

## 5 Ways to Communicate more Clearly

The winner in every business competition is always whoever communicates the most clearly. Whether you're dealing with employees, bosses, colleagues, or [customers](#), your ability to get what you want hinges on how well you talk and write.

With that in mind, here are five basic rules that apply to one-on-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many [communications](#) alike:

### 1. Always know the "why."

Whenever you're communicating at work, you're wasting time and energy if you don't know the reason the communication is taking place.

Before you initiate any communication, ask yourself, "What am I trying to accomplish?" Even chitchat should have a purpose, even if it's just to build camaraderie.

If somebody else is initiating the conversation, ask yourself, "Why is this conversation taking place?" If the answer isn't obvious, guide the dialogue to the "why" of it.

Understanding and focusing on the "why" allows you to avoid side issues and ratholes that might otherwise obscure the situation.

### 2. Communicate emotions in person.

Any communication that has high emotional content should be delivered in person (if possible and practical) or by telephone and teleconferencing (if not).

For example, if you've got great news that will get everyone stoked up, it will be more effective and create more positive energy if you deliver it in person.

A group meeting to announce a big sales win, for example, is like an instant celebration. By contrast, an email announcing the same win seems a bit like an afterthought.

Similarly, if you've got bad news or criticism, it will be better received, and more likely to be helpful, if it's delivered in person. If you use email, it will seem like you don't care or that you're cowardly.

### 3. Communicate facts via email.

Any communication that is primarily factual should be communicated in writing for two important reasons:

People only retain a small percentage of facts when they're communicated verbally. Therefore, having a written record of those facts helps ensure that they don't get lost when it's time to make decisions.

As I pointed out in "[Why You Should Never Have Update Meetings](#)," communicating facts verbally to large groups is extremely inefficient. It's much better to use email to get everyone up to speed and then have a discussion of what yet needs to be accomplished.

#### **4. Listen more than you talk.**

Generally, this rule is applied to in-person conversations, but it also applies in back-and-forth emails and social-media posts. Perhaps "'tis better to receive than to give" would be a better way to put it.

In any case, it's almost always a bad idea to try to dominate any conversation or communication, because if you're motor-mouthing (or motor-mailing), you're not learning anything.

Also, when you're focused on your output, you're making the communication all about you. As I explain in "[How to Have a Meaningful Conversation](#)," in business situations, communication is never about you. It's always about the other person.

#### **5. Simplify your messages.**

Everybody in today's business world suffers from massive information overload, which creates seemingly endless confusion and stress.

If you want to cut through the noise, you need to make your message as simple and easy to digest as possible. My posts "[5 Free Apps That Make You Seem Smart](#)" and "[8 Conversational Habits That Kill Credibility](#)" explain how to better hone your messages.