

COMMUNICATION HANDBOOK



“Let Us Give You a Hand in Communicating Effectively”

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COMMUNICATION HANDBOOK

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Introduction

The purpose of this Communication Handbook is to assist you in communicating effectively. It gives clear practical tips per each topic that might be applicable to your daily communication within the company.

The layout of the Handbook is very simple with an index of topics for quick reference. There are also some pages at the end of the Handbook, which you can use for your personal notes.

The Handbook is advised to be kept on the work desk for an easy reach when needed.

For further support and advice on communication you can always contact the TQM Communication Group in room 1317 (Alexandra Atepaeva, Debbie Evers, Loes van Gijn, Bianca de Ruiter).

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how to ...

Be a Good Communicator



- Give full attention to people while they are talking to you.
- Encourage other people to talk, and ask appropriate questions.
- Present your ideas so that others are receptive to your point of view.
- Treat people fairly and let others know how you want to be treated.
- Value teamwork and know how to build cooperation and commitment.
- Show respect for people's ideas and feelings, even when you disagree with them.
- Accept differences and conflict as a normal part of any work environment, and know how to address them constructively.
- Strive to understand other people and to be empathetic.
- Be open to negative feedback, and communicate difficult truths in a respectful way.
- Be able to easily win people's trust and respect.
- Check to make sure you have understood what other people are trying to communicate.
- Be confident and at ease giving a presentation.
- Avoid making absolutist judgments about people (e.g. "He/she is always that way.")
- Follow through on your commitments.
- Be able to work with people you have difficulties with without becoming negative yourself.

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how to ...

Communicate Effectively



Connect

- Establish rapport with people
- Pay attention to people's facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice.
- See things from the other person's point of view.
- Adjust your communication style to match theirs.
- Avoid criticizing, making negative judgments, or saying that the other person is wrong.
- Show interest in the other person's interests and concerns.

Listen

- Encourage people to talk.
- Show your willingness to listen. Minimize distractions. Attend to the other person with your whole body (your body language, eyes, facial expressions). Nod your head and give verbal cues to communicate that you are paying attention.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Listen to what people are trying to communicate, not just to what they are saying. Listen to their emotions. Listen also to what they want.
- Check to make sure you understand. Use your own words to reflect what you have heard and noticed.

Communicate

- Speak with sincerity and conviction.
- Be sensitive to other people's communication style.
- Know what you want to accomplish. Do you want people to understand your position? Lend their support? Approve your request?
- Listen at least as much as you talk.
- Attune what you say with how you say it. Keep your message fitting with your tone of voice, facial expression, and body language.

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Speak

- Project confidence.
- Connect with your audience.
- Know what you want to accomplish. Do you want people to understand your position? Lend their support? Approve your request?
- Keep it short and simple. Most communication can accomplish only one objective, develop three main points, and hold people's attention only so long.
- Ask for feedback; was the message understood.

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Listen Strategically



We can communicate on one or all of four different levels at any given time:

1. **Facts**
2. **Meaning**
3. **Feelings**
4. **Intention**

“The house is burning” is a simple, straight-forward statement. But those four words – depending on how they are said – may mean:

- “A residential structure is being consumed by flames.” (Facts)
- “The house we are in is on fire.” (Meaning)
- “Ahhhhh!!!!!!” (Feelings)
- “Run for your life.” (Intention)

Sometimes we do not understand other people because we are not listening, or we are not listening well. We are distracted or simply are not paying attention. But sometimes we do not understand them because we are not hearing what they want to communicate. We are not listening to the right level. We may hear the facts for example but miss the feelings.

LEVEL 1: THE FACTS

People want to →	Convey Information
Your task is to →	Listen to details and clarify
You need to ask →	“Who?” “What?” “Where?” “Why?” “When?” “How?”
Your goal is to →	Picture the situation as the person is describing it

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LEVEL 2: MEANING

People want to →	Make themselves understood
Your task is to →	Listen to the big picture, summarize and paraphrase
You need to ask →	“Am I understanding you correctly?” “Is this what you are getting at?”
Your goal is to →	Understand what the person means, and make the other person feel understood.

LEVEL 3: FEELINGS

People want to →	Connect on emotional level
Your task is to →	Listen with empathy, pay attention to body language and tone of voice
You need to ask →	“How does it make you feel?” “It sounds to me like you are feeling ...”
Your goal is to →	Recognize how the person is feeling and make the other person feel connected

LEVEL 4: INTENTION

People want to →	Get their needs met
Your task is to →	Listen to wants and needs, focus on solutions, action steps and outcomes
You need to ask →	“What do you want to have happen?” “What would help you in this situation?” “What can you/we do about it?”
Your goal is to →	Know what the person wants to achieve

how to ...

Win People's Cooperation



1. Make people feel understood.

Spend less time trying to make people understand what you want, and more time making them feel understood. In an ideal world people might make decisions, commitments and judgments based on logic and sound reasoning. But in this world people act in response to their preferences, feelings and social influence they might not be even aware of. If they trust you and feel you care about them, they are much more likely to cooperate with you.

2. Find common ground

Show people how their needs, values and dreams mesh with yours. To do so, you have to understand their values and concerns. See things from their point of view. Be sympathetic with their feelings. Then show them how cooperating with you can help them achieve what they want.

3. Listen.

Listening is the best way to make people feel understood and at the same time to find common ground. Ask open-ended questions, the kind that invite people's careful consideration and honesty. Try to understand what people mean, without getting hung up on the literal meaning of their words. And acknowledge their thoughts and feelings (which is not the same thing as agreeing with them).

4. Do not argue.

The person you defeat in an argument today may be the person whose cooperation you need tomorrow. Arguments make people stake out positions and defend them. And the more you try to prove them wrong, the harder they will resist you. People may feel overwhelmed and stop arguing with you. But that does not mean you have won them over. Most of the time, when you win an argument, you lose an ally.

5. Care about the people you want to influence.

If you are concerned about the people you are trying to win over, if you value their needs and dreams, they will know it and they will reciprocate. They will communi-

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cate more freely, speaking their mind more openly and listening more attentively. They will give you the benefit of the doubt and they will want to cooperate.

6. Be open for other's ideas.

Do not try to impose your ideas on others only. Listen to and value the ideas of the people that work for you or with whom you work together. Be open minded and feel confident with sharing the ideas with others. Even request for new ideas to gain people's support and cooperation.

7. Help people believe the change is possible.

People often know, although they will not often admit, that they need to change. They feel a vague uneasiness, sensing that things will not pan out the way they want. But they persist in doing what they have always done, thinking they are doing the best they can. Show them a better way, but more importantly convince them that the change is possible. Do not just give them a solution but offer them confidence.

8. Time your request well.

There is a time and season for everything, especially for asking for support. When people are feeling stressed out, anxious, angry, resentful or threatened, they are not really receptive. Do what you can to reassure them and to make them feel safe, and you increase your chances of winning their support. Look for "moments of influence", times when they feel capable and confident, and make your best case then.

how to ...

Negotiate



- Prepare for negotiation.
- Do not view negotiation as confrontational.
- Do not try to win at all costs.
- Do not become emotional.
- Listen to the other person(s). By listening you might receive information that will help you further in the negotiation.
- Try to understand the other person.
- Focus on issues, not personalities.
- Do not blame the other person.
- Use questions to find out what the other person's concerns and needs might be.
- When you hear the other person express their needs or concerns, use listening responses to make sure you heard correctly ("So, you are saying ..." "If I heard this right ...").
- State your needs and the reasons.
- Prepare options beforehand. Anticipate why the other person may resist your suggestion, and be prepared to counter with an alternative.
- Do not argue.
- Aim at win-win situation not a compromise.
- Consider timing.

how to ...

Give Feedback



1. Do It Often

Virtually no one thinks they get enough feedback and that is because virtually no one gives enough.

2. Do Not Be Shy

Give feedback as close to the event it refers to as possible. This way what happened is fresh in everybody's mind and it will be easier to learn from it.

3. Give It Some Meaning

Always provide the context before you give feedback. For example "I wanted to talk to you about the report that you wrote yesterday."

4. Be Specific

Talk about what went well and what could have gone better for the individual or the team.

5. Describe Actual Behaviors Where Possible

Avoid the infamous "feedback sandwich" (good-bad-good) – it comes across as untruthful and dilutes the impact of good feedback.

6. Give a Wider Context

Describe the impact it had and on whom. This gives an idea of how important it is.

7. Be Generous with Positive Feedback

With positive feedback describe what it tells you about the individual. There are not many greater motivators than being told you are a wonderful person.

8. Allow People a Chance to Respond

If they would like time to reflect, let them, and agree to talk about it again at a future date. Do not force people to talk about it though.

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9. Remain Objective

Do not let your personal prejudices get the better of you. Remember you are giving feedback for the other person's benefit and not to vent your own spleen.

10. Build an Action Plan

With critical feedback make sure there is an agreed way to progress. Find the right time and place.

how to ...

Deal with Criticism



1. Listen Impartially

Not showing any negative or defensive emotions when listening will stop you appearing vulnerable or fragile.

2. Summarize What the Other Person Has Said

This means you have understood them correctly and also that you have taken it all in.

3. Ask Questions

The more specific the criticism the more helpful. Find out what you did and when that gave them their impression. This will mean you will not make the same mistake again.

4. Criticism is Rarely Groundless but Often Exaggerated

Decide which elements are useful and what you can do differently to be more effective.

5. Think about How the Person who Criticizes You Looks at the World

Could they have been trying to help? Are they under pressure themselves? Think about why they have these views about you. This could give you some useful self-awareness.

6. Ask Those Who Criticize You for Their Advice

By making them part of the solution they are less likely to criticise you in the future.

7. Thank People Who Criticize You

Not only have they given you free information but you will also disarm them.

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8. Reframe Criticism Which Focuses on What Went Badly

Consider what positive steps you can take to improve in the future and what you have learnt from not succeeding.

9. If You are Angry, Take it out on Something , not Someone

It is understandable to be annoyed but not very useful.

10. Praise Others for What They are Doing Well

It will give you the moral high ground and make you popular (as well as reinforcing productive behavior).

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Keep Discussions from Turning into Arguments



The only way you can make sure you never lose an argument, to paraphrase Dale Carnegie, is to avoid getting into one in the first place.

In a discussion everyone wins.

In an argument no one wins.

When Having a Discussion	When Having an Argument
We treat people as partners in a problem-solving session.	We treat other people as opponents to be defeated.
We share ideas, consider alternatives, and evaluate the pros and cons.	We draw sides, defend our own positions, and attack the opposition.
We listen to other people’s thoughts and explore ideas we haven’t previously considered	If we listen at all, we do so only to find the weaknesses in the other person’s reasoning.
We learn more about the issue, about what we think and feel, and about each other’s values.	We are not open to new ideas or the possibility of changing our opinions.
We seek people’s support, not their resentful silence.	We want to prove the superiority of our side and the weakness of the other side.
We may passionately disagree with each other but mutual respect keeps the discussion civil.	Even when we “win” an argument, we usually do so by losing a potential ally.

Tips to keep discussions from turning into arguments:

1. Do not argue.

Refuse to get drawn into an argument. Be civil. Respect the other person as much as you honour your own values. Be assertive without resorting to aggression.

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Often we agree with people in principle but disagree with them in practice (we want the same thing but have different ideas of how to accomplish it). Find those areas of agreement. Make them clear. Try always to make the other person a fellow problem-solver, neither an opponent nor a friend.

3. Focus on interests, not positions.

An issue is what we want or need. A position is a way of achieving it. Avoid getting attached to your positions so that you do not lose sight of your interests. It is often easier to negotiate and compromise around interests than around positions.

4. Try to see things from the other person's point-of-view.

There is a reason why other people act and think the way they do – however how illogical, wrong-headed, or misguided as it may seem to you. If you criticize them or show disapproval for their reasoning, they will only harden in their resolution. They will resent and resist you. Seek, instead, to discover their hidden reasons, and you will find the key to their motivation.

5. Ask clarifying questions.

Ask open-ended questions. Closed questions – like “Do you agree with my proposal?” – limit people’s ability to express themselves. Open-ended questions – like “How do you feel about my proposal?” – give them freedom and give you more information.

6. Listen.

Spend more time listening than speaking (you can not get yourself into trouble by listening, but you sure can start a brawl by speaking). Listen with your body, your eyes and your mind as well as with your ears. Try to understand what people mean, without getting caught up in the exact words they say. Make them feel understood, and they will be much more likely to try to understand you.

7. If you are wrong, admit it.

There is nothing wrong with changing your opinion, once you have gained new information or perspective. As a matter of fact, it is the sign of wisdom and maturity. Remember that you have been wrong in the past even when you thought you were right, and admit that you might be wrong this time.

8. If you are right, allow the other person to save face.

You are trying to win people’s cooperation, not to prove them wrong. Your kindness will do more to gain their goodwill than anything else.

how to ...

Resolve Conflict



If you view conflict as something that should not happen, something that harms relationships, it becomes negative. And then avoid it and hope it would go away. But if you see conflict as a fact of life, an opportunity to strengthen relationships, you have a way to resolving conflict by turning it into something creative.

Try these 10 ways to resolve conflict:

1. Agree on a mutually acceptable time and place to discuss the conflict.

2. State the problem as you see it and list your concerns.

- Make “I” statements.
- Withhold judgments, accusations, and absolute statements (“always” or “never”).

3. Let the other person have his/her say.

- Do not interrupt or contradict.
- Do not allow name-calling, put-downs, threats, obscenities, yelling or intimidating behavior.

4. Listen and ask questions.

- Ask fact-based questions (who? where? what? when? how?) to make sure you understand the situation.
- Ask exploratory questions (what if? what are you saying? is this the only solution to your problem? what if did such and such? are there other alternatives to this situation?).
- Avoid accusatory “why” questions (why are you like that?).
- Use your own words to restate what you think the other person means and wants.
- Acknowledge person’s feelings and perceptions.

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5. Stick to one conflict at a time – to the issue at hand.

- Do not change the subject or allow it to be changed. (“I understand your concern but I’d like to finish what we’re talking about at the moment before we discuss it.”)

6. Seek common ground.

- What do you agree on.
- What are your shared concerns.

7. Brainstorm solutions to the conflict that allow everyone to win.

8. Request behavior changes only.

- Do not ask others to change their attitudes.
- Do not ask them to “feel” differently about something.
- Do not ask them to “be” different.
- If you want them to “stop doing” something, suggest an alternative solution.

9. Agree to the best way to resolve the conflict and to a timetable for implementing it.

- Who will do what by when?

10. If the discussion breaks down, reschedule another time to meet. Consider bringing in a third party.

how to ...

Present



Establish rapport/bond with your audience and they become your partners in a dialog, allies in your presentation. They will want you to succeed. They will overlook your nervousness and lack of polish. And they will give you the benefit of the doubt even if they lose thread of your logic.

1. Talk to people before your presentation.

Introduce yourself as people begin gathering. Ask them about themselves, what they do, and why they are there. Smile.

2. Have your audience's best interests at heart.

See your presentation as an opportunity to serve your audience, not to impress or "sell" them.

3. Establish eye contact.

Look people in the eye one at a time. Hold each person's gaze for 5 to 10 seconds and then look someone else in the eye. We distrust people who will not look us in the eye. A word of caution – some cultures consider such eye contact intrusive and rude.

4. Speak simply and with conviction.

Do not give a speech. Have a conversation with your audience. Say "I", "we" and "you" when appropriate.

5. Approach your presentation from your audience's perspective – not yours.

Address their concerns. Speak to their interests, values and aspirations. Avoid words they might not understand. Cite evidence they find credible. If you have to use words or acronyms they might not understand, explain them immediately.

how to ...

Use E-mail Properly



Email should be constructed and written so that the intended audience can read, understand and act on the message after the first time they read it.

- **Be concise and to the point**
Do not make an email longer than it needs to be.
- **Answer all questions and pre-empt further questions**
By answering all the questions you'll avoid further e-mails, frustration and wasting time.
- **Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation**
- **Make it personal**
The content of email should be customized.
- **Respond quickly**
Email implies a quick respond comparing to the written letter, so should be answered at least within 24 hours.
- **Do not attach unnecessary files**
- **Use proper structure and layout**
Use short paragraphs and blank lines in between for easier reading from the screen.
- **Do not overuse high priority option**
When overused it loses its function. Also might come out as aggressive.
- **Do not write in CAPITALS**
IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS LIKE YOU ARE SHOUTING

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- **Do not leave out the original messages**
Use “Reply with history” so the recipient can easily see what the email is in reference to.
- **Read the email before you send it**
Proof reading will help discover missed mistakes and misspellings, as well as ensure that none of the content is missing.
- **Do not overuse Reply to All**
Only use Reply to All if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message.
- **Take care with abbreviations**
Do not use the abbreviations if you are not sure whether the recipient knows them.
- **Use a meaningful subject**
Use a subject that is meaningful to the recipient and yourself. Make it as detailed as possible.
- **Use active instead of passive**
Active voice (“We will process your order”) sounds more personal, whereas passive (“Your order will be processed”) sounds unnecessarily formal.
- **Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT**
The less you use them the more function they have when you do use them.
- **Avoid long sentences**
Try to keep your sentences to a maximum of 15-20 words.
- **Keep your language gender neutral**
- **Use cc: field sparingly**
Use cc: field only if the recipient in the cc: field knows why he or she is receiving the email.
- **Use face-to-face communication whenever possible instead of e-mail.**
- **Think first before you write an email!**

how to ...

Use Voice Mail Effectively



- Update your personal greeting regularly
- Pause for 1-2 seconds before you record your greeting
- Make your messages short so the caller will not have to wait long to leave a message
- In your greeting let callers know when you will return their call
- Include information in your greeting about how callers can reach a colleague if you are not available
- If you will be away from the office for an extended period, on business or leave, let callers know how to reach a colleague who is taking your calls
- Make use of “Follow Me” when possible; make sure the person you direct your calls to is informed and knows how to reply
- Check your messages as often as possible, and return all calls within two hours. At the very least, return all the calls within 24 hours.
- When you return a call thank the caller for leaving the voice mail message.

When leaving a voice mail message:

- Always identify yourself and the company you are representing in case it is an outside call.
- Always state the reason for calling.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Leave voice mail messages that are concise (write an outline or even a script before you call, if you find it hard to compose a message on the fly). Convey concrete information.
- Do not ramble. Remember a voice mail message is not a two-way conversation. The recipient might have many other messages to pick up.
- **Always** give your phone number when you leave a message.
- Speak slowly and distinctive on voice mail when giving phone number or other facts that recipient may need to write down. Leave your name and number twice.

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- Watch your emotions when you leave a voice mail message. One way communication can come across much angrier, more hurtful or more self-pitying than intended.
- If you need a return call, say when and where you will be available.
- Voice mail can be used as a record of communication, in the same way as print. When leaving a message remember your voice mail is being recorded.

how to ...

Telephone Effectively



- Be prepared, know what you want to achieve, have a pen and paper at hand.
- Speak clearly.
- Do not speak too fast or too slow.
- Smile – people can ‘hear’ you smile.
- Use your first and last names to introduce yourself.
- Be confident and positive, genuinely interested and enthusiastic.

how to ...

Use Your Voice



People make judgments about you just by listening to your voice. It isn't only the words you use, but how you say them that can make a difference.

When people see you (face-to-face communication), the impact of your voice is approximately 38% of the overall impression you make—the "picture." Over the phone, it jumps to 85%—since there are no visual cues.

There are certain things you can do to have a more pleasing voice:

- **Have an appropriate expression**
Sound enthusiastic, or, when appropriate, alter your tone to fit the conversation (sounding sympathetic when talking about sad news, etc.)
- **Speak at the right temp**
Speak slowly enough that people understand you easily, yet not so slowly that you are taking too long to complete a thought.
- **Pause**
By pausing, you give people enough time to take in what you are saying. When you finish a thought, think of adding a period (.) by counting to three in your mind. If it would be a colon (:), count to two, and if it is a comma (,) , count to one. In other words, don't run your words together.
- **Eliminate fillers**
Avoid "uh," "um," "OK" and "you know."
- **Speak loud enough to be easily heard**
Speaking in a whisper is non-assertive and annoying. If people ask you to speak up or to repeat yourself, this is a clue that you need help in this area.
- **Speak soft enough to avoid shouting and screaming**
If people are asking you to "shh" or lower your tone, that's a clue, too.

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- **Watch your diction**

Completing words makes you sound smarter. Things like saying the "ing" ending can make a difference ("going" not "gonna," "doing," not "doin"). Avoid also dropping the beginning of words ("them," not "'em").

- **Control your breathing when you get nervous or excited**

It helps to lower your pitch, making you sound more credible.

- **Tape-record yourself or listen to your voice-mail messages**

Decide what you need to practice so you sound better—in face-to-face encounters and electronically.

- **Keep your hands away from your mouth when speaking**

And don't swallow words or let your voice trail off with any thoughts.

- **The power of your voice is the sum of its vocal quality and the words you choose.**

You must not take either for granted to ensure that your speaking formula is a winning combination.

how to ...

Have an Effective Meeting



- Set clear objectives: is a meeting a brainstorm session, informative or decision making, etc.
- Prepare an agenda, distribute it in advance to all the participants and stick to the agenda.
- Assure the meeting is chaired.
- Arrange the location in advance and inform all the participants.
- Ensure that appropriate supporting information is circulated in time to be useful.
- Make sure you are not disturbed (no cell phones).
- Be on time.
- Be prepared.
- Stay focused.
- Assure participation of all participants, avoid dominance.
- Assure accurate recording of meeting's minutes/notes.
- Take a break for meetings extending 1,5 hours.
- Having an efficient meeting is teamwork.
- Ask questions, there is nothing foolish about it.
- Make sure the meeting has appropriate opening and closing.
- Always end meetings on time and attempt to end on a positive note.
- At the end of the meeting summarize the outcomes, review actions and assignments, and set up the next meeting if necessary.
- Assure the minutes of the meeting are distributed to all the attendants not later than in the two following days.

how to ...

Have an Effective Brainstorming Session



Brainstorming can be a highly effective technique for maximising a group's creative potential in order to generate ideas and determine which ideas are most likely to succeed.

To run a group brainstorming session effectively, do the following:

1. Organize a brainstorming group of 8-12 people in a relaxed environment.
2. Select a leader and a recorder (they may be the same person), though the recorder should have an easy to understand hand writing.
3. Define the problem or idea to brainstorm. Write it out concisely and make sure that everyone understands it and is in agreement with the way it is worded.
4. If the issue is broad, break it down into smaller issues which can be brainstormed independently.
5. Set a time limit (i.e. 30 minutes) for the brainstorming.
6. Set up the rules for the session. They should include:
 - Letting the leader have control of the session;
 - Allowing and encouraging everybody to contribute;
 - Ensuring that no one will insult, demean, or evaluate another participant or his/her ideas;
 - Stating that no answer is wrong;
 - All ideas are welcome no matter how silly or far out they seem;
 - Building on others' ideas;
 - Absolutely no discussion taking place during the brainstorming;
 - Recording ALL the answers unless it is a repeat;
 - Stopping when the time limit is up.
7. Once the brainstorming starts, participants share their ideas and the facilitator writes them down preferably so everyone can see them (use a white board or a flip-chart).

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8. Keep in mind that most brainstorming sessions feature 2 or 3 “false finishes”, each followed by an explosion of new ideas, before the group has really exhausted its store of information and ideas.
9. Once the brainstorming is finished, write down about five criteria for evaluating ideas. It might be useful scoring each idea (i.e. 0 to 5) on each criteria in order to make evaluation.
10. Group the similar ideas together.
11. Eliminate responses that definitely do not fit.
12. Once ideas are narrowed down (i.e. to the top 5), discuss the remaining ideas in the group.
13. If there is not a clear winner, use a voting method.
14. Keep the record of all the ideas generated in the session even after choosing the best idea, as it might turn out to be not workable.

how to ...

... *Final Tips*

- Pay attention to your body language, it can communicate more than you think.



- Do not try to get too many messages across. People do not retain more than three ideas from a presentation or a discussion.
- Use face-to-face communication as much as possible as people generally prefer that type of communication.
- Be aware of the danger of misinterpretation or misunderstanding while communicating in a multicultural environment. You can visit <http://www.windowontheworldinc.com/countryprofile/index.html> for some useful tips on different cultures.
- Effective communication is timely and open.
- Share the thinking not just the conclusion.
- If there are no bad news or issues, it does not mean there is nothing to communicate.
- Communication is a process not a product (information needs interaction).

Notes ...



Notes ...



Notes ...

