Course Learning Outcomes for Unit V

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

5. Analyze techniques used to promote effective communication, accountability, and positive relationships within the workplace.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 9: Communication

Chapter 10: Electronic Communications

Click here to access the Chapter 9 PowerPoint Presentation. (Click here to access the PDF version of the presentation.)

Click here to access the Chapter 10 PowerPoint Presentation. (Click here to access the PDF version of the presentation.)

Unit Lesson

We continue professionalism in the workplace within this unit by analyzing different techniques that promote effective communication, accountability, and how to develop harmoniously positive relationships within job-related tasks and even the work environment.

There are numerous channels of communication in the workplace. Formal communication, informal communication, gossip, and the grapevine are each a means of communication. Formal communication is the official line of authority throughout any department. Informal communication is the major line of the communication process, sometimes referred to as the grapevine, which is a means of discussion, yet the information exchanged may not be inaccurate. Lastly, gossip is a channel of communication that often contains damaging and inappropriate information.

The communication process is the common exchange of information. Before we delve deeper into communication, stop for a minute to think about communication as a process. Unlike a transaction, a process usually involves a series of steps or tasks. For instance, if two colleagues are having a conversation, both of them must be active participants within the process for the message to completely transfer. So, being an active participant within the communication process is important, as all parties must do their part in the process. At times, workers can demonstrate frustration or impatience during an exchange of communication. Immediately, it might seem as if the worker is frustrated with you; however, the worker is likely to be frustrated with him or herself as he or she determines the appropriate words for what he or she wants to say. With that, be patient as you communicate with others, and do what you can to help them.

One of the most important items you can learn from this unit is that not effectively communicating can be very damaging to the workplace. Employees need a basic understanding of appropriate communication. To move beyond a basic understanding, it can be very beneficial to know not only how to communicate but also how to take advantage of the communication process. By utilizing effective communication techniques, you can make positive impressions in the workplace, and such a practice of professionalism is likely to propel your career, goals, and objectives.

In order for any communication to take place and be effective, a critical component is listening. Practicing proficient listening skills can have positive effects, such as increasing productivity, meeting goals, and fostering a congenial relationship among workers. One way to improve your listening proficiency is to train...
yourself to listen for details by focusing on the words and details to reduce misunderstanding. Another means to be a more effective listener is to be sincere in your outreach of concern for employees. Not only have an open-door policy but also encourage others to take the time to listen to one another by showing concern and empathy for the well-being of others.

Having proficient listening skills can result in faster production rates. Have you ever heard the saying, “a happy worker is a productive worker”? There appears to be a definite correlation between happiness and productivity. Additionally, good listeners seem to be more proficient toward the requirements of the job, and studies have indicated that they spend less time on revisions. Keep in mind, listening is not the same as hearing. Adults spend an average of 70% of their time engaged in some sort of communication. Within the 70%, an average of 45% of the time is spent listening, compared to speaking for 30% of the time, reading for 16% of the time, and writing for 9% of the time (Adler, Rosenfeld, & Proctor, 2001).

Listening is imperative and a major part of the communication process; however, there must be accountability and responsibility for our exchanges in communication. Please know that communication is challenging. With all the means (i.e., technology) of communication, one would assume it is easier more now than ever. However, the opposite is actually true. Some of the concerns include the misuse of electronic communication tools, the lack of (or poor) phone etiquette, and the numerous unprofessional uses of mobile devices, such as texting, social media, videos, and teleconferences. Today, workers have the ability to connect to one another via virtual venues. Some might even say that we rely too heavily on virtual communication techniques. Since we tend to rely on virtual communication (connectivity is through a virtual venue), it is predictable how a lack of listening and/or a block in the communication process can lead to misunderstandings. If we are not effective listeners, it can be very easy to misinterpret the intended message from a colleague. With a multitude of devices ranging from e-mail, texting, blogs, to wikis, it is no wonder messages are getting lost and distorted. Regardless of how you communicate, be sure to embrace the process and work with your colleagues to ensure the messages and goals are clear.

Lastly, be sure that you have a solid understanding of the latest policies and etiquette of electronic communication. The basic guideline is to keep it simple—treat others how you want to be treated. Always be polite, courteous, and graceful to demonstrate professionalism through communication. Within any type of workplace, one skill that can help you avoid unnecessary frustration is to know when a face-to-face conversation will be much more productive than an e-mail. Or, perhaps a phone call could be the proper communication method, rather than an e-mail. When you cannot communicate in person, be sure to avoid using all caps in e-mails, as it can appear to be yelling. Additionally, keep the message professional by maintaining a business-like sense while avoiding irregular symbols such as smiley faces, personal slangs, abbreviations, and improper salutations. End your e-mail communication with contact information, and before clicking send, review your message for clarity and mistakes. If possible, try to avoid communicating when you are upset. While upset, you may say something unprofessional since you may not be thinking clearly. At those moments when you are upset, step away and take a break. Then, after settling down, you can come back and respond in a professional manner. After you send an e-mail, it is not always possible to take it back. In other words, your message is out there for others to interpret and potentially share. So, be sure that your e-mail contains the message that you want to share. If you have doubts about sending an e-mail, it might be best to think it over before sending it. After thinking about it for a bit, you might realize how you can revise the e-mail to more accurately reflect the message you would like to send.

The reading in this unit addresses many aspects of professionalism and concludes with positive relationships at work through sharing a bit about yourself and who you are. For many, this will be an exciting opportunity to reach out to others. Present yourself as an approachable person by making connections with others—identify what you have in common to build your network. Also, when you speak about others, always do so by only saying positive things about them. By staying positive, you can prevent yourself from being the cause of any workplace gossip before it has the chance to begin.

Next, make a connection through supportiveness. If a worker is in need of assistance or struggling, ask him or her if you can help. Again, this will help the relationship by making another connection and allowing you and your colleague to work well together. Next, if you are very interested in networking and building strong professional relationships, get involved. Identify ways that you can get involved with others by participating in the same activities. Just as you reach out to offer assistance to others, do not hesitate to ask for assistance with your own work. Remember, a team is more productive than a party of one. Another gesture of creating a more positive relationship at work is to write random thank-you notes and letters of acknowledgement. Keep it fun and interesting by delivering the notes in a variety of ways, such as hand delivered, e-mailed,
voicemail, and greeting cards. Another way to bond is by initiating a conversation through asking simple yet sincere questions. Then, after you ask the question, you will have the perfect opportunity to practice your listening skills by listening to the answer(s). If you would like to build an even stronger bond with a colleague, you can consider joining an extracurricular activity that occurs outside of the workplace. Something as simple as going to lunch can also be a great way to build stronger workplace relationships. While building any workplace relationship, the core of it all begins with effective communication.

**Learning Activities (Non-Graded): A Worksheet to Practice Critical Thinking**

As you work through the material for this unit, consider completing a worksheet that contains valuable activities for practicing critical thinking toward communication. Click here to access the worksheet. This is a non-graded activity, so there is no need to submit it. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.

**References**


**Suggested Reading**

The following articles provide thoughtful insight into effective communication in the workplace as well as barriers to effective communication:

