

Productive Leaders

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7 Ways to Communicate Better with Your Boss



Good communication with the boss is critical for a positive and productive work environment. Many employees, however, struggle to communicate effectively with their supervisors.

According to a Gallup poll reported in [Business Journal](#), only 54 percent of employees feel they can approach their boss with a question. Supervisors who are open and approachable, not surprisingly, have better relationships with their employees, and more of those employees are more fully engaged.

However, we seldom get to choose our supervisors, so wherever we are in the organization, we have to communicate effectively with our boss. There are several techniques that can be used to improve communication.

1. Communicate in the Best Way for the Boss

Some people want to receive all their information via email, while others prefer text messaging. Some managers want to hear the tone of their employee's voice or have eye contact.

Whether it is email, texting, by phone, or face to face, it is imperative to communicate the way the boss likes to receive information. The best way to find out? Ask. Ask your boss how they want to receive information and tailor your communications to the way they work best.

2. Close the Loop

Whether it is closing the deal, finishing a project, or just following up, it is important for people to do what they say they'll do. The best way to do this is to create clear objectives and follow a point by point plan to make sure everything gets accomplished as it should. It's also important not to promise anything that is dependent on what other employees or departments will do.

Once you complete something, make sure you let your supervisor know. A quick email such as, "I sent you the McNeill report before lunch. Please let me know if you need any additional information or if you'd like to discuss it." You are offering help while making sure they know that the project is complete.

3. Let the Boss Know When You are Unavailable

Even if an employee is only be out of the office for a few hours, something as simple as sending a quick email can increase trust. If at all possible, a contact number should be given. Sometimes personal emergencies come up, and it is incumbent on the employee to let their hierarchy know. It's critical for an employee to plan ahead of time to make sure they have contact information so they can communicate this type of information.

I love seeing notes on doors letting others know where people are and when they will be back, as well as a cell phone number.

4. Keep the Boss Informed on Ongoing Projects

This is especially important when working on a long-term project that may take several months to complete. Especially if there are difficulties with the project, it is imperative to keep the manager informed.

[PeterBarronStark Companies](#) suggests scheduling a private meeting to deliver any bad news and not simply announce problems in a meeting or at an inappropriate time. The best employees also bring potential solutions when informing the boss of a problem.

5. Ask for Feedback

If your manager isn't giving you the feedback you need to know how you are doing, ask. According to [Forbes](#), employees shouldn't think their work isn't valued because the boss hasn't given them any recent feedback. Most managers are overwhelmed with a heavy workload, and sometimes managers just assume that their employees understand their vision and how they are doing.

Millennials tend need more feedback than older employees, and this creates a disconnect. When the manager operates by the precept, "You are doing fine unless I tell you otherwise" and the worker wonders "Am I doing this project correctly?" there is a communications gap. Few people enjoy the annual performance review. We find it is far more effective for managers to provide frequent updates to their employees on how they are doing. If the manager doesn't provide this, it is okay for an employee to take the initiative and ask for honest feedback.

6. Get the Facts Straight

One of the primary rules of good communication involves relaying correct information. Not only can communicating unconfirmed information create chaos in the office, but an employee may get a reputation as someone who is unreliable. [Bizmanualz](#) states that it is crucial to offer objective evidence instead of opinions whenever you're presenting an argument. Occasionally, in an effort to keep the boss informed quickly, good employees will pass along less-than-complete information. When possible, double check information.

7. Be Authentic

Dishonest communication creates tension. Most people can tell when someone is trying to sugarcoat bad news, or is simply trying to tell someone what they want to hear. [Scholastic.com](#) features an inspirational account of a young teacher who learned how critical it was to communicate effectively with a difficult boss. She used different forms of communication depending on the boss' mood and formed a support group at work. She found effective ways to communicate without sacrificing her authenticity.

Finding the best ways to communicate with a boss is a process that isn't always easy, but it worth the effort. Good communication at work decreases rework, reduces stress, and increases productivity. Following these steps can go a long way to improving communication with both managers and teams.

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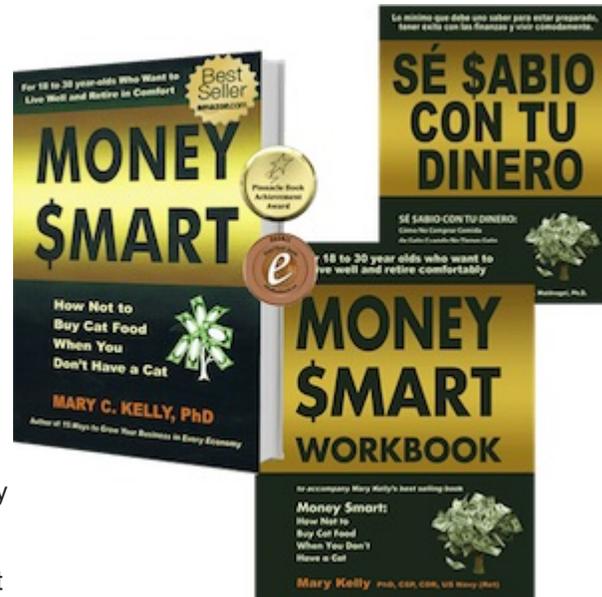
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