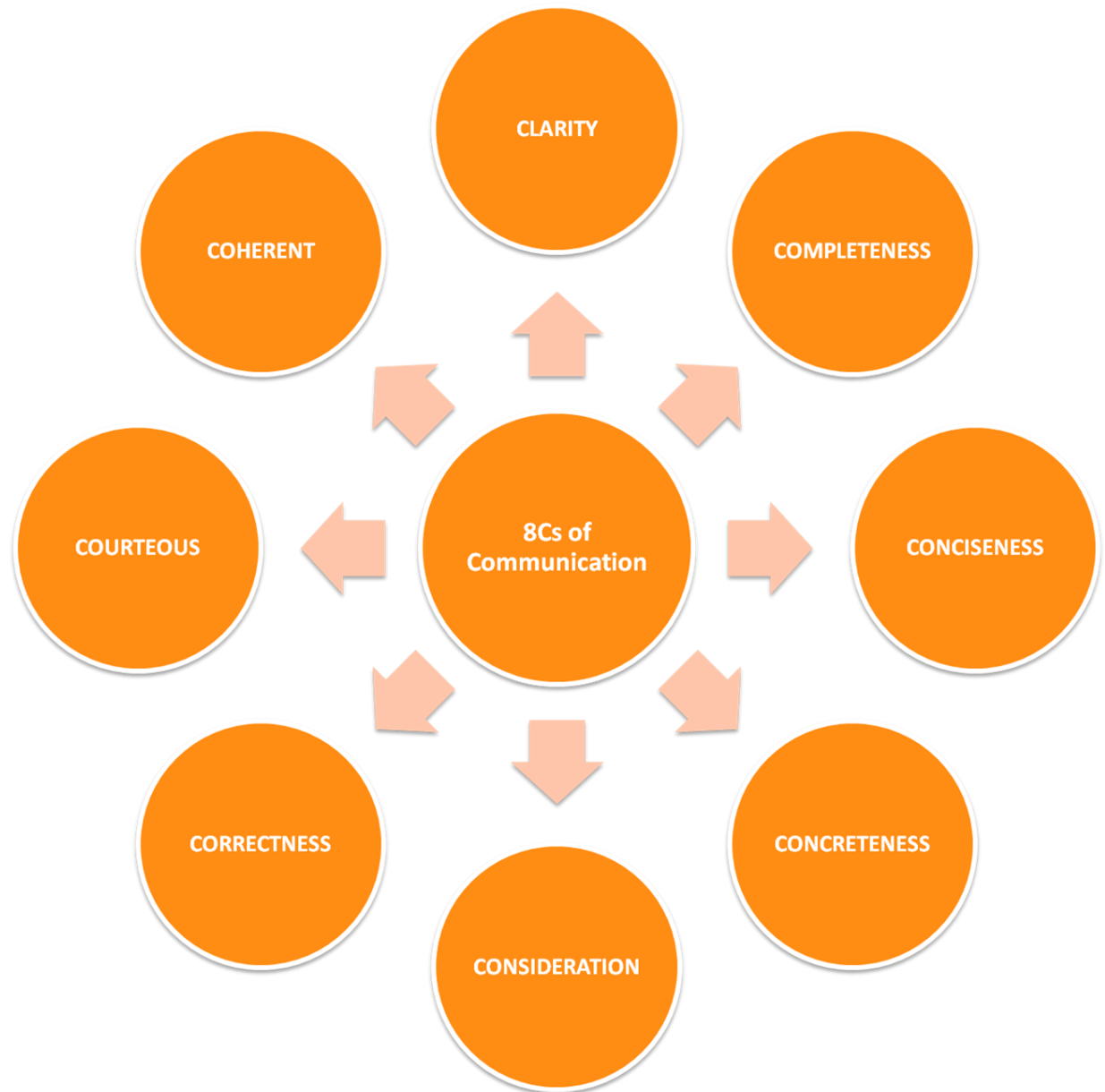


8Cs of Effective Communication



CLARITY

When writing or speaking to someone, be clear about your goal or message. What is your purpose in communicating with this person? If you're not sure, then your audience won't be sure either.

To be clear, try to minimize the number of ideas in each sentence. Make sure that it's easy for your reader to understand your meaning. People shouldn't have to "read between the lines" and make assumptions on their own to understand what you're trying to say.

Clarity implies emphasizing on a specific message or goal at a time, rather than trying to achieve too much at once. Clarity in communication has following features:

- It makes understanding easier.
- Complete clarity of thoughts and ideas enhances the meaning of message.
- Clear message makes use of exact, appropriate and concrete words.

Bad Example

Hi John,

I wanted to write you a quick note about Daniel, who's working in your department. He's a great asset, and I'd like to talk to you more about him when you have time.

Best,

Skip

What is this email about? Well, we're not sure. First, if there are multiple Daniels in John's department, John won't know who Skip is talking about.

Next, what is Daniel doing, specifically, that's so great? We don't know that either. It's so vague that John will definitely have to write back for more information.

Last, what is the purpose of this email? Does Skip simply want to have an idle chat about Daniel, or is there some more specific goal here? There's no sense of purpose to this message, so it's a bit confusing.

Good Example

Hi John,

I wanted to write you a quick note about Daniel Kedar, who's working in your department. In recent weeks, he's helped the IT department through several pressing deadlines on his own time.

We've got a tough upgrade project due to run over the next three months, and his knowledge and skills would prove invaluable. Could we please have his help with this work?

I'd appreciate speaking with you about this. When is it best to call you to discuss this further?

Best wishes,

Skip

This second message is much clearer, because the reader has the information he needs to take action.

Tips on Clear Communication

Choose precise words

Choose short, familiar, conversational words

Construct effective sentences and paragraphs

Achieve appropriate readability and listening ability

Include examples, illustrations, and other visual aids,

Seven tips for improving the clarity of your own communication.

1. Consider your audience

To be clear and easy to understand, you'll need to tailor your message to your audience. You talk to your 3-year-old differently than you talk to your co-workers. While that's an extreme example, the same principles apply when you consider the needs of each partner you communicate with. What you say in your own department may be clear because everyone has been immersed in the same dialogue for months or because your educational backgrounds are similar. But as soon as you have someone from another department involved in the conversation, you need to adjust your communication. The folks from Accounting, for example, don't know the HR strategy or hot topics. So you'd scale back and start from a common intersection around, perhaps, the company mission or strat plan.

2. Say exactly what you mean

Don't beat around the bush in business communications. No one has the time or tolerance for it. Instead, be direct without being unpleasant. Here is a feedback model you can use to say exactly what you mean without offending others. The reason this simple model works is that it is objective and focuses on behaviors that were observed rather than personalizing the feedback and causing a defensive response.

This is People First Productivity Solution's 3W Feedback Model. Each of the 3 W's represents a simple step (pictured above). Take these steps in order and be concise and to the point in each one.

What: Describe the situation and be specific. Your description should be based on your own observations, not on hearsay or assumptions. Use “I” instead of “You” at the beginning.

Why: Describe the impact of what you’ve observed. If there is not significant impact, a reason why this truly matters, then skip the feedback.

Way: Describe what you would like to see as a replacement behavior. Again, be succinct.

Here’s what it sounds like when you put all three pieces together:

“I have noticed that your dirty dishes have been left in the shared kitchen sink each of the past three days. I wanted to bring this to your attention because my lunch time comes right after yours, and I have to move your dishes before I can wash my own. I have some severe food allergies, and it is alarming to me when I have to touch plates with unknown foodstuffs on them. So I’d really appreciate it if you’d take a minute to rinse and remove your dishes when you’re done eating.”

This is clear, concise and non-attacking. It’s also effective. A less effective approach, one that doesn’t get directly to the point could put the recipient on the defensive or miss the mark entirely by being cushioned in a lot of vague statements.

3. Avoid jargon

Every company and every specialized field has its own terminology. Business, too, has certain phrases that become popular even though no one really knows what they mean. Whether you’re talking to your cohorts or to people outside your department, it’s best to avoid jargon.

These are the kinds of terms and phrases to avoid: action item, vet the idea, monetize, bandwidth, paradigm shift, big picture, outside the box, sharpen your pencil, manage the optics, feet on the street, bench strength, plug and play... Just speak like you would in a non-business setting. Your clarity will be a breath of fresh air.

4. Keep it short and simple

While it is good to know the how and why behind your decisions, it’s not always necessary to provide lengthy explanations. Be prepared to answer questions others may ask, but don’t overwhelm them with details and back story unless they ask. Give the highlights and the key points. Less is more.

5. Ask for a playback

When you are expecting others to do something in response to your communication, ask them to play back what they will do. Check to be sure they’ve understood. This doesn’t have to be done in a schoolmarm manner or in a way that seems condescending. As a routine,

you can just ask “I want to make sure we’re in agreement on next steps so why don’t you play back for me what you’ll do next.”

6. Over-communicate

The more important it is, the more times you need to say it. Your message will be lost as soon as another message or two comes into the mix. What’s more, for most people it takes repetition to remember and internalize what they have heard or learned. You may feel like you are over-communicating, but chances are good that each time you return to a subject you are instead reiterating and providing additional clarity.

7. Choose the right medium for the message

E-mail? Voice mail? Old school memo? Video conference? Webinar? In person to a group? One-on-one? The choices are many, and the message should determine which medium you select. Don’t go with easiest and most efficient unless you are sharing something that is simple, straightforward and informational only. When you want interaction and engagement, when you need buy in or support, you’ll need to think instead about the most effective way to truly involve others.

As a general rule, the more impersonal the communication is the less likely it is to be clear for everyone. That’s because you need to tailor your message to your audience and broad distribution doesn’t allow for that to happen (see tip #1).

Finally, when you are on the receiving end of others’ communication, you can also be sure that you have the clarity you need. Ask questions. Say “I’d like to restate what I’ve heard to make sure I understood fully and correctly.” Even though the communication should ultimately be the responsibility of the sender rather than the responsibility of the receiver, why take chances? Go ahead and double check so that you don’t end up doing work that doesn’t match the expected outcomes.

Here’s the best news about ensuring clarity in your communication. It saves you time and it is appreciated by others because it saves them time, too. These simple steps can make a big difference in your effectiveness, and you can put them into practice right away.

COMPLETENESS

The communication must be complete. It should convey all facts required by the audience. The sender of the message must take into consideration the receiver’s mind set and convey the message accordingly. A complete communication has following features:

- Complete communication develops and enhances reputation of an organization.

- Moreover, they are cost saving as no crucial information is missing and no additional cost is incurred in conveying extra message if the communication is complete.
- A complete communication always gives additional information wherever required. It leaves no questions in the mind of receiver.
- Complete communication helps in better decision-making by the audience/readers/receivers of message as they get all desired and crucial information.
- It persuades the audience.

In a complete message, the audience has everything they need to be informed and, if applicable, take action.

- Does your message include a "call to action," so that your audience clearly knows what you want them to do?
- Have you included all relevant information – contact names, dates, times, locations, and so on?

Bad Example

Hi everyone,

I just wanted to send you all a reminder about the meeting we're having tomorrow!

See you then,

Chris

This message is not complete, for obvious reasons. What meeting? When is it? Where? Chris has left his team without the necessary information.

Good Example

Hi everyone,

I just wanted to remind you about tomorrow's meeting on the new telecommuting policies. The meeting will be at 10:00 a.m. in the second-level conference room. Please let me know if you can't attend.

See you then,

Tips on Complete Communication

The communication must be complete. It should convey all facts required by the audience. The sender of the message must take into consideration the receiver's mind set and convey the message accordingly. A complete communication has following features:

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- A complete communication always gives additional information wherever required. It leaves no questions in the mind of receiver.
- Complete communication helps in better decision-making by the audience/readers/receivers of message as they get all desired and crucial information.
- It persuades the audience.
- The sentence or the message to be communicated should be complete and unambiguous to prevent any blunder while communicating.
- Answer all questions asked -- Give something extra, when desirable
- Check for the 5Ws and an H (Who, what, when, where, why and how)

CONCISENESS

Conciseness means wordiness, i.e, communicating what you want to convey in least possible words without forgoing the other C's of communication. Conciseness is a necessity for effective communication. Concise communication has following features:

- It is both time-saving as well as cost-saving.
- It underlines and highlights the main message as it avoids using excessive and needless words.
- Concise communication provides short and essential message in limited words to the audience.
- Concise message is more appealing and comprehensible to the audience.
- Concise message is non-repetitive in nature.

When you're concise in your communication, you stick to the point and keep it brief. Your audience doesn't want to read six sentences when you could communicate your message in three.

- Are there any adjectives or "filler words" that you can delete? You can often eliminate words like "for instance," "you see," "definitely," "kind of," "literally," "basically," or "I mean."
- Are there any unnecessary sentences?
- Have you repeated the point several times, in different ways?

Eliminate wordy expressions -- Include only relevant statements -- Avoid unnecessary repetition

Bad Example

Hi Matt,

I wanted to touch base with you about the email marketing campaign we kind of sketched out last Thursday. I really think that our target market is definitely going to want to see the company's philanthropic efforts. I think that could make a big impact, and it would stay in their minds longer than a sales pitch.

For instance, if we talk about the company's efforts to become sustainable, as well as the charity work we're doing in local schools, then the people that we want to attract are going to remember our message longer. The impact will just be greater.

What do you think?

Jessica

This email is too long! There's repetition, and there's plenty of "filler" taking up space.

Good Example

Watch what happens when we're concise and take out the filler words:

Hi Matt,

I wanted to quickly discuss the email marketing campaign that we analyzed last Thursday. Our target market will want to know about the company's philanthropic efforts, especially our goals to become sustainable and help local schools.

This would make a far greater impact, and it would stay in their minds longer than a traditional sales pitch.

What do you think?

Jessica

Tips on Concise Communication

Think Before You Speak

Thinking before you speak is half the battle when it comes to concise spoken communication. Thinking before you write may come more naturally, as you have to compose your thoughts, but many people don't bother to organize their thoughts before they speak. This makes it nearly impossible to speak concisely. You obviously can't take 30

seconds to completely organize your thoughts and say exactly what you mean every time you speak, but you can make an effort to not just blurt out whatever is on your mind. It's OK to take a few seconds to think about what you really want to say. Another tip, especially if you are involved in a conversation with several people, is to think ahead about what you are going to say when it is your "turn" to speak.

Main Idea First

Communicate the main idea first. The human brain does a lot of processing on the subconscious level, and getting the main idea you want to communicate out there early in the conversation allows your interlocutors to start thinking about the subject. This helps them follow you as you develop the topic. Think of communicating the main idea first to give your conversation partners a sign pointing in the general direction you are going.

Necessary Supporting Details Only

Provide supporting ideas, but don't provide irrelevant or tangential information. Providing too much information is typical in ineffective communication. The thought processes involved in preparing to speak create associations of varying degrees of relevance, but it is important to not become distracted by these associations. Effective, concise communicators focus only on the most relevant details, and in most cases, your listeners will pick up on a number of the associations that you did not specifically mention in your communication on their own.

Use Meaningful, Descriptive Verbs

Avoid weak verb constructions such as "there are" or "we have." Weak verbs require more words to adequately convey meaning, whereas active, descriptive verbs provide context and meaning through their more complex, layered meanings. Avoid passive constructions; active constructions carry a greater semantic load in fewer words.

Focus on Your Audience

Tailor both the style and the substance of your communication to your audience. Whom are you talking to and what do they really need to know? Different social contexts have differing expectations regarding communication, so stay focused on where you are and whom you are with, and structure your communication around their expectations.

CONCRETENESS

You need to believe in what you want to convey to the audience. Communicating concretely means being specific, definite and vivid rather than vague and general. Concreteness is a quality which needs to come to the fore especially during presenting/promoting yourself or a product or a service. There need to be details that capture the

attention of the audience, not bore them. . Ensure your message has important details and facts, but that nothing deters the focus of your message.

Bad Example:

Consider this advertising copy:

The Lunchbox Wizard will save you time every day.

A statement like this probably won't sell many of these products. There's no passion, no vivid detail, nothing that creates emotion, and nothing that tells people in the audience why they should care. This message isn't concrete enough to make a difference.

Good Example:

How much time do you spend every day packing your kids' lunches? No more! Just take a complete Lunchbox Wizard from your refrigerator each day to give your kids a healthy lunch and have more time to play or read with them!

This copy is better because there are vivid images. The audience can picture spending quality time with their kids – and what parent could argue with that? And mentioning that the product is stored in the refrigerator explains how the idea is practical. The message has come alive through these details.

Tips on Concrete Communication

- Use specific Facts and figures
- Choose image building words
- Avoid uncertainty

CONSIDERATION

Consideration implies “stepping into the shoes of others”. Effective communication must take the audience into consideration, i.e, the audience’s view points, background, mind-set, education level, etc. Make an attempt to envisage your audience, their requirements, emotions as well as problems. Ensure that the self-respect of the audience is maintained and their emotions are not at harm. Modify your words in message to suit the audience’s needs while making your message complete. Features of considerate communication are as follows:

- Emphasize on “you” approach.
- Empathize with the audience and exhibit interest in the audience. This will stimulate a positive reaction from the audience.
- Show optimism towards your audience. Emphasize on “what is possible” rather than “what is impossible”. Lay stress on positive words such as jovial, committed, thanks, warm, healthy, help, etc.

Tips on Concise Communication

- The type of audience who will be actually reading or will be communicating with should be always kept in mind. Since it is very easy for the communicator to explain a particular concept or theory but if it is not explained by keeping the average audience or receiver in mind it is very easy to lose their attention.
- Focus on `You` instead of I and we
- Show Receiver Benefit or Interest in Reader
- Emphasize the positive, pleasant facts
- Apply integrity and ethics

CORRECTNESS

When your communication is correct, it fits your audience. And correct communication is also error-free communication.

Do the technical terms you use fit your audience's level of education or knowledge?

Have you checked your writing for grammatical errors? Remember, spell checkers won't catch everything. Are all names and titles spelled correctly?

Bad Example

Hi Daniel,

Thanks so much for meeting me at lunch today! I enjoyed our conservation, and I'm looking forward to moving ahead on our project. I'm sure that the two-week deadline won't be an issue.

Thanks again, and I'll speak to you soon!

Best,

Jack Miller

If you read that example fast, then you might not have caught any errors. But on closer inspection, you'll find two. Can you see them?

The first error is that the writer accidentally typed conservation instead of conversation. This common error can happen when you're typing too fast. The other error is using weak instead of week.

Again, spell checkers won't catch word errors like this, which is why it's so important to proofread everything!

Tips for Correct Communication

Correct communication has following features:

- The message is exact, correct and well-timed.
- If the communication is correct, it boosts up the confidence level.
- Correct message has greater impact on the audience/ readers.
- It checks for the precision and accurateness of facts and figures used in the message.
- It makes use of appropriate and correct language in the message.
- Maintain acceptable writing mechanics
- Choose non-discriminatory expression

COURTEOUS

Courteous communication is friendly, open, and honest. There are no hidden insults or passive-aggressive tones. You keep your reader's viewpoint in mind, and you're empathetic to their needs.

Bad Example

Jeff,

I wanted to let you know that I don't appreciate how your team always monopolizes the discussion at our weekly meetings. I have a lot of projects, and I really need time to get my team's progress discussed as well. So far, thanks to your department, I haven't been able to do that. Can you make sure they make time for me and my team next week?

*Thanks,
Phil*

Well, that's hardly courteous! Messages like this can potentially start office-wide fights. And this email does nothing but create bad feelings, and lower productivity and morale. A little bit of courtesy, even in difficult situations, can go a long way.

Good Example

Hi Jeff,

I wanted to write you a quick note to ask a favor. During our weekly meetings, your team does an excellent job of highlighting their progress. But this uses some of the time available for my team to highlight theirs. I'd really appreciate it if you could give my team a little extra time each week to fully cover their progress reports.

Thanks so much, and please let me know if there's anything I can do for you!

*Best,
Phil*

What a difference! This email is courteous and friendly, and it has little chance of spreading bad feelings around the office.

Tips on Courteous Communication

Courtesy in message implies the message should show the sender's expression as well as should respect the receiver. The sender of the message should be sincerely polite, judicious, reflective and enthusiastic. Courteous message has following features:

- Courtesy implies taking into consideration both viewpoints as well as feelings of the receiver of the message.
- Courteous message is positive and focused at the audience.
- One should have the civility to respect the other person's dignity and self-esteem. The message, which will be communicated, should not be cruel or ruthless.
- Be sincere, thoughtful and appreciative
- Omit expressions that irritate, hurt or belittle -- Grant and apologize good-naturedly
- It makes use of terms showing respect for the receiver of message.
- It is not at all biased.

COHERENT

Your message needs to have a logical flow. Check to see that all of your points are relevant and that everything is consistent with the tone and flow of your text. Without coherence, the reader will easily lose track of what you have conveyed.

Bad example:

Dear Nam,

Thanks for submitting the industry report. Finn will give you some feedback on it. Finn also wanted to find out if you will be available for the client meeting tomorrow. We will be discussing the budget for the next phase of the project.

Regards
Shirley

The email was supposed to be about the industry report which was submitted and the feedback for it. The question about the meeting had come out of nowhere and will now distract Nam and her priorities.

Good example:

Dear Nam,

Thanks for submitting the industry report. Finn will give you some feedback on it. You will be receiving an email from him with detailed comments.

Regards
Shirley

This email talks only about the report. Therefore, Nam knows that her report has been viewed and she needs to wait for feedback. There are no other distractions. The query about the meeting must have been an entirely different email.

Tips on Coherent Communication

The First Principle of Cohesion: **Old First Cohesion:**

- Begin your sentences with information familiar to your readers.
- This can be information you've recently introduced within the text.
- This can be anything assumed to be part of the audience's general knowledge.

The Second Principle of Cohesion: **New Last Cohesion:**

- End your sentences with information your readers cannot anticipate – the new information you are trying to convey. The principle of old-before-new is built into our perception of time and story. The principle forms the conceptual basis of the introduction or background sections of an essay.
- Readers identify the topics of individual sentences clearly. Topics of sentences come in a paragraph: a coherent group of sentences all clearly related to one point.
- Don't begin a sentence with a bit of new information.
- Don't begin a sentence with a bit of technical information (unless you've already defined or explained it)
- Use your openings to refer back to previous material or gently introduce a new topic.
- Don't end a sentence with old information.
- Put the new, technical, and difficult information at the end of the sentence.
- Clearly signal when the end of a sentence begins