
The Essential Guide to **Communicating** With Tact & Credibility



AMA American Management
Association®

TRAINING SOLUTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS & ORGANIZATIONS

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	pg.01
Communication and Your Image	pg.02
Step 1: Overcome Communication Roadblocks	pg.04
Step 2: Understand Verbal and Non-Verbal Cues	pg.06
Step 3: Be a Better Listener	pg.09
Conclusion & Resources	pg.12



Success at work depends largely on how well you communicate

Introduction

The best idea is worth nothing if others can't hear it. Success at work depends largely on how well you communicate. But being an effective communicator in today's workplace isn't as simple as it seems. For starters, you need to be able to share your ideas, give feedback and listen to others. And your message needs to be clear and non-threatening.

Enter diplomacy, tact and credibility. When you communicate with all three, you're viewed more positively, which influences how others see your work. In this guide, you'll learn the three steps that'll help you be more diplomatic and tactful when communicating on the job.



Diplomacy



Tact



Credibility



One of the biggest factors impacting your image is how you communicate.

Communication & Your Image

Your image, or how others perceive you, can have strong implications for your career mobility, advancement and ultimate career success.

In other words, your success in life is dependent upon more than just your hard work and performance on the job. How others perceive you plays into your personal and career success.

Social psychologists studying the impact of image have determined that it takes approximately 30 seconds for someone meeting you to form impressions about your character and abilities.

While having a good image doesn't eliminate the need for good job skills and technical expertise, at the top levels of business where stellar job performance is the norm, the differentiating factors between success and stagnation often have to do with image. Even though this may not seem fair, it is reality.

One of the biggest factors impacting image development is how you communicate. That is because your communication with others directly impacts how they perceive you.

You cannot not communicate—and what you say or what you don't say, and how you say something helps formulate your image to others. Communication is in our control—and if we don't utilize our control over how we communicate, we negatively impact how others perceive us.



The better we are at communicating, the more effective we are at having diplomacy, tact and credibility.

Communication & Your Image

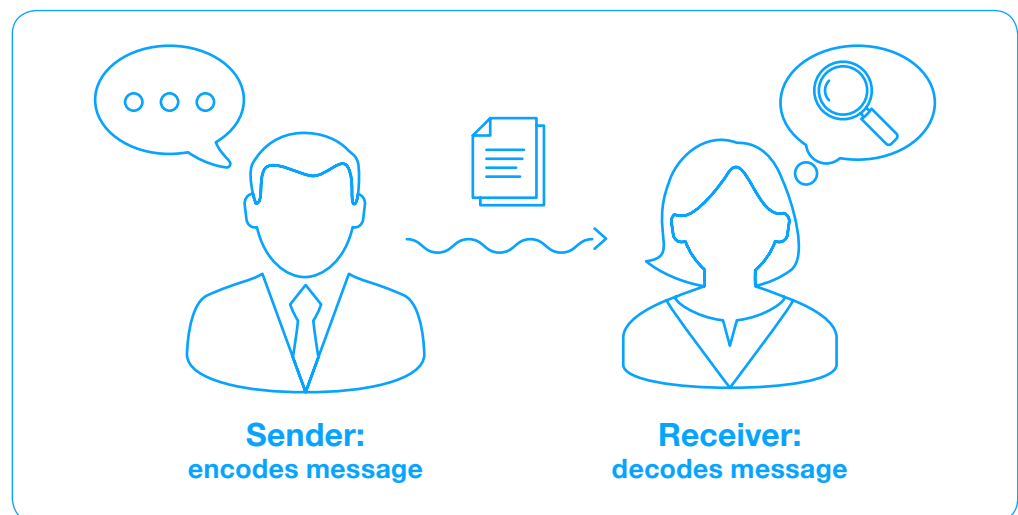
Communication is the means by which we transmit our ideas, thoughts, feelings, and hopes. When you communicate, you transmit information to others. Information is an asset and as valuable as real estate or manufacturing equipment. Good communication is the key to acquiring, processing and capitalizing on that asset. The better we are at communicating, the more effective we are at having diplomacy, tact and credibility—and the better our image will be in the eyes of others.

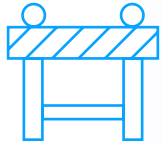
Anything you do—or choose not to do—can and will communicate a message!

A COMMUNICATION MODEL

The sender encodes a message, which means he/she decides what he/she is going to say and how he/she will communicate (verbally, email, etc.) The message is sent, and then the receiver decodes the message, or tries to understand what it means.

While this process may seem straight-forward, there is more to it than meets the eye. As a communicator, you must be mindful of all the “noise” occurring between what you say and what the listener hears. Once you are aware of these noises, you are more prepared to address them in your conversation. This in turn will help ensure you are sending the right message, and also being properly understood.





Good communicators are successful at overcoming roadblocks—they don't quit.

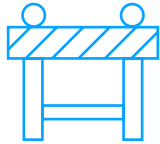
STEP 01: Overcome Communication Roadblocks

One characteristic of successful communicators is that they can overcome communication roadblocks.

Roadblocks to good communication can occur anywhere in the communication process. Good communicators are successful at overcoming roadblocks—they don't quit. When confronted with a roadblock, a good communicator will search out alternative ways to achieve their purpose. Overcoming communication roadblocks is the first step to being perceived as an effective communicator. Roadblocks impede your ability to communicate with diplomacy, tact and credibility.

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNICATION ROADBLOCKS INCLUDE:

- Time
- Crises
- Opposing perspectives
- Disrespect
- Personalities
- Conflicting goals
- History
- Preconceived ideas & assumptions



*Do your research.
Know in advance
the specific
objections you will
face.*

STEP 01: Overcome Communication Roadblocks

You can overcome any of these roadblocks by using the strategies below as needed.

- Do your research. Know in advance the specific objections you will face.
- Prepare a compelling defense in case you need it.
- Take the initiative and speak first—address differences and objections before your partner has a chance to vocalize them.
- Approach roadblocks and differences as a temporary state
- Agree to disagree if it will move the conversation forward.



one way to positively impact others is to improve your visual, vocal and verbal components of communication.

STEP 02: Understand Verbal & Non-Verbal Cues

Successful communicators pay attention to non-verbal components of communication. There are specific behaviors and actions you can take that will help others more positively “receive” the message you are sending them. Although communication is a difficult process, one way to positively impact others is to improve your visual, vocal and verbal components of communication.



VISUAL

Some studies have shown that visual elements carry the majority of the impact of communication (up to 55% to 60% of the impact of a message in face-to-face communication).

There are five visual elements of communication:

1. **Eye Contact:** Eye contact shows the other person we are listening.
2. **Facial Expression:** Our facial responses are a visual animation of how we feel about another person and their message.
3. **Body Language:** Body language either supports or contradicts the auditory messages we send. If your body language doesn't support what you're saying, the receiver is likely to think your message is dishonest.
4. **Object Language:** Object Language refers to how we visually present ourselves to others: dress, hairs and even how we keep our office, send messages to others about us.
5. **Proxemics:** Proxemics looks at how space is perceived and used in communication: while personal comfort zones vary by culture, the average personal comfort zone in the U.S. is about 1-1/2 to 4 feet.



Often, it isn't what you say but how you say it.

STEP 02: Understand Verbal & Non-Verbal Cues



VOCAL

In some research findings, vocal cues accounted for approximately 35% to 40% of the impact of a message.

There are four elements involved in vocal communication:

1. **Speed of Voice:** Problems arise when there is a significant discrepancy in vocal speed between two speakers. Consider adjusting your speed to more closely mirror that of your partner's if a speed discrepancy is detracting from the conversation.
2. **Volume:** People with deep voices are generally perceived as more persuasive than those with voices that are relatively high-pitched. This is true for women as well as men. Consider lowering your pitch when you want to have a positive impact. Also; in order to inspire trust, volume should be neither too loud nor too low.
3. **Inflection:** Inflection is the emphasis you place on certain words when you are speaking, and it tells others how you feel about what you are saying. A powerful message without the proper inflection can lose its impact on the audience. Be sure to vary your voice to generate and maintain interest.
4. **Tone of Voice:** Often, it isn't *what* you say but *how* you say it. Tone addresses the character of emphasis used: angry, sad, sincere, sarcastic, etc. People actually pay more attention to the tone in which you say something rather than what you actually say—so be sure to watch your tone when communicating with others.



Your choice of words determines how your communication is likely to come across to others

STEP 02: Understand Verbal & Non-Verbal Cues



VERBAL

Verbal communication is one of the major ways that we impact others and one of the major ways we demonstrate diplomacy, tact and credibility.

Verbal communication focuses on the words you use. Your choice of words determines how your communication is likely to come across to others. Words that are considerate of others are likely to help deliver a more sincere message as opposed to random words you might choose without concern for their possible impact.

When communicating, you should avoid words that label and judge. Words that are emotionally charged and value-laden will also cause you, as a communicator, to lose credibility and communication effectiveness.



Good listening can have a huge impact on increasing diplomacy, tact and credibility, and improving the way others perceive you.

STEP 03: Be a Better Listener

LISTENING MATTERS

Listening and responding effectively to someone else's statement is a crucial part of communication. When you actively listen, the person receiving the message feels important, recognized and accepted. Good listening can have a huge impact on increasing diplomacy, tact and credibility, and improving the way others perceive you.

- Most people are only 25% effective in listening.
- The average person listens at the rate of 500 words per minute, but speaks at the normal rate of only 125-500 words per minute.
- Listening skills are poorest when we interact with the people we are closest to—i.e., family members and co-workers.

The advantages to being an excellent listener include:

- You are more likely to understand what is being said.
- You will make the other person feel important, recognized and accepted.
- You will positively impact how others perceive you.



The next time you have a conversation with someone, aim for “Excellent” on all checklist items.

STEP 03: Be a Better Listener

HOW WELL DO YOU LISTEN?

Consider a recent conversation you had with someone who was explaining an idea to you. Use the checklist below to evaluate how well you listened to that person, and what areas need improvement. The next time you have a conversation with someone, aim for “Excellent” on all checklist items.

	Excellent	Acceptable	Needs Improvement
Maintained eye contact	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibited positive body and facial expressions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asked appropriate questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paraphrased when needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Used empathy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maintained silence/observed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Remembered what was said in the conversation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Limited the amount of time he/she spoke	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kept an open mind - no prejudice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Avoided jumping to conclusions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Created a positive atmosphere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Used words that showed concern for the feelings of the speaker	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



*Work at listening.
Active listening
takes practice.*

STEP 03: Be a Better Listener

MORE LISTENING TIPS

- Find common areas of interest between you and the speaker.
- Credibility on the part of the listener is one way to lessen resistance from others. People resist others less and listen to them more because of credibility.
- Work at listening. Active listening takes practice.
- Make meaningful notes about points you can't remember or need to address.
- Evaluate and be critical of content, not the speaker's delivery.



Conclusion & Resources

From overcoming communication roadblocks to understanding verbal and non-verbal cues, you now have a grasp on the skills you'll need to communicate your way to your next career goal.



READ MORE

[Ten Phrases That Should Be Banned from Your Workplace Vocabulary](#)



WATCH A WEBCAST

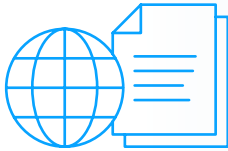
[Crash Course on Solving Communication Problems](#)

[Creating Friction-Free Relationships: Tools for Working with Anyone](#)



TAKE A SEMINAR

[How to Communicate with Diplomacy, Tact and Credibility](#)



Conclusion & Resources

ENSURE YOUR ONGOING SUCCESS AS A MANAGER WITH AMA'S TOTAL PROFESSIONAL



Building skills in these four areas is key:

Professional Effectiveness	Management Skills for New Managers
Relationship Management	Developing Your Emotional Intelligence
Analytical Intelligence	Critical Thinking
Business Acumen	Fundamentals of Finance and Accounting for Non-Financial Managers



American Management
Association®

TRAINING SOLUTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS & ORGANIZATIONS

Contact us to find the
training course that's
right for you.



www.amanet.org



877-566-9441



customerservice@amanet.org