

# Communication in the Workplace

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**A**s k most managers, executives and business owners what stands in the way of greater effectiveness in their businesses, and they will say communication, whether you have 5 employees or 5,000 employees. When a business suffers from poor communication among employees this generally leads to:



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- **Misunderstandings**
- **Lack of perceived importance**
- **Frustration and poor performance**
- **Increased staff turnover**

No matter your experience and expertise, your ability to communicate effectively can make the difference between success and simply "getting by." But effective communication doesn't happen by accident. It's a consistent process requiring time, research, and coordinated effort.

Here are a few helpful hints to help open the door to better communication:

**Personal Contact.** In this age of electronic communication, far too many of us use our business emails as a substitute for personal interaction. Set aside consistent time to meet in person. People relate to one another better when they can read each other's body language

and hear tonal inflections, that's how you feel the energy and connect. If personal contact is not possible, the next best way to connect is by talking on the phone or Skype.

**Positivity.** Having a positive upbeat attitude lets people know that you care. People like to communicate with friendly, likeable and approachable people. The words "please," "thank you," and "you're welcome," show that you appreciate a person's effort. Try saying, "Would you please..." instead of just, "Please..." You will sound more sincere.

**Open Door Policy.** People need to know that you are not sitting on your "throne." Be approachable as an individual. If your time is not to be interrupted let them know when you will be available. We all get so caught up in our own little worlds that we forget who is helping us reach our goals. Your employees should feel like they work **with you**, not for you.

**Find the time.** It is critical to carve time out of your schedule for regular one-on-one and group employee meetings. Not doing this puts you back on that throne you shouldn't be on!

**Consistency.** Consistency builds trust. You can't be nice one day and bite someone's head off the next. You will be feared instead of admired.

**Expectations.** Clearly share your expectations with your employees. Then there's clarity on the work to be done. They will comprehend what you expect without misunderstand-

ings.

**Read My Mind.** When you give instructions or discuss a business situation, do not assume that everyone understands you. Ask whether you've been clear or if further information or explanation is necessary. Make sure that everyone understands what needs to be done. At times, everyone feels like others should know what's in their heads. But no one can read minds! Pause and with a smile, ask, "**Did I explain this clearly enough for you?**" Assure yourself that they understood what you said.

**Listen.** Perhaps the most difficult communication technique of all is effective listening. By listening to others you show respect. Don't interrupt. Pause and make sure that the other person has stopped talking before you start talking. Make your conversation like a game of tennis and keep the ball going back and forth. If you both serve at the same time the game will not go well.

**Ask Questions.** If you hear something that confuses you, ask. Maybe you missed a detail or maybe you remembered something others forgot. Chances are if you're confused, then others are too.

**Speak Up.** If people have trouble understanding you, they will stop listening. If you speak with a very soft or slow voice, or if you mumble, you'll appear lacking in confidence. You don't have to be the loudest one in the room, just speak with assurance so that others can hear you loud and clear.

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**Read.** Educate yourself about current affairs so that you can talk intelligently about subjects in a conversation. I like to read the local paper, business weekly and a popular magazine so that I'm up on what's happening in my area. Also make sure that you know a little of what's going on around the world. This helps round you out.

**Meaningful Feedback.** A well-considered annual performance evaluation can be a valuable communication tool. But do not limit feedback to a once-a-year event. People do not like surprises. They desire an opportunity to develop and improve throughout the year. Provide continuing constructive on-the-job evaluation. Focus on situations as they arise, while they are still fresh. Point out the positive as well as the negative.

**Reward.** Consistently emphasize the good and reward achievements with private accolades and in groups meetings. Positive reinforcement goes a long way in business.

I promise that if you try these techniques your communication with your employees will improve. Just sayin'.



**About The Author**

Sharon Dillard is the award winning CEO of Get A Grip Inc., a national kitchen and bathroom resurfacing franchise company based in Albuquerque.

For more information, please call 505.268.0929 or visit [www.getagripinc.com](http://www.getagripinc.com)

**STAY TUNED** for the new "Just Sayin'" column being launched in the November/December 2011 issue of the New Mexico Apartment News. "Just Sayin'" will feature information for personnel working on-site, as well as vendor/supplier members.

