

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

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Module No:	BMSK4013
Module Title:	Management Communication

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Introduction

Communication is an essential part of every organization because it allows managers, employees, and customers to share information and work towards common goals. According to (Dr. I.Ilavarasi, S.No 2024) effective communication plays an important role in supporting productive working relationships, improving teamwork, preventing miscommunication, and maintaining high standards of customer service within organizations. In result, poor communication can lead to mistakes, conflict and lower levels of performance.

This report will examine how communication works in the workplace by applying different communication models and relating them to my own previous experience. I will be referring to my previous job role in a life insurance Call Centre, where communication was an important part of my everyday responsibilities. It will also discuss the importance of tone, language, formality, and verbal and non-verbal communication, before evaluating the communication methods used within the organization. Finally, the report will explore the relationship between motivation, performance and conflict, evaluate my own communication skills, and present a Personal Development Plan to help me support my future development.

1. Communication Models.

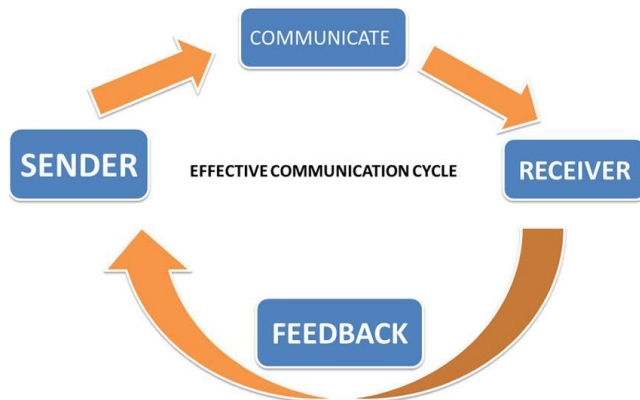
1.1 The Basic Communication Cycle

Below is an image showing the Communication Cycle model. This is a continuous basic model that simply shows how information is exchanged between people. First, it starts with the sender, who has some information or an idea that they want to communicate with someone else; they will encode this information either by a face-to-face conversation, writing a letter or email or telephone calls. The message is then sent through this method used to communicate - which can either be any of the above. The receiver then decodes the information they have received to understand what it is trying to say. Once they have understood that is when feedback will be provided by the receiver, which will then show the sender whether they have understood the message or if there are any misunderstandings.

The communication cycle plays an important role in effective workplace communication because it encourages a two-way exchange of information rather than one person simply sending a message. One of its main advantages is the use of feedback, which is the receiver's response after they have understood the message. Feedback allows the sender to check whether the information has been understood correctly or if any further explanation is needed. This helps to reduce misunderstandings, improve communication, and support positive working relationships.

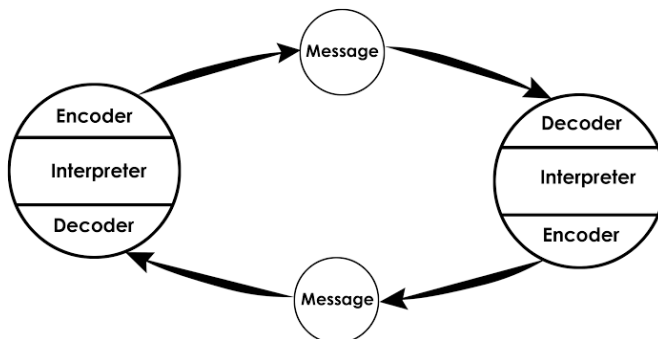
However, the communication cycle also has some limitations. It is a simple model that does not consider factors that can affect communication, such as distractions, emotions, cultural differences, or background noise. These barriers can make it more difficult for the receiver to understand the message correctly, which may lead to confusion or mistakes in the workplace.

The Communication Cycle is effective in my role at a life insurance call center because it helps ensure that information is shared clearly between the advisor and the customer. During a call, the advisor explains policy information, answers questions, and checks that the customer understands what has been discussed. The customer's feedback allows the advisor to identify any misunderstandings and explain anything that is unclear. This helps reduce mistakes, ensures customers receive accurate information, and supports a high standard of customer service.



1.2 Schramm (1954) - The Interactive Model.

The Schramm's Model of Communication is like the Communication Cycle because both show that communication is a two-way process where people send, receive, and respond to messages. The main difference is that Schramm's Model explains that people's knowledge, experiences, and background can affect how well they understand a message. If both people have a similar understanding, communication is more likely to be successful



One strength of Schramm's Model of Communication is that it shows communication as a two-way process, where both people send, receive, and respond to messages. This makes the model more realistic because it highlights the importance of feedback in checking that a message has been understood correctly. Another strength is that it recognizes that a person's knowledge, background, and experiences can affect how they understand a message. This is useful in the workplace, where people may have different levels of experience or come from different backgrounds.

However, the model also has some weaknesses. It assumes that both people are willing to communicate and give feedback, which may not always happen in the workplace. It also does not fully consider barriers such as noise, distractions, emotions, or technology problems, which can affect how well a message is understood.

In my workplace, Schramm could be an effective model as communication between advisors and customers is a two-way process. During a call, the advisor will explain information about a life insurance policy, then the customer could ask questions or provide them with information. Then the feedback can help the advisor to see if they understand the policy and what they have explained, leaving them the opportunity to explain any bits that remain unclear.

Overall, Schramm's Model is useful for explaining how communication works, but it does not include every factor that can influence communication in a real working environment.

1.3 Shannon and Weaver (1949) - The Transmission Model

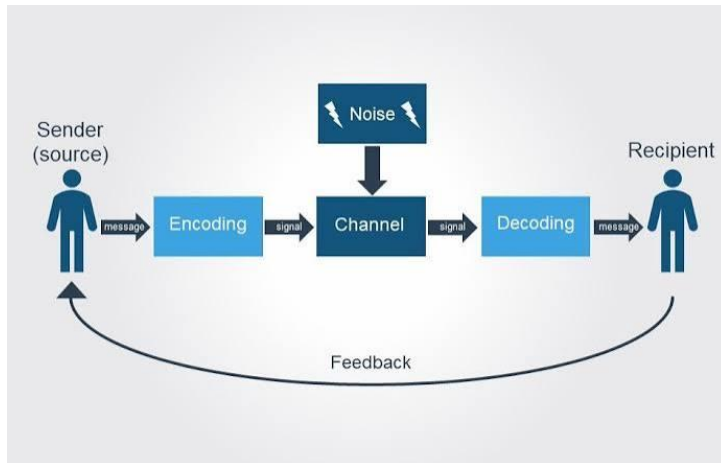
The Shannon and Weaver model is another effective communication model that explains how a message is sent from a sender to a receiver. The sender creates and sends a message through this communication channel, where it is received and understood by the receiver as above.

However, this model does introduce the idea of noise, which refers to anything that can interfere with or distort the message, such as background noise, poor phone signal, or distractions. This model is useful for showing how communication works and how interruptions can affect the message being received correctly.

This would be beneficial as this would show the workplace that messages can be affected by background noise, or poor phone connections and by recognizing these barriers, organizations can then improve their communication to make sure information is received as it should be.

A key weakness of this Communication Cycle is that it views communication as a one-way process from the sender to the receiver. This means it doesn't give enough importance to the feedback or the receivers response. In a workplace, this could cause some problems if a message is misunderstood because the sender may not know that the information has been interpreted incorrectly.

For example, in my previous call centre role, I would sometimes explain the difference between a policy a customer already held and another policy I was trying to upsell. However, some customers did not clearly understand the differences between two policies, and this shows a weakness of communication, because although the information was sent by me, the message was not always understood by the customer as intended. I would then have to explain the differences again using simpler language so that the customer understood the information before deciding.



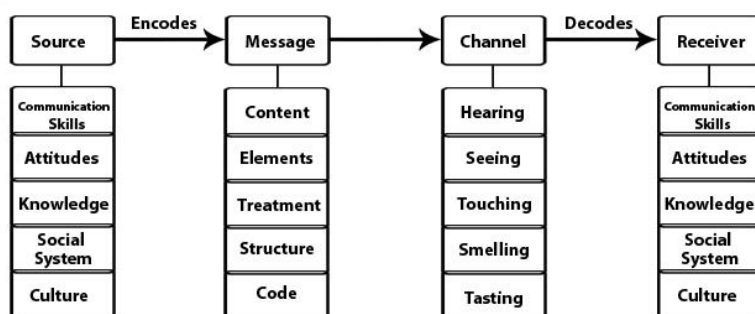
1.4 Berlo (1960) - SMCR Model (Source, Message, Channel, Receiver)

Berlo's SMCR model explains communication through four different elements – Source, Message, Channel and Receiver. The source is the person sending the information, while the message is the information being communicated. The channel shows how the message is delivered, such as through speaking, writing, listening or visual communication, and the receiver is the person who receives and interprets the message.

A key advantage of this cycle is that it recognises the factors such as communication skills, knowledge, attitudes and background can influence how a message is communicated and understood (Berlo, 1960). This makes the model useful in the workplace because it shows that effective communication is not only about sending information, but also about considering the person receiving it and the method used to communicate.

A disadvantage of Berlo's SMCR model is that it doesn't show the feedback between the sender and receiver clearly. This can make it less realistic for workplace communication where people often need to respond, ask questions or clarify information. For example, in a life insurance call centre, a customer could misunderstand information about a policy, but this model doesn't fully show how their response would help the advisor deliver the message differently.

Berlos's SMCR Model of communication



2. Importance of Tone, Language and Formality

Tone is the way someone speaks to another person and can affect how the message is received. It's important to use the right tone in the workplace because the wrong tone could make someone feel uncomfortable or feel they aren't being treated respectfully. In my previous life insurance role, I would use a polite and professional tone when speaking to customers because they may have questions about their policies and need to feel they are being listened to. I would also use a more formal tone when speaking to my manager, especially when discussing work-related issues.

Language is the words used when communicating with someone. It is important to use language that other people can understand. In my role, sometimes I had to explain the difference between a customer's existing policy and another policy I was offering. If I used too much insurance terminology, the customer may not understand the differences, so I would explain it using simpler language (Giles, 2016).

Formality is how formal or informal communication is depending on who you are speaking to. I could use a more informal way of speaking with colleagues because we worked together regularly. However, I would not use the same approach with a customer or manager as it could come across as unprofessional. Using the correct tone, language and formality helps communication clearer and more appropriate for different people.

3. Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is when people use spoken words to communicate with each other. This is important in the workplace because it allows information to be explained and questions to be answered. In my previous life insurance call centre role, I needed to speak clearly when explaining policies to customers, so they understood what I was explaining to them.

Active listening is also important because you need to properly listen to what the other person is saying. In my role, I had to listen to customers carefully so I could understand their questions and give them the right information. If I didn't listen properly, I could easily misunderstand the customer and give them an incorrect response.

Non-verbal communication includes things such as body language, eye contact, facial expressions and posture. These can show how someone is feeling or whether they're interested in the conversation. Although I mainly spoke to customers over the phone, my posture could still affect how confident I would sound when speaking.

Pace, pitch and tone of voice were very important in my role because the customer couldn't see me. Speaking too quickly could make it harder for them to understand me, while using a calm and friendly tone could make them feel more comfortable. Silence can also be useful because it gives the other person time to think or respond. Overall, using verbal and non-verbal communication correctly can help me workplace communication clearer and more effective.

4. Written and Verbal Communication Methods in the Workplace

	Method	Example	Pros	Cons	Recommendations for improvement
Verbal	Telephone calls	Used regularly to communicate with customers.	Quick and allows questions to be answered right away.	Customers can misunderstand information or miss something that is said.	Use clear language and check if customer understands the information.
	Team meetings	Used to share information with several employees at once.	Allows employees to discuss issues and ask questions.	Some people may not feel confident speaking in front of everyone.	Give everyone the opportunity to provide feedback.
Written	Emails	Used to share information with colleagues and managers.	Can always refer to it as its in writing.	Emails can be missed or misunderstood.	Keep emails clear and straight to the point.
	Instant messaging	Quick communication between colleagues	Quick and convenient.	Important information could get lost among other messages.	Use formal communication for important work information.

Overall, the workplace used different communication methods effectively, but choosing the most suitable method for each situation could improve understanding, reduce mistakes and support teamwork.

5. Motivation and Conflict

5.1 Motivation

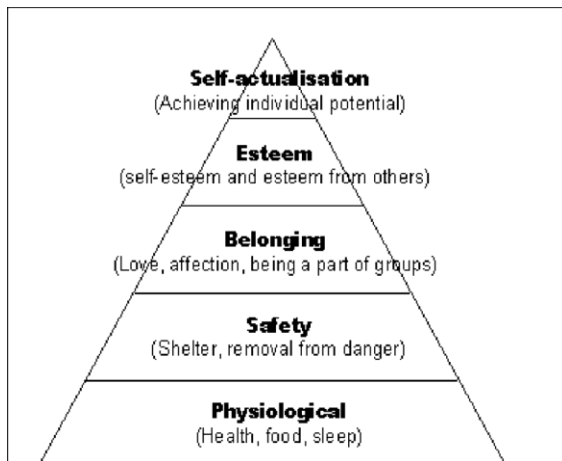
Motivation is what makes someone want to do something or achieve a goal. It can be intrinsic, which comes from within a person, such as enjoying their work or feeling proud of what they've achieved. It can also be extrinsic, which comes from outside factors such as money or rewards. Everyone can be motivated by different things depending on their needs, values, and goals. In the workplace, motivation is very important because it can affect how much effort employees put into their work and how well they perform. There are different motivation theories that can help explain what motivates people, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y and McClelland's Needs Theory.

6. Maslow

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was created by Abraham Maslow in 1943. It explains that people have different needs that can motivate them. The five levels are physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). Maslow believed that people usually need to meet their lower needs before they can focus on higher needs.

This can be related to my previous call centre workplace. Employees needed to receive a regular wage and have a safe place to work. Having good relationships with colleagues could help employees feel they belonged, while praise from managers could make them feel valued. Employees could also be motivated by opportunities to learn new skills or progress within the company.

One strength of this theory is that it shows that money is not the only thing that motivates employees. People can also want recognition, good relationships and opportunities to develop. However, a weakness is that people do not always have to follow the needs in the same order. For example, an employee could want a promotion even if some of their lower needs have not been fully met.



6.1 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory was developed by Frederick Herzberg in 1959. It explains that there are two types of factors that can affect how motivated and satisfied employees are at work. Hygiene factors include things like pay, working conditions, company rules, and relationships with managers. If these are not good, employees can become unhappy with their job. Motivators include recognition, achievement, responsibility, and opportunities to develop (Herzberg et al, 1959).

In my previous call centre workplace, employees could be affected by things such as their pay, working environment and support from managers. Being praised for doing well or having the chance to develop and progress could also encourage employees to work harder and perform better.

One advantage of Herzberg's theory is that it shows that money isn't the only thing that motivates employees. Recognition and opportunities to progress can also make people feel motivated. However, one weakness is that everybody is different, so the same things may not motivate employees in the same way.

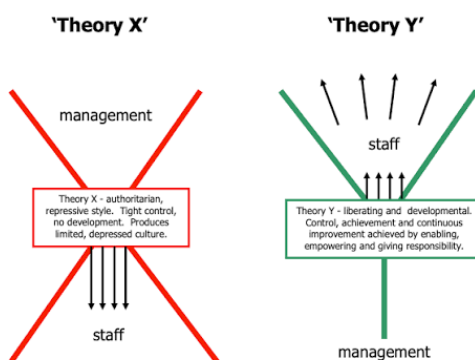


6.3 McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y was developed by Douglas McGregor in 1960. It explains two different ways managers can see their employees. Theory X suggests that employees do not like work, avoid responsibility and need to be closely managed. Theory Y suggests that employees can enjoy their work, take responsibility and be motivated to do well (McGregor, 1960).

In my previous call centre job, some managers would check employees' work and targets closely, which could be seen as Theory X. A Theory Y approach would be giving employees more trust and responsibility to complete their work without being constantly checked.

A Strength of this theory is that it shows how the way a manager treats employees can affect their motivation. However, a weakness is that not every employee will fit into either Theory X or Theory Y. Some employees may need support, while others may work better when they are given more freedom.



© alan chapman 2003-4 based on Douglas McGregor's X-Y Theory. More free online learning materials are at www.businessballs.com

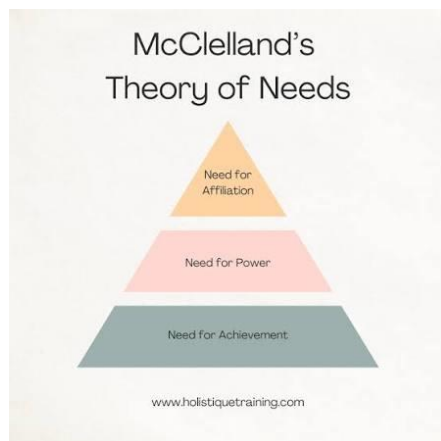
6.4 McClelland's Needs Theory

McClelland's Needs Theory was developed by David McClelland in 1961. The theory explains that people can be motivated by 3 main needs: achievement, affiliation and power. The need for

achievement is wanting to do well and reach goals. Affiliation is about having good relationships with people, while power is the desire to have influence or responsibility (McClelland, 1961).

This could relate to my previous call centre job because employees could be motivated by reaching their targets and doing well in their role. Some employees may also be motivated by having good relationships with their colleagues, while others may want to take on more responsibility or progress into a higher position.

One strength of the theory is that it recognises that people are motivated by different things rather than assuming everybody wants the same rewards. A weakness is that it can be difficult for a manager to know exactly what motivates each employee. People's needs can also change depending on their situation.



7. Motivation in my workplace

I think Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory relates well to my previous call centre job because there were different things that could affect how motivated employees felt. Hygiene factors included things like pay, working environment, company rules and the support from managers.

Employees are more likely to feel engaged when they feel supported and valued at work, which can have a positive effect on how they perform (CIPD, 2025).

The motivators were things such as being recognised for doing well, reaching targets, taking on more responsibility and having the chance to progress. In a call centre, reaching targets could give employees something to work towards, while being recognised by a manager could make them feel that their effort was noticed.

If the workplace focused on both areas, it could help employees feel happier and more willing to put effort into their work. This could lead to better performance, improved teamwork and better customer service. It could also make employees more likely to stay with the company. However, if employees were unhappy with their working conditions or felt their efforts were not recognised, their motivation could drop (Herzberg et al, 1959).

8. Conflict and Impact

Workplace conflict is when people disagree about something related to their job. It can happen for different reasons and does not always involve an argument. For example, unclear

communication or not knowing who is responsible for a task can cause problems. Differences in personalities, heavy workloads or poor listening can also lead to conflict. If employees do not trust each other, this can worsen the situation.

In my previous call centre workplace, conflict could happen if information was not passed on properly or employees were unsure about what they were expected to do. This could cause frustration between colleagues, especially if one person felt they were having to deal with more work than someone else.

If conflict is not dealt with, it can affect the workplace in several ways. Employees may become less motivated or feel stressed, which could affect the work they produce. It could also make teamwork harder and increase the chance of mistakes being made. If problems continue, relationships between colleagues could be damaged and some employees may take time away from work. So, dealing with issues early and making sure employees can communicate openly could help prevent small problems from becoming bigger ones.

9. Conflict resolution strategy

If I had a disagreement with a colleague in my previous call centre job, I would first try to speak to them privately rather than letting the situation continue. I would ask them what the problem was and listen to their side before explaining how I saw the situation. This would then give us both a chance to understand what had caused the disagreement.

If the problem was caused by something like a misunderstanding or unclear instructions, I would try to clear this up and agree on what should happen going forward. I would try to find a solution that was fair to both people rather than focusing on who was right or wrong. If we could not sort the problem out ourselves, I would speak to a manager and ask them to help resolve it.

I think dealing with conflict in this way could prevent the situation from getting worse as if it remains unsolved, it can affect relationships between colleagues and may also have an impact on their performance (CIPD, 2020). It could help to reduce stress and make it easier to work as a team. It could also reduce mistakes and help employees stay focused on providing a good service to customers and a more positive working environment.

10. Self-assessment, feedback and gap analysis

10.1 Self-assessment

For my self-assessment, I looked at areas including how clear I communicate, active listening, my tone of voice, confidence, written communication, and non-verbal communication.

After completing the self-assessment, I felt that one of my main strengths was listening to others and making sure I understood what they meant before responding. I also feel fairly confident when speaking to customers, which helps me build a good relationship with them. One area I need to work on is explaining information when the subject is more complicated. I can sometimes give too much information at once, which can make it harder for the other person to understand. I therefore need to focus on explaining things more simply and checking that the other person has understood. Overall, the assessment has helped me recognize that although I am fairly confident in my communication, there are areas I can improve to make it clearer.

10.2 Feedback from others

Feedback from other people is useful because it gives me a different view of my communication skills. It can help me notice things that I may not recognize myself and show me which areas I am doing well in and which ones I could improve. Feedback can also support improvement when it is given in a constructive way (Cioca & Gifford, 2022).

I created a short questionnaire asking people to rate different areas of my communication, including listening, spoken communication, confidence, tone of voice, and written communication. I asked three people who have communicated with me to complete the questionnaire. I then looked at their answers to identify any common strengths and areas for improvement. A blank copy of my questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

The feedback I received was mostly positive. All three people felt that I was a good listener and generally confident when communicating. They also felt that my tone was friendly and polite. One area that came up for improvement was when I over explain complicated information. The feedback suggested that I can sometimes give too much information at once, so I need to focus on keeping my explanations shorter and easier to understand.

10.3 Gap Analysis

Area	What I do well	What I could improve	Action
Listening	I am a good listener and always try to understand.	Ask more questions when unsure.	Ask questions to check I've understood.
Speaking	I am fairly confident when talking to others.	Sometimes give too much information.	Keep explanations short and simple.
Confidence	Fairly confident when speaking.	Be more confident in difficult conversations.	Get more involved in difficult situations.
Written Communication	My messages are usually easy to understand.	Improve longer messages.	Read messages back before sending them.

Overall, the gap analysis shows that I have good communication skills but there are still some areas I can improve. My focus will be on keeping explanations clear and simple, especially when dealing with more complicated information.

10.4 Personal Development Plan

A Personal Development Plan (PDP) is a plan that helps me identify skills that I want to improve and the steps I need to take to improve them. It gives me something to work towards rather than just knowing that I need to improve. I created my PDP by using the feedback I received from others and the gaps I identified in my communication skills.

I have used the SMART approach when setting my development goals. SMART means Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. Using SMART goals makes my development targets clearer and gives me a time limit to work towards. For example, rather than just saying that I want to improve my communication, I can set a specific target to improve how I explain complicated information and check my progress over a set period.

The main areas in my PDP have come from my feedback and gap analysis. These include improving my spoken communication, keeping explanations simple and becoming more confident when dealing with difficult conversations. The full PDP, including my SMART targets and actions, can be found in Appendix B.

11. Conclusion

Overall, this assignment has shown me that communication is a big part of how well people work together in the workplace. Good communication can help build better relationships, avoid misunderstandings and improve performance. For example, in a call-centre, if a colleague does not clearly explain something to another member of staff, it can lead to the wrong information being given to a customer.

The different models I looked at have helped me understand that communication can work well or go wrong for different reasons. I also found that motivation can affect how people perform at work, while conflict can have a negative effect if it is not handled properly. Dealing with disagreements in a calm and professional way can help prevent them from affecting the wider team.

The feedback I received also helped me look at my own communication more honestly. I found that listening, confidence and my tone of voice were some of my strengths, but I need to work on explaining complicated information more clearly. My PDP gives me a realistic way to work on these areas by setting SMART targets and actions. Overall, I now have a better understanding of my communication strengths and what I can do to improve them further.

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Appendix A: Communication questionnaire

Communication Questionnaire

Please rate my communication skills from 1-5, 1 = poor and 5 = very good.

1. Spoken Communication

How would you rate my spoken communication?

1 2 3 4 5

2. Listening

How well do I listen to others and allow them to speak without interrupting?

1 2 3 4 5

3. Clarity

How clearly do I explain information to you?

1 2 3 4 5

4. Tone of voice

How would you rate my tone of voice when communicating with you?

1 2 3 4 5

5. Confidence

How confident do I appear when speaking to others?

1 2 3 4 5

6. Written communication

How clear and easy to understand is my written communication?

1 2 3 4 5

7. Body language

How would you rate my body language when communicating when communicating face-to-face?

1 2 3 4 5

8. Overall communication

How would you rate my overall communication skills?

1 2 3 4 5

9. What do you think main strength when communicating with others?

10. Is there anything you think I could improve about my communication?

Appendix B: PDP

Personal Development Plan

Development area	SMART target	Actions I will take	How I will measure it	Target date
Clarity when speaking	I will improve how <u>clearly</u> I explain complicated information by giving shorter explanations and checking the other person understands.	Use simpler words, explain information one step at a time and ask if anything needs explaining again.	Ask for feedback and review how well people understand my explanation.	Within 3 months.
Listening	I will improve my listening skills by making sure I do not interrupt and checking that I have understood what the other person has said.	Allow the person to finish speaking and ask questions when I am unsure.	Ask for feedback from colleagues and review my communication.	Within 2 months.
Difficult conversations	I will become more confident when dealing with difficult conversations by practicing how I respond to challenging situations.	Practice different situations and think about how I could respond calmly and professionally.	Review how confident I feel before and after dealing with difficult conversations.	Within 3 months.
Written communication	I will improve my written communication by checking important messages before sending them.	Read messages back, check spelling and make sure the information is clear.	Check my messages before sending them and ask for feedback when appropriate.	Within 2 months.