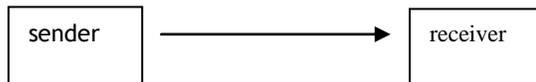


Communications Skills in Research

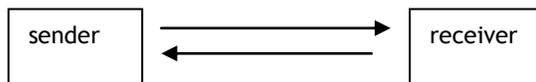
Communication: How does it work?

Transmittal Model



One – way communication, for example, Radio or Television

Transformational Model



The meaning is created in the interaction between the sender and the receiver.

- Communication is transformed according to the **frames of reference** we use during interaction.
- *Any* human interaction involves working in the transformational mode of communication.
- Any communication we have with others will be subject to transformation according to the frames of reference of the recipients. It is always unwise to assume that people have heard and understood what you want them to hear and understand.

Face to face communication: key to enhancing credibility

HIGH CREDIBILITY FACTORS INCLUDE:

- **EYE CONTACT:** in our culture high levels of eye contact are linked to sincerity, trustworthiness and friendliness. 60 -95% is perceived as positive.
- **OPEN POSTURE :** reasonably relaxed but with energy, demonstrating interest. Showing the area around the diaphragm.
- **FACIAL EXPRESSION :** reflecting the verbal content, illustrating commitment, interest, emphasis etc. Smiling and nodding are among the most persuasive and compelling.
- **GESTURES :** open and energised but without being repetitive, jerky or hesitant. Relaxed movements showing palms can be persuasive and will help keep listener attention.
- **MOVEMENT :** must reflect relaxation, energy and commitment to the direction of the communication.
- **SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS :** sensitivity to the comfort of others, to encourage the process of communication and avoid confrontation. Preserving 'comfortable personal space'.
- **PERSONAL ATTRACTIVENESS :** projecting positive personal image
- **HEAD HELD ERECT**

Communication:

How can you avoid misunderstandings?

- Be very clear yourself concerning the message you are trying to convey

'If you don't know what you are trying to achieve, how will you know when you have got there?'

- Use a common language
- Do not assume that people are familiar with technical or specialised language
- Be wary about making assumptions about what people do or do not know
- **Prepare** as thoroughly as possible
- Know your clients/colleagues, their needs and expectations
- Treat others as they need to be treated



How to identify and overcome cultural barriers to communication

Treat other people as they need to be treated.

Identifying the barrier is half the battle. Overcoming it involves a genuine desire to build bridges. You will need openness, a willingness to learn and the confidence to make mistakes. Above all, you need to be prepared to question, change and modify 'the way you do things'. What is normal to you is not necessarily either normal or right to someone else.

Be aware of your own cultural assumptions

Your actions and reactions are likely to be coloured by your culture(s), even if you are not always aware of this. If you are mystified by the action and reactions of others, it is very likely that they are similarly mystified by you. You can begin to build bridges by accepting that the way you do things is not better or worse just different. Enter into any communication with an open mind, open to new experiences and new ways of doing things.

Ask questions

Remember, effective communication is a two way business. If you believe that you may have misunderstood, or been misunderstood, don't stay quiet and hope for the best, check it out.

Do your homework

You will feel much more confident if armed with some knowledge about the culture that you are going to. Use this knowledge as a model which you can adapt and modify according to your own experience. There are some useful books for further reading suggested at the end of these materials.



Negotiation and Persuasion Skills : The key Principles

What is negotiation?

Negotiation is something we do all the time and is not only used for work purposes. For example, we use it in our social and family lives, deciding where to go on holiday, or where to meet.

Negotiation skills are communications skills

Negotiation can be defined as:

'Communication between two or more parties to determine the nature of future behaviour.'

Communication is always the link that will be used to negotiate the issue/deal/argument. This can be face to face, in writing or on the telephone. Your mode of negotiation will determine the kinds of communication skills you use: face to face negotiation, for example, involves all the non-verbal communication techniques.

Negotiation can involve two or more people. The greater the number of people involved, the more complex the negotiation.

Win/Lose (Distributive negotiation)

If your purpose for negotiation is to 'beat the opposition,' it is known as 'distributive negotiation.' An 'into battle' approach – in which there will be a winner and a loser.

It's by far the most common approach to negotiation but you may well not end up with a deal which is of maximum benefit to you. Why? Because your agreement is not being directed to a certain compromise and both parties are looking for a different outcome.

Win/Win (Integrative negotiation)

In this type of negotiation you try to come to a solution or compromise which everyone feels happy with. In other words, all parties' walk away feeling that they have gained something – even if it is not what they first thought they wanted to gain.

This approach is more likely to result in higher benefits for both yourself and others involved in the negotiation.



In reality, many negotiations are neither wholly distributive or wholly integrative but combine elements of both

What is negotiable?

The critical issue here is not so much what is negotiable or non-negotiable in the absolute sense but what you *think* is negotiable or non-negotiable.

If you consciously or subconsciously believe that something is non-negotiable, then it might as well be so. For example, if you accept that what is on a restaurant menu and only what is on the restaurant menu is all that is available, then you would never think to ask for something that you do not see there.

Successful negotiation begins with the belief that almost everything is negotiable, and almost everyone will negotiate with you. Some negotiations simply require more lateral thinking and creativity than others.

What happens when you make assumptions about what is and what is not negotiable?

It is possible for a group of people, all of whom want the same thing, to assume that the others want something else. Each person, therefore, fails to ask for his or her true desires. As a consequence, the group takes actions that are contrary to the desires of *everybody* in the group. In other words, no one gets what they want!

Choosing not to negotiate

Knowing when to negotiate and when not to, is an important skill in itself.

There are very different motivations for not negotiating. Perhaps, for example, you choose not to negotiate because the issues are not that important to you but may be critical to the other party. Perhaps you perceive that negotiating with a particular individual will always result in you losing and it's therefore not worth it. Or perhaps, in general, you simply lack the will to negotiate with people and repeatedly accommodate or avoid confrontation.



Some of us find negotiating in certain areas of our lives more productive or comfortable than in other areas. The person, for example, who enjoys the cut thrust and haggle of business life but who will capitulate on every domestic issue.

Some situations are more likely to cause us to choose not to negotiate. For example:

- The situation is too physically or psychologically dangerous
- The issues are trivial or symptomatic of larger concerns
- There are others who can negotiate these issues more effectively
- We perceive no chance of getting our needs satisfied
- The other party appears incapable of rational thinking
- We stand to lose much more than we might gain

The Golden Rule of Negotiation

People will not negotiate with you unless they believe they have something to lose or gain from it.

Recognising how you can help or hurt the other party is part of the art of negotiation.

Three Fundamental Questions of Negotiation

1. What do I want?

The first question to ask yourself before any negotiation is '*what do I want?*'

This is more complex than it seems. Knowing what you want often involves more than one issue concern or item:

I want to sell my house in three months and I also want to sell it for £X. Which is my greatest priority? Is it more important to me that I sell my house in three months or that I sell it for X?

Unspoken or subconscious issues may then come into play:

I will only sell my house to people I think will 'respect it' and who like gardening.



Because your answer to the ‘what do I want?’ question can involve multiple reasons, it makes sense to take some time over determining what exactly your multiple reasons are, write them down and prioritise. This becomes even more important when you are part of a team of negotiators since it is dangerous to assume that you are all exactly in accord. You need to check it out.

When a multiplicity of issues and priorities are involved, it also makes sense to be firm and flexible in your negotiations, goal guided as opposed to goal governed.

Recognising the difference between positions and interests

Negotiations get stuck when the parties involved retreat into inflexible, fixed positions, ‘I need a pay-rise versus you can’t have one’ is an entrenched position on the part of both parties.

Interests are the broader goals served by a party’s position.

I need a pay-rise. Why? Because I want a new car, I want to feel valued, I want an increase in status, I need to pay off debts.

Effective negotiators try to uncover the reasons behind the positions taken by their negotiating partners. They try to delve beneath the fixed positions and steer negotiations towards interests. Many pay-rise disputes for example are resolved by making offers of time or additional benefits, which serve the broader interests behind the stated need.

2. Why should they negotiate with me?

Before negotiating, you need a fair idea of ‘*What’s In It For Them.*’ Remember, people will only negotiate with you if and when they perceive they stand to benefit from the negotiation or lose if they do not negotiate.

Effective negotiators put themselves in the shoes of those they are in negotiation with and try to see things from their perspective. What might they want or need?

Knowing your players – the negotiator as detective

In order to do this you need as much information as possible about what they want and how they operate.

3. What are my alternatives?

What options do you have if the negotiation fails? What do you do if you or the other party walks away from an agreement?

The 'BATNA' concept

This stands for *Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement*.

If, going into a negotiation, you have an alternative to reaching an agreement, then you can negotiate more comfortably knowing that you can always walk away from the negotiation. For example, negotiating a pay-rise in your existing job from the position of having secured an alternative job which pays more will make you *at least* psychologically stronger.

The more important a particular negotiation is to you, the more essential it is to have an alternative that is equally as attractive as a negotiated agreement. If it is not a real alternative, than you are likely to fool yourself or the other party. The BATNA concept also relates to the other party. The stronger their BATNA, the stronger their position.



Nine steps to a deal: best practice in negotiation

1. Know what a good outcome would be from your point of view **and** that of the other side.
2. Look for ways to create value. Negotiations are not solely about the monetary price of things.
3. Know your BATNA. (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement) and be clear on your reservation price. Make an effort to make an informed estimate of what these may be from the perspective of the other party
4. If your BATNA is not strong – find ways to improve it.
5. Make sure that you know whether and how far the person or team that you are dealing with has the authority to close the deal.
6. Know those with whom you are dealing. Learn as much as you can about the people and the culture on the other side and how they've framed the issue.
7. Consider the importance of a future relationship with the other side. Recognise the value of good will and gather evidence to show your offer as fair and reasonable.
8. Expect hiccups and delays, changes and unexpected developments.
9. Alter the agenda and the process moves (how, where and when meetings and decisions occur) in your favour.

Evaluating the success of a negotiation: Questions to ask yourself

Relationship

- ✓ Has the negotiation helped to build the kind of relationship that will enable us and our clients to work effectively together over the project's life cycle?

Communication

- ✓ Do these negotiations help create an environment in which both parties can engage in constructive, problem-solving conversations?

Interests

- ✓ Does the deal satisfy our interests well at the same time that it satisfies our client's interests to an acceptable level, and the interests of relevant third parties to at least a tolerable level?

Options

- ✓ Have we searched for innovative and effective solutions with the potential for joint gain?

Legitimacy

- ✓ Have we used objective criteria to evaluate and select an option that can be justified by both sides?

BATNA

- ✓ Have we measured the proposed deal against our best alternative to a negotiated agreement? Are we confident that the deal satisfies our interests better than does our best alternative?

Commitment

- ✓ Have we generated well – planned, realistic and workable commitments that both sides understand and are prepared to implement?

Adapted from Danny Ertel 'Turning Negotiation into a Corporate Capability' Harvard Business Review May – June 1999



Some barriers to effective communication include:

Poor listening skills. Communication should be a two-way process. Both need to listen. Both need to be on 'receive' as well as 'transmit'.

Interference: Distractions – like noise, heat, poor light, anxiety, other emotional baggage, tiredness, ill health – may cause a message to be misconstrued, misheard, or misread, by sender or receiver

Being on different wavelengths: the sender and the receiver may process information differently, and thus understand things differently.

Build-up of distortion and 'garblement': when a message passes along a chain, it may end up rather differently from the way it was when you sent it out. (Remember the game of Chinese Whispers.)

Poor systems: maybe your messages go astray too often? Perhaps there is not an adequate system for dealing with phone messages? Perhaps your computers can't 'talk to each other'?

Information overload: like machines, people can be overwhelmed by too much data. They may start to 'process out' messages with which they feel they cannot deal.

Hidden agendas: Maybe some in your organization trade in 'disinformation' (plausible lies, half truths or distortions) to manipulate situations to their own ends.

Interpersonal feelings: strong positive or negative feelings can distort communication between individuals.

Emotional illiteracy: not being emotionally self-aware. Not identifying feelings accurately: not seeing the links between feelings, thoughts and action, in oneself and/or others.

Negative self-talk: The voice in your head telling you you're no good. Putting yourself down in public. (Be careful! People will take you at your own estimate.)

The effective communications checklist.

Consider a communication task you are currently facing at work. Ask yourself:
Have I identified (all) the most appropriate receivers?

- ✓ *What do I want my receivers to understand, believe, and do, as a result of my communication?*
- ✓ *What exactly do I need to say, to have this effect?*
- ✓ *What is the most appropriate medium for getting my message received and understood?*
- ✓ *What do I have to do to make the most effective use of that medium?*
- ✓ *What potential barriers do I foresee?*
- ✓ *How can I minimize or overcome these?*
- ✓ *What kind of feedback shall I expect, to convince me that my message has been received and understood?*
- ✓ *Am I ready to respond if my receiver wants to give me a message?*

Consider a communication you have recently received at work. As a receiver, ask yourself:

- ✓ *Is the sender right in identifying me as a target for this message?*
- ✓ *What effect does the sender want to have on me? What am I expected to DO as a result?*
- ✓ *What message does the sender apparently want to convey? (Could I restate it, to their satisfaction)?*
- ✓ *Am I allowing any of the common barriers to communication to spoil my understanding?*
- ✓ *Is there any hidden agenda of meaning that I am expected to respond to?*
- ✓ *Is the sender conveying any unintended (or intended) non-verbal messages that I need to take note of?*
- ✓ *What kind of feedback does the sender need from me, to show that the message has been received and understood?*
- ✓ *Do I need to ask the sender to clarify, or expand on the message?*



- ✓ As well as acknowledging receipt of the message, do I need to become a sender myself, and return a message of my own?

Writing with Impact

Email is probably the medium which has had most impact on office life in the recent past. Email was supposed to lead to the paperless office and enhanced communication. But has it?

Some advantages of email:

- It's quick
- It's not as intrusive as the phone, or a 'chat'
- It provides an enduring record
- You can easily 'copy people in'
- It's cheaper than 'snail-mail'
- Most of us can be self-servicing
- You can send attachments

Some drawbacks:

Volume can be overwhelming

You can find yourself with even more paper, if you print off

It can cut down too far on face-to-face communication

It's easy to fire off an email which you later regret

It's easy to send something to the wrong recipient

You can get deluged with 'junk'

People may expect an instant response

Encourages unnecessary 'copying-in'

Can discourage verbal interaction between close colleagues

Allows scope for errors of judgement and howlers (pressing the 'send' button after dashing off a reply in anger, or sending inappropriate emails to the 'wrong' recipients)

Can be abused (eg for non-work things, jokes, sex stories)

Can be over-used (eg 'The sandwich man is in the building')

Can come across as curt.

The fact that email is so quick and convenient can desensitise us to the possibilities of doing damage to working relationships. Tone is crucial. Abrupt emails can do more harm than their senders realise. And many say they feel offended to receive a routine query by email from a colleague in the very next desk. '(We never talk any more.)'

Tips for effective email communication:

- ✓ Don't use capital letters: IT FEELS LIKE SHOUTING.
- ✓ Use your subject line to encapsulate the topic. This helps the reader, and you if you need to re-find it, and is more likely to ensure your email gets read.
- ✓ Watch your tone. It's possible for emails to come across as curt, because they are so 'instant'. Remember to re-read and 'soften' where necessary. It's vital not to reply in anger either: you may well regret it later. If you feel angry when replying, save your response as a draft and consider later whether or not to send it.
- ✓ Remember that your email may well be printed off and filed. The cheery informality you adopted in your email to your friend on site might not seem so appropriate on paper.
- ✓ Use your spell and grammar checks if you are in doubt about your reliability. You are always on duty as an ambassador for your organisation. Some may tell you that life is too short to proof-read email: my advice is to do so nevertheless, particularly for anything going outside the organisation.
- ✓ Although emails are mid-way between phone calls and letters in terms of formality, it's as well to treat important emails as having just the same status as letters. So give them a similar amount of time and attention to planning, structure and detail.

Having said that, many busy people are maddened by long emails. **Know your audience!**

- ✓ Don't forget to proofread for long rambling sentences, irrelevance, paragraphing, and factual errors or ambiguities, as well as for spelling and punctuation.
- ✓ Use the signature function to make sure that your name, organisation name, and telephone number are always included. The recipient may not want to email you back: should your postal address go in there too?
- ✓ Think twice about how many, and who, to copy in. The 'cc' function can be dreadfully overused – as can the 'reply all' button. Most of us are struggling to cope with things we really have to read, as it is. You risk your important emails being deleted if your recipients regularly receive too much from you that they consider to be irrelevant.



- ✓ Think twice before sending unsolicited attachments. Many people work on webmail, with limited space. Your unexpected attachment may capsize their account.
- ✓ Check your organisation's policy about email use. Some have protocols about personal use of office email, for example. Some reserve the right to monitor all staff email, in and out. Think twice before circulating any chain letters or jokes, for example, not to mention your correspondence with holiday firms.
- ✓ Check what your system allows you to do in respect of filing and filters: you can use your filters to weed your email for much more than just spam.

Building your communications strategy

It may help to think **PEP**

Paper?

Electronic?

Personal?

Face-to-face

Phone



Communicating in writing: Some helpful tips for effective relationship building

Check your tone. The distance between you and the receiver is likely to be greater. Body language will obviously have minimal impact, but tone remains crucial.

Choose your words. You may need to choose your words carefully to ensure that you are not coming across as unfriendly, or rude, for example.

Use positive rather than negative language. Say what you can do, rather than what you can't. Try to avoid negatives altogether.

Use warm words.

Make sure you keep the warmth in your tone, in any written communication. Words like delight, hope, trust, commitment will all give your writing a warmth which will engage your audience.

Make up for the distance.

You may need to 'oversteer' a bit, to compensate for the lack of affirming body language: you won't be there to correct any wrong impressions when they read what you have written.

Personalise. Be a real person, even in formal letters.

Top and tail them yourself.

Avoid 'pp-ing' wherever possible.

Give your direct line, or email, so that can get back to you with any queries.

Always use a name for your receiver if you can. Avoid 'Dear Sir or Madam'.

Tone is particularly important in email, where the very speed and ease of the medium can lead to an ill-considered response, which may upset or offend. No doubt you can think of a few examples!

Presentations

Structuring successful presentations

Your presentation needs:

- **A Beginning**

You need to tell them here what you are going to cover – you can introduce your key messages at this point

Hook attention straight away

Ideas for doing this – A shock statistic, A challenge, A surprise, A question,

- **A Middle**

This is the main body of the presentation which supports, illustrates, explains, justifies.....your key messages

- **An End**

This is where you summarise what you have just said and draw attention to your key points or messages.

How to structure

- Before you start – work through the key questions to consider when preparing a presentation.
- Find a strong start and a rousing ending.
- Then find major headings or subheadings. Groups of three will help the audience take in the information.
- Each part of your presentation will need to be well signposted. Think of yourself as a tour guide – tell them where you are taking them and why they should stay with you at each stage along the way.

