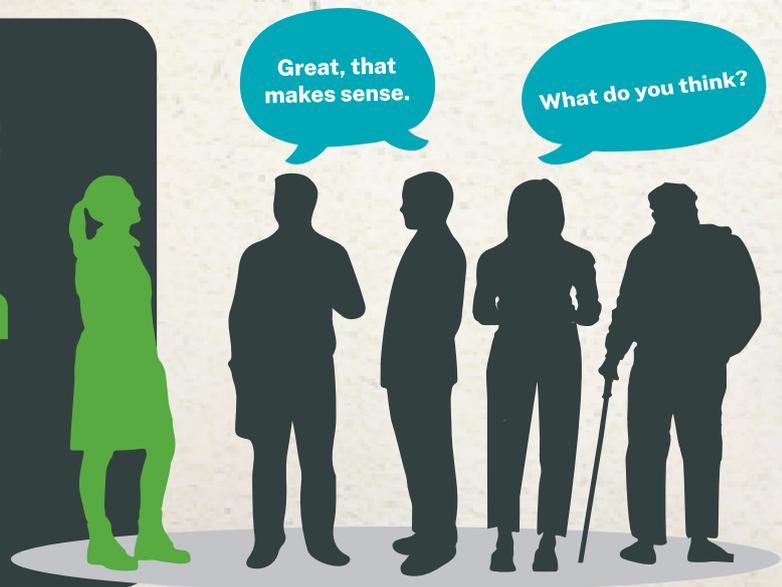


# Good Work Design: Effective communication



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## All managers communicate, but great managers communicate openly and effectively

Open communication is a two-way process where both people feel safe and confident to share information freely, knowing that they will be listened to, and their views respected by the other person. As a manager or supervisor, communicating openly with your employees builds trust, makes them feel valued and provides opportunities to express views and raise issues.

### Why it matters

Effective communication is essential in building employee morale, engagement and job satisfaction. It can help create a positive team atmosphere, improve [psychological safety](#) and enhance performance.

When managers and supervisors communicate effectively, people understand how their work contributes to the organisation's purpose and have opportunities to learn and improve.

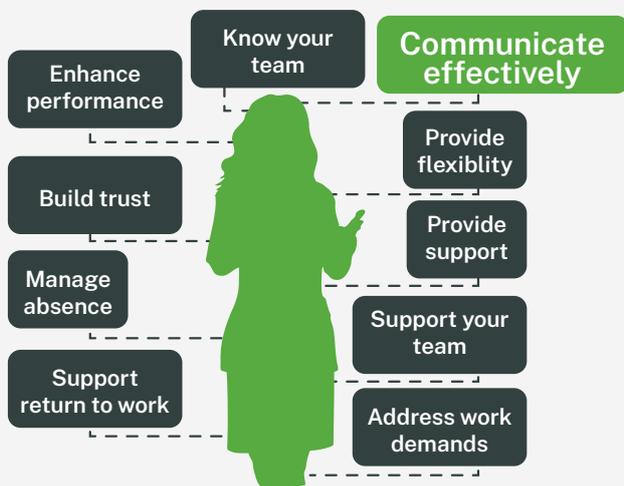
**'Research shows that the highest engagement is among workers with daily communication from their managers.'**

### How it's done

Consider the purpose of any communication to assess whether it is effective for the situation.

#### 1 Communicate often

- Hold frequent, ongoing and open conversations that help you understand your workers' strengths, motivations and how they are tracking.
- Conduct complex communication in a planned way, considering the purpose, who should be involved and the timetable.
- Identify your key messages and be direct in delivering them.
- Talk about what the work is, why it needs to be delivered and how the team can do their best work.
- Seek your team's input into ideas, strategies or timing of the work as this can lead to better decisions.
- Remember you can tactfully check that your communication was clear when you need to. For example, you can say 'I think it's important that we're on the same page, what do you see as the key points?'



What great **managers** do



**Research finds** that managers with effective communication strategies report fewer worker concerns.

## 2 Be accessible and flexible

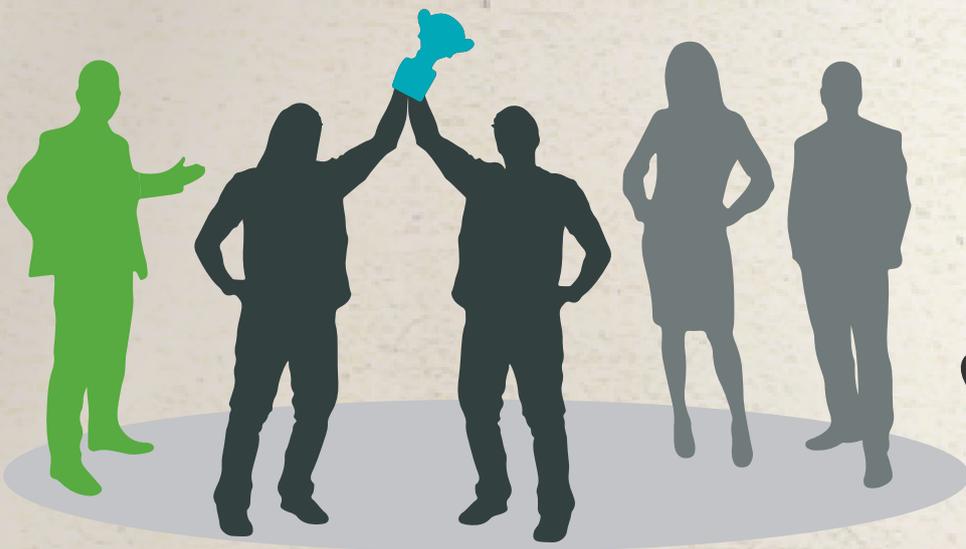
- Provide lots of opportunities for people to communicate with you. Daily check-ins and an 'open door' policy are two ways of ensuring you are accessible when your employees need you.
- Ask your staff how they would like you to communicate with them. This promotes a sense of control and enhances engagement.
- Choose communication methods that suit the circumstances and tailor your approach to your audience.
- Maintain a friendly, positive attitude when speaking to your staff.
- Be aware that research indicates that different communication channels work better for different types of work.

## 3 Be genuine

- Remember that communication is a two-way process. Be open to feedback and ensure people are comfortable asking you questions and raising concerns.
- Take time to get to know your team and help them feel comfortable talking on a broad range of subjects — work related and not.
- Be open and honest, for example, by showing vulnerability and admitting when you don't know the answer.
- Be authentic, bring your own 'whole person' to work and share aspects of your personal life, so your team can get to know you.

### Choose the right communication channel

- Face to face communication at an initial meeting is critical for building trust and relationships and helps bonding via screens.
- Screen-based communication works well for transactional work, but for other work it's better to be face to face.
- Using a phone can help you focus on the person's voice and read their emotions. If you can't meet face to face, consider using a phone for difficult conversations.
- Email is the least effective communication channel — keep it for simple tasks: coordinating activities, confirming agreements and requesting or sharing information.



# Teams who put in the work reap the rewards



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## Get to know your team through intentional communication

- 'Good morning' and 'goodbye'.
- 'How are you?'
- 'How was your weekend?'
- 'How are you finding your work?'
- 'Do you need anything from me?'

## 4 Listen with empathy

- Actively listen to your staff and show you care by giving them your undivided attention, using eye contact, positive body language and gestures to show engagement.
- Ask clarifying questions. This shows that you are listening and confirms that you understand and respect what they have said.
- Acknowledge feelings when you notice them, for example, 'You look like you're upset...?' Listen patiently and calmly and make neutral responses that summarise the issues, for example, 'I'm sure that must be challenging.' This will help them feel heard and understood.

**'I am a firm believer in listening to your staff at all times. The moment you stop doing this, you are in danger of losing your best people.'**

*Sir Richard Branson*

## 5 What if it breaks down?

Learning how to communicate effectively takes practice and is a joint effort for you and your team. No one gets it right all the time.

Look out for signs of possible miscommunication and seek clarity. When communication breaks down, you can get it back on track by:

1. acknowledging that the breakdown has occurred
2. avoiding blame
3. taking accountability; and
4. asking what you can do to ensure more effective communication next time.

## Ensure your communication is inclusive and culturally appropriate

- Be curious and develop some knowledge of people's cultural backgrounds.
- Keep an open mind and accept cultural and other differences.
- Use active listening to ensure you understand and are understood.
- Be aware of differences in non-verbal communication.
- Use clear language and avoid jargon and slang.

