successful conversation: Intention. What is the expected response one would like the audience to provide? If you are unaware of what you are trying to accomplish before you start a conversation it could end up going sideways.

It can be helpful to ask yourself before you speak: "what do I want to create?" It's critical to know your intent and to communicate it clearly. Leading a conversation with intent can make a 100% difference in the outcome.

Here are 4 intents commonly used when communicating: inform, inspire, motivate and engage.



Inform: the point of the communication is just for the audience to acquire new, additional and/or complementary knowledge. The audience doesn't have to respond or act on this piece of data.

That's what usually happens when you watch TV or read newspaper.

Inspire: the hope while communicating is to provide additional food for thought to the audience. The piece of information that is shared is meant to make them think, dream or fantasise.



Commercials are striving to attract customer in buying by inducing that something might be missing in your life.

Motivate: the objective of the communication is to make people do something, act upon the piece of information which is given to them. The point is to fire people up and brings them to take some action, whatever small, in the hope to start a movement.

Engage: the objective of the communication is for the audience to commit, on the long run. Here it's more about going along with campaigns, rallies, or any repetitive acquisition required until the object of the communication, its goal, is reached.

The intents can be these ones or any mix of them, or others.

Asking yourself these questions may help you get clarity on your intention.....

- What is important about what I want to say?
- Why is it important to me?
- What do I need from this person/audience?
- What do I **hope** to get by having this conversation? More understanding, collaboration, cooperation, connection, knowledge, appreciation, change, success, help or support in some way.....

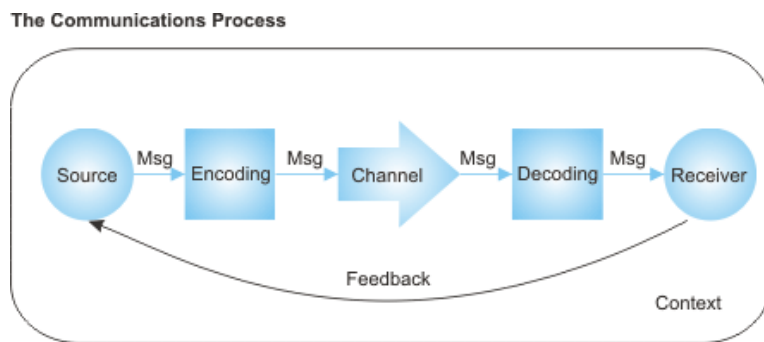
Being aware of your **hope** or **goal** is vital because it is reassuring and sets a positive tone. It can also be helpful to state what it is your intention, to share what you need, want and how you feel, not to hurt, judge or wound the other person. By stating intention you are taking responsibility and allowing your audience to respond accordingly.



2.2 Communication process model

Communication is the process of **sharing our ideas, thoughts and feelings with other people and having those ideas, thoughts and feelings understood** by the people we are talking with. When we communicate we speak, listen, and observe.

This process is divided in several steps as it is shown below. It is composed by a sender (source) and a receiver. The communication comes with the interaction between both in which the sender encodes a message through a channel, that is decoded by the receiver. The receiver can respond to the message by providing feedback, and giving his/her own opinion and thoughts.



2.3 Ladder of inference

The communication process involves the way how we **perceive the message**, and it can be explain by the **Ladder of Inference**. It says that our brains are firstly absorbing a big amount of data every moment and based on the data, we then take action and come to conclusions. So this is what happens:

Step 1: our brain pick up pure data. Everything is captured. At this moment, there is no meaning to it. It's just data.

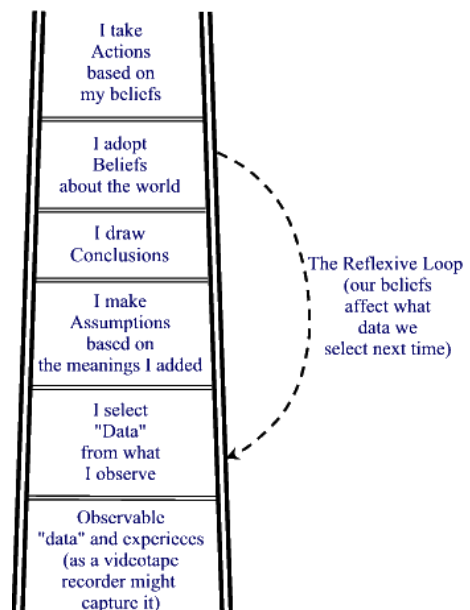
Step 2: from what we observe (the data in step 1) we start to filter and select specific pieces of it.

Step 3: we start to add meaning to the data, base on our experiences and believes of the world.

Step 4: we then draw conclusions from the meaning we have added to the data.

Step 5: we then adopt beliefs of the world.

Step 6: we take action based on those beliefs.



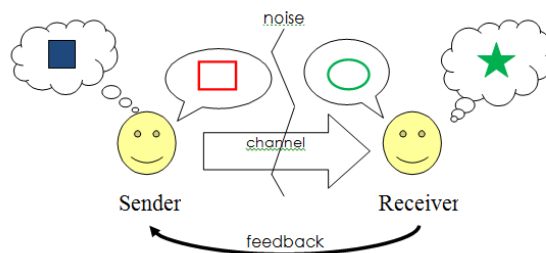


One example on how we can perceive the same thing in different ways is the Rorschach test. It is a psychological test composed by drawings, called inkblots, in which subjects perceptions of those inkblots are analysed through different psychological interpretations. This test is used to examine a person's personality characteristics and emotional functioning. The inkblots Rorschach test are below.



2.4 Communication Barriers

Is the communication always easy? What can make the message not so clear? What are the main communication barriers/obstacles?



Indeed it is not so easy and sometimes a big effort should be done to remove those barriers, or just to decrease their impact on the communication process. Here comes the main 7 barriers to a **good communication**.

1. **Physical:** time, environment, comfort, needs, physical medium
2. **Perceptual:** viewing what is said from your own mindset
3. **Emotional:** personal feelings at the moment
4. **Cultural:** ethnic, religious, and social differences)
5. **Language:** different languages or vocabulary, accents
6. **Gender:** distinct differences between the speech patterns in a man and those in a woman.
7. **Interpersonal:** Rituals, pastimes, working

Example: How comfortable do you speak on the phone when you are in a bus, and when you are home?



3 Listening

“The reason why we have two ears and only one mouth is that we may listen the more and talk the less.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Listening is the “receiving” part of communication. Making meaning from sound is an active process that includes:

1. Receiving information
2. Understanding
3. Evaluating the message
4. Giving feedback to the sender.

When executed effectively, listening:

- improves relationships between people;
- results in making others good listeners as well;
- improves problem solving skills;
- increases job satisfaction;
- improves communication, trust, respect among team members;
- builds teamwork.

3.1 Levels of Listening

There are different types of listening. Typically they are presented as **levels of listening**.

Various people have constructed listening models. Below is an attempt to encompass and extend good current listening theory in an accessible and concise way. Bear in mind that listening is rarely confined merely to words. Sometimes what you are listening to will include other sounds or intonation or verbal/emotional noises. Sometimes listening involves noticing a silence or a pause - nothing - 'dead air' as it's known in broadcasting. You might instead be listening to a musical performance, or an engine noise, or a crowded meeting, for the purpose of understanding and assessing what is actually happening or being said. Also, listening in its fullest sense, as you will see below, ultimately includes many non-verbal and non-audible factors, such as body language, facial expressions, reactions of others, cultural elements, and the reactions of the speaker and the listeners to each other.

3.1.1 Not Listening

Noise in the background - you are not concentrating on the sounds at all and nothing is registering with you. Ignoring would be another way to describe this type of listening. There is nothing wrong with passive listening if it's truly not important, but passive listening, Not Listening, is obviously daft and can be downright dangerous if the communications are important.



3.1.2 Pretending

You are not concentrating and will not remember anything because you are actually daydreaming or being distracted by something else even though you will occasionally nod or agree using 'stock' safe replies.

This is a common type of listening that grown-ups do with children. This level of listening is called **Responsive Listening** in some other models, although **Pretending** is arguably a more apt term, since the word 'responsive' suggests a much higher level of care in the listener, and Pretending reflects that there is an element of deceit on the part of the listener towards the speaker.

You will generally know when you are pretending because the speaker will see that glazed look in your eyes and say firmly something like, "Will you please listen to me? I'm talking to you!" ... Especially if the speaker is a small child.

3.1.3 Selective Listening

You are listening and taking in a certain amount of information, but because you already have such firm opposing or different views, or a resistance to the speaker, you are not allowing anything that is said or any noises made to influence your attitude and level of knowledge and understanding. You are projecting your position onto the speaker and the words.

You would do this typically because you are under pressure or very defensive. You would normally be aware that you are doing this, which is a big difference between the next level and this one.

3.1.4 Attentive Listening

You listen only to the content, and fail to receive all the non-verbal sounds and signals, such as tone of voice, facial expression and reaction of speaker to your own listening and reactions.

This is fine when the purpose of the communication is merely to gain/convey cold facts and figures, but it is very inadequate for other communications requiring an assessment of feelings and motives, and the circumstances underneath the superficial words or sounds.

Attentive Listening is a higher level of listening than Misunderstood Listening because it can gather reliable facts, but it fails to gather and suitably respond to emotions and feelings, and the situation of the other person, which is especially risky if the other person's position is potentially troublesome. This is a common form of listening among 'push and persuade' sales people. Attentive, Data-Only, Listening is typically driven by a strong personal results motive. It can be highly manipulative and forceful. This type of listening wins battles and loses wars - i.e., it can achieve short-term gains, but tends to wreck chances of building anything constructive and sustainable.



3.1.5 Empathic Listening

You are listening with full attention to the sounds, and all other relevant signals, including:

- tone of voice
- other verbal aspects - e.g., pace, volume, breathlessness, flow, style, emphasis
- facial expression
- body language
- cultural or ethnic or other aspects of the person which would affect the way their communications and signals are affecting you
- feeling - not contained in a single sense - this requires you to have an overall collective appreciation through all relevant senses (taste is perhaps the only sense not employed here) of how the other person is feeling
- you are able to see and feel the situation from the other person's position

You are also reacting and giving feedback and checking understanding with the speaker. You will be summarising, probably taking notes and agreeing on the notes too if it's an important discussion. You will be honest in expressing disagreement but at the same time expressing genuine understanding, which hopefully (if your listening empathy is of a decent standard) will keep emotions civilized and emotionally under control even for very difficult discussions. You will be instinctively or consciously bringing elements of effective communication and empathy into the exchange. It will also be possible, for one who knows, to interpret the exchange from the perspective of having improved the relationship, mutual awareness and understanding.

3.2 Listening techniques and tools

Listening leads to effective communication. Effective listeners HEAR and SELECT information from the speaker, give it meaning, determine how the speaker feels about it and respond in a matter of seconds. Only in this way is it possible to frame listening. It requires an ability to LISTEN for FEELINGS as well as words.

3.2.1 Hearing the message

1. Listening actively

Concentrate for the main theme of the discussion and specific ideas and facts. Be alert and ask questions. Check your posture. Sit up straight and look directly at the speaker.

2. Listen objectively

Understand the speaker's point of view. Put aside your biases (resentments, personal objectives, conflicts, interests, etc.) on a topic.

3. Listen analytically to the presentation

Recognise the theme, then the key ideas, the supporting facts and other details.



3.2.2 Interpreting the message

1. Listen to the sender's meaning for words

Come to a mutual understanding of the speaker's meaning. Good listeners know that a matchup in meaning is a match-up in understanding.

2. Determine the main points

Look for the structure of the message and mentally review the material that has gone before. The main points can come at the beginning, middle or end of a message. Usefulness of the message can be determined through the main points.

3. Understand the non-verbal cues

Gestures, facial expression, eyes and postures are non-verbal cues or body languages that either confirm or deny the message of the words and tone of voice. Ask for clarification or repetition if you are not sure of the speaker's meaning.

3.2.3 Evaluating the message

1. Listen with empathy and understanding

Gather all of the key information before forming an opinion. Weigh and analyze all of the evidences before making a decision. An empathic listener puts himself in the source's shoes and understands the problem from the sender's point of view.

2. Suspend judgment

Avoid making judgment about the speaker or the message. Understand the speaker's intent in what he wants to convey. Respect and recognize his point of view. Paraphrase or clarify if you are not sure of what he has said.

3.2.4 Responding to the message

1. Provide feedback

Listeners must provide feedback to the speaker in order to complete the communication process. An active listener will try to inform the speaker that he has heard, understood and evaluated appropriately the main message. A good feedback should be relevant and timely. It should be based on facts and should relate to what's happening at that time.

2. Control your emotion

As listeners, you may experience different levels of emotion to what the speaker says.

"Loaded" words or statements can make you react emotionally. To control this, you must identify what triggers you, understand your responses and develop the ability to listen objectively and attentively without interrupting.



3.3 5 ways to listen better

3.3.1 Silence

Simple as it may seem, the most important thing to remember is stop talking. Silence helps to reset and recalibrate your ear.

3.3.2 Mixer

In a crowded place, to actively pay attention to how many individual sound channel you can hear from the mix. This exercise might help you to improve the quality of your listening.

3.3.3 Savouring

Paying attention to mundane sounds can be very interesting as these are all around you all time and can provide some information.

3.3.4 Listening Position

To gain the ability to move your listening position to what is appropriate: from active to passive, from reductive to expansive, from critical to empathic. This will help you to get conscious and develop your personal responsive palette and tune better to message senders.

3.3.5 RASA

Rasa is the Sanskrit word for Juice and the acronym in term of communication stands for:

Received – pay attention to the person

Appreciate – ensure you're listening

Summarise

Ask questions afterwards

The conversation between the message sender and the message receiver is a delicate dance. Even though your goal may be to simply hear the message, it requires give and take from both parties from the beginning stages of the communication process down to the last word.



4 What is feedback?

Feedback is a piece of information provided by an agent (in our case a leader) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding. It is meant to provide:

- corrective information
- encouragement
- chance to evaluate (other point of view)
- clarifying ideas
- recognition for good work

Feedback is a "consequence" of performance. Often, it is the most realistic indicator of how well a task was completed. Moreover, it is a "self-esteem" vitamin! :) Always, it should be useful and meaningful to the receiver, something that they can use for their benefit: it's essentially a gift, so make it a gift as well.

Besides personal feedback described above, feedback can also be given to groups.

4.1 Effective Feedback

As a **leader** in your organisation, you will be expected a lot from. Whatever the position, **you** are there to **make things work**. For this you will need a lot of tools. Some you will learn during this session, others you will learn or develop on your own. What is important is that you do this pro-actively and you are aware of the changes you need to produce.

Effective Feedback is one of the best tools you have for *motivating people, improving work efficiency, developing others, creating a proper work environment, creating synergy and connection* in your team. In the right hands and with the proper perception, this tool can do wonders. But, as any skill, giving and receiving feedback is something that has to be learned, practiced, improved; it is a skill you develop in time.

There are several aspects that a true leader must master: **giving** and **receiving** feedback developed extensively below. Experience shows that receiving feedback in a professional way might prove harder than giving it, but this is something up to each to discover.

An additional angle to deal with feedback for leaders is the individuals' development which should be the main goal:



4.1.1 Constructive

Feedback should be set to direct followers towards and/or to help determining where and how to take corrective action in order to improve.

4.1.2 Positive

Feedback should help increase followers' confidence, encourage continued high performance and leverage what they're already doing effectively.

Constructive feedback can:	Positive feedback can:
1. Help identify where and how to take corrective action	1. Reinforce appropriate behavior and performance
2. Help align expectations and priorities	2. Help build a sense of achievement
3. Increase self-awareness	3. Enhance internal motivation
4. Fill in gaps in knowledge	4. Help build trusting relationships
5. Help build trusting relationships	5. Increase self-awareness

Ultimately, followers need to know where they have to improve and what they should keep doing to achieve individual and organisational goals.

4.2 Preparations / Before giving feedback

Before talking to someone about their observed behaviour/performance, it is important to ask yourself whether:

1. The person understands what their task/role is; how do you know?
2. The person fully understands your expectations in terms of quality and quantity of work; expected attitude; professional behaviour; how do you know all these?
3. The person had performed well in a similar task in the past. If not, were they made aware at the time? If they received proper feedback, why hasn't anything changed? Or if something changed – how and to what extent? If yes, what do you think has caused the dip in performance?
4. The person is over/under qualified for the task they were assigned;
5. The person knows that there is a problem (in case you have identified one and would like to bring it up);
6. You or others in the organisation are contributing to the problem.





4.3 Giving constructive feedback

When you are giving feedback, there are some useful rules you could follow (DOs) and some things you should try to avoid (DON'Ts).

DOs:

- Ask whether you can deliver your feedback now.
- Give feedback in private - directly to the person concerned.
- Give feedback as soon after performance as possible, but not when the people are still emotionally engaged.
- Be specific and use concrete examples. Refer to behaviour.
- Be clear about what you want to say.
- Include positive perceptions and feelings. If you can't find anything positive to say, it's time to look in the mirror. (Feedback does not equal criticism in the negative sense)
- Communicate perceptions as perceptions and feelings as feelings, not as facts.
- Formulate feedback as precise and possible and detailed enough.
- Ask questions for understanding summarize and express your support.
- Take ownership on the feedback you are giving: use „I“.

DON'Ts:

Try to avoid these as they can demotivate, be disrespectful and generally can make things even worse. So:

- Don't refer to the person as such, but to their behaviour and especially to behaviour that can be changed.
- Don't judge.
- Don't use words that indicate a generalization such as “all”, “always”, “never”, etc.
- Don't forget that it is you who is giving the feedback and hence you owe it: use “I” statements.
- Don't sugar-coat negative feedback.
- Don't postpone/avoid the conversation until you've “had it up to here”.
- Don't give positive feedback without specific elements.
- Don't mistake valid reasons for excuses.
- Don't tell someone you know what's going on inside their head.
- Don't give feedback only when there is a problem. -> people will learn that after "you are a real team player, ...", you will follow with ", BUT ..."
- Don't use sarcasm to make a point.

Finally, feedback should work vice versa; your partner should be able to answer the same way.



Though:

...if you are giving feedback to get something off your chest then you are not really giving feedback. Feedback should help a person develop further and assess correctly what their actions imply. Don't take it on them if you are angry or unhappy – your feelings are yours and they don't help others become better.

...if you are giving feedback that is related to poor/inappropriate performance, make sure you are clear about what exactly you would like to see changed. State your requirement and expectations and also state what will happen if they are not met.

Feedback giving process:

- Ask if the receiver is ready to listen.
- Present the **specific facts/actions/behaviour** you want to feedback.
- Explain what you were **feeling** due to that behaviour.
- Tell **how** these feelings due to the behaviour **personally affected** you or **your work**.
- Provide **suggestions** on how the person can **improve** the behaviour.

4.4 After giving feedback

Follow up (check if the identified problems were dealt with and the behaviour/ performance were improved). Don't expect to see an instant change: feedback is information that needs to “sink in” and not an instruction list. However, to speed up the change you could keep an eye open for everything that's getting them closer to improving the situation and assert it.

4.5 Receiving feedback

As already mentioned, feedback is information; it can sometimes be surprising, even causing strong emotional outcomes. However, there are a few golden rules on how to receive feedback.

DOs:

- Listen, don't interrupt.
- Ask for clarifications if you feel you need any.
- Thank for the feedback.
- evaluate feedback for yourself and follow up if needed



DON'Ts (try not to...):

- get defensive
- prove them wrong
- feel you have to do something to change yourself
- give an answer to justify yourself
- dismiss the information
- feel helpless to do anything about what you heard
- change the focus and attack the speaker
- generalise the message and feel bad about everything/ think you're perfect in all aspects

If you want more feedback, ask for it – the more people you ask the more informed you'll be! Also, by asking as many people as possible, you can make a balanced decision regarding the information that's coming your way.

But remember that not everyone knows how to give good, constructive feedback. If instead of feedback you get criticism, use questions to guide the other person through the process of giving feedback.

Feedback receiving process:

- **Say** if you are ready to receive it.
- **Listen** and **smile**.
- **Ask for clarifications** if you need any.
- **Thank for the feedback**.



5 Further Readings

If you want to develop your knowledge from this document, below you can find some references that were used when designing this training session.

5.1 Books

- Mastering Communication, Nick Stanton
- 7 habits of highly effective people, Stephen R. Covey
- Rule #1 Stop talking, Linda Eve Diamond
- The lost art of listening, Michael P. Nichols
- Giving and perceiving performance feedback, Peter R. Gaber

5.2 Web

- <http://www.systems-thinking.org/loi/loi.htm>
- <http://www.systems-thinking.org/loi/loi.htm>
- <http://www.hodu.com/barriers.shtml>
- http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/julian_treasure_5_ways_to_listen_better.html
- <http://managementhelp.org/communicationskills/feedback.htm>