

# **Effective Communication Webinar**

## **Participant Handouts**



CREATING RESPECTFUL WORKPLACES FOR BUSINESSES  
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# What is Effective Workplace Communication?

## **EFFECTIVE**

Consistent with law, policies and values

Listening to learn

Assertive

Respectful

Direct

Focuses on facts

## **INEFFECTIVE**

Violates law, policy or values

Listening to win

Aggressive

Condescending or demeaning

Involving third parties

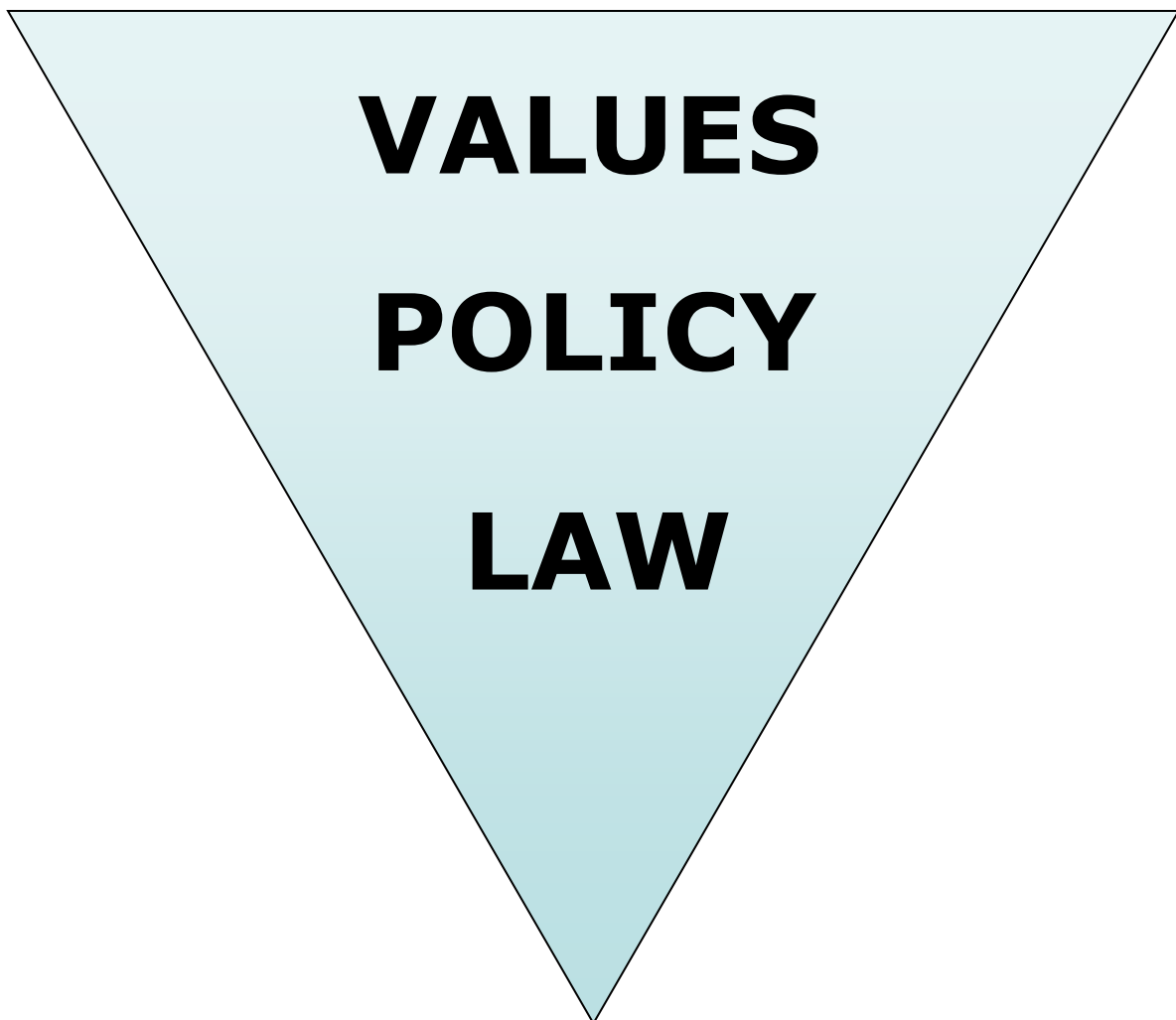
Focuses on unsubstantiated beliefs



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## Where Does Communication Fall?

- ☐ Your communications and your team's communications need to be appropriate and compliant with the law, your policy and your values.



# Condescending Behavior

Many complaints about bullying involve what complainants label as condescending or demeaning behavior. When coaching those accused of this behavior, we find that they frequently don't understand what we mean by those terms. Here are some suggested definitions and examples:

- ☐ Condescending behavior is having or showing a feeling of patronizing superiority; showing that you consider yourself better or more intelligent. It's usually intended to make people feel bad about not knowing or having something and it often works.
  
- ☐ Examples of condescending behavior include acting as if you know everything and are not open to new ideas, reacting to an upset with "well, that's never happened to me", offering unsolicited advice (unless you're a supervisor), not being open to feedback, referring to people in the group in the third person (even if they're sitting right there), using pet names, talking over other people.

## Demeaning Behavior

- ☐ Demeaning behavior is that which is intended to cause a severe loss in the dignity and respect of someone; words or actions intended to debase, lower, degrade, discredit or devalue a person.
- ☐ Examples of demeaning behavior include criticizing a person in front of others, making jokes at another person's expense, rolling eyes after someone's comments, making sarcastic comments about a person.

**Note:** In most situations, these behaviors don't violate the law or most employers' policies unless they are based on *protected characteristics*.

## Communication and Power

Many situations of ineffective communication involve significant power differentials, clouding the issue of whether the conduct was welcome or unwelcome. In order to improve your communication, you need to consider:

- ☐ Is there a power differential?
- ☐ Have I done my best to make the other person comfortable having an honest and helpful conversation?
- ☐ Have I considered what linguist Deborah Tannen calls report talk versus rapport talk? What person is using which style and why? Are the styles reflective of power differentials?
- ☐ Have I considered that the other person may not feel comfortable refusing unwelcome behavior because of the power differential?

**Note:** People gain power through position, status and sometimes gender, race and so on.

# How to Communicate Effectively During Conflict

Many complaints about poor communication arise from conflict situations.

1. Remember filters. We all hear what is said through our own filters. Filters can include our assumptions, biases, our own history, experience, etc.
2. Listen as witness. Ask, "How would I listen to this person if I knew I were going to be called as an objective witness in court?"
3. Clarify. Before you speak, make sure that you understand what the other person is saying. Ask open-ended (non-leading) questions until you do.
4. Restate. Ask: "I think you said '....' Is that accurate?" Continue restating until your partner agrees that you heard him or her accurately.
5. Pause before you speak. Ask yourself what negotiation style you're using and why. Is it the style that will serve you best over the long term of this relationship?
6. At the end of a communication, summarize the conversation and clarify the original reason for the communication. Did the speaker want your advice, feedback, a sympathetic ear, action or a solution to a problem? Be sure you know why you were asked to listen and what you're expected to do, if anything, about the communication.
7. Assume 100% of the responsibility for the communication. Assume leadership in your communication. Assume that it is your job to make sure that you understand what the other person is saying and that he or she understands what you are saying.
8. Check out misunderstandings. Assume miscommunication before you assume some is trying to undermine your efforts.
9. Use what or how. Avoid buts.
10. Avoid condescending or demeaning comments. Avoid talking down.



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# Addressing Unconscious Bias

Be aware of:

- ☐ Challenging stereotypes and countering stereotypical information
- ☐ Using facts to explain situations
- ☐ Changing perceptions and relationships with others from different backgrounds
- ☐ Being an active bystander
- ☐ Improving processes, policies & procedures
- ☐ Small changes can go a long way



# Don't Stand By, Stand Up

If you observe hurtful or offensive behavior, comments or jokes and say nothing, you are approving of that conduct. Instead, you can:

- ☐ **Clarify what you heard:** "I think I hear you saying that all \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_. Is that what you mean?"; "It sounded to me that you think ..."
- ☐ **Ask for more information:** "I'm not sure I understand what you are saying. Can you explain?"; "What's so funny?"
- ☐ **Appeal to common values:** "At this organization, we don't talk about people that way. Can we discuss something else?"
- ☐ **Refer to your own experience:** "That was my first reaction too, then I realized ..."
- ☐ **State your opinion about the comment:** "I think it's wrong to stereotype people."; "I think it's unfair to generalize about a group of people."
- ☐ **Appeal to the speaker's integrity:** "I've always thought of you as a fair-minded person. It surprises me to hear you say something that sounds biased."
- ☐ **Explain the impact:** "Your comment is hurtful."

# Do's and Don'ts for Intervention

Leaders have a responsibility to intervene when they observe inappropriate communication.

## **DO**

Intervene early.

Be consistent.

Look into rumors of inappropriate behavior.

Identify the prohibited communication.

Identify applicable policies.

Listen to the employee's concerns.

Ask the employee to stop.

Stick with the known facts and be professional.

Document intervention.

Touch base with HR.

## **DON'T**

Wait until there's more damage to the recipient and more liability.

Intervene with some people and let others escape.

Assume that you can't find out what's going on.

Focus on opinions or beliefs.

Focus on who's offended.

Dismiss issues, although you may schedule another meeting if it's a different topic.

Accept less than a commitment to stop.

React emotionally or defensively.

Rely on verbal warnings.

Assume this is the first time with this employee.



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# Guidelines for Effective Communication

- ☐ Most poor communication is unintentional, unconscious or unskillful.
- ☐ How can your leadership support effective communication?
- ☐ Platinum rule:  
Treat people the way they want to be treated
- ☐ With peers:  
Listen - observe - ask for permission.  
When in doubt, don't.  
The bigger the group, the higher the standard.  
Ask for feedback.
- ☐ With subordinates:  
Do NOT ask for permission in the moment.  
DO ask for feedback one-on-one
- ☐ Apologize
- ☐ Forgive