

Essential Skills

Confidence, Assertiveness & Communication

Trawsnewid Addysg, Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education, Transforming Lives

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During this session we will...

- identify the purpose and desired outcome of a professional conversation;
- distinguish between passive, assertive and aggressive communication;
- use structure to create clear and respectful professional communication;
- demonstrate appropriate communication during challenging workplace conversations;

The four questions to guide our session.

1. What do I want to achieve?

Purpose

- *Solve, Clarify, Change, Protect or Agree*

2. What should I do?

Professional judgement

- Challenge, Negotiate, Compromise, Escalate or, Seek Advice.

3. How do I speak?

Communication approach

- Passive, Assertive, Aggressive

4 . What do I say?

Communication structure

- Observe → Impact → Position → Request

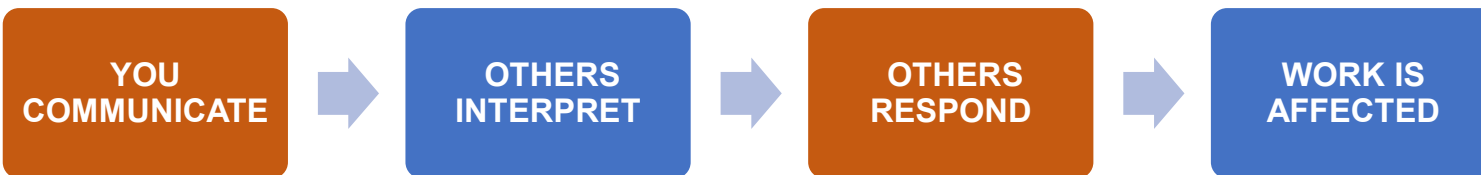


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Professional Communication in UK

Communication is more than speaking English.

Effective professional communication means helping other people understand you and helping you understand them.



Most UK workplaces will expect you to:

- ask questions;
- contribute ideas;
- disagree appropriately;
- admit mistakes;
- communicate workload problems;
- give and receive feedback;
- raise concerns.



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1. What do I want to achieve?

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It is important to consider your purpose or aim before communicating.

There are five broad aims:

Solve

- There is a problem that needs resolving.

Clarify

- Something needs to be understood.

Change

- Something needs to happen differently.

Protect

- A person, standard, relationship, organisation or outcome may need protecting.

Agree

- Different needs or views need bringing together.

1. What do I want to achieve?

Scenario at work.

A colleague repeatedly interrupts you in meetings.

What do you want?

Change



Probably not: - I want them to know they're rude.

More useful: - **I want to be able to contribute without being interrupted.**

1. What do I want to achieve?



Scenario Practice

Your manager gives you more work than you can complete.

Aim =

1. What do I want to achieve?

Work in pairs or small groups to decide what is the aim of your communication in response to each of the following scenarios.

Scenario A

A colleague's work repeatedly arrives late.



Scenario B

A colleague makes a joke you think is inappropriate.

1. What do I want to achieve?

Scenario C

You don't understand what your manager has asked you to do.



Scenario D

A colleague appears to be completing a task in an unsafe way to save money.

Reflect

- Did we all agree on the aim of our communication?
- Have any of you encountered challenging scenarios in the past?

What happens if my real aim is:

"I want to prove that *I am right*"

This is a case of position versus outcome.

Position: I want them to accept my idea.

Outcome: I want us to identify the best solution.

As a professional this is distinction you will develop.



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2. What should I do?

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What Professional Response Does the Situation Need?

There are five main professional choices:

CHALLENGE

NEGOTIATE

COMPROMISE

ESCALATE

SEEK ADVICE

2. What should I do?

It is important to match your communication aim with your professional response.

My aim		Possible professional response
Clarify	↔	Seek advice / ask directly
Agree priorities	↔	Negotiate
Question a decision	↔	Challenge
Find middle ground	↔	Compromise
Protect someone from serious risk	↔	Challenge / escalate
Unsure of responsibility	↔	Seek advice





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3. How do I speak?

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When communicating professionally we show how we balance our own needs with those of others.

There are three ways that people can communicate:
Passively, Assertively or Aggressively.

We want to develop Assertive communication.



Passive: avoiding disagreement, holding back opinions or agreeing when you would rather say no. This can leave important concerns unspoken and lead to frustration.



Assertive: expressing your views, needs and boundaries clearly and respectfully while also listening to others. This aims for a healthier balance. It means



Aggressive: blaming, demanding, interrupting or using an intimidating tone. This puts your own needs first, at the expense of others

3. How do I speak?

How we speak affects our team and workplace.



Here is an example of aggressive communication. The aim of the communication is not achieved due to the poor level of professional skill and choice.

Please be warned that this video contains shouting.

3. How do I speak?

Examples of improving assertiveness



3. How do I speak?



Communication style	My needs and views	Your needs and views	Typical result
Passive	Minimise - You matter more than me.	Prioritise	My concerns may remain unheard
Aggressive	Prioritise - I matter more than you.	Minimise	I may achieve compliance but damage relationships
Assertive	Value - You matter and I matter.	Value	Clear position, respect, opportunity for resolution

3. How do I speak?

The Same Situation, Three Responses

What Does Assertiveness Sound Like?

Situation: Your manager asks you to complete another task today. You already have too much work.

Okay, no problem.

No. That's completely unreasonable

I can work on this today, but I also have X and Y due. Which would you like me to prioritise?

PASSIVE

AGGRESSIVE

ASSERTIVE

Discussion

Is being confident the same as being assertive?





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4 . What do I say?

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A Simple Structure for Difficult Conversations

Structuring your communication will help you to remain professional and effective.

O



I



P



R

1. OBSERVE - What has actually happened?

Use facts rather than accusations. - *The last two reports arrived after the agreed deadline.*

2. IMPACT - Why does it matter?

This meant I couldn't complete my section on time.

3. POSITION - What do I think or need?

I need enough time to complete my part of the work.

4. REQUEST - What would I like to happen next?

Could we agree that I receive the next report by Wednesday?

4 . What do I say?

Observe - Aim to focus on behaviour and not the person

✓ **Do Talk About the Problem**
✗ **Don't Attack the Person**

4 . What do I say?

A Simple Structure for Difficult Conversations

O	1. <u>OBSERVE</u> - What has actually happened?
I	2. <u>IMPACT</u> - Why does it matter?
P	3. <u>POSITION</u> - What do I think or need?
R	4. <u>REQUEST</u> - What would I like to happen next?

Choose one of the workplace scenarios. Work as a small group to develop an assertive, professional response.

Scenario 1. Competing
Priorities

Scenario 2 - Challenging
Experience

Scenario 3. - Inappropriate Joke

Scenario 1. Competing Priorities

O

1. OBSERVE - What has actually happened?

I

2. IMPACT - Why does it matter?

P

3. POSITION - What do I think or need?

R

4. REQUEST - What would I like to happen next?

You are completing an important report for your manager, Priya, due tomorrow. She has told you it is your priority.

A more senior manager, David, asks you to produce additional figures today. You estimate this will take two hours and could prevent you completing Priya's report to the required standard.

When you explain this, David says: "Priya will understand. This has come from the executive team, so it needs doing."

You are unsure whether David has authority to change your priorities.

Your task: Decide what you want to achieve, what professional response is appropriate, and develop an assertive **OIPR response**. Be prepared to explain what you would do if David continues to insist.

Scenario 2 - Challenging Experience

O

1. OBSERVE - What has actually happened?

I

2. IMPACT - Why does it matter?

P

3. POSITION - What do I think or need?

R

4. REQUEST - What would I like to happen next?

Your team is making an important professional decision. An experienced colleague, Martin, recommends an approach the organisation has used successfully before.

You have identified evidence suggesting circumstances are different this time and that Martin's approach could create a significant problem with regulation and finances.

Martin responds: "We've used this approach plenty of times. I know what I'm doing."

Other colleagues appear ready to accept his recommendation. You are not certain Martin is wrong, but you believe the potential consequences justify further investigation.

Your task: Decide what you want to achieve and what professional response is proportionate. Develop an assertive **OIPR response**. How can you challenge expertise without pretending to have certainty you don't have?

Scenario 3. - Inappropriate Joke

O

1. OBSERVE - What has actually happened?

I

2. IMPACT - Why does it matter?

P

3. POSITION - What do I think or need?

R

4. REQUEST - What would I like to happen next?

Jamie regularly jokes about Noor, a relatively new member of your team. The jokes focus on Noor being inexperienced and asking questions.

During today's meeting Jamie says: "Careful everyone, we'll be here all afternoon if Noor starts asking questions."

People laugh. Noor smiles but doesn't contribute again. Afterwards Noor tells you: "It's fine. Jamie's only joking."

However, you've noticed Noor becoming quieter in meetings over recent weeks. You work at the same level as Jamie.

Your task: Develop an OIPR response and consider what would make you seek advice or escalate.



Reflection

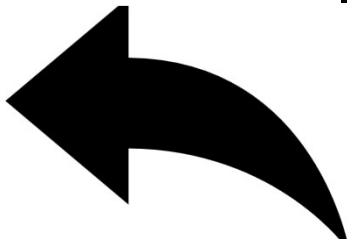
Think about your experiences in the session today and complete the following sentences in private reflection.

In difficult conversations, I sometimes focus too much on...

A professional response I need more confidence using is...

An assertive phrase I want to practise is...

I will know my communication is becoming more effective when...





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