

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 of common workplace conversations;
- recognise different ways of responding to workplace situations;
- distinguish between passive, assertive and aggressive communication;
- use OIPR to structure a simple professional conversation;
- practise useful language for speaking up professionally;

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

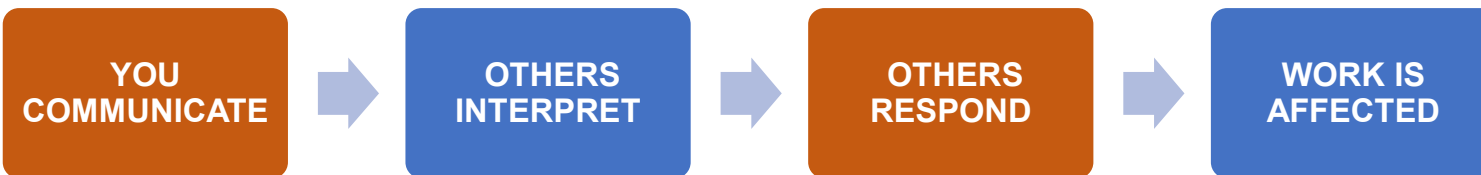


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Professional Communication in UK

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. *"There is a problem with the work."*

Clarify

- Something needs to be understood. *"I don't understand the instructions."*

Change

- Something needs to happen differently. *"I keep being interrupted."*

Protect

- A person, standard, relationship, organisation or outcome may need protecting. *"I think something may be unsafe."*

Agree

- Different needs or views need bringing together. *"We need to decide which task comes first."*

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

You notice a colleague completing a task in a way that you think may be unsafe.

Reflect

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



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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

Can someone be confident but aggressive?

Can someone feel nervous but still communicate assertively?





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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. -"I've noticed..." / "We agreed..." / "The last time..."

2. IMPACT - Why does it matter?

"This means..." / "This affects..."

3. POSITION - What do I think or need?

"I need..." / "I'm concerned that..." / "I think..."

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

"Could we...?" / "Can we agree...?" / "What would you suggest?"

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 <u>actually</u> 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?

Let's practise one together.

Situation

A colleague regularly interrupts you when you are speaking.

We can build an OIPR structure response together:

O — Observe

"I've noticed that I've been interrupted several times when I'm speaking."

I — Impact

"Sometimes I don't get to finish explaining my ideas."

P — Position

"I'd like to be able to finish my point."

R — Request

"Could you let me finish before responding?"

Situation

A colleague regularly interrupts you when you are speaking.

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?

I've noticed that I've been interrupted several times when I'm speaking. Sometimes I don't get to finish explaining my ideas. I'd like to be able to finish my point. Could you let me finish before responding?



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 have two important tasks to finish today. Your manager gives you another task and asks you to complete that today too.

You don't think you can complete all three properly.

Your task: You need to explain the problem and find out what to do first.

Use **OIPR**:

Observe: What work do you have?

Impact: What is the problem?

Position: What do you need?

Request: What could you ask your manager?

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?

A more experienced colleague suggests a way of completing a task. You have noticed something that you think could cause a problem, but you are nervous about saying so because you are new.

Your task: How could you raise your concern respectfully?

Use **OIPR**:

Observe: What have you noticed?

Impact: What could happen?

Position: What are you concerned about?

Request: What would you like the team to check?

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?

A colleague regularly makes jokes about a new employee. Today they make another joke during a meeting. The new employee laughs but becomes very quiet afterwards.

You are not sure whether they are upset.

Your task: What could you do?

If you decide to speak to the colleague, use **OIPR**:

Observe: What did you see/hear?

Impact: What happened afterwards?

Position: What concerns you?

Request: What could you ask them to do?



Reflection - Finding My Professional Voice

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

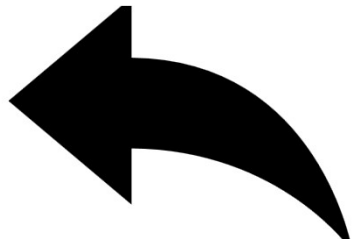
One situation where I could speak up is...

One professional phrase I want to remember is...

If I don't understand something, I can say...

If I am concerned about something, I can say...

In my next professional role, I will communicate effectively by...





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