



Partners



T.I.K.C.I. Tools to Improve Key Competences of Instructors

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND NETWORKING



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1. PRESENTATION

This is an introductory communication and networking material for instructors. It focuses on internal networking that is within the organization the instructor works. It assumes that instructors are already familiar with the practice of organizational communication; however they need assistance with development of networking skills, specifically targeted internally to their organization. The material approaches networking from an interpersonal communication perspective and introduces theories of internal communication, internal networking, tools for effective internal communication and networking practice in the workplace.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this material are to assist instructors in:

- Expressing ideas and opinions clearly and understandable.
- Listening actively to the partners, ensuring the understanding of the messages received by repeating or additional questions.
- Be able to establish contact with others to request information or support.
- Adapt the messages to the type of partner and context in which it is located. Consider the views and opinions of others to communicate.
- Establish and maintain formal and informal communication with key networking for the job.
- To persuasively argue and to presents ideas effectively in order to transmit to the receiver of the message.

3. BENEFITS OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

3.1 What is internal communication?

A general definition of communication is the process of transmitting ideas, thoughts, information, emotions, etc. between and among people. Regardless of the context in which this transmission occurs, there are certain basic ideas about communication which always apply, and which should be understood when reading this section.

- **Communication is not one-sided.** You can provide the information to the organization, but if that information is not understood, or is not understood in the way you meant it, the attempt for communicating was in vain. Any good communicator has to empathize with the audience and try to anticipate what they will think and how they will feel about a message they receive. That happens between the instructors and the trainees during the workplace.
- **Communication involves more than words.** It can include body language, facial expression, and tone of voice, as well as the attitude and general tone that are projected in speech, writing, or actions. The condescending or hostile message sent by someone's tone or stance may be stronger than the supportive message sent by his words. You can find more information about it in the material about "Presentation Skills".
- **Communication can either be direct** (E.g. go directly from the source to the recipient of the message) **or indirect** (E.g. either go through a third -- or fourth or fifth -- party). While indirect communication is often necessary, it always carries the possibility that its message will be distorted as it goes through the network between the source and the recipient, and it also eliminates the source's non-verbal communication. (E-mail and memos do the same.)

- **Different individuals and groups communicate using different styles and assumptions.** People's personal experience, gender, racial and cultural background, education, and perception of who has power all influence how they send, receive, and interpret communication.
- **All communication has three aspects:** its content; the tone in which it is delivered; and the structure through which it is delivered. All of these together contribute to what the communication's actual message is, how well the communication is understood, what effect it has on the person or group to whom it is directed, and what its ultimate result will be. To communicate effectively, organizations and individuals have to take all of these ideas into account.

In its simplest terms, internal communication is communication within an organization. It encompasses both "official" communication -- memos, guidelines, policies and procedures, etc. -- and the unofficial communication that goes on among and between the staff members of all organizations -- the exchange of ideas and opinions, the development of personal relationships, and the proverbial conversation around the water cooler. It goes in all directions among line staff (those who do the specific work of the organization and work directly with the target population), administrators, supervisors, clerical and support staff, volunteers, and, perhaps, even the Board of Directors. So the trainees who will participate of the life of the enterprise during the workplace are part of this internal communication.

Internal communication is a lot more than people talking to one another, however. It is the life blood of any organization, the way in which everyone gets the information she needs. It means that anyone can easily get his question answered, as well as that no one gets left out when there's a birthday celebration for a staff member.

Good internal communication can:

- Afford people the information they need to do their jobs effectively.
- Make sure they know about anything that concerns them.
- Provide people with clear standards and expectations for their work.
- Give people feedback on their own performance.



- Provide them emotional support for difficult work.
- Suggest new ideas about both their work and their lives.
- Allow them to take the pulse of the organization and understand its overall situation.
- Help them maintain a shared vision and a sense of ownership in the organization.

In many ways, internal communication is the glue that holds an organization together. Without it, you are just a collection of disconnected individuals each working individually at her own job. With it, you're a unit with power far beyond the sum of your parts.

3.2 Why should we promote internal communication?

Unless you're a one-person organization, communication is one of the most important aspects of managing what you do. What can internal communication do for you? Here's a short list:

- Internal communication can improve the effectiveness of the organization. The more information people have, the more quickly they get it, and the better connections they have with others in the organization, the better the work of the organization gets done, and the better jobs individuals do. The better jobs they do, the better they feel about their jobs and about the organization. The ultimate beneficiaries of all this are the target population, the community, and the organization, which finds itself with committed and efficient staff members, satisfied participants, and community respect.
- It keeps everyone informed of what's going on in the organization. No one gets any unpleasant surprises, and everyone has the chance to deal with changes, good news, and bad news together.
- It allows the organization to respond quickly and efficiently to change, emergencies, etc.
- It makes problem-solving easier by providing a channel for everyone's ideas and opinions. Solutions can come from unexpected directions, but only if there is the possibility that they'll be heard.

- It creates a climate of openness within the organization. If everyone feels he has access to whatever information he needs or wants, and can talk to anyone in the organization about anything, it encourages good relations among people, promotes trust, and forestalls jealousy and turf issues.

3.3 Impact of Poor Communication

- Misunderstandings and mistrust – if staff / customers feel that information is being kept from them there will be an element of mistrust
- Low morale – staff will feel that their opinion and thoughts do not matter so will feel undervalued.
- Below par performance
- Creates bad feeling and can destabilise business operations
- Creates an unpleasant working environment
- Employees whose instructions are inadequate or unclear can act in breach of regulations without meaning too.
- Lack of basic information can be a breach of workers' rights

3.4 Impact of Poor Communication between the Instructor and the trainees

- Lack of information that suppose not to understand how to manage in the workplace.
- Not have feedback from the trainees because they think that their opinions are not important for the enterprises.
- Creates an unpleasant training environment.
- The student's do not want to continue with their studies or working later in their professional career.
- No give to the school the feedback of the enterprise.

4. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

4.1 Internal communication

The manager will have to communicate with members of staff at all levels, including the trainees, within the organization effectively from senior management to administration staff and it is important that this communication is adjusted and therefore effective at all levels.

4.2 External communication

There will also be the need to communicate with people outside the organization such as suppliers, customers, funding providers and support networks. Again communication must be effective externally to ensure collaboration and relationships with these parties are efficient.

So if we speak about the workplace the external communication of the instructor is with:

- The trainees/trainers
- The colleagues and management of the company
- The responsible of the vocational, educational and training organization

4.3 Advantages of Effective Communication in the Workplace

Although in a small firm it is easy to assume that everyone knows what is going on, it is important that there is a communication strategy in organisations of all sizes. A good communications strategy can:

- Ensure accurate information, instruction and guidance is provided
- Facilitate the exchange of ideas and views
- Reduce misunderstandings



- Improve managers performance and decision making
- Improve workers performance and commitment if they understand targets and deadlines and receive proper feedback
- Improve health and safety
- Reduce costs
- Improved employee commitment and job satisfaction, particularly if employees understand what the business is trying to achieve and the effect of their contribution
- Increased morale leading to lower turnover of employees and reduced recruitment and training costs
- Improved decision making
- Employee acceptance and support of management decisions
- Better relationship building with support organisations
- Improved relationships with customers, increased sales and better customer service
- Improve your organisations reputation and contribute to brand identity
- Create business opportunities with like-minded business people
- The opportunity to know and select future workers.

Successful consultation and information sharing sessions are critical to business success. Benefits of making employees and trainees feel involved and empowered can be higher productivity and reduced recruitment costs.

Organisational difficulties will arise because of ineffective relationships and information flow between managers and their employees, suppliers and customers.

5. COMMUNICATION AND INTERNAL NETWORKING

5.1 What is networking?

It is a concept that includes any practice, application or event seeking to facilitate the establishment of relationships, contacts and collaborations between people with different objectives, from professionals seeking employment or Entrepreneurship, to the more personal relating to leisure, friendship and relationships.

5.2 How do you promote internal communication?

There are three interrelated issues that an organization needs to address in promoting internal communication. The first involves the organizational climate and culture. The organization has to be a place where open communication is accepted and encouraged. The second concerns establishing clear definitions of what needs to be communicated, and by whom. If you assume that everyone always needs to know about absolutely everything, the staff would spend all its time merely receiving and passing on information. There need to be guidelines about what and how information gets passed. The last issue is that of the systems that the organization creates to get its work done and to enable internal communication.

5.3 Organizational climate and culture

To foster internal communication, the first and most important step is to establish a climate of openness that encourages the free flow of communication and information in all directions. This means that the organizational culture has to embrace internal communication, and that individuals - particularly key individuals, who might be the director and other administrators, or who might simply be the people that others respect and listen to; when we are speaking about the workplace this person is the instructor- have to feel comfortable with, and model communicating regularly and clearly with, anyone and everyone else in the organization.

The culture of an organization consists of accepted and traditional ways of doing things, particular relationship structures, how people dress, how they act toward one another, etc. People get used to that culture, and, just as in a society, changing it can be difficult. If the culture of an organization has encouraged hoarding information and lack of contact among staff, switching to a culture of openness and free exchange may take time and a lot of tact.

The suggestions below about creating an appropriate climate for communication apply to everyone in an organization.

Creating a climate that fosters internal communication includes:

- Practice what you preach, E.g. listen to others, and act quickly and appropriately on their questions, complaints, suggestions, issues, etc. This is probably the most important aspect of developing an atmosphere of openness. People have to be consistently treated as if they and their ideas and opinions matter. That is what the instructor has to do.

Don't assume anything is trivial if someone is concerned enough to talk to you about it. On the other hand, there are people in the world who like to see conflict, or who feel it's their right to complain about everything, whether their complaints are justified or not. You need to be respectful in any case, but you can also use some judgment in how you respond without compromising the atmosphere of the organization.

- Treat everyone similarly; regardless of what job they have in the organization, or of how you feel about them personally.
- Be sensitive to your - and others' - style of communication. Ideally, the people on both ends of a communication are partners. Being open and offensive or condescending is probably worse than not being open at all. Many people are apparently born expert communicators; others need to be trained to communicate appropriately (see the description of "Staff training" below); and still others simply need to be informed that -- often because of differences in age or gender -- their style of communication is bothering others. Again, instructors need to set a clear example here, but part of good internal communication is the willingness of people to speak out when they feel uncomfortable or offended. Often, that can be enough to solve the problem.

- Be culturally sensitive. This encompasses a large area, and runs both ways. The people on both sides of a cultural divide -- whether it's a divide of race, ethnicity, religion, or something else -- need to be sensitive to the assumptions and needs of the other. Something as simple as how far apart they stand can create tension, and the use of some terms that seem innocent on the part of one - "you people" is a prime example - can cause anger and lasting bad feelings on the part of the other.
- Make sure information flows in all directions. The organization should ensure that people learn immediately about things that interest or affect them, and should set up systems to make sure that happens, as well as mechanisms to make sure that less timely information gets passed around. A good welcome manual can help to the instructor.

5.4 Clear definitions of what needs to be communicated and by whom

Much of the information an individual gets is directly related only to him or his job. He obviously can't relay all of it to everyone else. What does need to be communicated to others, and who is responsible for doing it? The answers to those questions will vary from organization to organization, but here are some broad guidelines:

- Any information that anyone needs to do his job or to better understand the context of the work should be communicated to him immediately by whoever has the information. Some possibilities here include information from another staff member about a participant that both are working with; information from another staff member about a situation that he is about to encounter as part of his job; or new rules, regulations, guidelines, etc. that affect his work (from the instructor if they are internal; from whoever learned about them if they are external, e.g. federal laws).
- Anything that directly affects the work, employment status, working conditions, or working relationships of an individual should be immediately communicated to her. Under most circumstances, the communication should take place before the situation is set in stone, so that all participants can be part of a discussion about what's going to happen. She should never hear about this type of situation from rumor or from anyone other than the manager or her instructor (depending upon the management structure

of the organization). And she should hear about it *first* before anyone who's not affected.

- Any problem or issue with someone's job performance should be communicated to him as soon as it becomes apparent. The student should be informed by his instructor of exactly what the problem is, and the two should work together - with others if appropriate - to find ways to solve it, and to improve on performance. If the problem is serious enough to be a potential reason for finish with the workplace, the staff member should be told that, and the procedure by which he might be finish with the workplace explained to him. The assumption should be that the situation will improve, but if it gets worse, neither the seriousness of it nor the consequences should come as a surprise.
- Any problems that arise between or among staff members, including the trainees, should be addressed immediately. As discussed above, the ideal is that all parties would be capable of simply dealing with the issue face to face. If they can't or aren't willing to, there should be an organizational procedure by which the situation can be mediated by someone trusted by everyone involved. In either case, it's vital that the situation be identified by at least one of the parties involved as quickly as possible, so that it can be addressed and resolved before it affects the work of the organization.

Training has a role here. If staff members have tools with which to communicate (conflict resolution skills, I-messages, etc.), they are more likely to be willing to address problems or conflicts directly.

- Any problems between trainees and the organization or general staff dissatisfaction with any aspect of their situation needs to be communicated reasonably and quickly to the director or other person designated to handle those issues.
- Any information important to the working of the organization as a whole - a funding cut or increase, a visit by a celebrity, a staff resignation, a new program possibility, etc. - should be communicated to everyone, including the trainees. (In the case of a resignation, the staff member may want to write a general note or tell others herself at a meeting or individually.)
- Positive information, praise, etc. should be communicated as often as possible by anyone who has it to give, but especially by directors or instructors themselves.

5.5 Improved internal communication strategies overcoming communication problems

5.5.1 Listening skills

More than just asking people to listen to others, training here might include specific instruction and practice in active listening.

Active listening is a process by which you learn to temporarily turn off the voices in your own head and simply pay close attention to what another person is saying. Most of us "listen" by preparing our reply to what someone else has said, a reply that usually concerns our own experience. By learning to concentrate on the whole of what the other person is saying, we can learn a great deal not only about what he really means (often lost as we listen to our own thoughts), but also about its importance to him. This makes it far more likely that we'll respond in a meaningful way that opens up communication, rather than closing it off.

The simplest and most common active listening exercise is one where several people hold a conversation with certain rules. It is often a more powerful learning experience if the topic is one on which people disagree. No one can interrupt anyone else, everyone gets a chance to speak, and each person must correctly summarize what the last speaker has said (according to that speaker) before he can offer his own thoughts. Knowing you must summarize the last person's message encourages real concentration, and a much more controlled and profound conversation than if everyone is simply fighting to state his own opinion.

5.5.2 Cultural sensitivity

Cultural differences can be a difficult obstacle in communication. This is not only an issue of place of birth, but of race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexual orientation, gender, disability each of these brings with it its own set of cultural norms and values, and it's important to be aware of them.

5.5.3 Training

Like every other aspect of the organization, should reflect the values you want to communicate. If all training is lecture, or is passed down as "truth" by an authority figure, it is unlikely that trainees will feel that the organizational culture is one of openness, or that their opinions matter. If people are encouraged to share their own experiences, to discuss any information



given, to challenge the trainer if they disagree, not only will the training be more valuable, but new staff members will learn what the organization wants and expects from them. In short, the form and the content of the training have to go together.

5.5.4 Supervision

The form that supervision takes in an organization can easily either foster or stifle internal communication. If supervision is seen as intrusive (like looking over people's shoulders and trying to catch them doing something wrong) internal communication (particularly among supervisors and supervisees) probably will not benefit. If supervision is seen - and practiced - as supportive and helpful, a way to continually enhance the quality of one's work, then internal communication is more likely to flourish. Another role that supervision plays here is that it can help staff and volunteers to examine and improve their own communication, and thus improve communication within the organization.

5.5.5 Regular meetings

A staff of any size, particularly one that operates out of a variety of places (different communities, for instance), should meet regularly. The same happens with the trainees who are in different enterprises. They can meet in the schools.

These meetings are, in fact, vital to the work of the organization, allowing people the chance to share ideas (and thus improve their own work by applying what they've heard), hear what's going on in the organization as a whole (and confirm their commitment to the work), and renew relationships with one another (making it easier to work together).

Build in a mechanism for everyone to get a chance to talk about what she's doing and what's currently exciting about the job for her. *This makes it possible for people to feel that their experience is valued, and for others to pick up ideas that they can use in their own work.*

Keep meetings informal. *Don't be afraid to use humor, or to make at least occasional fun part of the organizational culture.*

5.5.6 Opportunities for communication

An organizational newsletter -- either printed or e-mailed -- can be a way of getting large amounts of information to people. That and any other communication (bulletins, memos, etc.) should embody in their style and the method of their distribution the same principles of openness and general respect as the rest of the organization's functioning.

Everyone should have easy and direct access to the means of communication, E.g. mailboxes, phone and voice mail, fax, e-mail, phone and pager numbers, e-mail addresses for everyone else in the organization, and both electronic and actual bulletin boards and newsletters.

E-mail is a particularly effective method of internal communication. It is possible to create an internal list of emails, so that everyone can receive e-mails sent by any other person in the organization. There should be guidelines for using the list with emails, so that messages meant only for a particular person and non-work-related messages are not sent over them. Lists with emails are easy to set up.

Another level of list with emails (for larger organizations) is the electronic distribution list. In this situation, the list with emails has a general distribution list and a series of specialized distribution lists as well. Everyone is on the general list, which will have messages about the organization as a whole. In addition, people may ask to be put on specialized lists that cover their area of work (counseling, grant information, new medical developments, etc.) These lists are a bit harder to set up, but may be extremely effective for improving communication in large organizations.

5.5.7 Procedures and clear lines of communication for dealing with out-of-the-ordinary situations

When problems arise, communication is made easier - and more likely - if there are systems that help people understand exactly what to do to deal with the situation. Some of the more common instances:

5.5.8 Problems among instructor-workers-trainees

Unresolved conflicts in an organization make life harder and more tensed for everyone. The ideal here is always that a staff member at least tries to resolve issues by approaching the person with whom he has difficulties. If that is not possible, a well-drawn procedure is needed for addressing the conflict. First, tell X, who will try to mediate. If X is involved in the issue, go to Y. Etc. that makes it more likely that it will be brought out in the open and that it will be resolved.

5.5.9 Problems, or potential problems, in the organization that need to be discussed and addressed

In order for problems to be dealt with effectively, or, even better, nipped in the bud, people have to believe that:

- Problems can be resolved, but only if they're identified and acknowledged.
- There are no organizational repercussions or blame for identifying a problem.
- There are organizational systems that work for addressing problems quickly and resolving them fairly and effectively.
- These systems require the participation of everyone in the organization.
- Conflict can lead to organizational and personal growth if it's faced squarely and resolved in reasonable ways.

Some ways to ensure that conflicts and problems in an organization *don't* get communicated or resolved:

- Make sure that all problems are resolved by orders issued by an administrator or someone else in authority, without consulting anyone else.
- Call in the person(s) at the core of the problem, yell at them, and record the scolding in their personnel files.
- Call an emergency staff meeting and blame everyone for what's going on.
- Encourage people to flag problems in the organization, but deny it or don't do anything about it when they do.
- Blame the person making the report for starting trouble.

5.5.10 Emergencies

These can take many forms, from an attack on the organization in the press to an injury on the job to a security problem that results in a rape. There need to be clear lines of communication for reporting the situation, and the person to whom it's reported needs to know exactly how to respond, both to the reporter - who may be injured, terrified, or shaken up - and to the situation.

5.5.11 Accessibility of everyone in the organization

This is a fairly simple concept that is sometimes difficult to effect. In essence, it means two things:

Anyone should be able to speak to anyone else in the organization without permission from anyone else all too often; the opposite of "good internal communication" is the "chain of command". This metaphor, borrowed from the military, lines out who can speak to whom in an organization, and defines the scope of each person's authority. In a proper chain, you can contact anyone below you, but only the person immediately above you. If you need to talk to the director, you have to go through your immediate instructor (who then has to go through her supervisor, etc.) to get permission. This model and its variants are not exactly conducive to free and open communication.

5.5.12 Occasional or institutionalized opportunities to socialize, either at work or elsewhere

One way to encourage communication is to set up ways for people to get to know one another well. The goal is to make people comfortable with one another.

6. PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION

As with so many aspects of organizational management, developing plans, systems, pathways, internal communication is only the beginning. The hard part is getting and keeping it going, essentially forever. In order to maintain internal communication and continue to make it better, you have to look at it regularly to see how you're doing. Monitoring it on a regular basis will help you identify where it's working and where it's not, and to keep working toward your communication goals and especially when the trainees change from one term or year to other. It supposes to control the communication continuously.

There are a number of simpler ways to look at your internal communication that will give you at least a general picture of how well it is working.

Step 1. Check trainee's satisfaction on the level, speed, and inclusiveness of the information and other communication they receive. (Depending upon how formal you want or need to be, this could involve conducting a formal survey, written or otherwise.) Do they feel included in the working of the organization? Are they the last to know about things that affect them? Do they always, or almost always, have the information they need to do their jobs as well as possible?

If you're afraid they won't answer honestly, you can give people the option of answering anonymously - less useful information, but better than inaccurate information. On the other hand, if people are not willing to answer honestly under their own names, or even if you *think* they aren't, that probably tells you a great deal about the quality of your internal communication.

Step 2. Ask for feedback at the end of the meetings, either on the meeting itself, on the decision-making process, or anything else of concern. You could also, on a regular basis, devote all or part of the meeting to a review of internal communication procedures and how well they're working.

Step 3. Make internal communication a topic at whatever evaluation sessions you hold to look at the organization as a whole.

Step 4. Try to determine whether internal problems over the period of time you are assessing (a year, perhaps) have decreased in frequency and/or severity compared to the previous period. If there is a noticeable change for the better, it is likely that at least some of that change is due to improved communication.

Step 5. Try to identify and rectify sticking points. These might be individuals, systems, or organizational inertia.

- **Individuals:** If particular people seem to be bottlenecks in the flow of communication, you can try to pull them into the network by enlisting them in seeking solutions to the problem; trying to address the issues that keep them from communicating effectively; or, if all else fails, bypass them in some way so that they don't hang everyone else up.

- **Systems:** You can work as a staff to modify or change systems to be more responsive to the communication needs of the organization. This may mean changing the form of a staff meeting, as described above; instituting alternative ways for people to get information or have contact with one another; rewriting policies and procedures to include or encourage communication at particular steps; etc.

- **Organizational inertia:** the organization as a whole may have made a commitment to a policy of open communication, but if there are attitudes or preconceptions or procedures left over from what the organization was like before, they may work against the new order. The trainees, instructors and the organization as a whole have to look at these outdated ways of functioning and find ways to change or eliminate them. This kind of change is never easy, and is often slow. It is more apt to happen if everyone works together to understand the ways in which the organization and individuals are working against themselves, and to come up with solutions.

Like all aspects of a good workplace process the communication should be monitored on a regular basis, at least annually.

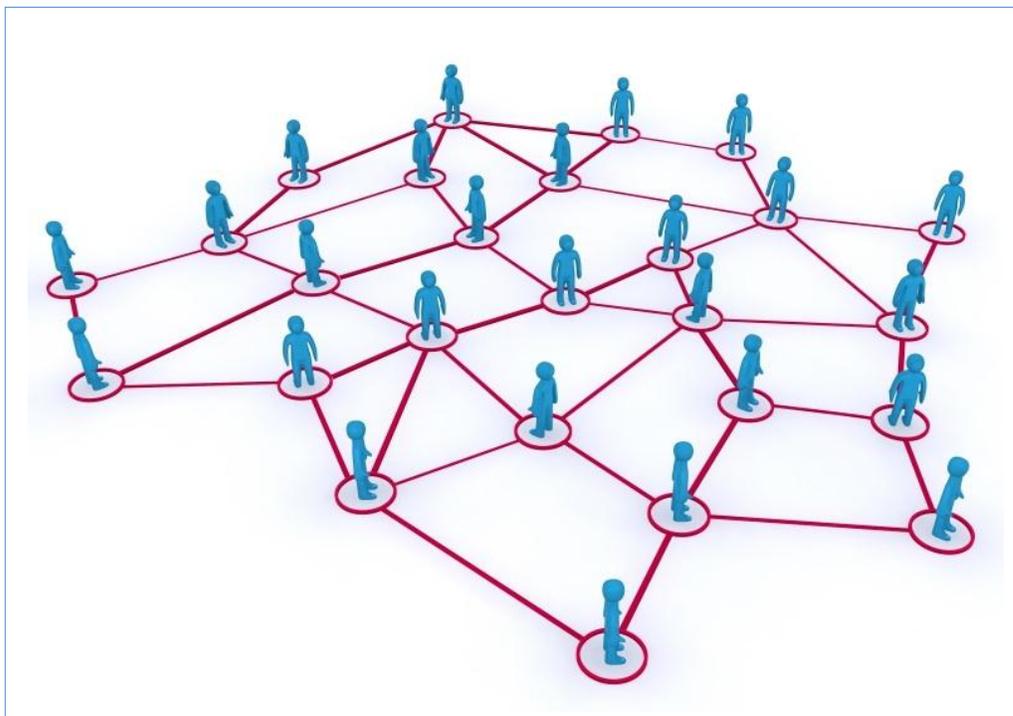
7. LEARNING TASK

The learning task is a practical exercise each instructor can follow to evaluate her or himself after reading the course material. The learning task assists instructors by applying in practice the knowledge learned about networking and practicing effective communication skills.

First, identify the persons within your organization you aim to increase the effectiveness of your communication. Place their names in the network depicted below. Tip: choose a mix of people both co-workers you meet on a regular base and also occasional contacts.

Secondly, apply good internal communication aims. You may wish to use the ones from page 3 of the material or write down more specifically the communication and networking aims for each co-worker.

Thirdly, make a planning for key persons with whom you will practice internal networking. Choose individuals who have the role of linking you with other people within the organization. Write down in a timetable when and where it is most probably to meet them. You may also list company yearly events besides regular team meetings.



8. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Communication – The transfer / exchange of information from one person to another

One to One Communication – The transfer / exchange of information on a person to person basis

Group Communication – Exchanging information with a group of people at the same time

Internal Communication – Exchanging information with people within organisation

External Communication – Exchanging information with people outside the organisation

Oral Communication – Using words to convey / exchange information

Non – Verbal Communication – Using body language to convey information, for example facial expressions and eye contact

Active Listening – Listening to individuals when they are exchanging / sharing information

Communication Tools – Instruments used to transfer information from one individual / group to another

Barriers to Communication – Issues which prevent the effective transfer of information

Communication Strategy – A written plan of goals, activities, timeframes and resources in terms of the exchange / transfer of information

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10. TEACHING MATERIALS

- <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=1876428&show=abstract>
- <http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-06192011-123819/unrestricted/dissertation.pdf>
- <http://www.swinburne.edu.au/ict/research/riso/publications/Social%20Networking%20Tools%20for%20Internal%20Communication.pdf>



11. TIKCI MATERIALS

Materials for download: <http://www.tikci.eu/corp/materials.aspx>