

9.4 Communication Skills

Communication is the act of a sender conveying information to a receiver in a method which delivers the meaning the sender intended. Active listening skills help to deepen understanding and trust between the sender and the receiver. Effective communication benefits all stakeholders.

Communication may be accomplished using a variety of delivery methods: verbal, non-verbal, physical, and written. Most communication methods deal with words, while some methods deal with movements and expressions. Words, gestures, and phrases may have different meanings to different individuals. Effective communication involves both the sender and receiver possessing the same understanding of the information being communicated. A shared glossary of terms and clear goals are effective tools to avoid misunderstandings and the resulting complications.

Effective communication includes adapting communication styles and techniques to the knowledge level and communication styles of recipients. Effective communicators understand how tone, body language, and context change the meaning of words. Gaining an understanding of the terms and concepts (prior to the exchange) can provide fruitful benefits.

Planning effective communication includes the sender reviewing the information that is known about the receiver. Differences between the sender and the receiver, such as native language, culture, motivations, priorities, communication, learning, and thinking styles may call for specific communication methods. Each piece of information must be carefully crafted and packaged to ensure it is clear and understood.

When planning to communicate information, the following considerations may be helpful:

- consider what the receiver knows or does not know,
- structure the information in a logical, comprehensible manner,
- determine how to best present the information to convey the intended meanings (for example, using visual aids, graphs, diagrams, or bullet points), and
- understand the expectations of the recipients.

Communication Skills core competencies include:

- Verbal Communication (p. 204),
- Non-Verbal Communication (p. 205),
- Written Communication (p. 205), and
 - Listening (p. 206).

9.4.1 Verbal Communication

.1 Purpose

Business analysts use verbal communication to convey ideas, concepts, facts, and opinions to a variety of stakeholders.

.2 Description

Verbal communication uses spoken words to convey information from the sender to the receiver. Verbal communication skills are used to express business analysis information, ideas, concepts, facts, and opinions. It allows for the efficient transfer of information, including emotional and other non-verbal cues. It can be paired with both written and non-verbal communication.

Verbal communication deals specifically with the sender's choice of words and the tone of voice. When the receiver is able to see the sender, the sender's nonverbal communication impacts the meaning of the message being understood by the receiver. When the sender is able to see the receiver, the receiver is providing a response and both the sender and receiver are engaged in a dialogue, even though the receiver may not be speaking verbally. Monitoring the receiver's nonverbal communication allows the sender to consider adapting the message for the receiver.

Having an understanding of the tone of the communication and how it can positively or negatively influence the listener allows the business analyst to more effectively communicate verbally. Effective verbal communication skills include the ability to make one's meaning understood. The sender should partner verbal communication with active listening to ensure that information presented is being understood by the receiver.

.3 Effectiveness Measures

Measures of effective verbal communication include:

- restating concepts to ensure all stakeholders clearly understand the same information,
- assisting conversations to reach productive conclusions,
 - delivering effective presentations by designing and positioning content and objectives appropriately, and
- communicating an issue's important points in a calm and rational manner, and presenting solution options.

9.4.2 Non-Verbal Communication

.1 Purpose

Non-verbal communication skills enable the effective sending and receiving of messages through—but not limited to—body movement, posture, facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact

.2 Definition

Communication is typically focused upon words that are written or spoken. Non-verbal communication, however, is believed to convey much more meaning than

words alone. Moods, attitudes, and feelings impact body movement and facial expressions. Non-verbal communication begins immediately when one person is able to see another. The effective use of non-verbal communication skills can present a trustworthy, confident, and capable demeanor. Being aware of nonverbal communication provides the opportunity to be aware and address the feelings of others that are not expressed verbally

Observing gestures or expressions cannot provide a complete understanding of the message being expressed by these non-verbal cues. These cues are indicators of the feelings and intent of the communicator. For example, when a stakeholder's non-verbal communication does not agree with their verbal message, the business analyst may want to explore the conversation further to uncover the source of this disagreement.

.3 Effectiveness Measures

Measures of effective non-verbal communication include:

- being aware of body language in others, but not assuming a complete understanding through non-verbal communication,
- intentional awareness of personal non-verbal communication,
- improving trust and communication as a result of non-verbal communication, and
- effectively addressing and resolving situations when a stakeholder's non-verbal communication does not agree with their verbal message.

9.4.3 Written Communication

.1 Purpose

Business analysts use written communication to convey ideas, concepts, facts, and opinions to variety of stakeholders.

.2 Definition

Written communication is the practice of using text, symbols, models (formal or informal), and sketches to convey and share information. An understanding of the audience is beneficial to effectively use written communication. Presenting information and ideas requires selecting the correct words so the audience will understand the intended meaning. Written communication has the added challenge of presenting information at a time or place that is remote from the time and place it was created.

Effective written communication requires a broad vocabulary, strong grasp of grammar and style, and an understanding of the terms which will be understood by the audience. Written communication has the potential to convey a great deal of information; however, conveying information effectively is a skill which must be developed.

.3 Effectiveness Measures

Measures of effective written communication include:

- adjusting the style of writing for the needs of the audience,
- proper use of grammar and style,
- choosing words the audience will understand the intended meaning of, and
- ability of the reader to paraphrase and describe the content of the written communication.

9.4.4 Listening

.1 Purpose

Effective listening allows the business analyst to accurately understand information that is communicated verbally.

.2 Definition

Listening is the process of not just hearing words but understanding their meaning in context. By exhibiting effective listening skills, business analysts not only have a greater opportunity to accurately understand what is being communicated, but also to demonstrate that they think what the speaker is saying is important.

Active listening involves both listening and interpreting what the other person is trying to communicate beyond the words used in order to understand the essence of the message. Active listening includes summarizing and repeating what was stated in different terms in order to ensure that both the listener and the speaker have the same understanding.

.3 Effectiveness Measures

Measures of effective listening include:

- giving the speaker undivided attention,
- acknowledging the speaker with verbal or non-verbal encouragement,
- providing feedback to the person or the group that is speaking to ensure there is an understanding, and
- using active listening skills by deferring judgment and responding appropriately.