

COMMUNICATING CONFIDENTLY

The art of verbal business communication

Self-Paced Guide



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How will this Reference Help?

This guide has been developed to help you learn to apply proven techniques for expressing yourself admirably in any situation. Whether you are being interviewed or conversing with a colleague, whether you're participating in a meeting or speaking before an audience or attending a social function, your new speaking skills will enable you to say what you mean without causing pain to yourself or others.

This guide will help you to;

- Learn techniques to enhance personal and professional communication
 - Communicate effectively with colleagues and customers
 - Use language to build authority and influence
 - Develop confidence
-

To complete this learning effectively you need to follow the instructions in this Reference Guide. Each section will help you achieve one or more of the learning outcomes.

There are a number of activities to help you develop the skills and knowledge required to help you communicate effectively. They may ask you to answer questions, discuss issues with others or find additional information.

As you follow the sections, you will notice a number of icon prompts. Each icon signals different types of activities that you may or may not wish to do.



TIP



HINT



ACTIVITY

As you progress through this guide you may wish to refer to your manager for assistance or information. Your manager is there to support your learning.

Continued on next page

How will this Reference Help?, Continued



HINT

As you work through this book and improve your business communication skills you should also continually do these three things:

- **Ask for feedback.** Have several friends/colleagues evaluate each of your attempts to communicate effectively.
 - **Seek out every possible opportunity to practice** your communication skills. Think about doing some training at work; volunteer to make a presentation at the next meeting. Distribute evaluation forms at the end of your sessions. The comments made will enable you to maximise your skills.
 - **Keep paper and pencil with you** as you watch television, especially interviews with recognised national and international figures. Become sensitised to the specific techniques they employ to give quick but meaningful replies to unanticipated questions/circumstances.
-

CONFIDENCE & COMMUNICATION

Developing Confidence

There is a direct correlation between your confidence level and the competence others perceive you to have. There is also a direct correlation between your confidence level and your own perception of your own competence.



ACTIVITY

This activity will help you to determine how confident you are at communicating.

On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being highest, rate your degree of comfort in performing each of these actions, most of which will require on-the-spot thinking. Without deliberating very much, record what you would say in these situations.

1. Everyone at a meeting, including your boss, has expressed approval for a plan of action. You are the last person to give an opinion and your opinion is that the plan will not work. How comfortable would you be in expressing the only dissenting vote? (Circle the number that best reflects your degree of comfort.) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 What would you say?

2. How comfortable are you about asking to see your boss without taking up his or her time?
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 What would you say?

Continued on next page

Developing Confidence, Continued

3. You have just seen the person you most admire in the entire world being seated near you in a restaurant. How comfortable would you be in asking for their autograph?

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 What would you say?

4. At a social gathering, someone makes a comment that you find inappropriate. How comfortable would you be in telling the person that you did not appreciate what they said?

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 What would you say?

5. How comfortable would you be in complaining to a tradesman about the high price they had charged?

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 What would you say?

If you scored lower than 20 on the analysis, you will want to pay particular attention to the following recommendations for increasing your sense of self-worth.

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Communication and Misunderstanding

“Speak clearly, if you speak at all; carve every word before you let it fall.” – Oliver Wendell Holmes

It has been observed, “the infinite capacity of human beings to misunderstand one another makes our jobs and our lives far more difficult than they have to be.” Think about misunderstandings you have had in the past - with family members, with friends, with co-workers, bosses or customers. Most of those misunderstandings probably would not have occurred in the first place if clear and thoughtful communications had preceded the misunderstanding.



ACTIVITY

Briefly describe the last communication interaction you had with another person that resulted in a misunderstanding.

What exactly did you do or say that may have caused the misunderstanding?

Given the time over, what would you change to make the exchange an accurate and significant interaction?

Communication is...

.

It is not always easy to communicate well. As far as communicating with others is concerned, we must keep certain things in mind. Communication:

- Is irreversible
 - Is constant
 - Connects us
-

Communication is irreversible

Once a word has left your mouth, there is no calling it back. True, you can attempt to make amends for words you wish you had not uttered, but the initial impact of your words is bound to remain in the receiver's mind for a long time.

Communication is constant

You may think you can avoid communicating by being silent. But the truth is, even your silence speaks. It has been said that you cannot NOT communicate. So many aspects of your being are sending out signals or messages to others in the immediate environment. The signals may be misinterpreted, but they are nonetheless being sent.

"Object language," for example, communicates information about the type of person you are by identifying your personal preferences. If you smoke or don't smoke, if you drive a Porsche or a Volkswagen, if you wear designer suits or less formal attire, if you bite your nails or smile excessively – all of the choices you have made or habits you have formed are conveying information about you to other people.

Someone walking into your home could look at the books you have on your bookshelf and probably form a fairly accurate impression of you. The way you have decorated your home or your office is another source of data about the kind of person you are.



HINT

While you can never escape communicating, you can make choices about what symbols you wish to use in the process of communicating. Part of your success in responding easily to unanticipated questions or events will depend on the messages you send – messages that use words as well as those that do not.

Continued on next page

Communication is..., Continued



“ACTIVITY

Have a look at the items listed below. What do you think these things say about you? Ask someone you are comfortable with for his or her opinion. Do they see you as you wish others to see you?

Item	What message are you sending?
Clothes	
Desk area	
PC	
Pin board	
Mobile phone	

Communication connects us

We may not wish to have any connection formed at all, but communication between two individuals creates a bonding, if only for that instant of their meeting. As a rule, the bonding extends far beyond the casual connections that are made between two strangers.

In the workplace we are inextricably bound to others in our immediate environment. We may not especially like some of these people and we may try to minimize our encounters with them, but the fact remains there is a symbiotic relationship among individuals who work together.



HINT

Recognising that we are joined to achieve a mutual goal and not to cause friction will help us to achieve some degree of harmony. A spoken reminder of this mutual goal will help reduce conflict.

COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

Communication and Human Relations

More careers have been damaged through faulty human relations skills than through lack of technical ability. Many people are technically smart, but human-relations poor, because they seem unaware that simply knowing how to do a job is not the key to success. To produce results, most of us depend on others and this requires knowing how to work and communicate effectively with people. Before this can be done successfully, many human relations skills must be learned and practiced.

Many individuals underestimate the problems that poor human relations can cause. They persist in concentrating on personal productivity and ignore the fact that they are part of a complicated team structure that can operate efficiently only when human relationships are given proper attention.

To be human relations smart, it is essential to maintain co-operative relationships with all members of an organisation, from co-workers to supervisors. Communication must be open and healthy. The quality of any relationship will influence the productivity from that individual.



ACTIVITY

The following is a list of 20 human-relations competencies. Tick those you practice daily. This exercise will determine whether you are human-relations smart.

Continued on next page

Communication and Human Relations, Continued

- ☐ Deal with all people in an honest, ethical and moral way.
- ☐ Remain positive and upbeat even while working with others who may be negative.
- ☐ Send out positive verbal and nonverbal signals in all human interactions, including the telephone.
- ☐ Refuse to be involved in any activity that might be hurtful or damaging to another person.
- ☐ Build and maintain open and healthy working relationships with everyone in the workplace. I refuse to play favourites.
- ☐ Treat everyone, regardless of ethnic or socio-economic differences, with respect.
- ☐ Work effectively with others regardless of their sexual orientation.
- ☐ Am open to others to restore a damaged relationship with me. I focus on a positive outcome.
- ☐ Maintain a strong relationship with my immediate supervisor without alienating co-workers.
- ☐ Am a better-than-average producer while contributing to the productivity of co-workers.
- ☐ Refuse to initiate or circulate potentially harmful rumours.
- ☐ Maintain a good attendance record, including being on time to work.
- ☐ Show I can live up to my productivity potential without alienating co-workers who do not live up to theirs.
- ☐ Acknowledge mistakes or misjudgements rather than hide them.
- ☐ Refuse to allow small gripes to grow into major upsets.
- ☐ Am an excellent listener.
- ☐ Keep a good balance between my home and career lives so that neither suffers.
- ☐ Look for and appreciate the good characteristics of others.
- ☐ Keep my business and personal relationships sufficiently separated.
- ☐ Make only positive comments about those not present.

Give yourself five points for each square checked.

A score of 70 or more indicates you are practising a substantial number of recognised human-relations skills; a score of 50 or less suggests a review of current practices is in order.

Communicating with Colleagues

In both your professional and your personal activities, you may encounter people who are supremely self-confident and perhaps a little stubborn. You may not feel comfortable around such individuals at first, but with a little practice, you will soon be able to 'hold your own in time.'

Even the best communicators seek to improve their communication style. They revise their words, they practice what they will say, they ask others for feedback, they learn new words, and they study the style of people they admire. In short, they are continually looking for ways to hone their words so their messages will be properly carved and clearly understood.



TIP

Don't expect to communicate clearly every time you need to. Seek opportunities that will help you sharpen your verbal skills. If you do make a mistake or say something inappropriate, learn from the experience and exercise greater caution the next time. Watch how others handle tense situations and imitate their style.

There will always be some people in your work who seem to put you on the spot- either because they enjoy seeing you squirm or perhaps because they simply have a personality that intimidates people. The latter type is easier to deal with.

When you know a superior or colleague is gruff by nature, when you know that he/she does not mean you harm but rather simply expects quick answers backed by competent research, you can be prepared for that expectation.

Hostile colleagues are much more difficult to deal with, for they are operating from psychological drives that may be foreign to you. If you are not used to dealing with sarcasm or put- downs or plain rudeness, you will have to sharpen your defences in order to reduce the stress such people can cause.

It is important that you keep in mind the ultimate purpose of the interaction in which you are engaged. Especially in your business relationships, shouting, sarcasm or belittling comments will not help you reach your mutual goal. Being angry or sarcastic in response to negative comments will only escalate the anger and take both parties further away from their objective.

Continued on next page

Communicating with Colleagues, Continued

Win-win outcomes are possible in human encounters. But it is up to us to overcome the restraining forces, to reduce barriers so that we can achieve desirable outcomes.



ACTIVITY

Scenario: At a brainstorming session, you offer an idea you believe has merit. The committee member responds, "that's the dumbest idea I've ever heard!" What would your reply be?

Displaying self-confidence among the unshakeably poised, self-control among the acid-tongued will enable us to work together in a spirit of cooperation and not competition.

Communicating with Customers

Just as with colleagues, there will always be customers or clients who will put you on the spot or become difficult to deal with. Communicating well can help you convert a dissatisfied customer into a satisfied one. The rule to remember is an easy one: without your customer you would not have a job. Put yourself in the customer's shoes and try to imagine what the customer is thinking and what has led him or her to those thoughts.

Looking at every customer interaction from the customer's perspective will help you find the words to assure that customer you really are concerned about their needs and expectations. You cannot help but show sincerity if you think customer thoughts as you think on your feet. Keep your customer in the forefront of your mind. Treat them, as you would wish to be treated. Serve the customer with pleasantness, offering suggestions and assurances that they deserve. They are, after all, why our company is in business.



ACTIVITY

Scenario: A customer or client is extremely upset that you have failed to return their call from a week ago and is threatening to no longer do business with you. What would you say to turn the situation around?

We can respond professionally and caringly in our customer contacts if we have taken the time to learn what the customer or client truly expects. Armed with such knowledge, you will be better prepared to interact with the myriad of situations that your customers bring to you. You will be able to think on your feet and sound polished rather than dumbfounded, because you are guided always by the customer's or client's interest.

Potential Damaging Situations



TIP

Below are some tips to help you diffuse potential damaging situations that may arise between you and your colleagues or customers.

Not all of the following techniques will work all of the time. Nor will they work in every situation. However, we recommend trying as many as you can, as often as you can. In time you will acquire confidence and competence in your ability to think on your feet and communicate well in difficult situations.

- ✓ **Stand up for yourself.** Remember that you have just as much right as anyone else to be heard. Earn the respect of others by politely, but firmly stating your viewpoint.
- ✓ **Don't become too defensive** (maybe there is some merit in what the colleague or customer has to say). But don't over-apologise either. Say something even if it has a neutralizing remark such as, "I can see you feel strongly about this. I respect that."
- ✓ If the person is merely expounding **listen carefully, without interrupting**, to what they have to say. Often the person is merely seeking attention. To help you separate the "attention seeker" from the true "complainer," you should ask yourself these questions:
 - Does the person have a legitimate complaint? Might I possibly react in this way, given these circumstances?
 - Is this typical behaviour for this person?
 - Is this truly an attack or merely a release of pent-up feelings?
 - Am I over-reacting? Am I considering it hostile when it may be a simple disagreement or expression of a different point of view?
 - Is the person attacking me or the information I am presenting?
- ✓ If the colleague or customer is attacking in a belittling way, you will want to **stop the attack**. Explain that you sincerely wish to resolve the problem but you will deal with them at a later time.
- ✓ **Try humour** if you can. It won't always work – nothing always works – but it often defuses a volatile situation as nothing else can.

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Potential Damaging Situations, continued



- ✓ **Acknowledge the merits of the colleagues or customers claim.**
Sometimes people are so tired of being ignored that their anger escalates to the point of explosion. They may simply need to be heard.
 - ✓ You can **pay the person a compliment**, a sincere compliment. Most people will feel too foolish to continue attacking after having received public recognition of the worth of their comments.
 - ✓ If a person questions or casts doubt on information you have presented, ask them for **examples to support this charge**.
 - ✓ **Ask the person what you could do to satisfy them.**
-

Understanding Business Communication

In business you are what you say- because spoken language is the most influential type of business communication.

Great language skills cannot hide poor work but, excellent work and above average results are generally uncovered and rewarded in the workplace through good verbal communication skills.

By understanding how language actively shapes every situation, you place yourself in a position to build power and credibility.

Language is power- and knowledge of language is an effective political tool.

By building great language skills, you:

- Gain control over the impressions you create
- Learn the best way to convey the right message
- Accomplish your goals

In short, by understanding the language of business, you can increase your power and influence.

Two Basic Language Styles

Being a good business communicator means understanding how a situation dictates what style of speech will be most effective, and how the style of speech used, in turn, influences the business situation that arises. Knowing the two basic business language styles available and choosing the best allows you to borrow authority from your vocabulary and increase your influence until such time as your expertise and experience levels catch up.

In spoken business communications, the two language styles, which can be used either selectively or as a combination are:

Language From The Centre

Directs
Makes statements
Decisive
Controlling
Establishes a context of
authority

Language From The Edge

Responds
Asks questions
Avoids argument
Conventional
Establishes a context of
protecting the group

Both styles are important, and choosing which style to use and when to use it appropriately in any given situation will immediately enhance your ability to communicate well.

Language From The Centre

Language from the centre is intended to make the speaker sound like a leader. It conveys the message that the person is in familiar territory, and therefore can be trusted to suggest what the best course of action is.

Language from the centre positively oozes confidence, competence, know-how and implied authority.

The key characteristics of language from the centre are:

Directs rather than responds.

Attempts to convey as much information as concisely as possible.

Directive and decisive comments are made, and any interruptions are cut short and the conversation is brought back to the items on the agenda.

The speaker keeps everyone on track by using statements like:

- "Getting back to our original concern."
- "That's interesting, but we need to focus on..."
- "Excellent I hear you. Let's look at..."

Makes definitive statements.

Problems are uncovered, potential solutions are discussed and decisions are made.

Ideas are delivered directly and forcefully.

The speaker is the presenter and uses statements like:

- "You'll like the way this is put together."
- "I'm sure we can make budget and meet our objectives."

Decisive

Contradicting, arguing or disagreeing as needed.

An objective analysis of the factual evidence.

Language is not abrasive or personal.

The speaker confidently and aggressively disagrees with ideas put forward by using statements like:

- "Yes you're right, but is that the right message to send?"
- "A key point to keep in mind is....."
- "I'm willing to argue on closer analysis,....."

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Language From The Centre, Continued

Controlling

Professionals speak impersonally and with respect for the opinions of others.

Eye contact, good posture and a moderate tone of voice are used to present information unemotionally and rationally.

Establishes a context of authority

There is no ambiguity or haziness.

Facts such as numbers, statistics, and reports are used to support their claims of authority.

The speaker has authority and experience and uses statements like:

- "That's the same problem we faced at....."
- "This is something I did previously for....."
- "I've analysed this situation and noticed....."



TIP

Here are some tips that will help you to use language from the centre in your next business interaction.

1. Do your homework and pick just two or three pieces of information you want to cover.
 2. Make every point concisely and briefly. Get to the point. Be definitive and exact.
 3. Save your best idea for the middle or end of the meeting.
 4. Be willing to disagree when needed. And don't take it personally if others disagree with you.
 5. Be friendly confident and self- assured. Avoid distractions like adding irrelevant personal information.
-

Language From The Edge

Language from the edge is intended to make the speaker seem approachable. It conveys the message this person is inclusive and inquisitive, and that the correct course of action will emerge if everybody puts forward their best ideas.

Language from the edge is conversational, warm and exploratory.

The key characteristics of language from the edge are:

Responds rather than directs.

Speakers do not set the agenda, but respond to whatever the group wants to talk about.

They make small contributions to the conversation with statements like:

- “It sounds like we all agree that.....”
- “If I understand the issue correctly.....”

Asks questions

Questions are used to obtain more information, to include everyone in the group in a discussion and to generate follow-up discussion.

Good questions allow others to establish their credentials or expertise publicly. For example:

- “Are these figures directly comparable with...?”
- “Do you think we have a problem with...?”

Avoids arguments at all costs

Speakers are highly unlikely to engage in open argument or direct challenges to other people.

Suitable questions are asked so the discussion can be guided gently.

- “Do we know why...”
- “Has a practical way been found to...”

Continued on next page

Language From The Edge, Continued

Uses conversation to influence

Cultivates and encourages open conversation constantly. Speakers invite others to join the conversation and build bridges to make that happen.

Comments are addressed to the whole group.

- "It sounds like what you're saying is..."
- "If I understand correctly, your concern is..."

Establishes a context of protecting the group members

Speakers soften the impact of what they are saying by adding personal disclaimers, apologies or personal comments.

They demonstrate that they are concerned about the welfare of the group.

- "I realize this may be irrelevant, but..."
- "You may have already covered this but..."



TIP

Here are some tips that will help you use language from the edge in your next meeting or business interaction.

1. Plan ahead so you can talk less – perhaps by circulating the information beforehand in written or electronic form.
 2. Prepare a list of questions that invite others to participate.
 3. Consciously invite others to participate in the conversation
 4. Relax and allow others to expand on what they are saying in more detail.
 5. Wait three seconds whenever there's a pause in the conversation. Use silence effectively.
 6. Instead of thinking about what you're going to say next while others are speaking. Listen carefully to what they are saying. Take notes and focus on their ideas.
-

Language Choices



ACTIVITY

Think about a recent business interaction you had. Did you use a majority of language from the centre or from the edge?

Was this the most appropriate style for the situation? Why or why not? What would you do differently

ENHANCING YOUR SKILLS

Enhancing Your Ability to Communicate

Now that we understand the two types of language styles used in business communication, language from the edge and language from the centre, we will look at how to apply them.

Good communication is an understanding of how a situation shapes speech and how speech shapes a situation.

This involves a four step process:

- **Looking In-** note your present speech patterns
 - **Looking Out-** study how high achievers speak
 - **Trying In-** test new ideas in a small way
 - **Trying Out-** use new pattern in a public setting
-

Looking In

Note your present speech patterns

Before you can change your speech style, you need to know how you currently speak.

Understanding the way you speak currently isn't easy. Even if you were to write down everything you say each day, that would miss the differences in tone and pronunciations.

Here are a few key questions you should seek answers to:

- How do I sound in a meeting?
 - How do I come across in an interview?
 - What do I sound like in conversation?
 - How much do I say?
 - How long do I talk?
 - How many questions do I ask?
 - How confident do I sound?
 - How much variety is there in my speech?
 - What impressions do I create?
-



TIP

Here are a couple of things that you can do to try and understand the way you speak.

1. Pick up your phone and call your own voicemail. Listen to your message objectively. How do you come across, and what level of professionalism or friendliness do you communicate?
 2. Invite colleagues to come to one of your presentations and critique you. Ask them to be honest in pointing out any irritating habits you may have. Invite their comments about body language, facial expressions and handling interruptions.
-

Looking Out

Study how high achievers speak.

Every field of business and organisation has its own unique vocabulary and jargon. By becoming more intensely aware of these you place yourself in a position to incorporate them into the way you communicate.



HINT

Here are a few things you should look out for:

- Do the most successful people offer ideas with disclaimers or are they bold and direct?
 - Do the powerful people use language from the edge or language from the centre?
 - Are the rising stars in your field rule-breakers or quiet respondents?
 - How are new ideas that contradict the normal procedures put forward?
 - When evidence is presented, what type of research is usually used to back up the conclusions?
 - Look at high performers in the workplace within the organisation- what type of communication strategy do they use?
-



TIP

Here are a couple of things you can do to try and understand how others communicate.

1. After a meeting, talk with your colleagues and ask them what part of the meeting they found beneficial. Do the same with your boss, and compare the two answers you receive. The differences may be quite interesting.
 2. Identify a few role models- perhaps people who have achieved something exceptional. Find out how they generally communicate, and how you can go about replicating that style.
-

Trying In

Test new ideas in a small way.

By experimenting in a small and friendly environment first, you can fine-tune and improve before moving onto a larger, more public stage.



HINT

Try adding a few new phrases to the way you communicate and interact day-to-day.

To use language from the centre, say less, sound confident and think “me” rather than “we”. For example, to add language from the centre, you might say:

- “I disagree with that idea.”
- “I would argue that...?”
- “I would like to take a closer look at this budget/ time line/ set of qualifications/ etc.”
- “I have several ideas on how we can attack this problem.”
- “I am strongly in favour of that idea.”

Alternatively to add some language from the edge, you might use phrases like:

- “That’s interesting. Please go on.”
- “Is there more to the issue we should be discussing?”
- “This may or may not be relevant, but have we considered....”
- “Okay, what else do we need to discuss?”
- “What should be our plan of attack?”

Remember language from the edge stresses inclusion and builds bridges so everyone can participate. Think “we” and whenever you feel the urge to jump into conversation, count to three first.

Business language is situational, so you should pick carefully the actual situation where you try in a new speech pattern

Continued on next page

Trying In, continued



TIP

Here are a couple of things you can do to try and test your new language skills.

1. Write out the new phrases on a small piece of paper and tape it to your telephone to remind you try them when out when appropriate.
 2. Try experimenting with your new phrases when you attend a meeting or conference where people don't know you well.
-

Trying Out

Use new pattern in a public setting

You are now ready to use your new speech openly where people will judge you.



TIP

If you habitually use language from the centre try adding more language from the edge.

For example, if you continually find yourself disagreeing with a suggestion and starting an argument, try asking questions instead so an open discussion can be entered into.

Alternatively, if you generally use language from the edge try and work in more language from the centre.

For example, instead of always responding to whatever a group wants to discuss in a meeting, try sticking to an agenda and cutting any discussion short that goes off track.

Putting Language to Work

Understanding the communication process and the importance of good human relation skills, as discussed earlier, is key to knowing when to appropriately use each of the two language styles in any business situation.

Enhanced business communication skills allow you to showcase your ideas more effectively and ensure your excellent work gets the credit it deserves. By understanding the language you use better, you can create power and credibility with everything you do. Whether it be through:

- Team changes
 - Voicemail
 - Location
-



Team Changes

Anytime you change teams, you should anticipate you'll need to adjust your business language style to suit the demands of your new position

TIP

- Start with language from the edge initially – and become a sponge for the way language is used. Before you attempt to gain power in your new position, observe carefully the culture, lingo and speech style most commonly used.
- Build credibility and power by doing work that is highly visible, innovative and solves a problem. It's easier to get noticed if you are breaking new ground or solving an established problem nobody else has mastered yet.
- Look for an opportunity to specialize so you can begin using language from the centre. Choose a significant area of expertise that adds value for your customers and specialise in that field. Become someone who is handy to have around because of what you know in that area. You may be able to blend your new work requirements with old expertise you've accumulated earlier in your career.
- Know your audience and do your homework before you start trying to sell your own ideas. If you are sophisticated and knowledgeable enough, you'll identify who needs to be coddled and who can be handled with bullet points. It's up to you to ensure you apply appropriate language strategy with the right people, and move onwards and upwards from there.

Continued on next page



Voicemail

Without any background information about the context, messages can seem abrupt, rude, random or arrogant. Thus they should be left with caution.

TIP

Some specific ideas and strategies are:

When setting up your voice- mail message:

1. Be brief
2. Sound welcoming and friendly
3. Suggest a time you can be reached directly
4. Update your message regularly, daily if necessary
5. Less is more

When leaving voice-mail messages:

1. Plan before you speak
2. Be careful to listen to the instructions
3. Give your name and phone number at the beginning
4. Repeat your name and phone number at the end
5. Leave a message that advances the project
6. Bear in mind the local style of the recipient
7. Provide motivation for returning your call
8. Never leave more than two messages on anyone's voice-mail at any one time

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Putting Language to Work, Continued



Location

In addition to deciding whether language from the centre or language from the edge should be used, there are also a large number of situational factors – geography, position, assumption, class, education – which will help determine the best way to communicate effectively.

TIP

1. Understand the language habits you commonly use- which will be the cumulative result of your own geographical location, age and education.
 2. Learn to be tolerant of others with different language habits.
 3. Never jump to quick judgment about the “correctness” of anyone else’s accent, language habits or word choices.
 4. Avoid slang, acronyms and colloquial expressions when talking to visitors or when working away from home.
 5. Don’t be afraid if pauses in conversations arise. Ask for clarification politely, and expect some mistakes to occur along the way.
 6. Remember a written agreement is always more reliable than a spoken agreement, especially in multilingual settings.
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CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

How has your confidence developed?

As you have progressed through this guide, you have been developing confidence. Each time you tried one of the activities, your experience and expertise grew a little. As they grew, so did your competence.

Possessing both confidence and competence empowers you to accomplish new deeds. And, with each accomplishment, your confidence grows and the cycle continues.



ACTIVITY

Reassess your level of confidence by once again answering the questions below.

On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being highest, rate your degree of comfort in performing each of these actions, most of which will require on-the-spot thinking. Without deliberating very much, record what you would say in these situations.

1. Everyone at a meeting, including your boss, has expressed approval for a plan of action. You are the last person to give an opinion and your opinion is that the plan will not work. How comfortable would you be in expressing the only dissenting vote? (Circle the number that best reflects your degree of comfort.)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 What would you say?

2. How comfortable are you about asking to see your boss without taking up her time?

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 What would you say?

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How has your confidence developed?, Continued

3. You have just seen the person you most admire in the entire world being seated near you in a restaurant. How comfortable would you be in asking for their autograph?

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 What would you say?

4. At a social gathering, someone makes a comment that you find inappropriate. How comfortable would you be in telling the person that you did not appreciate what they said?

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 What would you say?

5. How comfortable would you be in complaining to a tradesman about the high price they had charged?

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 What would you say?

If you scored lower than 20 on the analysis, you will want to pay particular attention to the following recommendations for increasing your sense of self-worth.

Improving your Confidence Further



TIP

Here are some suggestions to help you to continue to develop your confidence.

- ✓ **Find someone in your organisation that you consider a true leader. Compare their communicating style to your own.**

When you note specific ways in which they are a better communicator than you, study what they say and attempt to imitate some of the most powerful aspects of their style. If possible, develop a mentor relationship with them.

- ✓ **Don't agonise over your communication failures.**

Don't give yourself daily verbal beatings for mistakes that you have made. Learn from your errors but don't hold yourself hostage to memories of embarrassing or awkward times when you had to think on your feet. Move forward without guilt or blame or shame.

- ✓ **Self- talk. Whenever you do think on your feet especially well, compliment yourself.**

Make note of what you said, of how your audience responded, of what you might have done to make your performance even better.

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt?

As well as being aware of your current skills and confidence levels and what and when to use business language, for positive and effective verbal communication you need to know and use all of the activities and techniques until they become your normal way of doing things.

Over the coming weeks, notice the ways you have changed what you do because of the learning activities you have completed in this Reference Guide.

To assist you in your reviewing your learning, compare your performance against the learning outcomes;

- Learn techniques to enhance personal and professional communication
 - Communicate effectively with colleagues and customers
 - Use language to build authority and influence
 - Develop confidence
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HINT

Remember to continue to improve your business communication skills, always:

- **Ask for feedback.** Have several friends/colleagues evaluate each of your attempts to communicate effectively.
 - **Seek out every possible opportunity to practise** your communication skills. Think about doing some training at work; volunteer to make a presentation at the next meeting. Distribute evaluation forms at the end of your sessions. The comments made will enable you to maximize your skills.
 - **Keep paper and pencil with you** as you watch television, especially interviews with recognized national and international figures. Become sensitised to the specific techniques they employ to give quick but meaningful replies to unanticipated questions/circumstances.
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CONGRATULATIONS on communicating effectively!