

Communication: The Key to Performance Management

Participant Guide



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Welcome

Welcome to this TEL (Technology Enhanced Learning) training event. We are excited that you will be joining us today for *Communication: The Key to Performance Management*, and we look forward to helping you to get as much out of this time as possible.

Your participation is an important part of this class. If you have a question, don't hesitate to ask. There are probably several others in the class who have the same question – you might as well be the one to ask. It is our goal that you leave class today with no unanswered questions.

How To Interact with the Instructor

We encourage you to ask questions and share your comments with the instructors throughout this TELNPS course.

If you were physically in the classroom with the instructor, you would raise your hand to let her/him know you had a question or comment. Then you would wait for the instructor to recognize you and ask for your question. We are all familiar with that “protocol” for asking questions or making comments.

With TELNPS courses there is also a “protocol” to follow to ensure that you

can easily ask questions and others can participate as well. It may seem a little strange at first asking a question of a TV monitor. Remember, it is the instructor you are interacting with and not the monitor. As you ask more questions and participate in more TELNPS courses, you will soon be focusing only on the content of your question and not the equipment you are using to ask it.

As part of the TEL station equipment at your location, there are several push-to-talk microphones. Depending on the number of students at your location, you may have one directly in front of you or you may be sharing one with other students at your table.

When you have a question, press and hold down the push-to-talk button, maintaining a distance of 12-18 inches, and say,

“Excuse me [instructor’s first name], this is [your first name]

at [your location]. I have a question (or I have a comment).”

Then release the push-to-talk button. This is important.

Until you release the button, you will not be able to hear the instructor.

The instructor will acknowledge you and then ask for your question or comment. Stating your name and location not only helps the instructor, but also helps other students who are participating at different locations to get to know their classmates.



Course Overview

Why a Communication: The Key to Performance Management program?

Communication is one of those everyday activities that we can tend to take for granted, like the air we breathe. We don't often have to think about our breathing, it just comes naturally. And like breathing, we communicate all the time, whether we intend to or not. The words we choose, the tone of our voice, our facial expressions, all work together often subconsciously to relay messages. When communication breaks down, and the intended message is not what was received, it can become costly in terms of wasted time, productivity, and even morale. This can be particularly challenging for supervisors who must routinely communicate with their employees on issues of performance and conduct. How can we be sure that what we INTEND to relay is what is received by the other person? Today's course will help you to identify some things you can do to help ensure that you understand your listener and choose an appropriate set of behaviors to get the right message across!

Target Audience

Any NPS employee with supervisory responsibilities, or who serves as an

advisor to supervisors, such as an HR Specialist. This course has been approved as counting towards the mandatory annual 40-hour NPS supervisory training requirement.

Program Timing

Communication: The Key to Performance Management is a 2-hour TELNPS course.

Learning Objectives

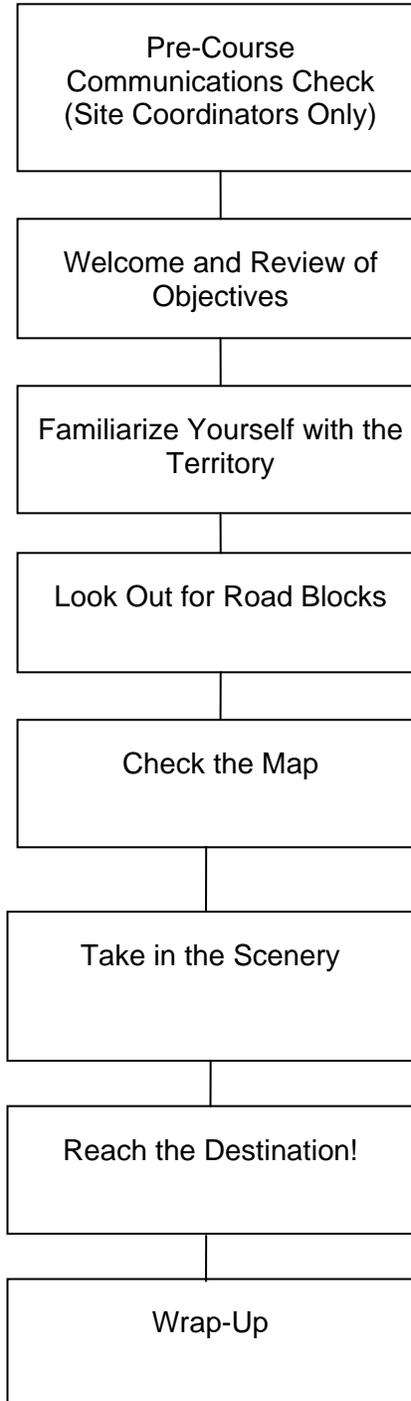
After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Recognize common barriers to communication
- Given a written statement, distinguish between facts and assumptions
- Clarify messages using positive language
- Recognize nonverbal cues in communication

Site Point-of-Contact Responsibilities

The TEL Station Site Point-of-Contact must reserve the training room, notify employees that the park will be participating in this TEL training event, make sure the Participant Guide is available to students, set up the TEL Station on the day of the training, make sure students sign in on the attendance roster, and finalize the Class Attendance Roster in DOI Learn.

Communication: The Key to Performance Management Course Map



Familiarize Yourself with the Territory

***Exercise:* Characteristics of a Good Supervisor**

Think of the best supervisor you have known. What were some of the traits or behaviors that made this person a good manager?



Working Definition of Communication

While there are many definitions of “communication,” for today’s class we will be using the following:

Communication is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another.

Familiarize Yourself With the Territory, cont'd.

Exercise: Share Your Experience



1. As a supervisor, have you ever had to deal with a performance and/or conduct problem?

2. What communication challenges did you have with this performance or conduct problem?

To help preempt problems in communicating, here are some basics you can do BEFORE you have that conversation:

1. **KNOW THE EMPLOYEE.** Get to know their work habits, motivation, personality, interests, hobbies.
2. **KNOW THE WORK:** Find out the facts of the situation, obtain records, samples of work products, make note of your personal observations, discussions with others.
3. **KNOW THE SETTING:** Give the employee advance notice of the meeting, provide privacy and a comfortable environment, offer your complete concentration on the employee. Get rid of interruptions.

Look Out for Road Blocks

“A barrier to communication is something that keeps meanings from meeting.”
--(Reuel Howe, theologian and educator)

Even the best-prepared communications can go awry if they are impeded by some all-too-common mistakes. Here are some examples of these “road blocks” to effective communication:

Judging (vs Correcting)

- Criticizing
- Name-calling
- Diagnosing
- Blaming

Diversions/Side Trips

- Dredging up the past
- Deflecting responsibility

Threats

- Emotional outbursts
- Physical violence or threat of violence
- Complaints/grievances

Exercise: “Top 3”

What are YOUR top 3 road blocks to communication?



Look Out for Road Blocks, cont'd.

Exercise: Facts or Assumptions

Read the paragraph below and answer the questions that follow.

An office worker had just turned off the lights in the office when a man appeared and demanded a set of files. The office manager opened the file drawer. The contents of the file drawer were scooped up and the man sped away. The building guard was promptly notified.

For each of the statements below, indicate **T**=True, **F**=False, **A**=Assumption

1. A man appeared after the manager had turned off the lights.
2. The robber was a man.
3. The man who appeared did not demand files.
4. The man who opened the file drawer was the office manager.
5. The division director scooped up the contents of the file drawer and ran away.
6. Someone opened the file drawer.
7. After the man who demanded the files scooped up the contents of the file drawer, he ran away.
8. While the file drawer contained files, the story does not state which files.
9. The robber demanded files of the director.
10. The office worker had just turned off the lights when a man appeared in the office.
11. It was broad daylight when the man appeared.
12. The man who appeared opened the file drawer.
13. No one demanded files.
14. The story concerns a series of events in which only three different persons are referred to: the manager, a man who demanded files, and the building guard.

Check the Map

"I know you think you know what I said, but I wonder if you realize that what you think I said is not what I meant."

-- Anonymous

Before you begin your conversation, you should reflect on what it is you would like to accomplish. This will influence what you say and how you say it. For example, is your purpose to have a problem resolved? Is it something the employee can handle, or are there factors that are outside of their control? Do you expect the employee to change the behavior immediately, or should there realistically be a transition period?

How To Prepare for Your Conversation

As you prepare for your meeting with the employee, consider the following:

- What is your destination? What is the specific problem? What is the desired outcome?
- Consider the other person's perspective.

"If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from that person's angle as well as from your own." --Henry Ford

- Anticipate the other person's response (e.g., not enough time, not enough training, equipment problems, personal problems)
- Own your message. Frame your concerns using "I" statements:
 - I noticed a significant error in the last fee collection report you submitted.
 - I am concerned about your frequent tardiness.
 - It is my perception that you spend a lot of time on personal phone calls and as a result, payroll is not completed on time.

Check the Map, cont'd.

- Be specific. Give examples of the behavior to illustrate your concern, e.g., “On Thursday, you were 15 minutes late to work.” “The April staff report, which was due April 30, was turned in May 12.”
- Invite dialogue with questions. Try to avoid the word *why*.
 - Can you describe what you’ve seen happening here with this situation?
 - What do you see as possible causes for this situation?
 - Brainstorm with me some ideas to help improve this situation.
- Explain the impact of the employee’s behavior on the work, e.g., others need their reports to be completed on time, coming in late sets a bad example, etc.
- Focus on the solution, not the problem. “Move from past tense to the future – this will help both you and the employee to look ahead.”
- Avoid language that often triggers a negative response from listeners:
 - Always, never, constantly
 - Should, must, ought to
 - To be honest with you...
 - I hate to tell you this, but...

If necessary, disagree, without being disagreeable.

Check the Map, cont'd.

Exercise: Using Positive Language

Individually or as a group, rewrite the following statements. Remember to own your concern, be specific, explain the impact, focus on the solution, and avoid trigger words/phrases.

1. You are always late for work.

2. You never submit your financial reports on time.

3. You waste too much time talking on the phone.

4. Why are the timecards always full of errors?

5. Why is it taking you so long to finish that painting job?

Check the Map, cont'd.

Helping Your Employee To Prepare

Don't forget to help your employee to prepare for your meeting!

- Give them at least 24 hours' notice. Rather than tell them when and where to meet, ask if they are available to meet with you at the desired time and place.
- Explain the purpose of the meeting.
- Provide the employee with any resource materials they may need to prepare for the meeting (e.g., a blank DI-2002, proposed critical results, copy of previous appraisal, copy of PD, GPRA goals, work unit goals, etc.)
- Always emphasize that performance management is a joint effort.
- Arrange for a private meeting place. Make sure that you have comfortable chairs. Clear away any clutter that can be distracting.
- Have all calls held and ask not to be disturbed.
- Make sure you have all appropriate documents on hand so that you don't have to leave the room during the meeting.
- Make sure you have pen and paper for making notes.

Exercise: Read the Signs

How good are you at determining what a person's expression is saying? Look at each of the facial expressions that appear on your screen. What do they mean to you?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Take in the Scenery

You're now on your way. You've prepared yourself with a clear, objective, specific message, and you've prepared the employee for the conversation. Now it's time for the "rubber to meet the road"!

- Listen for meaning, not just words.
- 80/20 Rule: Listen more than you speak. Don't argue. Don't rebut. (Listen 80 percent of the time, talk 20 percent.)
- Make sure you're on the same trip – paraphrase, repeat, ask questions to encourage discussion (e.g., How do you feel about that? What do you plan to do? How are you going to resolve this issue? How would you go about implementing that new program? Can you give me a specific example of what you mean?)
- Be conscious of nonverbal messages (yours and the listener's).
- Keep your emotions in check. If the discussion becomes emotionally charged, pull over – park the car – and let everyone cool off. Strong emotions, especially anger and embarrassment, are big-time barriers to effective communication.

Exercise: Don't Get Distracted!

As you watch the scenario, use the criteria above to evaluate the supervisor's communication with the employee. **What advice would you give the supervisor to help improve the communication?**

Listen for meaning _____

80/20 Rule _____

Paraphrase, repeat, ask questions _____

Nonverbal messages _____

Emotions _____

Reach the Destination!

As important as it is to prepare and deliver your message effectively, you must not forget to follow up to ensure that it has had its intended impact.

A few final points:

- Collaborate on a solution.
- Agree on the steps needed to correct the problem and establish a time frame.
- Put the agreement in writing.
- If the terms of the agreement are met, give positive feedback. Acknowledge and celebrate!
- If the terms of the agreement are not met, follow up with another road trip! (e.g., to find out if there is new information, has anything changed since you last talked about the issue?)

Reach the Destination! cont'd.

***Exercise:* What Would You Do Differently?**



Think about your own challenges that you described at the beginning of class. As a result of today's training what would you do differently?

To Receive Credit for This Course

Take the **on-line evaluation** at: www.nps.gov/training/tel

- Click on the DOI Learn tab
- Go to the link under Class Evaluations for *Communication: The Key to Performance Management*
- Please complete the evaluation within 2 weeks of the course, by June 6

Also, sign the **Class Attendance Roster**.