

Unit 2

Obstacles to Communication in Business World, Listening and Communication Etiquette

Barriers to communication

The word barrier means an obstacle, a hindrance or simply a problem that comes in a way of transmission of a message and blocks the process, either completely or partially.

Different types of barriers are as follows:

1. Physical or environmental barriers:

Anything in the environment or surroundings creates barriers in the process of communication is called as physical barriers or environmental barriers or mechanical barriers.

- a. Noise - The noise created by external factors like traffic, playing of loud music, trains and airplanes, or by crowds of people, affects our communication.
- b. Time & distance - Time becomes a physical barrier when people have to communicate across different time zones in different countries. The physical distance between people who need to communicate can also cause problems because it does not allow oral or face-to-face communication.
- c. Defects in communication system – Mechanical problems and defects in instruments of communication also create physical barriers, as in a faulty fax machine or typewriter. Similarly, a computer that hangs, or a dead telephone line can lead to non-transmission of messages. eg. No range in mobile, technical problem in mike or speakers.
- d. Wrong selection of medium – The sender selects the medium which is not familiar to the receiver.
- e. Physiological defects like stammering, hearing defects, mumbling while speaking etc.

2. Language or Semantic barriers:

Language is the main medium of communication and words are its tools. Language proves to be a barrier at different levels, such as semantic (meaning), syntactic (grammar), phonological (pronunciation, intonation, pitch etc.) and finally linguistic (across languages) Thus, language barriers can arise in different ways:

- a. Jargon or unfamiliar terminology - There are some special terms or technical words used by people belonging to a certain group or field of work such as doctors, lawyers, computer software engineers or college students. They use words which are their own, specialized jargon which cannot be understood by anyone outside their group.
- b. Difference in language – Unfamiliar language becomes a barrier when people do not know each other's language. This barrier can be overcome by using a common medium of communication, as in a classroom. Translation is also an important way of overcoming this barrier.
- c. Words are of two kinds: extensional and intentional words. Extensional words are clear in their meaning and therefore do not create barriers – such as words like boy, chair, garden etc. Intentional words are words that describe and they can be understood differently by different people, according to the meaning that a person gives to the word. Thus good, bad, beautiful are intentional words, and a simple sentence like she is a good girl. can create confusion because the meaning of the word 'good' is unclear.
- d. Sometimes, the same word is used in different contexts, giving rise totally different meanings. A word like 'hard', for example can be used in different ways: hard chair, hard-hearted, hard drink, having a hard time – all these use the same word but the meanings are different.
- e. Barriers can be created when we come across words, which have the same sound when pronounced, but which mean very different things. Examples: words like fair and fare; bear and bare; council and counsel.

3. Psychological barriers:

Psyche means mind. Psychological barriers are created in the mind. Communication is a mental activity and its aim is to create understanding. But the human mind is complex and not all communication can result in understanding. There are several kinds of psychological barriers which can come in the way of understanding.

(a) Emotions: Emotions are among the most common psychological barriers to communication. The emotion may be connected to the communication received or it may be present in the sender's or receiver's mind, even before the communication takes place. In both cases, it acts as a barrier. Emotions can be positive, like happiness and joy, or negative, like fear, anger, mistrust etc. Both positive and negative emotions act as barriers, if they are not kept in check.

(b) Prejudice: A prejudice is an opinion held by a person for which there is no rational basis or valid reason. It can be against something or someone, or in favour of it, but it becomes a barrier to a meaningful communication. Prejudices are based on ignorance and lack of information, e.g., prejudices about certain communities or groups of people.

(c) Halo effect: Sometimes our reactions to people are not balanced or objective; they are of an extreme nature. Either we like a person so much that we can find no shortcomings in her/him, or we dislike someone so much that we can see nothing good in her/him. In both cases, we commit errors of judgment and fail to understand the person.

(d) Self-image or different perceptions: Every person has in her/his mind a certain image of herself/himself. S/he thinks of herself/himself in a certain way. This is their perception of themselves, their self-image. One's self-image is the product of one's heredity, one's environment and one's experiences, and thus every person's self-image is unique and different from the others. Self-image can create a barrier because we accept communication which is compatible with our self-image. We avoid or reject communication, which goes against our perception of ourselves.

(e) Closed Mind: A closed mind is one which refuses to accept an idea or opinion on a subject, because it is different from his idea. Such persons form their opinion on a subject, and then refuse to listen to anyone who has something different to say about it. A closed mind may be the result of some past experience or just habit. It is very difficult to remove this psychological barrier.

(f) Status: Status refers to rank or position. It could be economic, social or professional status. In any organisation, hierarchy creates differences in rank, and this is a normal situation. Thus, status by itself does not cause barriers; but when a person becomes too conscious of his status, whether high or low, then status becomes a barrier. For instance, in a business organisation, a senior executive who is unduly conscious of his seniority will not communicate properly with his juniors, and will refrain from giving them the required information. Similarly, if a junior is acutely conscious of his junior status, he will avoid communicating with his seniors, even when it is necessary

(g) Inattentiveness and Impatience: Sometimes the receiver may not pay attention to the sender's message, or he may be too impatient to hear the message fully and properly. Such barriers are common in oral communication.

4. Cross-cultural barriers: Mary Allen Guffey defines communication as ,”the complex system of values, traits, morals and customs shared by a society.”

Cultural diversity within a country, and cultural differences between people from different countries, are a major cause of barriers. This is because people are conditioned by their cultures, and they develop certain habits of working, communicating, eating, dressing etc. according to their cultural conditioning. They find it difficult to get through to people who come from an alien culture, and who have different habits. A simple thing like a greeting to welcome a person is vastly different in India from a greeting in, for example, an Arab country, or in Japan. Food and dress habits of a different culture can make a person uncomfortable. Concepts of space and time are also different across cultures; for example, Indians do not mind sitting close to each other and sharing space in offices or in public places. However, a European would not be able to tolerate such intrusive behaviour. Similarly, people who come from a culture where time is very valuable will be impatient with those who come from a culture with an easygoing attitude towards time, where everything is done in a slow, unhurried way. a. Cultural diversity b. Time c. Space d. Food e. Manners f. Decision making

Overcoming Barriers : Barriers disrupt communication and interfere with understanding. They must be overcome if communication has to be effective.

Physical barriers are comparatively easier to overcome. The use of loudspeakers and microphones can remove the barriers of noise and distance in crowded places like railway stations. Traffic signals and non-verbal gestures of the traffic policeman remove physical barriers on the roads. Technological advancement has helped in reducing the communication gap arising due to time and distance .It is possible to make an alternative arrangement, should the technological instruments fail. A back-up plan helps in tidying over any snag.

Language or Semantic Barriers can be overcome if the sender and the receiver choose a language which both of them understand very well. Help from a translator or an interpreter also helps in overcoming the language barrier. Exposure to the target language and training oneself in the acquisition of skills of the given language too help in overcoming the language barrier. Language barriers can be avoided by careful study and accurate use of language. Clarity should be the main objective when using language. Jargon should be avoided.

Psychological barriers, as also cross-cultural barriers are difficult to overcome, as they are difficult to identify and even more difficult to address. Even these can be avoided or reduced by adopting a flexible and open-minded attitude. The ultimate aim is to build bridges of understanding between people – that is the main aim of communication. Training oneself to listen to different views, exposing oneself to different environments help in broadening one’s outlook and cultivating tolerance to multiple views. Teaching oneself to listen with empathy helps in making oneself more open to others’ perceptions. While dealing with psychological or cross-cultural barriers the sender should make it a point to– (i) use language that is politically neutral and correct. (ii) present views in simple and objective manner (iii) focus on the objective of communication (iv) Adopt flexible and open-minded attitude (v) Training of listening skills (vi) Exposure to different environment, views will help to broaden outlook. (vii) Listening with empathy helps in making oneself more adapting to other’s perceptions.

Listening

Importance of listening

1. Listening is the first means of acquiring information
2. Listening is the first means of learning new language
3. Helps to solve problems

4. Helps in framing plans and policies
5. Helps to share information
6. Helps in decision-making
7. Helps to know organization
8. Develops better relations
9. Provides encouragement

Nature of listening process:

Listening is such a routine activity that most people do not even realize that they are poor listeners, and are, therefore, in need of developing their listening skills. Others may feel that listening is a very difficult task, perhaps, next to impossible to achieve. But the truth is that good listening habits can be cultivated, and with practice, much can be achieved. Understanding the complex process of listening, itself, may help people become good listeners. Listening involves the following inter-related steps in sequential order:

Receiving-----Attending-----Interpreting-----Remembering-----Evaluating-----Responding

- **Receiving:** This is a kind of physiological process. The sounds impinge on the listener's ear. It is only when he takes these in that he can go further in the process of getting at the meaning.
- **Attending:** The listener has to focus his attention on the message. to the exclusion of all other sounds that may be present in the immediate surroundings.
- **Interpreting:** The sounds have to be interpreted, that is, the listener tries to understand the message that is being put across against the background of his own values, beliefs, ideas, expectations, needs, experience and background — and, of course, taking into account the speaker's viewpoint.
- **Remembering:** This involves storing the message for future reference.
- **Evaluating:** The listener makes a critical analysis of the information received, judging whether the message makes sense while separating fact from opinion.
- **Responding:** The listener gives a verbal or nonverbal response, and takes action accordingly.

Barriers to listening:

- 1) **Distractions**
 - a) **Semantic** - The listener is confused about the actual meaning of a word, as the word has different meanings.
 - b) **Physical** - This occurs when, for eg., the air-conditioning system or microphones fail; or there is noise in the surroundings; or, someone is constantly tapping on the table with his fingers.
 - c) **Mental** - This occurs when the listener makes himself the central character of his daydreams and forgets the speaker.
- 2) **Faking attention or pretending to listen** – This usually happens when the message consists of material of a difficult or uninteresting nature. The listener may not want to bother to understand the message. Sometimes this may happen when he is critical of the speaker's looks, style of speaking, or mannerisms.
- 3) **Defensive listening** – This kind of listening takes place when the speaker's views challenge the listener's beliefs.
- 4) **Prejudice** – The listener's bias, negative attitude, preconceived notions, fears, or stress adversely affect listening.
- 5) **Constant focus on self** - A person's ego may also adversely affect his listening. The Roman playwright, Terence, reveals this aspect of human nature when he says: My closest relation is myself. A person may believe that he knows everything that the speaker is talking about and, therefore, does not need to listen.
- 6) **Information overload** - The listener may be exposed to too many words or points and, therefore, be unable to take in everything. He should learn how to pick up the important ones, and discard the rest.
- 7) **The thinking-speaking rate** - The speaking rate is 125 – 150 words per minute, whereas the thinking rate is 400 words per minute. So, the listener's mind is moving much faster than the speaker is able to speak. The extra, intervening time, before the speaker arrives at his next point, is usually spent in shifting one's mental

focus, or in day dreaming. 8. Short attention span - The natural attention span for human beings is short. This is not easy to rectify, except for making a special effort to concentrate and prolong one's attention span.

Listening strategies:

- 1) Preparation for listening – The environment must be made conducive to listening. Noise and disturbance can be kept out by closing doors, or using a soundproof room. Suitable arrangements for microphones and stationery should be made in advance. Interruptions must be prevented. By these means, the physical barriers can be eliminated, and the listener can focus his attention on the speaker.
- 2) Background knowledge – The listener should train himself to listen intelligently, bearing in mind the speaker, the topic and the situation.
- 3) Re-organize the material in mind – The listener should be able to recognize patterns used by the speaker, and should be able to identify the main / central point, and supporting points; s/he should re-organize the material in his mind according to certain headings so as to facilitate recall.
- 4) Focusing on the speaker's matter than manner – The listener should not be prejudiced by the personal or behavioral traits of the speaker or his style, but should focus on the content, intent, and argument of the message.
- 5) Listening actively – Listening actively also involves being considerate to the speaker and empathizing with him. By adopting an alert listening pose, the listener puts the speaker at his ease and places him in a better position to formulate and express his ideas. The listener should have a positive attitude towards a talk, believing that in every talk there is always at least one point or idea that will be of value and special significance to him.
- 6) Listen with complete concentration – The listener should learn to differentiate between argument and evidence; idea and example; fact and opinion. He should attempt to pick out and paraphrase the important points while disregarding unimportant ones.
- 7) Interaction –
 - a) Do not interrupt - Allow the speaker to finish what he is saying before you begin to talk.
 - b) Do not disturb the speaker by indulging in some undesirable form of activity, like talking to the person next to you, looking at your watch, or walking out, or appearing uninterested or distracted.
 - c) Do not contradict the speaker
 - d) Do not let your mind move on to anticipate what is going to be said next – just listen carefully to what the speaker is actually saying. If you are busy planning your replies, you are likely to miss important points, and make irrelevant or stupid statements.
 - e) Adopt an open-minded attitude – Be open to new ideas, ask questions, seeking clarification of meaning, ideas, and thoughts; or to gather additional information, or to direct the flow of the conversation.
 - f) Avoid passing comments or making remarks when the speaker is speaking
 - g) Do not let your mind indulge in some other activity h. Only one person should speak at one time.
- 8) Patience – Do not get restless or impatient. Be careful not to lose your temper.
- 9) Motivation – The experience of listening is more rewarding if the listener is motivated and interested. Confidence and trust in the speaker are necessary.
- 10) Provide positive feedback – By maintaining eye contact, using proper facial expressions, nodding from time to time, leaning forward, and so on, you put the speaker at his ease, encourage him and thus enable him to give of his best.
- 11) Listen for vocal & no-verbal cues – By noting the speaker's tone of voice or facial expressions, it is possible to get at his meaning more effectively. Pay attention to what the speaker says as much as to what he leaves unsaid.
- 12) Make good use of the time gap between speaking and thinking – Spend this 'extra' time reflecting on what the speaker is saying. You could even jot down points or make brief notes on selected topics. Make a kind of mental summary, and evaluate what is being said. You may anticipate what the speaker is going to say next, but it is necessary to listen carefully to find out whether it is exactly what you expected or whether

there is some difference. If there is a difference, it is important to consider what the difference is, and the reason for it.

- 13) Introspection – The listener must honestly examine his existing listening habits, and consider whether he can improve upon them.
- 14) Practicing listening skills – Train yourself to use your listening skills every time you have occasion to listen. Do not abandon the task of listening, especially if you find it difficult. Listening is an act of the will as much as a matter of habit. It depends on mental conditioning. Willingness to make an effort, therefore, matters.
- 15) Adopting to different communication events – Effective listening includes the ability to adapt to several communication events, involving intercultural communication situations. The listener must be aware of factors like culture, gender, race, status, etc., and not allow them to adversely affect his listening. In this connection, tolerance, patience, and empathy are important.

Styles of listening:

1. Empathic listening – In this case we empathize with the speaker, and understand things from her/his point of view, allowing her/him the freedom to express her/his emotions.
2. Informational listening – Here, the aim is to receive information. So, the listener pays attention to the content, and makes decisions regarding the taking of notes; s/he also watches for related non-verbal cues, asks questions, and focuses on the replies. All this helps her/ him to assimilate the information.
3. Evaluative listening – We are exposed to a great deal of material intended to persuade us to accept the speaker's point of view; we need to evaluate what we hear, and note only certain points that are of interest or use to us.
4. Appreciative listening – We use this form of listening when we listen to our favourite music or watch an enjoyable television programme. In these instances, careful listening greatly enhances pleasure and appreciation.
5. Critical listening – This is when we listen critically and analytically, carefully considering the topic of the argument, the intentions of the speaker, his omissions, his point of view; his credibility and so on.

Communication Etiquette

Etiquette is the set of rules or customs that control accepted behaviour in particular social groups or social situations

General etiquettes:

1. If you're seated at a table with eight or fewer guests, wait until everyone is served and for the hostess to begin eating before you dig in. At a long banquet table, it's OK to start when several people are seated and served.
2. All items not having to do with food (and decoration) should remain off the table: keys, clutch bags, sunglasses, and especially phones.
3. Excuse yourself before reaching for your phone.
4. Don't make a big deal of saying you don't drink. Simply place your fingertips on the rim of the glass and say "Not today, thanks." This implies no judgment of those who wish to imbibe.

5. Don't use a speakerphone unless you're in your office and holding a meeting that's being attended by someone remotely. Alert the person you're speaking with that others are present, close the door, and definitely don't be a chatterbox while you talk. FYI: Using speakerphone at full volume to go through your voice mailbox is the definition of annoying.
6. Whoever arrives first, gets the door. It doesn't matter the gender of either.
7. Don't microwave stinky food.
8. Basic airport etiquette: Don't crowd the boarding. And once on board, stow your stuff and get out of the aisle quickly. When claiming your baggage, don't crowd the carousel. Step forward only when you see your bag.
9. Basic e-mail etiquette: Don't send an e-mail that just says "Thanks". If all you have to say in your email reply is "Thanks!" refrain from sending it. You're just clogging an inbox.
10. Things not to do when emailing: shout in all caps, use colored fonts or clip-art emoticons, attach large files, forward an email unless appropriate.
11. Basic of telephone etiquette: When talking to someone in person, don't glance down at your cell phone to see who's trying to reach you.
12. When answering the phone at work, state your name and place of business.
13. When leaving voice mails, state your name, place of business, and number. Succinctly say why you're calling.
14. Don't yell into the phone. Even if you can't hear the person on the other end very well, that doesn't mean they can't hear you.
15. If a cell phone call is dropped, the person who initiated the call should redial—even if you'd wrapped things up.
16. Work emails can be sent anytime, but business texts should be restricted to one hour before the start of the workday to two hours after it ends.
17. Basic culinary etiquettes: Use your hand to shield your lemon as you squeeze it into your iced tea so you don't inadvertently squirt your dining companion in the eye.
18. If you're eating and want to take a sip, dab your mouth with your napkin to avoid staining the rim of the glass.
19. Grabbing a bowl of salad or a saltshaker as it's being passed to someone who asked for it is the equivalent of cutting in line: greedy and rude.
20. While passing the food on the table, the dishes go counter clockwise.
21. Don't ask for leftovers at a business lunch or dinner. When out with family or friends, it's fine to ask for your leftovers to be wrapped, but don't do it in business lunch or dinner.

22. Don't check personal devices during a meeting attended by your boss or anyone else who can make her disapproval your problem.
23. In an elevator, let the people off the elevator.
24. If you leave your cell phone at your desk, turn it off.
25. Don't play music too loud.
26. Remove your sunglasses and earbuds to speak to someone.
27. Always be punctual.

Etiquette of letter writing

1. **Letterhead:** Generally business letters are written on 8.5 x 11 sheets of quality plain paper or pre-printed stationery. Your name or company name should be clearly identifiable. Your address and other contact information should also be easy to find and read.
2. **Formatting the letter:** Use a consistent type size and style that is easy to read and helps define your overall company image. The most common layout style for business correspondence is to justify to the left margin and to place an extra line space to indicate new paragraphs. Whether you indent the first line or not is a matter of style and both are fine. My only recommendation is not to right-justify the letter as it often makes the letter more difficult to read. Take care in laying out your letter to have balanced margins all around.
3. **Heading:** Begin all business letters with the following information, in this order:

Date

List the date the letter is being sent, spelling out the entire date in either the American (April 1, 2011) or European (1 April 2011) styles. Do not use any form of abbreviation. Typically, no more than two to three lines spaces follow this line.

Addressee and Inside Address

Write the following information each on separate lines:

Name

Title or position

Company name

Street Address, including suite number

City, State, Zip Code, and Country (as appropriate)

As a sign of respect, especially for first-time letters to someone you have never met, it is best to address the person properly as Miss, Ms, Mrs. or Mr. (as applicable), followed by their first and last name. If the addressee has a designation, such as M.D. or Ph.D., use only one style at a time. For example, list John Smith, M.D., not Dr. John Smith, M.D. Please remember Ms is a proper word requiring no period; it is not an abbreviation.

When entering the name of a state type the entire name, such as Pennsylvania, not the postal code PA. The postal code should only appear on the envelope. Follow this block of information with two line spaces.

Greeting and salutation: Letter writing protocol dictates business letters begin with "Dear" followed by the addressee's honorific and last name, followed by a colon, not a comma. For example, write "Dear Dr. Smith:" Again, Dear Ms Smith is best for first time letters. As you become better acquainted with the person, one style is to type in their proper name, then strike it out by pen and hand write their first name to

show less formality. Follow this information with twoline spaces. Only personal letters use a comma after the salutation and name.

Body text: The current style is to write letters in as conversational a manner as possible. Long gone are the days where letters were written to sound more formal in an attempt to elevate your level of professionalism and education. Avoid phrases such as “Pursuant to” or “Please find enclosed” and stick with the same phrases you use in business conversation. I like to write letters using a sandwich approach: begin and end all correspondence with positive and cordial sentiments. Sandwiched in the middle, write the core information you want to convey. Separate each paragraph of text with two-line spaces.

Closing: End letters with a cordial phrase you are comfortable using—Sincerely, Yours Truly, or Best Regards—followed by a comma. Depending on space left at the bottom of the sheet, allow four to five lines spaces for a signature.

Signature lines: Type the name of the person who wrote and signed the letter, using both their first and last name. In cases where a woman wishes to be addressed a specific way, be sure to add Mrs., Ms, or Miss in parenthesis before her name. If the letter is written by more than one person, include a signature line for each. A second signature line may be used to list the person’s title or position, as applicable.

Notations: At the bottom of the letter, typically two-line spaces below the second signature line list notations for Enclosures, Postscripts, and Courtesy Copies. List courtesy copies as “cc” with the names of all individuals who are receiving a copy of the letter. I like to highlight each “cc” person’s name when sending their copy.

Identifying initials: When someone other than the author types and finalizes a letter, it is customary to include a line indicating who performed this work. Show the initials of the writer of the letter in capital letters, followed by either a colon or forward-slash and the assistant’s initials in lower case letters. For example, RFH:sjs or RFH/sjs.

Proof read: Always print out a copy of your letter and read it before signing and mailing. Look that the margins and format are pleasing to the eye. Read the letter for spelling, grammar, and correct contact.

Folding: One of the biggest frustrations in receiving a letter is how sloppy and incorrectly it is folded. A crookedly folded letter communicates a lack of care, interest, and professionalism. Letters typed on standard 8.5 x 11 paper, mailed in a standard #10 business sized envelope should be folded in thirds, leaving the top flap just slightly short of meeting a perfect one-third fold at the bottom. Leaving a little flap allows the receiver to open the letter more easily. If you are using a smaller envelope, fold the paper first in half lengthwise, then in thirds horizontally.

Inserting: Place the folded letter into the envelope with the top flap in front and upright in the envelope. When the person opens the envelope he or she can easily pull the letter out, open it, and read it. Inserting it any other way makes it more difficult to open and read.

Addressing the envelope: For that initial good impression, use printed envelopes that match your letterhead. Your return address should be easy to find and read. When addressing envelopes, use the U.S. Postal Service guidelines for the fastest delivery service: Type all addresses. Use all capital letters. Eliminate all punctuation. Insert one space between the city and state and two spaces between the state and zip code. Again, there is no comma between the city and state. Use only the two-letter state code.

E-mail etiquettes:

According to a study by the International Data Corporation (IDC) workers spend 28 percent of their workweek reading and answering email.

Here are some of the dos and don’ts of email etiquette.

Do have a clear subject line.

Most of us have to compete with the hundreds of emails clogging our inbox every day, so the clearer your subject line, the more likely your message will be read. For example, if you're sending a proposal to someone, be specific and write, "The Fitch Proposal Is Attached."

Don't forget your signature.

Every email should include a signature that tells the recipient who you are and how to contact you. Set it up to automatically appear at the end of each email. Include all of your contact details so the recipient doesn't have to look up your address, email or phone number.

Do use a professional salutation.

Using "Hey," "Yo," or "Hiya" isn't professional, no matter how well you know the recipient. Use "Hi" or "Hello" instead. To be more formal, use "Dear (insert name)." Using the person's name in the salutation - "Hello Robert" -- is quite appropriate, but remember not to shorten a person's name unless you're given permission to do so.

Don't use humor.

Humor does not translate well via email. What you think is funny has a good chance of being misinterpreted by the other party, or taken as sarcasm, without the accompanying vocal tone and facial expressions. When in doubt, leave humor out of business communications.

Do proofread your message.

Don't be surprised if you're judged by the way you compose an email. For example, if your email is littered with misspelled words and grammatical errors, you may be perceived as sloppy, careless, or even uneducated. Check your spelling, grammar and message before hitting "send."

Don't assume the recipient knows what you are talking about.

Create your message as a stand-alone note, even if it is in response to a chain of emails. This means no "one-liners." Include the subject and any references to previous emails, research or conversations. It can be frustrating and time consuming to look back at the chain to brush up on the context. Your recipient may have hundreds of emails coming in each day and likely won't remember the chain of events leading up to your email.

Do reply to all emails.

Give a timely and polite reply to each legitimate email addressed to you. Even if you do not have an answer at the moment, take a second to write a response letting the sender know you received their email. Inform the sender if their email was sent to the wrong recipient, too.

Don't shoot from the lip.

Never send an angry email, or give a quick, flip response. Give your message some thoughtful consideration before sending it. If you feel angry, put your message into the "drafts" folder, and review it again later when you are calmer and have time to formulate an appropriate response.

Do keep private material confidential.

It is far too easy to share emails, even inadvertently. If you have to share highly personal or confidential information, do so in person or over the phone. Ask permission before posting sensitive material either in the body of the email or in an attachment.

Don't! overuse exclamation points.

Exclamation points and other indications of excitement such as emoticons, abbreviations like LOL, and all CAPITALS do not translate well in business communications. Leave them off unless you know the recipient extremely well. It's also not professional to use a string of exclamation points!!!!

Telephone etiquettes

Introduction

These are some basic manners that everyone in Business should follow because what you say represents you, your organization and your ideas. All of these deserve to be portrayed in the best possible manner. There are certain thumb rules that we go by in Business. As a fun activity, a group of you could do a role play for learning this.

Common telephone etiquettes:

- Keep a pleasant voice pitch. Use warm wishes like “good morning, “how are you, good sir?” and such. First impressions are the last impressions. So make them last.
- **Know your audience:** It's important to know who you are speaking to set the tone and use relatable language with them.
- **Never call any person at odd hours** like early morning or late nights as the person will definitely be sleeping and will not be interested in talking to you.
- If you are the one who has called, before starting the conversation, introduce yourself first and then definitely confirm whether you are talking to the right person. Example – Hello ma'am. Good morning. My name is Pratyush, I am calling from Toppr.com. Am I speaking with Neha?”
- **Make sure your content is crisp and relevant.** Don't play with words, come to the point directly and convey the information as required. If you the one dialling, first prepare your content thoroughly and then only pick up the receiver to start interacting.
- Re-check the dialled number to avoid unwanted confusion and mistakes.
- Remember you are making a conversation. Be a good listener and always ask for feedback to know whether you have the other person on the same page as you. Also, when the call is done, always ask politely to the person on the other hand if that is all? Then end with pleasantries.

- Always speak each and every word clearly. The person on the other end can't see your expressions so remember your tone should be apt to express your feelings in the correct form.
- Another very important telephone etiquette is to never put the second party on very long holds. It is rude and may cause irritation to the person on the other end.
- If there are disturbances around like TVs, radios, etc., it's telephone etiquette to turn it's volume down so you are audible to the person on the line.
- If you are eating and it is a formal phone call, it does not sound good. First off, all calls must be scheduled on non-lunch hours. If there are unplanned calls that are business related, either ask for pardoning you till you finish eating or maybe take a break from eating and finish the call first. Not only do we sound funny when we speak on the phone while eating, but we can also be not clearly understood.

It is hard to concentrate on the person on the line if you are focusing on other activities like watching a video, reading a book, eating, playing video games, etc. It may very well come off as irresponsible and disinterested to some.

- One of the important telephone etiquettes is to not take too long to pick up a call. If you miss the call, make sure you give a call back as the other person might have an important message to convey. Avoid giving missed calls at workplaces as it irritates the other person. Be professional and always approach first if you are the one in need.

Do not leave your phone numbers on your emails for them to call you if you are the one approaching for work.

- In professional talks, never keep the conversation too long as the other person might be busy. Always keep the content crisp and relevant and do come to the point after formal greetings.
- If you are not the correct person and the speaker needs to speak to your co-worker always politely say "one moment please- I will call him/her in a minute". If the colleague is not in the office premises, always take a message on his/her behalf and don't forget to convey to him when he is back. Also, it is best if you do not discuss these messages with others as some information could be sensitive too.
- If you have network issues between a call, deal with it patiently and wisely. People tend to raise their voices when the network is the issue. If it's a patchy network, even a raised voice is going to sound patchy. So do not resort to yelling. Moreover, it causes disturbance to others around you. Check your network, if

the issue is at your end, politely tell them you are disconnecting the call to find a better spot to call back from.

Chances are they won't be able to hear it, but you have no choice. If re-connection takes too long, leave them a message with a re-scheduled call. In case the network disturbance is from the other person's end, politely tell them that you are facing difficulty in hearing them. Kindly ask them to find a network zone.

- **Wrap up:** The final telephone etiquette is to tie all loose ends of the conversation in your final wrap up. One may also relay the important highlights of the conversation to make sure everyone is on the same page. If this conversation was a conference with a larger group, take everyone's final say and make sure everyone has put their point forth without hesitation.

Social media etiquettes

1. Don't Mix Business and Pleasure

Some public figures get paid to post outrageous or inspiring things on their social media accounts, but mere mortals don't have this privilege. If your job requires you to maintain a social media account with your name on it, don't use it to talk about where you're going clubbing tonight, or to share photos of your new puppy. Keep separate accounts for this type of engagement. If the handles of your personal and business accounts are similar, clearly indicate which account is which in the about section. To soften the blow of questionable content, attach a disclaimer, such as "All views expressed are my own," to your personal Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Keep in mind that your professional concerns should always outweigh your personal ones. For instance, if you've been tapped for a promotion at work, but haven't been cleared to discuss it publicly, resist the urge to share the news on your personal social media accounts.

2. Use Caution Posting and Tagging Photos

You probably don't appreciate it when your friends tag you in unflattering or candid photos, so why put them in the same position? If you're posting a group photo, ask permission before tagging your friends, or post the photo with the caption "Tag yourself" to encourage others to take the initiative. Also, make sure your profile pictures, especially on business-focused social sites such as LinkedIn, are professional. Crisp, high-resolution head shots work best.

The rules change for your business page, where a logo or representative image might be appropriate. If professional concerns lead you to maintain an anonymous Facebook or Twitter page, feel free to be more creative with images. Just don't do anything truly offensive – it's still possible to deduce the owner of an anonymous page.

3. Be Self-Centered in Small Doses

Even if you understand you're not the center of the universe, your social media presence could be singing a different tune. Before you post, tweet, or share anything, think about how others might interpret it – will it be perceived as insightful and informative, or crass and boring? This is particularly important if you depend on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, and other tools to market your professional side.

The 4-1-1 rule, which was developed for Twitter, but can be applied to other platforms, is a good template for engagement. The idea is that every time you post something that's "all about you," you share at least four pieces of content written by someone else.

4. Understand That Your Sense of Humor Isn't Universal

Unless you're sending a private message, your social media posts reach well beyond your friends and family members. What flies in the locker room or frat house might not be kosher in a setting where people from different backgrounds congregate. This doesn't mean you can't use well-placed humor in your posts – just make sure it's appropriate.

5. Don't Be Reactive

Celebrity Twitter wars are fun to watch, but avoid getting sucked into your own social media arguments. From behind a screen, a fight's consequences seem less immediate, and many people are willing to go toe-to-toe online in ways they'd never dream of doing face-to-face. If you hash things out on social media, your words and actions can be saved and dredged up down the line.

There are many ways to start a social media spat, from personally responding to a politically tinged Facebook post, to publicly calling someone out for wrongdoing. No matter how the fight starts, the results aren't constructive. In addition to alienating your adversary and his or her associates, you could develop a reputation as a hot head. And if you're a senior employee, such as a VP or public relations specialist, your employer could take action against you, even if the dispute has nothing to do with your job.

6. Avoid Over-Sharing

Your social media feeds shouldn't read like an inner monologue. Occasionally sharing what your cat's up to or how awesome dinner was last night is fine. But over-sharing – as in posting your cereal choice every morning – is the quickest way to lose your friends and followers. Even if you don't use your accounts for professional purposes, your social presence is a big part of your [personal brand](#). You want your brand to be interesting, engaging, and representative of your best characteristics. You don't want to dilute it with scads of irrelevant posts.

7. Build a Legacy for the Future

It's standard for employers and educational institutions to vet candidates' [social media activity](#) before granting an interview or accepting an application, so be sure that your accounts don't jeopardize your chances. Ramp up the privacy settings on your personal accounts so your posts aren't visible to non-contacts. Remove and un-tag morally or legally questionable photos. Find and delete any disparaging comments you've made about previous employers or colleagues. Make sure your LinkedIn profile has an updated resume, and begin engaging with relevant professional groups.

Think past the next status update – your social media presence contains years of information about you, and your exposure increases with the digitization of society. If you want to use social media to say and share what you please, consider creating semi-anonymous accounts under a pseudonym, such as nickname, misspelling, or inversion of your full name.

8. Don't Misrepresent Yourself

Dishonesty can have serious personal and professional consequences, even on social media. It might feel easy to misrepresent yourself when you're hiding behind a screen, but even a seemingly innocent embellishment on your LinkedIn profile, such as inventing a more impressive title at a previous job, could get you canned. Using social media to take credit for the achievements of your coworkers is also a no-no.

9. Don't Drink and Tweet

If you're impaired in any way – lack of sleep, jet lag, or one too many drinks – you're more likely to break the rules of social media etiquette. If you'd feel unsafe behind the wheel, wait to engage online until you're in a better frame of mind. Similarly, if your first instinct after a hard day at work or a fight with your partner is to vent digitally, resist the temptation. You're liable to say something that could damage your personal or professional reputation.

10. Understand Each Platform's Best Practices

Some social media etiquette principles are broadly applicable, and many are extensions of offline courtesy. But others, such as what to include in direct messages on Twitter, and when or with whom to connect on LinkedIn, are platform-specific. Before you become an active user of a new social media platform, read up on its best practices. And since these practices can change as new features emerge, study up each month to stay current.

Social media has tremendous power, so it's important to follow proper etiquette when you engage with other users. From avoiding extensive self-promotion, to maintaining a respectful sense of humour, most best practices are simply a high-tech version of old-school etiquette. But the social media world moves far faster than the offline world, so it's critical to think about the effects your words, pictures, and videos have

before sharing them with hundreds or thousands of your peers. Digital denizens aren't always quick to forgive.

Corporate Etiquettes

Have you ever felt disrespected at work? In a survey, 98% of respondents of thousands of workers stated that they'd experienced uncivil behavior in the workplace.

When workers feel disrespected by their colleagues, they're less likely to perform well. In many cases, workers resign from their positions, leading to internal tensions in the company. Who would want to work in a place where they feel uncomfortable or unwelcome?

On the other hand, when customers experience uncivil behavior from companies, they're less likely to purchase from them. Why lose customers before they even engage with your product or company, based on bad manners and poor business etiquette?

To put it simply, incivility is a serious hindrance to the long-term profitability of any organization and has both internal and external effects.

Fortunately, many incivility issues can be avoided by learning and practicing proper business etiquette. When you're more conscious of how you're interacting with your colleagues, customers and business partners, relationships will prosper and profits will increase.

Ten essential business etiquette tips to create a more positive work environment and build stronger relationships with customers.

1 – Solicit Feedback

Most people have behavioral blind spots. You may think that you're behaving in a considerate, respectful manner, without noticing how annoying you might be. We all have pet peeves, but understanding what yours are and being mindful of your own behavior can help you avoid getting on people's nerves. Asking for feedback is a great way to increase your awareness of your own behavior and how it may actually hinder your abilities to create positive and successful relationships.

Understanding what kind of reputation you hold and the personality you portray is especially important to senior leaders. The reputation of senior leaders can drive employee commitment by as much as 41%.

If you hold a leadership position within your organization, soliciting feedback about the way you conduct yourself is crucial for long-term success.

You may wish to collect feedback informally by asking your subordinates what they think of your style of leadership, or you can collect feedback using digital surveys. In either case, it's important that you request honest feedback and ensure that negative opinions will not be punished. A good way to ensure that you receive truthful comments, and promise your respondents' their security, is through anonymous forums that allow people to be more open about what they are saying about you.

Finally, it's critical that you take actions to rectify any criticisms that are raised. The purpose of the feedback is to give you a better understanding of how you come across and offer you suggestions to improve your workplace behaviour. Understanding and receiving feedback without taking offense to what is said is important. Everyone has their own opinions, and you may not agree with everything that is said. The best way to collect and interpret any feedback is looking for common trends between your respondents' comments to see if there are any recurring themes.

Feedback can be both positive and appear to be negative... but don't take anything as 'negative' as that word holds a lot of stigmas...rather, see all comments as constructive criticisms to improve your relations or praises to continue doing what you are doing. Take every comment with equal weight and be sure to celebrate the things that you are doing right!

2 – Maintain Visibility

Barricading yourself and hiding away from your colleagues can be perceived as hostile and even rude. A closed door might as well be a moat and a gated castle...so put down the drawbridge and be open! Do not isolate yourself from your coworkers!

If you've got an urgent task to complete, it may be efficient for you to put on headphones or close your office door until you're finished working. But, if you do close your door, be sure you crack it open just a bit, as soon as you get your task done.

We understand that sometimes work environments can be rowdy and distracting, making it difficult to get any work done without tuning out your surroundings. We must keep in mind that productivity is important but that open communication is essential for all businesses to thrive.

While everyone needs a little solitude every once in a while, it's important to make time for your colleagues too. Leave your office door open as much as you can, and encourage your colleagues to come in and talk to you.

Taking 5 minutes every so often to discuss informal matters with your colleagues will dramatically improve your workplace relationships. Sometimes faking an interest in your colleague's dog or beloved cat can go a long way. Be nice! I'm sure some of them are polite and listen to your own boring stories! But having small-talk with colleagues fosters team-building and you may even find some commonalities amongst yourselves! If you're generally perceived as warm and affable, your colleagues can better understand when you need to take some 'me time' throughout your workday.

You want to work hard and stay focused while also seeming approachable to your colleagues.

3 – Nonverbal Communication Matters

Whether or not you believe the frequently quoted statistic that 93% of communication is nonverbal, body language and vocal tonality are extremely important when communicating with other people (especially in a business context).

If your words are positive, yet your voice is tense and your body language is contracted, people will view you with distrust.

Always strive to maintain good posture and open body language. If you're seeking to build positive relationships with your colleagues, closing your arms in front of you, avoiding eye contact and fidgeting excessively, will make the wrong impression of you being disinterested or untrustworthy. Not only does that leave a bad taste in their mouths, but you are also destroying your relationships to the team.

Finally, remember to smile more often! Smiling reduces stress, boosts the moods of people around you and can actually improve your chances of receiving a promotion.

If you are having a rough day, eating your favourite snack or watching a funny GIF can boost your mood, and turn your day right-side up. If you're in a funk, it will show! So, fake it till you make it!

4 – Behave Impeccably During Meetings

Whether you're meeting with team members, shareholders or clients, the way you conduct yourself during formal meetings tends to leave a long-lasting impression – so make it a good one!

Make sure to arrive punctually and thoroughly rehearse what you plan to say before the meeting. If you start discussing long-winded topics that aren't specifically relevant to the people in the room, they'll only resent you for wasting their time. Leave the small talk for breaks and lunches!

Speak loudly enough to convey your message clearly, but don't take it too far or you may be perceived as aggressive.

Introduce people who don't know each other in the meeting and always listen quietly when someone else is speaking. Avoid checking your phone during meetings and always set your ringtone to silent.

Only eat during a meeting if everyone else is eating too. When the meeting is finished, clean up after yourself before leaving.

Finally, avoid asking a string of questions at the end of the meeting. Other people may be ready to leave and will feel that you're holding them up if you do so.

5 – Give Respect to Everyone

Don't be a kiss-ass or a push over and treat everyone at your office equally.

It's no secret that most people in an organization are looking to further their careers, but when you're blatantly showing that all you care about is climbing the ladder, it will ruin your workplace relationships.

Be confident in who you are and your position on the team. If you do not agree with something, do not be afraid to politely voice your opinion while acknowledging the feelings and opinions of others.

Whether speaking to an intern or a CEO, you should always be polite and treat everyone equally. It can be intimidating speaking to a manager, a boss, or someone with a high title at your workplace. If you say your “please” and “thank-you’s” to everyone on the team, not only will you be respectful to everyone, but you might even gain more confidence by seeing and treating everyone the equally.

Part of team building is ensuring that everyone on the team is heard and felt respected.

Irrespective of what position a person holds in your organization’s hierarchy, always treat everyone with respect and gratitude.

6 – Shower Your Colleagues with Praise

You may believe that embellishing your own achievements will improve your chances of getting a promotion, but the opposite is usually true.

When you downplay the achievement of others, they may actively start working against you in order to prevent you from achieving your goals.

Be confident in who you are and your position on the team. If you do not agree with something, do not be afraid to politely voice your opinion while acknowledging the feelings and opinions of others.

Whether speaking to an intern or a CEO, you should always be polite and treat everyone equally. It can be intimidating speaking to a manager, a boss, or someone with a high title at your workplace. If you say your “please” and “thank-you’s” to everyone on the team, not only will you be respectful to everyone, but you might even gain more confidence by seeing and treating everyone the equally.

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7 – Punctuality is Key

When you show up to the place you’re supposed to be, at the right time, day in, day out, this demonstrates you’re a person who honours their commitments.

Conversely, when you consistently show up late (irrespective of how valid your excuses are), this shows that you’re not fully committed to the organization that employs you.

If you’re late to a meeting with business partners, think about what this conveys.

Professionalism and punctuality go hand in hand, so always endeavour to honour your commitments in a timely manner.

Perhaps you will be late in hitting your deadlines, or you’ll be hard to get a hold of if an urgent situation arises. If something does come up that you cannot avoid, be sure that you do what you can to compensate for the lost time or the missed deadline. Sometimes things happen, and sometimes dogs really do eat our paperwork. Just be sure you keep a copy of everything you do and keep a record of your work processes. Offering to make up for missed time can mean a lot to an employer or offering alternative arrangements demonstrates that you have considered the consequences of the interruption and are committed to your responsibilities.

Also, let everyone involved in the project know that something has happened... leaving people out of the dark makes you look both unprofessional and creates an unwanted surprise for your colleagues and employers.

8 – Don’t Gossip

In an office, it’s not expected that every single conversation will revolve around work topics. However, indulging in office gossip is never a good idea if you want to be respected.

Talking about colleagues behind their back is unnecessary and will damage relationships when rumours spread. If you find yourself getting dragged into office gossip, simply leave the situation instead of adding fuel to the fire. If you really can’t avoid these situations, try to inject work related topics into the discussion to kill off the petty gossip.

If you’re going to talk about colleagues, emphasize their strong points instead of slandering them.

9 – Be Professional at the Dinner Table

It's easy to let your guard down when you're at dinner with your colleagues or customers. After all, it's the evening and the work day has finished – you can enjoy some wine and relax a little.

While it's true that dinner provides an opportunity to get to know business associates on an informal level, it's important to remember that you're still a representative of your company – in every situation!

Never talk with your mouth full and always remain courteous, especially if you've had a drink or two. Be polite to the waiting staff, even if something goes wrong – losing your cool is never okay when you're with business associates.

Carefully consider which restaurant to dine at depending on who you're with. It's fine to visit your local fast food venue with your team members during your lunch break, but this kind of venue would be an inconsiderate choice for meeting with potential business partners.

Likewise, if you choose a restaurant which is too lavish, this could convey that your company is wasteful in terms of financial management.

Finally, please learn the proper etiquette for dining utensils – not knowing how to leave your plate when you're finished eating can make a terrible impression.

10 – Dress Appropriately

Dress codes differ from company to company, so ensure that you have a good understanding of yours.

For men, choosing a pair of work shoes that matches the colour of your suit is wise. Your suits should be ironed and fit your body properly – if your pant leg is too short, your socks will always be on display which looks unprofessional. Also, make sure that your socks **MATCH**. Other than watches and wedding rings, avoid jewellery.

For women, wear something professional...whether it is a blazing blazer or a lovely dress. Heels, flats, and boots can all work with these outfits depending on what you decide and what is weather appropriate.

Accessories should always match the overall aesthetic of your outfit. Again, jewellery should be kept to a minimum, as they can be distracting and even uncomfortable. You want to make sure that you are comfortable...if you walk to work, wear running shoes or boots and pack some heels or flats in your purse to switch into when you get to the office.

Also, don't be too casual when it's dress-down day. Any time you're with your colleagues, impressions matter! You can switch from your formal, collared shirt to a short-sleeved shirt, but don't come to work in a tracksuit or something you'd wear around the house.