

Communication Ethics @ Work

Mixing Business with Pleasure

Best known for his snarky sense of humor and famous “Top Ten” lists, CBS funnyman *Late Show* host David Letterman made waves for an entirely different reason in the fall of 2009.⁴¹ When word got out that he had an office romance with an intern on his staff, then another, then another, the story grew to scandalous proportions. Although release of this story was sensational (as it included stories from coworkers, graphic details, and the juicy little tidbit that Letterman was in a committed relationship at the time), it did highlight an ever-increasing issue for leaders in the workplace: office romance. Just how common is workplace romance? In a survey by Careerbuilder.com, 40 percent admitted to dating a coworker, with an additional 12 percent who hadn’t but said they would.⁴² Of the 40 percent who had dated a coworker, 42 percent said they had dated a boss or supervisor. Three of ten respondents also said they married someone they met at work. Leaders are now recognizing that workplace romances are inevitable.

Historically, workplace romance has been considered taboo. But now companies are recognizing that by permitting office

romance, employees get what they consider an important benefit of working for the company: an opportunity to enhance their social life. However, an office romance almost certainly will have an effect on the interpersonal dynamics within a group.⁴³ In a related survey, 85 percent of respondents said that although common, workplace romances are a potential distraction for everyone at work. In addition, relationships between supervisor/subordinate, such as those Letterman engaged in, can have devastating consequences. There is the risk of retribution if the romance sours. Also, “third-party” employees can feel left out or begin to question the fairness of evaluations or rewards. In addition, these types of relationships have the potential to make the work environment so uncomfortable, that parties could file sexual harassment or hostile workplace complaints.

How does a leader navigate these legally and ethically murky waters? Do you believe the potential rewards for office romance outweigh the potential risks? As a leader, would you encourage or discourage these types of relationships? Would you participate in one?

develop and market products and services that meet these needs. For example, the late Steve Jobs, cofounder and CEO of Apple, identified a consumer need for portable and personalized tablet computers designed to deliver audiovisual media—including books, magazines, movies, music, and games—to users. Under his leadership, Apple developed and delivered the iPad to millions of people throughout the world.

Researchers are learning that task-focused relationships do not necessarily result in satisfied or loyal customers.⁴⁴ With minor exceptions, customers who are treated in a depersonalized manner walk away feeling unsatisfied. To enhance the quality of the service provider–customer relationship, **outward communication**, which is the communication that occurs between a service provider and a customer, needs to be focused on meeting the needs of the customer. Wendy Zabava Ford has conducted a number of research studies examining customer-service communication.⁴⁵ Ford’s research finds that personalized service, which occurs within a person-focused relationship, is “tailored service, or service that attempts to address the unique needs of the individual customer.”⁴⁶ Examples of communication behaviors associated with personalized service include asking questions to identify customers’ specific needs, offering options and advice to customers, and spontaneously sharing information on topics of interest to customers.

One service company that continues to set the standard for customer service is Disney. Much has been written about how Disney trains its employees or cast members to communicate and interact with customers (guests).⁴⁷ Whenever the word “Guest” is used in any of their internal or external communication, the “G” is capitalized as a symbolic way of showing how critically important the customer is to the Disney organization. To make sure guests received personalized customer service, Disney cast members practice the following “7 Guest Service Guidelines”:⁴⁸

1. Make eye contact and smile. Begin and end every interaction with a Guest with direct eye contact and a sincere smile.
2. Greet and welcome each and every Guest. Extend an appropriate greeting to every Guest you come into contact with. In some areas of the park, themed greetings are offered.

terms & definitions

Outward communication communication between a service provider and a customer.

Communication Skills FOR A Digital Age

How Technology Can Help You Manage Time

You don't manage time, you manage what you do with your time: You manage your communication. Here are several software programs and applications that time management experts recommend to help you manage information and messages that you send and receive each day.¹⁶

- **Xobni <xobni.com>**: This free program helps you manage email messages and attachments.
- **MindManager <mindjet.com>**: This low-cost software program is based on the mind-mapping technique of making links between the ideas you develop. It provides tools to help you take notes and capture ideas while simultaneously helping you keep major projects in mind.
- **Evernote <evernote.com>**: If you currently use sticky notes or other methods to record ideas and information, this free software program can help you consolidate all of your scribbles in one place and also help you find what you've written.
- **RescueTime <rescuetime.com>** and **JournalLive <journalLive.com>**: These two free programs help you keep track of what you do with your time while on the computer.
- **Dropbox <getdropbox.com>**: This free software lets you sync files among several computers so you don't have to hunt for a file on your desktop computer that may be on your laptop.
- **Jott <jott.com>**: If you need to make a quick reminder note but don't have a pencil or pen handy, you simply call a phone number, leave a recorded message, and then later you'll receive an email message with your message now in text format.
- **FileCenter <lucion.com>**: This program is a document management system that permits you to scan large amounts of paperwork so you can easily track where you've electronically filed it.
- Meet people in their office or workspace rather than yours. If you are in someone else's office, you are less likely to get involved in a long conversation from which you can't escape. When the meeting is in your office, you have nowhere else to go; if you're visiting in a colleague's office you can keep the meeting short.
- Verbally communicate how much time you have for a visit. Let others know what your time limits are. You might say, "Janice, I'm due at a meeting in ten minutes, can we discuss this issue in that time?" We're not suggesting that you lie about meetings or other appointments to avoid conversations. But do honestly let others know of your time parameters.
- If you have an administrative assistant, ask him or her to announce when your next appointment is, which will help you signal the need to end a meeting.
- Verbally signal that your time is up. By saying, "Do you have any final observations before we conclude our visit?" you send a clear message that your time is limited. With some people you may need to be even more explicit: "Ken, I'm sorry, but I have to conclude our meeting."

Take Action

Having goals and objectives, making a master list, prioritizing your work, and managing interruptions won't be enough to achieve increased productivity unless you act. The final element in managing your time and managing communication in order to increase your efficiency is to turn your plans into action. One strategy that can help you take appropriate action to accomplish your goals and objectives is to use the power of reflection.

One of your most powerful time management/communication management tools is the power of reflection. When you reflect, you take time for an important but not urgent task: to review what you need to do next. As we emphasized at the beginning of this appendix, becoming aware of what keeps you from achieving your work goals and having clear goals and objectives is the starting place for taking concrete steps to working more efficiently.

terms & definitions

Xobni <xobni.com> program that assist in managing email messages and attachments.

MindManager <mindjet.com> software program that uses a mind-mapping technique to make links between ideas; it provides tools to take notes and capture ideas while keeping upcoming major projects in mind.

Evernote <evernote.com> software used to consolidate the user's notes and ideas. It also helps find entries that have been submitted.

RescueTime <rescuetime.com> and **JournalLive <journalLive.com>** program that helps keep track of how one spends time while on the computer.

Dropbox <getdropbox.com> file-syncing software that allows one to link files from several computers.

Jott <jott.com> system where one can simply call phone number, leave a message, and then receive an email message with the information in text format.

FileCenter <lucion.com> document management system that permits you to scan large amounts of paperwork to easily track its electronic filing.

Understanding the nature of relational conflict on the job is the first step in learning how to manage conflict at work. The elements of our definition will guide you in diagnosing the conflict and identifying the causes of the conflict. Also, knowing how relational conflict is communicated (through competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, or accommodating) allows you to be prepared to manage conflict, which is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

Skills for Managing Emotions

One problem that most people have when trying to manage conflict is controlling their emotions. Most conflicts provoke emotional responses: anger, hurt feelings, frustration, fear, or defensiveness. Of all the emotions that people can feel on the job, frustration and anger are the most commonly experienced emotions.⁵² According to Anne Kreamer, who studies and reports on workplace emotions, the main cause of the frustration and anger is coworkers who are not doing their share of the work.⁵³ So what do you do with your emotions at work? Should you check them at the office door or should you recognize and process them? Kreamer argues that “it’s high time we get rational about emotions in the workplace.”⁵⁴

Emotions play an instrumental role in how you solve problems. Again, research data does not support the old assumption that emotions only get in the way of rational thinking. Cognitive neuroscientists Mary Helen Immordino-Yang and Antonio Damasio argue that emotions and thinking should not be separated.⁵⁵ *Emotional thought* is the term they use to describe how people solve problems.⁵⁶ The emotional and thinking systems in the brain work together in a synthetic manner to solve important problems. For example, if you’ve ever been caught not doing your share of the work on an important project, you probably felt embarrassed and ashamed. These emotions have a “stickiness” that remain in your memory and prevent you from repeating the same mistake.

Although some people want to express their anger and frustration to show the other person their level of anger and frustration and to release bottled-up emotions, these emotional outbursts usually ignite the other person’s emotions and result in emotional contagion. Like conflict in general, emotions are like a virus that spreads very quickly from one person to another.⁵⁷ We have a tendency to mimic each other’s behaviors. If you approach a conflict situation in a hostile or defensive manner, the other person, maybe even without knowing it, starts mimicking your behaviors and begins feeling hostile and defensive too.⁵⁸ If you’re going to be successful at managing a conflict, you must become aware of the contagion effect and try to prevent it from occurring. Although you do not have control over the other person’s emotions, you can affect his or her emotions indirectly by managing your own emotions during a conflict conversation. Here are a few suggestions for how you might prevent the contagion effect.

SELECT A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE TIME AND PLACE TO DISCUSS THE CONFLICT. Let the other person know that you would like to discuss something important and find out when the other person might be available. Make sure this time works for you and your schedule too. If you or the other person is tired, there’s a risk of becoming locked in an emotion-charged confrontation. It’s best to have a conflict conversation when you’re both well-rested. Also, make sure you have some privacy for your conversation.

MONITOR THE EMOTIONAL TEMPERATURE. Let the other person know that you expect the conversation to be respectful and that if the conversation becomes too emotional, you will call a “time-out” or postpone the conversation until the emotions have subsided. For example, you might say, “I know we both feel strongly about the decision not to promote Leslie to unit manager, but I hope we can calmly discuss other alternatives for

her career development.” Verbal messages like this acknowledge feelings but also reinforce expectations for being polite to one another.

BE NONVERBALLY RESPONSIVE TO OTHERS. Emotions are conveyed primarily through nonverbal messages. And remember that we don’t have as much control over our nonverbal messages as we do our verbal messages; emotions have a tendency to “leak” out of us in our nonverbal behavior. Many times these leaked cues convey negative emotions. Although it is natural to have a closed body orientation (to cross arms and pull back) during conflict conversations, try remaining nonverbally responsive to the other person. Make appropriate eye contact. Ensure an open body position by facing the person, uncrossing arms and legs, leaning forward, and using appropriate head nods. Nonverbally responsive messages have a tendency to defuse or neutralize negative emotions.

AVOID PERSONAL ATTACKS, NAME-CALLING, PROFANITY, AND GUNNY-SACKING.

Because conflict situations are usually emotionally charged, it is easy to resort to what conflict researchers refer to as “below-the-belt” fighting.⁵⁹ This type of conflict is expressed by attacking the individual and making the conflict personal. Profanity, which is usually not acceptable in the workplace, or a personal attack is usually reciprocated by the other person. This cycle of negative emotional expression needs to be broken if there is to be any hope of managing the conflict constructively. Another way to manage emotions is to avoid engaging in gunny-sacking, or kitchen-sink fighting.⁶⁰ Gunny-sacking occurs when a person begins discussing a single conflict situation and then continues to unload or dump on the other person all of the things that have been bothering him or her. Essentially, it’s emptying the “gunny-sack” of grievances. This type of conflict management is perceived as unfair by most people and increases negative emotions. To avoid gunny-sacking, limit the scope of your conflict conversation to a single issue rather than multiple issues.

Skills for Managing Conflict Conversations

Imagine you’re having a problem with your coworker Michael. Rather than talking behind his back, you discuss the problem with Michael directly. But while you’re talking, something happens almost without your knowing it: Michael “spins” the conversation so that the problem seems to be about you and not him. It happens quite often, and it can be frustrating. If we’re not careful, people can hijack conflict conversations. When this happens, we walk away from the conflict conversation asking ourselves, “How did that happen? Why did I let him do that?” In reality, the problem is not just the other person’s and it’s not just yours. Because you and the other person are interdependent, the problem belongs to both of you.

To keep your conflict conversation on track and work toward a solution acceptable to both individuals, consider structuring your conversation using what we refer to as the PUGSS model of conflict management. Each letter of the PUGSS acronym represents a different part of the conversation.⁶¹

- P = Describe the *Problem*
- U = Achieve *Understanding*
- G = Identify *Goals*
- S = Brainstorm *Solutions*
- S = Select the best *Solution*

The advantage to using the PUGSS model is that it keeps conflict conversations focused, and it helps people prepare their conflict messages. Here’s how the process works.

DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM. What is the other person saying or doing that is bothering you? Using “I” language, describe the problematic behavior. “This is what I see you doing. This is what I hear you saying. This is how I’m feeling.”

ACHIEVE UNDERSTANDING. Make sure the other person understands the problem. Simply ask, “Do you know why this is a problem?” You might want to ask the person to paraphrase what she or he hears you saying to confirm understanding. If the person doesn’t understand, which is common, then continue to describe the problem but in a different way. It is important not to continue to the next step in the conversation until you’re confident that the other person understands the problem.

Also, make sure the person doesn’t hijack or deflect the conversation and make the problem about you. For example, if you’re discussing with an employee the fact that the person is frequently late, the employee may change the subject and mention that you need to be less rigid and more understanding. If this occurs, tell the person that you’d be happy to follow up at another time to hear his or her thoughts about your being rigid and not understanding. Then redirect the conversation back to the employee’s tardiness problem. In other words, keep the conversation focused on the employee’s behaviors, not on yours. That’s a different conversation that should be conducted at another time.

IDENTIFY GOALS. Next, let the other person know what you want and need. Find out what the other person wants and needs. Once you have identified individual goals, identify the goals you have in common. Build on your common goals. For example, if you’re working with an employee who is constantly late to work, you might mention that the goal you have in common is for this person to remain employed. You might say, “I know you want to keep your job, and I want you to keep your job too. Our goal is the same. Now let’s work together to reach this goal.” People are usually surprised to find out that they have a number of common or similar goals.

BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS. Now that the problem and goals have been identified, it’s time to find a solution. Ask, “What can we do to fix the problem? How can we ensure that both of our goals are met?” Withhold all evaluation and generate as many creative solutions as possible.

SELECT THE BEST SOLUTION. Finally, select the best solution. Evaluate each of the brainstormed solutions and compare each to the goals you’ve identified. If a solution doesn’t meet the goals of both people, then it’s not the *best* solution. Continue evaluating each solution until you come up with one that meets all the goals identified earlier.

Figure 6.4 reflects how PUGSS might unfold in a real relational conflict in the workplace. This particular conflict, which actually occurred, involves two employees who work in the same office. One of the employees, Marisa, brings her infant daughter to work because she has been unable to arrange child care. The other employee, Rick, is distracted by the child’s crying and often ends up doing Marisa’s work.

For most people, working through conflict is troublesome and difficult because there’s so much uncertainty. We have no idea how the conflict conversation is going to go. This uncertainty produces a lot of anxiety. One of the advantages of using PUGSS to structure your conflict conversations is that it makes managing and resolving conflict like working through a script. To reduce the uncertainty and anxiety, we encourage you to plan your conflict conversations and structure them using the PUGSS model.

There is simply no way to escape relational conflict at work. To manage conflict when it occurs, first ensure that the workplace climate is conducive to managing conflict. Workplace environments that are supportive, trusting, caring, and accepting ensure that relational conflict is managed well. Second, manage your emotions carefully by managing

Describing the Problem

- Rick:** Do you have a second? I have a problem and I know that you can help me fix it.
- Marisa:** Sure, come in. What's the problem? How can I help?
- Rick:** Something has been bothering me.
- Marisa:** What is it?
- Rick:** I haven't been able to get much work done lately. I begin a project that requires concentration and then I hear your child crying. The other day she cried from 9:00 a.m. until 11:00. I was feeling very frustrated.
- Marisa:** Yes, she was not having a good day. I'm so sorry.
- Rick:** I have also had other employees assign me work that is usually given to you. Yesterday, the Director of Marketing asked me to stuff all of these envelopes and I don't even report to her. I feel like I'm getting dumped on because others don't want to burden you with additional work. I'm feeling a bit abused by this situation, and I'm frustrated and anxious.

Achieving Understanding

- Rick:** Do you understand why this is a problem for me?
- Marisa:** I think so. Here's what I hear you saying: My child bothers you and others are dumping my work on you because they perceive me as having too much to do, with my child and everything else.
- Rick:** Your child is not the distraction, but her crying is.
- Marisa:** I also didn't know that others perceived me as ineffective.
- Rick:** I don't think anybody thinks you're ineffective at all—I just think they perceive you as having your hands full with your workload and your child.
- Marisa:** I understand. Again, I apologize for this and I'm glad you brought this problem to my attention. Let's fix it.
- Rick:** What do you suggest we do to fix the problem?

Identifying Goals

- Marisa:** What do you need to get your job done?
- Rick:** I need a quiet work environment. I also need others to know that you're available so they stop giving me your work. I don't feel our work is equally distributed. What do you need?
- Marisa:** I need to be able to care for my daughter and work at the same time. Being a single working mother is challenging.
- Rick:** Well, yes—I can't even imagine how hard it must be.
- Marisa:** Well, we both need our jobs and we like working here. . . .
- Rick:** Also, we're good friends and I don't think we want this to damage our friendship.
- Marisa:** I agree completely. What do you see as being a workable solution?

Brainstorming Solutions

- Rick:** How about having your parents care for her while you're working?
- Marisa:** I could see if I could change offices so we wouldn't bother you.
- Rick:** How about seeing if the company might help you finance daycare?
- Marisa:** How about you change your work schedule and work nights? Is that a possibility?
- Rick:** Could you get a babysitter with whom you could exchange babysitting services? For example, you sit with the other person's child on the weekends and this person could sit with your child during the week.

FIGURE 6.4 The PUGSS Approach to Conflict

Selecting the Best Solution

- Marisa:** Why don't I see if I could change my office so that my daughter and I will be out of your way?
- Rick:** I think that would meet my need for a quiet workplace; however, I still believe people will perceive you as having your hands full and they will come to me. Is it possible for your parents to care for your child during the day?
- Marisa:** Well, unfortunately my parents aren't capable of caring for my daughter. They're not comfortable around babies. My mother pops Valium every time we step foot in the house and my dad leaves once my daughter begins to cry.
- Rick:** What about exchanging babysitting services with a neighbor?
- Marisa:** That idea might work. . . . My neighbor is a firefighter and he works two 24-hour shifts during the weekend. I could watch his kids all weekend, and I believe he would be willing to watch my daughter during the workday.
- Rick:** That would meet both of my needs and yours. Do you agree?
- Marisa:** I do agree. All I want is good childcare for my daughter and to keep my job.

FIGURE 6.4 (continued)

conflict at the appropriate time and place, explaining your expectations for how you will treat each other during the conflict conversation, being nonverbally responsive, and avoiding personal attacks, name-calling, profanity, and gunny-sacking. Third, plan and structure your conflict conversations to ensure that you reach a solution you both can agree on.

Skills for Managing Bullies

Although we're used to hearing about bullies on playgrounds and in high school hallways, we're not used to hearing about them in business and professional contexts. Unfortunately, bullying in the workplace is becoming more and more of a problem at work. Communication researcher Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik and her colleagues report that 1 in 3 of all workers in the United States have been bullied sometime during their work history.⁶² According to Lutgen-Sandvik, **workplace bullying** is an extreme, negative, and persistent form of emotional workplace abuse achieved primarily through verbal and nonverbal communication.⁶³ Four characteristics differentiate workplace bullying from other forms of employee abuse: (1) bullying communication behaviors are extreme and intense, (2) the behaviors persist over long periods and result in negative effects, (3) targets or those bullied believe these communication acts are intentional, and (4) targets feel they cannot defend themselves in the situation.⁶⁴ Examples of bullying may include some of the following behaviors:

- When someone criticizes you when there is no reason to justify the criticism
- When someone falsely blames you
- When someone treats you differently than the rest of your work group
- When someone swears at you
- When someone intentionally excludes you from important activities
- When someone shouts at you or humiliates you
- When someone makes you the target of practical joke
- When someone excessively monitors you

A leader is held responsible for managing these difficult and often challenging situations. There are a number of strategies for managing bullies in the workplace. Figure 6.5 examines two best practices: talking to the bully and writing a letter to the bully.

terms & definitions

Workplace bullying an extreme, negative, and persistent form of emotional workplace abuse achieved primarily through verbal and nonverbal communication.

Principles two and three, effectively using and interpreting verbal and nonverbal messages, are also important in managing your time wisely. Your ability to make written lists and to prioritize the items on those lists are key verbal competencies that, if used wisely, can increase your productivity. Managing interruptions involves using several nonverbal communication behaviors so as to increase efficiency.

The fourth principle, being able to listen and thoughtfully respond, is critical to increasing your efficiency. There are many times when hearing a message accurately in the first place would have saved time, energy, and expense of redoing a project or task. Accurately interpreting what others say is directly linked with increased efficiency and goal achievement.

Finally, the fifth principle of appropriately adapting messages to others is key to managing time. Being able to assess situations and appropriately customize messages and behaviors to accomplish tasks are essential to both effective communication and achievement of goals.

Even without reading this appendix, you probably have a good sense of what a good time manager does, as well as what people do who are less skilled in efficiently managing their time. Table A.1 lists the results of a survey that identified the top ten time wasters. To help you get a sense of the time management issues that confront you, make a note of the behaviors on the list that you have found yourself doing. Note how many of the time wasters relate to how we communicate with others. Whether it's the phone, email, text messages, visitors, meetings, socializing, or explicitly poor communication, directly or indirectly most of those factors recognized as time wasters are linked to how we communicate with others. A first step to improving your response to those obstacles is being aware of those behaviors that decrease productivity.

Besides noting time wasters that you may be guilty of from time to time, another way to increase your awareness of your time management competence is to conduct a time audit. Take a moment to complete the time audit form in Rating Scale A.1. After each activity listed, estimate how much time (rounded off to quarter and half hours) you spend in a 24-hour period doing each activity. The scale indicates a target amount, which you may or may not agree with, but which gives you something to compare your own time estimates to. Once you've estimated how much time you spend performing each activity, review your estimates to determine if you're comfortable with the time you currently spend on these tasks. If you'd like to spend more time doing an activity (such as sleeping or pursuing a hobby) draw an arrow pointing up next to that activity. If you want to spend less time performing an activity (such as traveling or commuting to and from work or school), draw an arrow pointing down to indicate you'd rather spend less time doing this task. Your time management audit can begin to reveal how you'd like to spend your time on a typical day.

TABLE A.1 The Ten Biggest Time Wasters²

1. Management by crisis
2. Telephone/email interruptions
3. Inadequate planning
4. Attempting too much
5. Drop-in visitors
6. Ineffective delegation
7. Personal disorganization
8. Lack of self-discipline
9. Inability to say no
10. Procrastination



RATING
SCALE **A.1**

Where Your Time Goes³

Daily Activity (Monday–Friday)	Number of Hours	
	Target	Actual
Utility Time		
Sleeping	8	7
Bathing, Dressing	1/2	1/2
Eating	1½	1
Traveling	1½	1½
Total Utility Time	11½	10
Employment Time/Academic Time		
Working/Studying/Attending Classes/Teaching	8	8½
Breaks	1/2	1
Waiting	1/4	1/4
Socializing	1/4	1/4
Total Employment Time	9	10
Discretionary (Leisure) Time		
Watching TV	1	1
Athletic and Health Activities	1/2	1/2
Hobbies, Housework	1	1
Family and Social Activities	1	2
Total Discretionary Time	3½	4
Total	24	24

Develop Written Goals and Objectives

Without a map, directions, or a GPS system, it's difficult to navigate from one city to another or to find an unfamiliar address. Just as you need a map or a GPS to help you get where you're going, you also need a map of your work destinations. To manage your time well (and manage your communication, too), you need to establish goals and objectives to clearly identify where you want to go. Being able to develop clear and well-written goals and objectives is the first step in working and communicating more efficiently.⁴