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# Adaptive Communication

Growing Your Style for Enhanced and Flexible Connection with Faculty

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# Messages Not Received? Let's Start!

Our role is to provide unparalleled support, understanding and knowledge to our faculty and campus.

If your PI isn't connecting to you, future communication will be exhausting when there are conflicting styles.

## **Goals for this session:**

- a. dissect our personal communication
- b. learn about adaptive communication
- c. keeping your own style
- d. steps and strategies

# Get to Know Each Other



Vanessa has over 13 years working in research administration and project management in higher education, hospitals and advertising.

She has held positions within central offices and departments, with a focus in post award financial management.

She has an academic background in contemporary communication and science communication, with interests in fandoms, online communities and video games.

**What about you?**

# *Discussion - Defining Communication*

## **Some questions to get your brain working:**

1. What does good communication mean to you?
2. Do you feel like you communicate well?
3. How do you want to be perceived in the workplace?
4. Where does the communication break down for you?
5. Do you have areas you wish to improve on?

# Adaptive Communication

“Adaptive communication refers to a style in which the speaker tailors their natural communication style to the needs of their audience.”

## **This allows you to:**

1. Have intention when you speak with faculty or peers
2. Shift your perspective to ask different question
3. Create common ground and connection

*Source: The Center for Management and Organization Effectiveness*  
<https://cmoe.com/glossary/adaptive-communication/>

# Psychology Behind Adaptive Communication

“When you speak to someone, you naturally, automatically, and unconsciously mirror the other person's conversational features—and they do the same. Your speech styles become more similar because you adopt their language patterns and they adopt yours.”

## Subtle shifts like:

1. Matching body language
2. Adjusting tone and volume
3. Share a medium of communication

Source: *Psychology Today*

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mind-brain-and-value/202406/the-psychology-of-adaptive-communication>

# Autonomy in Adaptive Communication

Never feel like you need to change who you are at your core.

You can choose to streamline or change your communication – find what works from this presentation, and your own observation and research.

The more in touch you become with your own style, the more flexibility it provides for the ability to adapt as needed.

# *Discussion* - Autonomy in Communication

How do we align ourselves in this field to:

- find the space between being required (in many ways) to assist and train researchers
- staying true to yourself and your own style?



# Generational Differences

## Multigenerational Collaboration Grid – differences and similarities

Generation	Characteristics at Work
<b>Traditionalists</b> 1928 - 1945	Loyal (expect both ways), want to feel needed, prefer things in writing
<b>Baby Boomers</b> 1946 - 1964	Driven and competitive, "pay your dues" mentality, prefer 1:1 communication
<b>Gen X</b> 1965 - 1980	Independent workers, hands off managers, prefer email or text
<b>Millennials</b> 1981 - 1996	Collaborators, need continuous feedback, prefer text and email
<b>Gen Z</b> 1997 - TBD	Independent workers, like responsibility, prefer face to face or text/office software

Source: *Generational Diversity In The Workplace* with Linda Croyle - LinkedIn Learning <https://onlymadecraft.com/>

# Communication Style: The Basics

**Check** - for linguistic bias or tone policing in your communication. Don't dismiss or misinterpret emotion or intellect, whether its via email or in person.

**Remember** - address faculty using correct pronouns. If you are not sure, just ask or default to they/them.

**Try** - the Harvard Implicit Bias test. Understand that cultural, gender, age and/or generational differences filter our messages.

# Communication Style: Verbal

## Understand the Use of Idioms and Colloquial Language

When we assume the receiver is fluent in our language, we relax how we speak. That's not always effective and causes misunderstanding.

1. Understanding the phrase "think outside the box"
2. Using sport or pop culture analogies - "a Hail Mary pass".
3. Addressing someone as "y'all" or "hon"

Language adds style and provide cultural information, but can be unclear. Idioms in personal 1:1 conversation allow for context, think about the receiver if an explanation is needed.

# Communication Style: Written

## Active VS Passive voice

With written communication, we might find ourselves using passive voice to present ourselves as more academic. However, this makes communication rambling and confusing.

**Original** - The financial report has been submitted to the sponsor and will be reviewed by the end of the week.

**Revised** - I submitted the report, and the sponsor reviews it weekly.

# Communication Style: Consistency

## Standard Responses

Create templates within your email platforms for standard communication.

This generates consistency in responses but allows for personalization.

- Always use the same email heading for financial reports.
- Limit the use of acronyms (for example, NOA or NCE)
- Set reminders so that monthly or weekly tasks are done on time (consistency for you, but also for faculty)

# Communication Style: Technology

## The Medium is the Message

Observe the way your faculty respond to messages - do you notice that its coming from a cell phone?

Many of our PI's are on the go - teaching, clinical practice, traveling.

- Check how your emails look on a mobile device (cell and tablet).
- Reduce blocks of text and write succinctly.
- Don't use lots of **bold**, **colors** and underline – not accessible.
- Send emails later in the day if they respond at night - get at the top of their inbox!

# Communicating: When You Don't Want To

**It happens to all of us.**

Perhaps you are buried under deadlines.

Perhaps today is just not your day.

How do we communicate that we don't want to communicate?

**First identify what the issues are:**

Is your inbox overflowing and you need to prioritize?

Deadline-driven tasks overshadowing other requests?

Is it personal or work burnout?

# Communicating: Saying No

**Set generic responses to send to faculty and colleagues.**

Be forgiving to yourself, and honest with the recipient. Everyone is stressed! Communicate quickly to allow for more space.

## **Examples:**

I've been inundated due to sponsor requests and reporting deadlines, but both subawards are on my priority list.

Feel free to follow up/bug me again if I do not respond within a specific time frame.

## ***Discussion – Do You Feel Like an Expert?***

One of the best ways to set your communication style as adaptive is by becoming an expert.

1. What are your strongest assets?
2. What areas of research do you excel at?
3. What do you have the most knowledge in?
4. Who across campus can you identify as experts?

# Re-Wire Your Style: Become An Expert

**Always offer to be helpful, offer to assist in what you know.**

It teaches you even more about becoming an adaptive communicator, and it lets someone else at your institution know that they can call you in the future.

**Think and believe in yourself as an expert.**

Why is it important to think of yourself as an expert?

A “**fake it ‘til you make it**” approach might not be best for your first R01 submission, but it helps to believe in yourself and communicate well no matter your skill level.

# Questions? And Final Thoughts



“First Day Back To Verbal Communication”  
by Danny Shanahan in The New Yorker