Professional Communication Facilitator Guide

Overview

This session is designed to give students an insight into communication in the world of work with a view to prepare them for later life. Students will learn about writing professionally, an essential skill. There will be the opportunity for students to think about and have a go at communicating professionally across different channels.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- ☐ Know how to make written communication professional and appropriate
- ☐ Consider how to behave and communicate professionally in a workplace

Agenda

Getting Started (15 min)

- Different types of communication
- How do we communicate?

Professional communication (30 min)

- Writing Professionally
- Conversations in the workplace

Wrap-up & Reflection (10 mins)

Preparation / Materials Needed

- ☐ Chart Paper / Post It Notes
- ☐ Marker pens
- ☐ Download the session PowerPoint

Vocabulary

Tone: How you are saying what you are saying. This may be verbally or in written communication.

Non-verbal: Not involving or using words or speech. For example, body language.

Rapport: A connection with someone else. Building a rapport is an important part of making a new relationship with someone.

Teaching Guide

This guide includes a suggested script for the session. However, please feel free to tailor and adapt this accordingly when delivering.

Section 1: Getting Started (15 minutes)

Share the agenda for the session on the screen (slide 2).

(Slide 3) Ask the students to think about 3 forms of communication. If they have extra time, get them to think about how they might adapt their style of communication in different situations and around different people.

Show slide 5 and the three forms of communication: tone of voice, body language and what you say. Ask students which one they think is the most effective form of communication. Move to slide 6 which reveals the answer. This comes from a widely quoted study by **Professor Albert Mehrabian** in the 1960s observed that when measuring personal impact, an individual takes in the following: 55% Body language; 38% Tone of voice; **only 7% is what you actually say**!

Ask students to spend **1 minute** thinking about any specific ways of communicating that are related to these three forms of communication. Debrief the whole class back together. Some points to cover:

- **Dress** – consider the environment you're going into. If it's an interview, you'd be expected to dress smartly. If it says smart casual, always be on the safe side and wear shoes instead of trainers or pumps. If it says business casual, try to wear a collar or plain colours.
- **Body language** – consider the message you are conveying without speaking. Open vs. closed stance or folded arms; respect personal space of others; make eye contact and act professionally; stressed or tense vs. relaxed and friendly.
- **Mannerisms** – be aware of what you are doing and self-check. Tapping a foot, looking around the room, uhms/ahs after every word, staring, playing with your hair, hands in your pockets or clicking a pen – all can be distracting! Mannerisms can often be confused with body language but mannerisms are something that you're generally not aware that you're doing.
- **Tone of voice** – it's not about what you say but rather the way you say it. Be aware of the impression your words make. Your tone can make a positive or negative impression: for example, you could come across enthusiastic, engaged and clear or as nervous, shaky and quiet.
- **Introduction** - think about your verbal impression. Saying your name when you introduce yourself – often people will say this too quickly and combine their first and last names so it's not really clear. How credible you are starts from the point that you introduce yourself and if someone can't remember your name because it's not been clearly communicated then this will lessen your impact. Practice saying your name and introducing yourself to ensure you are clear with this.
- **What you say** – it doesn't matter if your intent is honourable if your impact is not. Sometimes, regardless of your intentions, what you say can make matters worse. Other times, you might say the exact right thing for the situation.

How do we communicate?

Talk the students through the many different platforms that can be used to communicate in the workplace (Slide 7).

Ask them to spend **2 minutes** thinking about which communication forum is most appropriate for the situations described on Slide 8. Show the answers on Slide 9 and reflect on why they think each forum is matched with its situation. Chat messages are most appropriate for short, informal conversations, whereas emails are best suited to making more formal requests, conveying larger amounts of information. Video conferencing is the most effective platform for longer, more nuanced conversations, such as discussing the details of a project.

Section 2: Professional Communication (30 minutes)

Activity 1 - Writing Professionally

Talk through the slide (11), explaining how written communication in the form of emails makes up a huge part of the working world today.

Outline the structure that a professional email should take (Slide 12) and what each email should accomplish.

Run through the points to remember and think about when writing an email (Slide 13). Additional points to cover included below.

- **Tone** - do you know the person you're emailing? Are you writing to someone unknown or new?
- **Email opening** - "Hi" might be appropriate with someone you're familiar with, but "Dear" might be more appropriate if you are unfamiliar with them. If you don't know the name of who you're writing to, use their title (for example, Head of English) or use "Sir or Madam" or "To whom it may concern" as you would in a written letter.

Give the students an opportunity to write their own professional email, according to the brief on slide 14. Once they have finished, show them the example of best practice on slide 15. Give them 2 minutes in pairs to discuss what they think is effective about this example. Debrief and hear feedback from students.

Activity 2 - Workplace conversations

Talk through slide 17, explaining that being comfortable and confident with having conversations with people is an important part of the working world. The next activity will allow students to have a go in a safe space by doing a role play activity. The purpose of this section is less about learning about having an effective conversation, but rather about professionalism and expectations within the workplace.

Run through the points to remember and think about when having a formal conversation (Slide 18).

Introduce the activity on slide 19. Put the students into pairs for the role play exercise. You may wish to allocate each group one of the scenarios, or allow the students to choose. If time allows, students may wish to do more than one.

The three scenarios are:

- A 1:1 phone call with someone who you see regularly
- A 1:1 phone call with someone who you have never met or spoken to before
- A face to face meeting with someone who you have spoken to on the phone but never in person.

Give students **1 minutes** for the first role play, then swap roles. Allow another **minute**. Take thoughts / reflections / feedback from students after the activity. How did they find the activity? What did they learn? Ask for one or two groups to demonstrate their conversations - pick out what they did well based on the points we highlighted on slide 18.

An alternative activity

Depending on the group, you may wish to run this alternative activity. Get the students to work in pairs, thinking through how they would approach one of the above scenarios, taking on board all of the points covered on slide 9. Tell students that you want one or two volunteers to role play with you afterwards. As the teacher, invite one or two willing volunteers to role play with you. Discussion afterwards - what did the students do well? What could they improve on?

Section 3: Wrap Up & Reflection (10 minutes)

Time for students to reflect on what they have learnt from this session. Run through the summary on slide 21.

Ask students to answer one of the questions on slide 22. Choose a few students to share.

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