Communication Skills

# Barriers to Communication

Try to identify one or two occasions when you’ve found communication difficult. Think carefully about what made communication difficult and record your thoughts in the space below.

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| The situation: |
| What made communication difficult: |

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| What made communication difficult: |

## Key Barriers

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| Barrier: | How could the barrier be avoided? |
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## Learning Points

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# Building Rapport with Subordinates

Rapport exists when two people develop a feeling of harmony, well-being and security. We feel like we understand one another and can communicate with ease.

It can be compared to musical resonance. When you strike a note on a tuning fork and hold it near to another tuning fork, the second will also start to vibrate even though they do not touch. This resonance or rapport occurs between people when they work and live in an open, trusting and contented relationship.

Rapport is about meeting people on their own level and making them feel at ease. It is based on mutual respect and agreement.

When you relate to other people you can choose one of two standpoints from which to start:

You can concentrate on the differences between you.

### Or:

You can emphasise the similarities between you (the things you agree on, feel and think the same about and react the same way to).

If you emphasise the differences it will be virtually impossible to achieve rapport.

The emphasis on similarities and/or differences occurs not just in the words we use when talking to others, but in they way we express ourselves through tone, body language and attitude.

For example, if one person is standing and talking loudly, the result will be to emphasise the differences between them and someone who is sitting and talking quietly, even if they are saying the same things.

Matching, or mirroring, is an effective tool for building rapport. It is a way of holding up a mirror to another person so that they see in your actions and statements a reflection of their own.

### Body Language

When we are in rapport with another person, our body language will naturally tend to mirror the other person's. When you are trying to establish rapport with another person, consider whether your body language is 'jarring' with theirs. Consider for example:

* Sitting position.
* Movement and position of legs and arms.
* Overall posture.
* Walk.
* Dress.
* Facial expression.
* Breathing.

### Speech

Similarly, we need to be aware of our speech, and consider whether this is contributing to rapport. Consider your use of:

* Pitch.
* Tone.
* Volume.
* Choice of words.
* Jargon.
* Foreign words.
* Slang.
* Professional terms.

### Attitude

We need to build rapport by initially reflecting the same feelings and moods as the other person, or at least an appreciation for how they are feeling – particularly when those feelings are positive. Even where those feelings are negative, for example, the other person is tense and angry, we will need to acknowledge and respect this in order to build rapport and move the conversation forward constructively.

In any discussion we need to show respect for the other person's skills, qualities, experience, beliefs and feelings.

## Establish Rapport Scenarios

Read the following short scenarios and discuss with your partner how you could establish more rapport with the individuals concerned. If it helps you, act out the scenarios between you.

### Scenario 1

A manager is sitting, writing a report. A member of staff knocks on the door, and enters the office saying, “Have you got a minute? I have an idea for a new product. I think you’ll like it”.

The manager says nothing, stays seated, does not look up, carries on writing and then, after a long silence, sighs, and, still looking at the page, replies, “I’m in the middle of a report just now. Later perhaps.”

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### Scenario 2

A manager is walking through the office when a member of staff runs up to them. "I've got a problem with my computer, which keeps crashing and I'm worried that a customer’s order may not be processed. It was a really urgent order."

The manager looks at their watch. "Well, I was just going to lunch, but if it's really urgent I suppose I could look at it now." They walk back to their office, take off their jacket and put it on the back of their chair before returning to the member of staff's desk. "So”, they say in a relaxed manner, taking a seat next to the member of staff, "What's the problem again?"

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## Learning Points

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# Goldilocks Quiz

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|  | | True | False |
| 1 | Goldilocks was a little girl. |  |  |
| 2 | Goldilocks knocked on the door before entering the house. |  |  |
| 3 | The bears had porridge for breakfast. |  |  |
| 4 | Papa Bear’s porridge was too hot. |  |  |
| 5 | There were three bears. |  |  |
| 6 | Goldilocks ate all of the porridge in one bowl. |  |  |
| 7 | There were three chairs in the lounge. |  |  |
| 8 | Goldilocks broke Baby Bear’s chair. |  |  |
| 9 | Goldilocks went upstairs to the bedroom. |  |  |
| 10 | Mama Bear’s bed was too soft. |  |  |
| 11 | When Goldilocks saw the bears she was frightened. |  |  |
| 12 | Goldilocks ran off into the forest. |  |  |

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| Notes: |

Learning Points

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## My Notes:

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# Communication Action Plan

This is your opportunity to reflect on what you’ve been learning and identify the actions you need to take to successfully adapt your behaviour. They can be divided into 3 categories: what you will stop doing, what you will start doing and good habits you will continue with.

| Stop | Start | Continue |
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