

4.8: Verbal and Written Communication Strategies

Learning Objectives

- Explain the concept of emotional intelligence.
- Describe the four types of communication in the workplace.
- Explain the various communication styles and identify your own style.

Communication, as you see in our opening scenario, is key to any successful career. While communication is likely discussed in several of your other classes, it should also be addressed in a human relations book, since much of what we do at work is based on effective communication.

How many times do miscommunications happen on a daily basis, either in your personal life or at your job? The good news is that we can all get better at communication. The first thing we need to do is learn how we can better communicate with others. Then we will want to look at our own communication style and compare that with other styles. Have you ever spoken with someone you just didn't "get"? It is probably because you have different communication styles. Body language is also a key contributor to communication; in fact, as was suggested in the late 1960s by researcher Albert Mehrabian, body language makes up 93 percent of our communication.^[1]

One of the most important aspects of good communication is emotional intelligence (EI). **Emotional intelligence**, as we discussed in Chapter 2 is the ability to know and manage our emotions, motivate ourselves, understand others' emotions, and manage relationships. Without EI, it would be impossible to effectively communicate with people.

Communication Directions

In addition to the communication that occurs within organizations, each of us has our own individual communication style. Many organizations give tests that may indicate their candidate's preferred style, providing information on the best job fit.

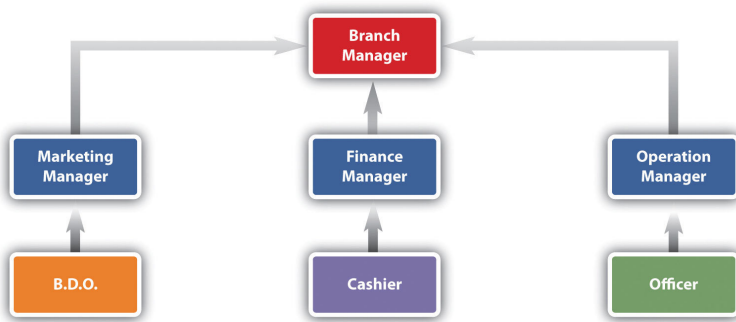
As you already know, communication in companies is key to having a successful organization. Of course, learning how to communicate better, as a result, is the cornerstone of a successful career. Likewise, understanding how companies communicate with employees can result in employees who are more loyal and motivated.

Those that don't communicate well, though, see increased turnover, absenteeism, dissatisfied customers, higher product defect rates, lack of focus on business objectives, and lack of innovation.^[2]

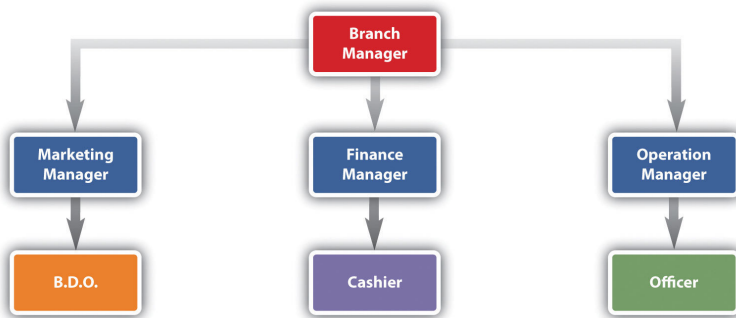
Four main types of communications occur within a company: upward communication, downward communication, diagonal communication, and horizontal communication. Each type of communication can serve a different purpose in human resources, and many messages may be sent in a variety of ways.

Upward communication is when the lower levels of an organization communicate with the upper levels of an organization. Some examples might be an employee satisfaction survey using online survey tools such as SurveyMonkey. These kinds of tools can be used to determine the changes that should occur in a company. Oftentimes human resource departments may develop a survey such as this to find out how satisfied the employees are with things such as benefits. Then the organization can make changes based on the satisfaction level of the employees. Employees might also engage in upward communication in a given work situation. They might tell their manager their plate is full and they can't take on any new projects. This is considered upward communication, too.

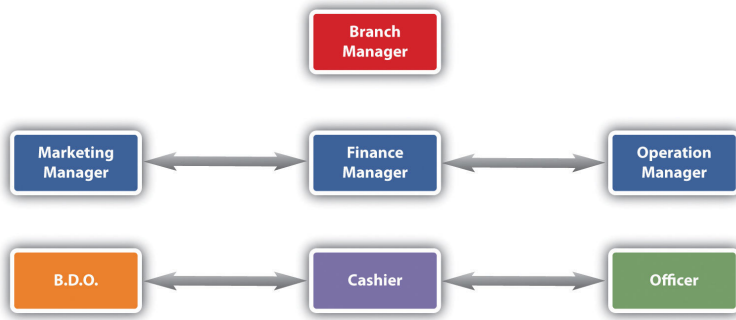
Downward communication is the opposite of upward communication, in that the communication occurs from the upper levels of an organization down to the lower levels of the organization. A manager explaining how to do a task to an employee would be considered downward communication. Development of training programs to communicate safety in the organization might be another example. A change in a pay or bonus structure would be communicated using the downward approach as well.



"Upward" Communication in a Bank



"Downward" Communication in a Bank



"Horizontal" Communication in a Bank

Figure 4.8.1 Types of Communication Flow in Organizations

Organizations

A **diagonal communication** approach occurs when interdepartmental communication occurs with people at different levels of the organization. When the human resources assistant speaks with the marketing manager about the hiring of a new employee in marketing, this would be considered diagonal communication.

Horizontal communication occurs when people of the same level in an organization—for example, a marketing manager and a human resource manager, communicate usually to coordinate work between departments. An accounting manager might share information with a production manager so the production manager knows how much budget they have left.

Within all the communication methods we discussed, there are a variety of approaches. Of course, the most obvious is the informal communication that occurs. An e-mail may be sent or a phone call made. Meetings are another way to communicate information. Companies can also use more formal means to communicate. A blog would be an example. Many companies use blogs to communicate information such as financial numbers, changes to policy, and other "state of the business" information. This type of information is often downward communication. However, blogs are not just for upper management anymore. Companies are using microblogs more and more to ensure that people in various departments stay connected with each other, especially when tasks tend to be very interdependent.

Companies also use social networking sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, to keep in touch. For example, Alcatel-Lucent, a 77,000-employee telecommunications company in Europe, found that using social media keeps a large number of employees connected and tends to be a low or no-cost method of communicating. Rather than sending e-mail to their employees telling them to expect updates via these methods, the news is spread via word of mouth as most of the employees blog or use Facebook or other social media to communicate. In fact, Alcatel-Lucent has over eight hundred groups in its system, ranging from business related to ones social in nature.^[3] Use of this type of technology can result in upward, downward, horizontal, and diagonal communication all at once.

Companies also use intranets to communicate information to their employees. An intranet is an internal website, meaning that others generally cannot log in and see information there. The intranet may include information on pay and vacation time as well as recent happenings, awards, and achievements. No matter how the company chooses to communicate with you, understanding these varieties of methods can help make you a better employee. Now that we have discussed communication from the company perspective, we should discuss communication from the personal perspective.

Communication Styles

In addition to the communication that occurs within organizations, each of us has our own individual communication style. Many organizations give tests that may indicate their candidate's preferred style, providing information on the best job fit.

Our communication styles can determine how well we communicate with others, how well we are understood, and even how well we get along with others. As you can imagine, our personality types and our communication styles are very similar. Keep in mind, though, that no one person is "always" one style. We can change our style depending on the situation. The more we can understand our own dominant communication style and pinpoint the styles of others, the better we can communicate. The styles are expresser, driver, relater, and analytical. Let's discuss each of these styles next.

People with an **expresser communication style** tend to get excited. They like challenges and rely heavily on hunches and feelings. Depending on the type of business, this can be a downfall as sometimes hard data should be used for decision-making purposes. These people are easily recognized because they don't like too many facts or boring explanations and tend to be antsy if they feel their time is being wasted.

People with a **driver style** like to have their own way and tend to be decisive. They have strong viewpoints, which they are not afraid to share with others. They like to take charge in their jobs but also in the way they communicate. Drivers usually get right to the point and not waste time with small talk.

People with a **relater style** like positive attention and want to be regarded warmly. They want others to care about them and treat them well. Because relaters value friendships, a good way to communicate well with them is to create a communication environment where they can feel close to others.

People with an **analytical communication style** will ask a lot of questions and behave methodically. They don't like to be pressured to make a decision and prefer to be structured. They are easily recognized by the high number of questions they ask.

Table 4.8.1 Which One of These Communication Styles Do You Tend to Use?

Factors	Expresser	Driver	Relater	Analytical
How to recognize	They get excited.	They like their own way; decisive and strong viewpoints.	They like positive attention, to be helpful, and to be regarded warmly.	They seek a lot of data, ask many questions, behave methodically and systematically.
Tends to ask	Who? (the personal dominant question)	What? (the results-oriented question)	Why? (the personal non-goal question)	How? (the technical analytical question)
Dislikes	Boring explanations/wasting time with too many facts.	Someone wasting their time trying to decide for them.	Rejection, being treated impersonally, uncaring and unfeeling attitudes.	Making an error, being unprepared, spontaneity.

Factors	Expresser	Driver	Relater	Analytical
Reacts to pressure and tension by	“Selling” their ideas or becoming argumentative.	Taking charge, taking more control.	Becoming silent, withdrawn, introspective.	Seeking more data and information.
Best way to deal with	Get excited with them, show emotion.	Let them be in charge.	Be supportive; show you care.	Provide lots of data and information.
Likes to be measured by	Applause, feedback, recognition.	Results, meeting goals.	Friends, close relationships.	Activity and business that lead to results.
Must be allowed to	Get ahead quickly. Likes challenges.	Get into a competitive situation. Likes to win.	Relax, feel, care, know you care.	Make decisions at own pace, not feel cornered or pressured.
Will improve with	Recognition and some structure with which to reach the goal.	A position that requires cooperation with others.	A structure of goals and methods for achieving each goal.	Further development of interpersonal and communication skills.
Likes to save	Effort. They rely heavily on hunches, intuition, feelings.	Time. They like to be efficient, get things done now.	Relationships. Friendship means a lot to them.	Face. They hate to make an error, be wrong, or get caught without enough info.
For best results:	Inspire them to bigger and better accomplishments.	Allow them freedom to do things their own way.	Care and provide detail, specific plans, and activities to be accomplished.	Structure a framework or “track” to follow.

Let’s discuss an example of how these communication styles might interact. Let’s assume an analytical communicator and a relater are beginning a meeting where the purpose is to develop a project timeline. The analytical communicator will be focused on the timeline and not necessarily the rapport building that the relater would be focused on. The conversation might go something like this:

Relater:	What are you doing this weekend? I am going to my son’s baseball game. It is supposed to be hot—I am looking forward to it.
Analytical:	That’s great. Okay, so I was thinking a start date of August 1st for this project. I can get Kristin started on a to-do list for the project.
Relater:	That would be great. Kristin is a really hard worker, and I’m sure she won’t miss any details.
Analytical:	Yes, she’s Okay. So your team will need to start development now with a start day coming up. How are you going to go about this?

How do these two personality styles walk away from this conversation? First, the relater may feel ignored or rejected, because the analytical communicator didn’t want to discuss weekend details. The analytical communicator may feel annoyed that the relater is wasting time talking about personal things when they have a goal to set a project timeline. These types of small miscommunications in business are what can create low morale, absenteeism, and other workplace issues. Understanding which style we tend to use can be the key in determining how we communicate with others. Here is another, personal example of these communication styles and how a conversation might go:

Expresser, to his partner:	I am really excited for our hiking trip this weekend.
Driver:	I still think we should leave on Thursday night rather than Friday.

Expresser:	I told you, I don't think I can get all day Friday off. Besides, we won't have much time to explore anyway if we get there on Thursday; it will already be dark.
Driver:	It won't be dark; we will get there around seven, before anyone else, if we leave after work.
Expresser:	I planned the trip. I am the one who went and got our food and permits. I don't see why you have to change it.
Driver:	You didn't plan the trip; I am the one who applied for the permits.

In this situation, you can see that the expresser is just excited about the trip and brings up the conversation as such. The driver has a tendency to be competitive and wants to win, hence his willingness to get there Thursday before everyone else. The expresser, on the other hand, tried to sell his ideas and didn't get the feedback he felt he deserved for planning the trip, which made the communication start to go south.

In addition to our communication personalities, people tend to communicate based on one of three styles. First, a **passive communicator** tends to put the rights of others before his or her own. Passive communicators tend to be apologetic or sound tentative when they speak. They do not speak up if they feel like they are being wronged.

An **aggressive communicator**, on the other hand, will come across as standing up for his or her rights while possibly violating the rights of others. This person tends to communicate in a way that tells others they don't matter or their feelings don't matter.

An **assertive communicator** respects his rights and the rights of others when communicating. This person tends to be direct but not insulting or offensive. The assertive communicator stands up for his or her own rights but makes sure the rights of others aren't affected.

Table 4.8.2 Which One of These Communication Styles Do You Tend to Use?

	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Definition	Communication style in which you put the rights of others before your own, minimizing your own self-worth	Communication style in which you stand up for your rights while maintaining respect for the rights of others	Communication style in which you stand up for your rights but you violate the rights of others
Implications to others	My feelings are not important	We are both important	Your feelings are not important
	I don't matter	We both matter	You don't matter
	I think I'm inferior	I think we are equal	I think I'm superior
Verbal styles	Apologetic	I statements	You statements
	Overly soft or tentative voice	Firm voice	Loud voice
Nonverbal styles	Looking down or away	Looking direct	Staring, narrow eyes
	Stooped posture, excessive head nodding	Relaxed posture, smooth and relaxed movements	Tense, clenched fists, rigid posture, pointing fingers
Potential consequences	Lowered self-esteem	Higher self-esteem	Guilt
	Anger at self	Self-respect	Anger from others
	False feelings of inferiority	Respect from others	Lowered self-esteem
	Disrespect from others	Respect of others	Disrespect from others
	Pitied by others		Feared by others

Have you heard of a passive-aggressive communicator? This person tends to be passive but later aggressive by perhaps making negative comments about others or making snide or underhanded comments. This person might express his or her negative feelings

in an indirect way instead of being direct. For example, you are trying to complete a project for a client and the deadline is three days away. You and your team are working frantically to finish. You ask one of your employees to come into work on Saturday morning to finish up the loose ends so the project will be ready to present to the client on Monday. Your employee agrees, but when you show up on Monday, the project isn't ready to present. You find out that this person had plans on Saturday but wasn't direct with you about this. So the project didn't get completed, and you had to change the appointment with the client. Later, you also find out that this employee was complaining to everyone else that you had asked her to come in on Saturday. As you can see from this example, passive-aggressive behavior doesn't benefit anyone. The employee should have been direct and simply said, "I can't come in on Saturday, but I can come in Sunday or work late Friday night." Ideally, we want to be assertive communicators, as this shows our own self-esteem but at the same time respects others and isn't misleading to others, either.

When dealing with someone who exhibits passive-aggressive behavior, it is best to just be direct with them. Tell that person you would rather she be direct than not show up. Oftentimes passive-aggressive people try to play the martyr or the victim. Do not allow such people to press your buttons and get you to feel sorry for them. This gives them control and can allow them to take advantage.

Listening

Listening is obviously an important part of communication. There are three main types of listening. **Competitive or combative listening** happens when we are focused on sharing our own point of view instead of listening to someone else. In **passive listening**, we are interesting in hearing the other person and assume we hear and understand what the person says correctly without verifying. In **active listening**, we are interested in what the other person has to say and we are active in checking our understanding with the speaker. For example, we may restate what the person has said and then verify our understanding is correct. The feedback process is the main difference between passive listening and active listening.

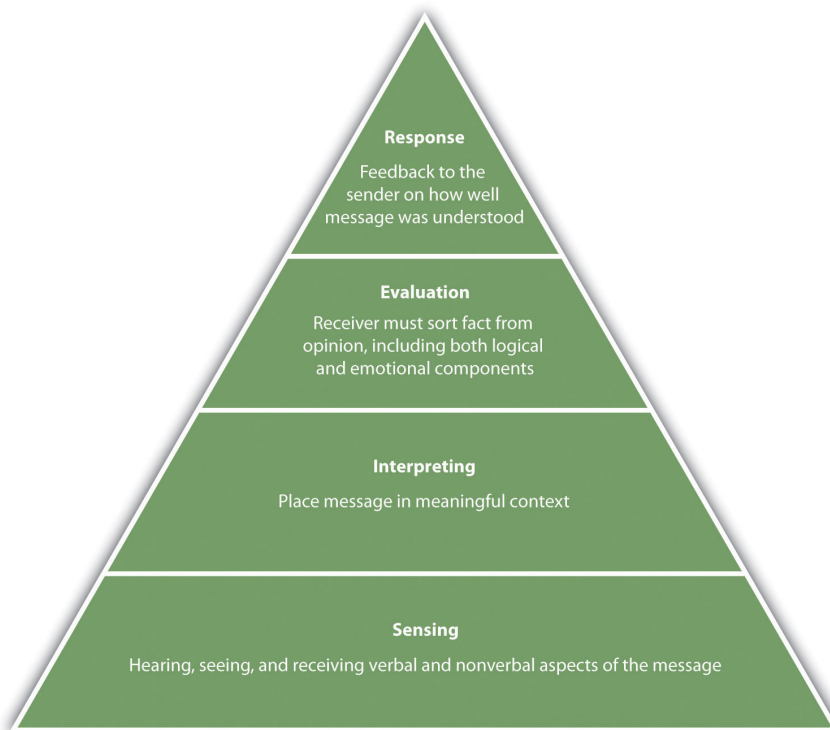


Figure 4.8.2 Active listening involves four

phases.

Source: Steil, L., Barker, L., & Watson, K. (n.d.). *SIER hierarchy of active listening*. Provenmodels, accessed August 1, 2011, <http://www.provenmodels.com/554>.

Written Communication

Besides verbal communication, much of our communication at work may happen in the written form, such as e-mail. When using e-mail as a communication tool, we should consider the four Cs:

- **Complete.** We want to make sure that all facts are included in the e-mail. When responding to an e-mail, also make sure all questions have been answered.
- **Concise.** Try to make e-mails as concise as possible. If your e-mail becomes long, it may be better to have a personal conversation rather than an e-mail to make sure the message gets across in the appropriate way.
- **Correct.** Be sure to check e-mail, grammar, and spelling. E-mails should always have a greeting, body, and closing.
- **Clear.** Is your writing easy to understand? Does it flow well?

When considering the four Cs, we also want to consider the following e-mail tips:

- Make sure the subject line is descriptive.
- Use upper and lower case letters. Using all uppercase would be like shouting your message.
- Do not use the “reply all” function if it isn't necessary.
- Make sure to sign your e-mail.
- Before sending, always reread your message to make sure you are conveying your message clearly.
- Do not send e-mails when you are angry or upset. Use a twenty-four-hour rule before replying to an e-mail that gave you this type of emotional response.
- Try to avoid “text message” writing in e-mails—for example, shortening of words such as LMK (let me know).
- Do not forward jokes.
- Limit your use of emoticons.

email do's and don't



Video 4.8.1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRE-uciREO4>

When sending e-mails we want to consider the four Cs: complete, concise, correct, and clear.

Following these e-mail tips will ensure your communication is clear and concise. It saves time, in the long run, to spend time writing a good e-mail rather than trying to e-mail back and forth with someone who did not understand your message the first time.

One of the challenges of written communication is the inability to see the receiver's reaction to your e-mail. In other words, e-mail does not allow us to see the nonverbal responses from our receivers. The nonverbal aspects of communication will be the next topic in this chapter.

Key Takeaways

- *Emotional intelligence* can be improved over time, unlike IQ, which stays stable throughout life.
- Emotional intelligence includes knowing and managing your emotions, motivating yourself, recognizing and understanding other people's emotions, and managing relationships.

- There are four types of communication at work: *downward*, *upward*, *horizontal*, and *diagonal*. All types of communication can happen at once, especially with the use of blogs and social networking sites.
- Companies that use good communication tend to have less turnover and less absenteeism.
- There are four main types of communication styles: *expresser*, *driver*, *relater*, and *analytical*. The better we can understand our own style of communication and the communication styles of others, the easier it will be to communicate with them.
- Passive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive behaviors are not healthy ways of communicating. Assertive behavior, on the other hand, respects one's own rights and the rights of others.
- *Nonverbal communication* is one of the most important tools we can use to communicate how we feel. Watching others' body language can give us signals as to how they may really feel.
- Listening is also an important part of communication. *Active listening* occurs when we are interested in what the other person has to say, and we check with the speaker to make sure we understand what they have said. *Competitive or combative listening* is when we are focused on sharing our own point of view. *Passive listening* is when we listen to someone but do not verify that we understand what someone is saying.
- When sending e-mails, follow the four Cs: complete, concise, correct and clear.

Exercises 4.8.1

1. Learn more about your EI by going to <http://www.queendom.com/tests/access...idRegTest=1121> and taking the test. Then answer the following questions:
 - a. What did the test say about your EI?
 - b. What are some things you can do to improve your EI? What strategies might you use to improve your EI?
2. Which communication style, the expresser, driver, relater, or analytical, do you typically use? How can you get better at understanding other people's style and get comfortable communicating in their style?
3. Do you tend to be passive, assertive, or aggressive? Give an example of when you used each style and discuss the result.

1. Mehrabian, A., & Ferris, S. R. (1967). Inference of attitudes from nonverbal communication in two channels, *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 31(3): 248–58.
2. Business Performance. (n.d.). Effective communication in the workplace, accessed July 19, 2010, www.businessperform.com/workp...unication.html.
3. Gaudin, S. (n.d.). Alcatel-Lucent gets social with company communication. Computerworld, accessed July 19, 2010, www.computerworld.com/s/artic...ommunication?t axonomyId=209&page Number=3.

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