

Competencies for Early-Career HR Professionals



Session 4: Communication

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Session 4: Introduction

□ Overview

In this session we will explore the Communication competency. We will learn how to prepare, deliver and conclude a public presentation. Finally, we will assess multiple workplace scenarios and determine the most essential communication skills that are required for success.

□ Learning Objectives

- Explain the relevance of the Communication competency to the job of an HR professional.
- Identify and explain the subcompetencies and behaviors that underlie the Communication competency.
- Analyze the role that the Communication competency plays in helping HR professionals address real-world issues.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply the Communication competency in various contexts.

□ Session 4 Lessons

- Lesson 1: Definition and Components of the Communication Competency.
- Lesson 2: Effective Verbal Communication and Meeting Facilitation Skills.
- Lesson 3: HR Conversations and Effective Use of Social Media.

□ Due This Session

Reading Assignments:

- “We Need to Talk: Ten Scenarios to Practice Handling Needed Conversations.”
 - Left side of the room reads Scenarios 1-5.
 - Right side of the room reads Scenarios 6-10.

Activity Assignment:

- Work with a partner to determine the key communication skills that will be necessary to deal with each scenario.
- Be prepared to share your responses to the assignment questions:
 - What are the key communication behaviors you need to exhibit in all five of your assigned scenarios?
 - Which of these behaviors will be the most difficult to model?
 - What ideas do you have for helping yourself master this behavior?
 - What type of tone will you need to establish during each of these meetings?

Lesson 1: Definition and Components of the Communication Competency

❑ Introduction

This lesson reviews the definition, description, examples and subcompetencies of the Communication competency.

❑ Communication Definition and Descriptions

Definition:

- The ability to effectively exchange information with stakeholders.

Description:

- Includes a wide range of verbal and written HR interactions and is the foundation on which relationships are built and maintained.

Examples:

- Fielding employee grievances
- Collaborating with other organizational units to address business challenges.
- Describing policies and practices.
- Setting goals.
- Communicating progress.

❑ Communication Subcompetencies

- Verbal communication skills.
- Written communication skills.
- Presentation skills.
- Persuasion.
- Diplomacy.
- Perceptual objectivity.
- Active listening.
- Effective timely feedback.
- Facilitation skills.
- Meeting effectiveness
- Social technology and social media savvy.
- Public relations.

❑ Communication Behaviors

- Provides clear, concise information to others in verbal, written, electronic and other communication formats for public and organizational consumption.
- Listens actively and empathetically to the views of others.
- Delivers critical information to all stakeholders.
- Seeks further information to clarify ambiguity.
- Provides constructive feedback effectively.
- Ensures effective communication throughout the organization.
- Provides thoughtful feedback in appropriate situations.
- Provides proactive communications.

Competencies for Early-Career HR Professionals

□ Ways to Develop Communication Skills

- Demonstrates an understanding of the audience's perspective.
 - Treats constructive feedback as a developmental opportunity.
 - Welcomes the opportunity to discuss competing points of view.
 - Helps others consider new perspectives.
 - Leads effective and efficient meetings.
 - Helps manage communication not just on HR issues.
 - Uses communication technology and social media.
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- Participate in training programs to develop your active listening skills and communication fundamentals.
 - Pay attention to the communication methods used by senior employees, including your boss or manager; identify which methods are effective or ineffective, and tailor your own communications accordingly.
 - Seek out public speaking opportunities.
 - Take on an assignment that will culminate in a presentation to a group of stakeholders.
 - Take on an assignment that will require communication with stakeholders throughout the process.
 - Sign up for a course or workshop to sharpen specific communication skills, such as technical writing, interpersonal communication or public speaking.
 - Carefully prepare e-mail communications—try to be as concise as possible.
 - Prepare an agenda for a departmental or organizationwide meeting.
 - Share a strategic idea in a meeting.
 - Develop a training program—communicate to employees why this program will be beneficial.
 - Increase your HR-related social media presence.
 - Analyze the communications you receive for differences in tone and specificity as directed to different levels and audiences.

Lesson 2: Effective Verbal Communication and Meeting Facilitation Skills

❑ Introduction

This lesson reviews key verbal communication and meeting facilitation skills.

❑ Effective Verbal Communication Skills

- Who has ever given a public presentation?
- What was the experience like?

❑ Preparation Tips for Public Speaking

- Handwrite your notes first. Then type them into the slide deck.
- Sit calmly and read your notes once.
- Practice in front of a monitor/projector while actually clicking through your slides, and have a printed copy in front of you.
- Place an “x” on the printed copy of the slides where you stumbled a bit or could not remember your key points.
- Keep track of time on the first run-through so you have a baseline.
- Do a gap analysis on what you know and what you do not know.
- Highlight any points in the speaker notes that *you must* make.
- Prepare a flip chart of key points if you are sure you cannot remember them.
- Identify the points that are important and you tend to forget—memorize just those. At least remember the number of points you want to make.
- Memorize the points you want to make for your first slide and your last slide.

❑ Delivery Tips for Public Speaking

- Expect to feel as if you have forgotten everything right before you go up on stage.
- If at all possible, do not use notes. It is too tempting to read them, and you lose credibility.
- There are “sneaky” ways to reorient yourself using the slides (for example, point to a particular bullet point on the screen while you quickly take in the next few points).
- It is OK to point to a few key ideas on the slide while you are speaking.
- *Voice-track* with the slide; do not read from it.
- Add your own points, stories and examples, if they come to you and they are relevant.
- If you forget a point, make fun of yourself!
- Do not point out the fact that you missed something (unless

❑ **Concluding Tips for Public Speaking**

- you must).
- Do not go back and cover a point you missed if it does not matter (weave it in later).
- When you are finished, thank everyone and count to three. It does not look good when presenters dash off the stage.
- Read the crowd. If people look like they have question, encourage them to ask it. Try to get a conversation going so that the presentation does not fizzle out.
- Do not start packing-up or turning your back on the audience. The best sign of a great presentation is that a lot of people come up to speak with you after the presentation.

❑ **Effective Meeting Facilitation Skills**

- Ineffective meetings cost companies a lot of money.
- Effective meeting facilitation is the key.

❑ **Assessing the Quality of a Meeting**

An ineffective meeting

- It is not clear who is leading the meeting.
- Participants are not even sure why the meeting is being held or why they were invited.
- Physical environment is not conducive (e.g., noisy, hot, glare on screen).
- The meeting lacks an agenda.
- There is uneven participation (some people dominate the conversation, whereas others say nothing).
- Participants are distracted (e.g., constantly checking e-mail).
- Many side discussions occur.
- Participants push their own agendas.
- Meeting starts late or runs over its allotted time.

An effective meeting

- Meeting leader appears ready and organized before the meeting starts.
- Participants come prepared.
- The meeting has a clearly stated purpose and measurable outcomes.
- The meeting is using a process that ensures even participation and efficient use of time and that involves a novel approach for reaching results.
- The meeting sticks to the schedule, but the facilitator does not end important conversations abruptly.
- The participants are engaged.

❑ Causes of Ineffective Meetings

- “Standing meetings” take place when participants do not have much to share.
- Very little planning goes into the meeting.
- Meeting process is poorly designed.
- The wrong people are invited to the meeting.
- Roles for the meeting participants are unclear.
 - Who has authority?
 - What is that authority?
- Meeting purpose or goals are unclear.
- Individuals are unwilling to participate or take risks.
- Discussions are poorly structured.
- Some participants have hidden agendas.
- No accountability exists (no one takes responsibility for the assignment of tasks).

❑ Albert Mehrabian’s Theory on Human Communication

| Communication Method | Percentage of Meaning |
|--|-----------------------|
| Written only | 7% |
| Audio only | 38% |
| Nonverbal (facial expressions and body language) | 55% |

❑ Planning Successful Meetings

- Clearly define the purpose of the meeting.
- Define your desired result.
- Consider if a meeting is really necessary.
- Have criteria for who needs to attend the meeting.
- Have a good process for running the meeting.
- Prepare an agenda and garner input from meeting stakeholders about the agenda.
- Identify roles for the meeting.
 - Facilitator.
 - Note-taker.
 - Decision-maker.
 - Subject matter experts (SMEs).
- Send preparatory assignments out with ample amount of time to complete.
- Send meeting reminders (include a “hook” to intrigue the participants).

❑ **Running Successful Meetings**

- Start and end on time.
 - Have a good meeting facilitator (someone seen as objective if possible).
 - Trust your meeting process, but be flexible when necessary.
 - Frequently remind everyone of the meeting purpose and intended outcomes.
 - Establish ground rules.
 - Encourage participation.
 - Summarize the discussion frequently.
 - Create a safe climate for group members.
 - Minimize distractions.
 - When the meeting is over, evaluate its success.
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Lesson 3: HR Conversations and Effective Use of Social Media

❑ Introduction

In this lesson, students will compare responses to the scenario-based questions. We will also review the use of social media in HR communication.

❑ Handling Needed Conversations

Directions:

- Get together with your partner and the other students who had your same scenarios.
 - Left side of the room reads Scenarios 1-5.
 - Right side of the room reads Scenarios 6-10.
- Be prepared to share your responses to the assignment questions:
 - What are the key communication behaviors you need to exhibit in all five of your assigned scenarios?
 - Which of these behaviors will be the most difficult to model?
 - What ideas do you have for helping yourself master this behavior?
 - What type of tone will you need to establish during each of these meetings?

❑ Use of Social Media in HR Communications

- Recruiting.
- Employee communications.
 - Blogging/microblogging.
 - File sharing/collaboration.
 - Group communication.
- Onboarding.
 - Paperwork.
 - Orientation/training.
 - FAQ/phone numbers/IT information.
- Recruiting.

❑ Why Use Social Media in HR Communications

- Millennials were raised on social media and will soon outnumber Baby Boomers in the workplace.
- Many employees have become overwhelmed by e-mail.
- Organizations are becoming more geographically dispersed.
- Social media aligns with our natural desire to share our knowledge and seek out those we consider experts.

Challenges of Using Social Media in HR Communications

- Privacy concerns exist.
- Personal viewpoints are easily assumed to be organizational positions on issues.
- Posts are difficult to fact-check.
- Controlling malicious postings is difficult.

Session 4: Summary

Key Points from This Session

List your key points here:

End-of-Session Discussion

- What content that we have covered in these four sessions was the most useful to you?
- What are a few things you have started to see differently as a result of these four sessions?
- Which competency is the most intriguing to you and why?
- What advice would you give to a brand new HR professional as a result of what you have learned in these four sessions?