

## MAKING COMMUNICATION WORK

Ten Top Tips from Neil Thompson, Avenue Consulting Ltd  
[www.avenueconsulting.co.uk](http://www.avenueconsulting.co.uk)

1. *Be clear about what you are trying to communicate* If you are not clear in your own mind about what you are trying to say, don't be surprised when it is not clear to others either. Good communication depends on clarity.
2. *Be clear about purpose* Knowing what to communicate, to whom, when and so on will depend largely on *the purpose* of the communication. Being clear about *why* we are trying to communicate will help us decide *what* and *how* to communicate.
3. *Listen* Communication is a two-way process. We cannot make communication work unless we listen carefully. People are less likely to listen to you if they feel you are not listening to them. This may sound obvious but it is amazing how often the importance of listening gets forgotten.
4. *Use non-verbal communication appropriately* If we are not careful, our body language can undermine or even contradict what we are trying to say.
5. *Consider the context of communication* Is this the right time and place? Is the setting giving the wrong message? Are there distractions?
6. *Consider the medium of communication* Is what you are trying to say best said orally or in writing? Letter, memo or email? Remember that the medium is also part of the message.
7. *Consider the management of communication* Are there appropriate systems and processes in place? Even very advanced communication skills will be of little use if there is no mechanism for the communication to take place.
8. *Consider cultural differences* Communication is very culture dependent, so take extra care when communicating with someone from a different cultural background from your own
9. *Identify barriers to communication* Some may be unavoidable but not all will. Think ahead and, where possible, remove or reduce barriers to effective communication.
10. *Don't underestimate communication* It plays a central role in how we live our lives and how we go about our business. It would be very foolish to take it for granted and not give it the attention it deserves.

### Points to ponder

1. Do you have a policy on managing communication?
2. Do you have a system for evaluating training effectiveness?
3. Are your key managers and staff aware of the issues and their importance?
4. Have they received appropriate training?
5. Do you have access to specialist advice and support if/when you need it?