

Rules for Effective Communication (© W. Hoy, 2018)

Administrators use multiple methods to communicate including speeches, letters, memos, electronics, and conferences, which span the range from formal to informal and include both written and oral, verbal and non-verbal messages, as well as email, tweeting and texting. Let's examine some communication strategies and suggestions based on research.

General Suggestions

1. Use two-way rather than one-way communications to ensure that messages are understood.
2. To improve understanding, follow oral communications with written summaries.
3. To promote clarity, make sure that your verbal, nonverbal, and written communication are all consistent.
4. To encourage flexibility, use informal communication channels rather than formal ones.
5. In conflictual situations, use informal communications first and switch to formal ones as a last resort.

Speaking in Public

Individuals in positions of authority need to speak skillfully. Susan Fiske (2010) and Thomas Holtgraves (2010) have reviewed the research literature and identified a set of practical principles for speakers. Consider the following basic rules:

1. Be confident: Avoid hesitant and uncertain speech.
 2. Be direct: Get to the point without excuses.
 3. Speak quickly: A reasonable rapid pace of speech is functional.
 4. Use sophisticated speech: Refined vocabulary and varied word choice convey competence.
 5. Use Standard English: Slang and street language undermine respect and the message.
 6. Speak up: Talking is expected of authority figures: **Be authentic and forceful in your speech.**
 7. Dominate: Be aggressive in your speech; your goal should be to communicate clearly and convincingly.
- In sum, speakers should be confident, direct, quick, sophisticated, dominating, and use Standard English.

Email, Tweeting, and Texting.

The digital age has ushered in common and ubiquitous modes of communication, which can be used wisely or imprudently. A few additional caveats are important for digital communication.

1. Never write and send an email that you would not care to have everyone read.
2. Never write and send an email in anger; write it if you must, but do not send until at least a day later.
3. To be on the safe side, use Standard English when you email, text, or tweet.
4. Don't use any form of digital communication if you don't understand it.
5. To tweet or not to tweet, that is the question. Avoid tweeting or texting as a communication device unless you are confident in your message and need to get the message out to large numbers of people quickly, e.g., an emergency.

Nonverbal Communications and Arrangements.

You can use nonverbal cues to your advantage.

1. Arrange your office space so it communicates what you want it to.
2. A conversation area in your office is conducive to authentic, free flow discussions.
3. Avoid pretentious decorating items; they distract from open communication.
4. Body language is important—a firm handshake, a smile, and eye contact are important aspects of nonverbal behavior that communicate much about you; use them to your advantage.
5. Don't infringe on other people's space; keep your distance neutral; and resist the hug.
6. Make your nonverbal messages congruent with your verbal ones so as to not confuse.