

WORKPLACE WRITING PROMPT - #7

TOPIC: Communication in the Workplace

QUESTION: Write an informational essay describing good communication and why it is important in the workplace. What are the different aspects of communication and how can they be used effectively on the job?

DIRECTIONS:

1. Read the following texts:
 - Master This One Skill and It Will Take You Far
 - Soft Skill: Good Communication
2. As you read the texts, think about details from the texts you might want to use in your essay. You may highlight key points and ideas.
3. After reading the texts, create a plan for your essay. Decide on which argument you will support. Think about ideas, facts, definition, details, and other information or examples you want to use to support your claim.
4. Write a five paragraph essay with an introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Each paragraph should contain between 3-6 sentences. Follow this outline:
 - **Introduction paragraph #1** – Introduce the topic clearly and provide a focus. Explain what the essay will be about. Turn the topic question into a statement.
 - **Paragraph #2** – Describe what good communication is and give examples of the different aspects of it. Discuss how this life skill transfers to the workplace. Use evidence from the texts.
 - **Paragraph #3** – Discuss why good communication in the workplace is important. Give examples of situations at work that would require good communication skills. Use evidence from the texts.
 - **Paragraph #4** – Describe how the different aspects of communication can be used effectively on the job. Tell how an employee can improve his/her communication skills. Use evidence from the texts.
 - **Conclusion paragraph #5** – Provide a summary of the information just presented.
5. Be sure to use correct sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Use clear language and vocabulary. Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion. Be sure to use information and details from the texts.

Master This One Skill and It Will Take You Far

Developing your communication skills will lead to success

By Hannah Morgan

Whether you are an aspiring leader or in a support role, developing your communication skills can impact your success. First, let's take a look at the complexities of communication. It's more than the words you use. It's how and when you choose to share information. It's your body language and the tone and quality of your voice.

These are things you should consider as you strive to improve your interactions with others:

Know the outcome. Before you begin planning what you will say in an upcoming meeting, consider what you want the outcome of your communication to be. What actions do you want others to take? How will you move people? That's the term used in Daniel Pink's "To Sell Is Human: The Surprising Truth About Moving Others." Pink contends that we are all in sales today. "Whether we're employees pitching colleagues on a new idea, entrepreneurs enticing funders to invest or parents and teachers cajoling children to study, we spend our days trying to move others."

Build a reputation. In the workplace, other people's perceptions of you don't form based on a single encounter. But never forget how valuable a good first impression is! In order to gain respect and be seen as a trusted authority, eager team member or dedicated employee, you will need to build your reputation over time. Every interaction -- from how you greet your co-workers in the morning to how you summarize a status update in an email -- contributes to how people view you.

Avoid flaunting power and intellect. Compelling communicators don't strong-arm people into paying attention or dazzle listeners by showing off how much they know. Leave your ego at the door when speaking to people. Establish an even playing field, and place yourself at the same level with your listeners. Avoid a condescending tone of voice and terminology your audience will not immediately understand. While you may be the smartest, most knowledgeable person on a particular topic, wait for the invitation to share your expertise.

Be confident. A wimpy response isn't going to gain the recognition or support you desire. Confidence is queen when it comes to effective communication. Use strong action verbs, avoid filler words, such as "um" or "ah," look people in the eye and sit or stand up straight when called on to speak.

Show awareness of others. Shoving your great ideas or accomplishments down throats of listeners isn't going to work. Building relationships is part of the communication process and is key to your success in conveying your message. When you deeply understand how your audience thinks and feels and what is important to them, you can use that information to craft a message that will resonate with your listeners. Your message should imply concern for others.

As the saying goes, "walk a mile in their shoes" to understand what's important to the people you are communicating with.

Consider timing. There is a time and a place for everything. When you are aware of the events or emotional state of those you are communicating with, you can improve the timing of your message. Appropriate timing means you have taken the person and occasion into consideration and know when to share your message.

Master the art of listening. The most adept communicators are experts at listening and reading between the lines. Mastering the art of listening isn't easy. You will most likely feel tempted to share your own insights, opinions or assumptions while listening to someone. Avoid commentary or interjecting. Instead, ask open ended follow-up questions. This provides evidence that you are hearing and listening to the person. It shows your respect for the person speaking and for the information they are sharing. Practicing good listening skills will help you gain the respect of those you encounter.

Earn respect and trust. Earning respect and trust from your colleagues, managers and customers doesn't happen automatically. Your title and role don't give you any special privileges. If you work hard to exceed expectations and deliver with integrity, you are on your way to establishing the right to be trusted. Consistently repeat these steps to earn the right to be heard.

All these things probably sound familiar. You've read them before. What you really want is concrete help in improving your communication. There are thousands of books on the topic of communication. These self-help books can arm you with more insight and tools to improve your understanding of the intricacies of communication, but there is nothing as powerful as practicing what you learn.

Here's how to develop your communication skills:

Learn from mentors. Enlist help from managers or leaders you respect. These mentors can provide constructive feedback and real-time coaching.

Watch TED Talks. Learn how to present by watching innovative thinkers featured in TED Talks. In 18 minutes or less, these videos capture presentations of great communicators. Since 2006, TED has been hosting conferences and events centered around science, technology, business, culture, art and design to share – as TED puts it – "Ideas Worth Spreading."

Join Toastmasters International. Join a Toastmasters club, and build your skills in a "learn-by-doing" meeting. Toastmasters International has been around 90 years helping members improve their communication, public speaking and leadership skills.

Attend a Dale Carnegie program. Go to one of Dale Carnegie's well-known leadership development programs, which are based on his legendary book, "How to Win Friends & Influence People." According to the Dale Carnegie Training website, these programs teach you how to: "strengthen interpersonal relationships, manage stress and handle fast-changing workplace conditions." The description continues: "You'll develop more effective

communication skills and be better equipped to perform as a persuasive communicator, problem-solver and focused leader. And you'll develop a take-charge attitude initiated with confidence and enthusiasm."

Soft Skill: Good Communication

Step one: Stop insulting your boss's ties

By Mack Gelber

Human beings are social creatures. Unlike dogs, cats, or goldfish, we have the ability to give voice to our problems and verbally express ourselves when something's not working out. But while we may be communicators, that doesn't mean we're always good ones--if that were the case, no one would ever yell at their siblings, or get into a fight over the last bag of Bugles in the vending machine.

Outside of relationships, there's no place where good communication is more key than the workplace. No, we're not talking about your rambling, typo-ridden emails. An office is a microcosm of larger society, and the status quo of peaceful productivity can be easily disturbed by a few poor judgment calls. But never fear! AOL Jobs is here to help with this comprehensive breakdown of the best communication advice available, so lower your clenched fists, put down the Bugles, and take a look.

Bosses

Things you should never say to your boss

Maybe your boss is a Michael Scott type, the kind of superior who wants to be your friend and hang out after work over drinks. Even if that's the case, you can't forget that they occupy a higher rung of the ladder, and you need to approach your interactions with tact. This means you need to stop practicing your standup routine on them--save it for open mic night.

Phrases that will make your boss happy

It can be easy to forget sometimes, but bosses are people too. They think. They feel. And there are things you can say to them that could do wonders for your professional relationship. We're not talking about magic words, just a few simple phrases that could take the awkwardness out of some of your interactions. Hint: one of them is "You're a wonderful boss."

Asking for a raise

There are few situations as fraught with tension as asking your boss for a raise. It's a tightrope walk that would make Philippe Petit shudder, but there are still a few things you can do to come in prepared and improve your chances. Yes, that means not cursing your boss out.

Telling your boss about a co-worker's inappropriate behavior

No one likes to think of themselves as a tattletale. But there's a difference between telling on someone and simply supplying information about behavior that shouldn't be allowed to continue. Here's how you can do that without playing the blame game.

Co-Workers

Getting along with difficult co-workers

"I didn't come here to make friends!" You might shout these words if you're a cast member of *The Real World*, but behaving affably is a key element of happy, functioning workplace. That's not to say you need to be everyone's best friend, but you should still aim to be friendly and cooperative, even to those co-workers whose personalities might not mesh so well with yours. Remember: you're all on the same team.

Gossip is good for productivity

No, not the kind of gossip about how Lucy's breath smells like cat food, or Frank's ties look like optical illusions. A recent study has found that work-related gossip ("Frank's ties are putting Lucy in a trance and preventing her from working," maybe) keeps the office slackers from slacking off, and improves overall productivity. Just don't go too far, or you might hurt Frank's feelings.

What not to say to your co-workers

The lion's share of our days are spent around our co-workers, people whose lives may otherwise remain distant and perhaps even mysterious to us. It's an odd, in-between kind of relationship, and it goes without saying that there are some boundaries you should never cross. Like telling them they look pregnant. Definitely don't do that.

Be mindful of office politics

Remember that thing we said about how an office is nothing like *The Real World*? We take it back. Offices are actually a whole lot like *The Real World*, with all the political undercurrents you'd expect in an environment where power is wielded and divvied. It pays to be aware of office politics, although how much you play the game largely depends on how comfortable you are with the calculating, reptilian part of your brain.

Know thyself

How to be a better communicator

Maybe the issues you're dealing with require more general advice. We've got you covered here, too. Remember that listening is an integral aspect of good communication, and that you should always know and respect your audience--whether you're giving a presentation on quarterly budgets or playing death metal in a dive bar.

Finding the right job for your communication style

Maybe you're a think-on-your-feet squawk box, or maybe you're someone who's more comfortable communicating over email. Whatever the case, there's a perfect job out there for your personal communication style.