

**BSBLDR401 Communicate effectively as a  
workplace leader**

# **Learning Guide**

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## Table of Contents

BSBLDR401 Communicate effectively as a workplace leader .....	1
Context of communication .....	2
Reasons for communication .....	4
Body Language .....	7
Communication: Transmitting the Message .....	8
Communication: Receiving the message .....	10
Workplace Communication Methods.....	13
Environmental Barriers to Communication.....	20
Human Barriers to Communication.....	22
Legislative and organisational requirements .....	24
Anti-Discrimination legislation .....	25
Environmental Sustainability legislation .....	26
Effective Workplace Leadership .....	28
Approaches to communication.....	30
Following-Up .....	32

## **BSBLDR401 Communicate effectively as a workplace leader**

This unit describes the skills and knowledge required to communicate effectively as a workplace leader, including understanding the context, choosing methods of communication to suit the audience, and following up.

This unit applies to managers, supervisors and team leaders required to communicate with other persons within the workplace.

### **Elements of competency**

There are 3 “elements of competency” in this unit. Elements describe the essential outcomes of a unit of competency.

They are:

1. Identify context for communication
2. Clarify message and engage communication
3. Take follow-up actions

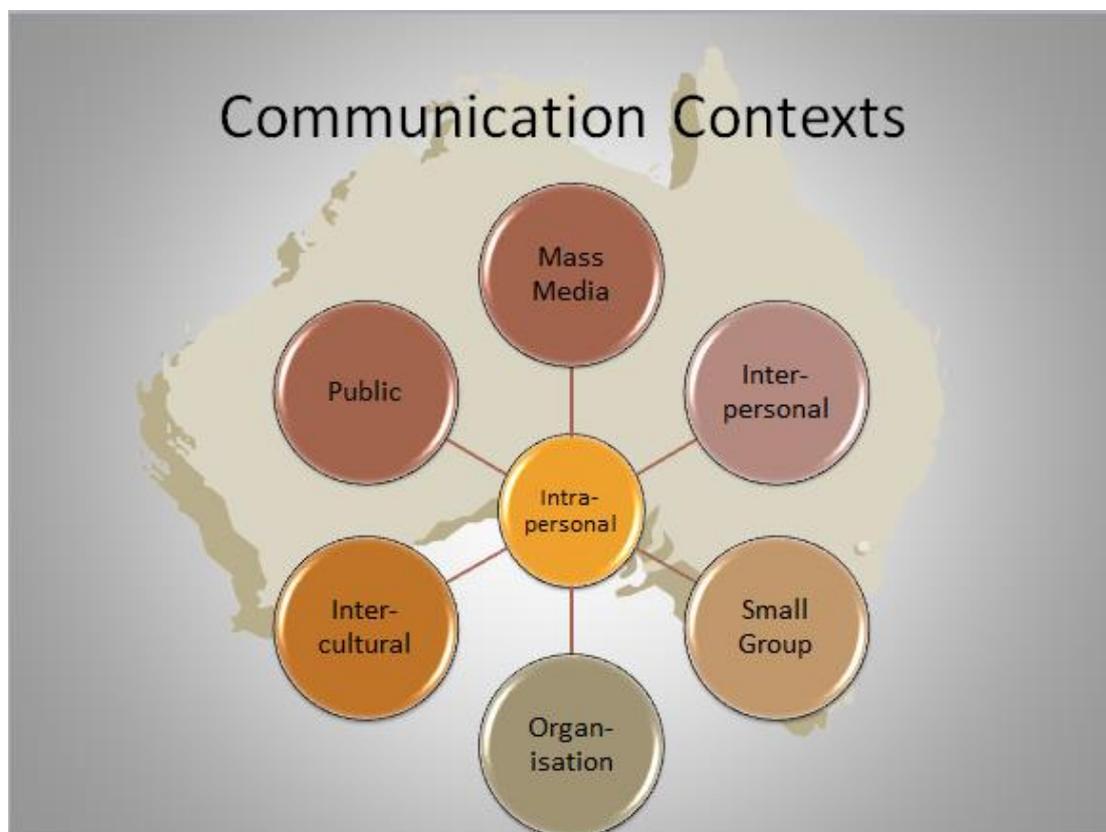
### **Evidence of Competency**

In order to demonstrate your competency, you will need to provide evidence. This is the Performance Evidence for the unit:

Evidence of the ability to:

- identify the context for communication and adjust approach and responses accordingly
- create and present clear messages choosing method and mode appropriate to the audience and context undertake effective two-way communication from the perspective of a team leader
- identify and record actions required as a result of communication and follow-up in a timely manner.

## Context of communication



As a workplace leader, you communicate with people in various contexts.

The communication context is the **environment** in which communication takes place. When communication theorists talk about environment, they are not just talking about the place. They are talking about who is present, whether the communication is one-way or two-way and the purpose of the communication.

The methods of communication will change, depending upon the context. As a workplace leader you will need to adjust your communication methods and style to the context.

### Differences in context

<b>Intrapersonal</b>	This is communication where there is only one person. In other words, it is how you communicate with yourself – thinking things through. Some theorists don't count this as communication, seeing it more relevant to psychology. However in the workplace you will often need to make decisions in your role as a leader, and this will require you to consider all options, plan and prioritise. When you are doing this, you are communicating with yourself, in an <b>intrapersonal context</b> .
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<b>Interpersonal</b>	This is communication between two people only. The context is usually face to face but may also be via technology (telephone, email, Skype, twitter, FaceBook) For instance, if you need to make a decision, you may approach colleagues and team members individually and ask for their opinion. When giving feedback, information or opinions to another individual, you are communicating in an <b>interpersonal context</b> .
<b>Small group</b>	This is communication in a group of 3 to 12 individuals. It is the context of communication that is probably most relevant for you as a team leader when conducting team meetings or presenting information to the team in a <b>small group context</b> .
<b>Organisational</b>	Communication theories define any kind of social structure with common goals as an “organisation”. From our point of view, the <b>organisational context</b> is your company/workplace. As a manager, you need to communicate both up and down in the levels within the organisation. You also need to communicate with colleagues at the same level. Communication in the <b>organisational context</b> is likely to be more formal, often in writing and the method is determined by your organisation’s policies, procedures and expectations.
<b>Intercultural</b>	Australia is a multi-cultural society and this should be reflected in your workplace. There can be differences of meaning and understanding when people from different cultures attempt to communicate. When communicating in an <b>intercultural context</b> , you will need to take care to ensure that messages are being transmitted and received accurately – that you are actually hearing what the other person is saying and not filtering it through your own cultural beliefs and attitudes.
<b>Public</b>	The public communication context is a large audience. Depending upon your work role you may need to make a speech or deliver a presentation to an audience of more than 12 individuals. This is the <b>public context</b> . It can also apply to a situation where you need to run a toolbox meeting with more than 12 people present, or deliver training to a large group. You may also need to communicate in the <b>public context</b> with customers or clients.
<b>Mass Media</b>	This is when an individual or small group of people communicate through mass media with a large group. Advertising is a perfect example. The way that you design an advertisement will be different from the way you would communicate in other contexts. With the growth of communication media and technology, the <b>mass media context</b> will become increasingly important.



*Sometimes both contexts apply. For instance if you send an email to a colleague, the context is both interpersonal and organisational – because you must follow correct organisational protocols in the format and content of the email.*

## Reasons for communication



One of the most important functions of a workplace leader is to communicate. A leader's purpose is to support and enable their team to achieve the organisation's objectives. This will involve communication at all levels within the organisation.

Communication is a two-way process. The purpose of communication is to achieve a shared understanding. Good communication involves the following skills:

### Communication skills

- Listening
- Reading
- Speaking
- Writing (or drawing)

## Communicating with the Team

In what ways do you communicate with your team? These are some examples.

Skill	Communication	Reasons
Listening	issues raised by the team	to gather facts and resolve issues
	ideas from the team	continuous improvement
	questions from the team	give advice, counsel, coach, mentor, instruct
Reading	reports and data from team members	analyse, determine action, report progress to management
	emails etc. from team members	seeking advice, raising issues, giving information
	minutes of team meetings	follow up the action plan
Speaking to the team	delivering presentations	providing information and motivation
	consulting	seeking ideas, input into plans
	explaining issues	solving problems, resolving issues
	explaining decisions	involving the team
	giving positive feedback	recognising and rewarding performance
Speaking to individuals	asking for feedback	seeking information, ideas
	asking about issues	finding out reasons for issues
	providing instructions	achieving work requirements
	coaching/mentoring	developing the individual
	counselling meeting	resolving poor performance
	giving positive feedback	recognising and rewarding performance
Writing/Drawing (emails, memos, notices)	procedural instructions	achieving work requirements
	consulting	seeking ideas, input into plans
	explaining issues	solving problems, resolving issues
	explaining decisions	involving the team
	giving positive feedback	recognising and rewarding performance

## Communicating with Management

A team leader must liaise with management. They act as a conduit between their team and the people who have overall strategic management of the organisation.

Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to instructions, decisions, plans, strategies so as to implement them</li> <li>to issues of concern, so as to resolve them</li> <li>to feedback, so as to evaluate own and team performance</li> <li>to questions, so as to respond and provide information to management</li> </ul>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>policies, procedures, codes of practice, codes of conduct etc. so as to implement them</li> <li>instructions, plans, strategies so as to implement them</li> <li>memos, emails, notices etc. so as to determine the correct action</li> <li>feedback, so as to evaluate own and team performance</li> <li>questions, so as to respond and provide information to management</li> </ul>

Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to respond to questions and/or provide information and ideas</li> <li>• to raise issues that need to be resolved by management</li> <li>• to make suggestions for improvement</li> <li>• to keep management informed of progress and results</li> </ul>
Writing/Drawing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regular reports required by management</li> <li>• one-off reports on projects, plans or issues to resolve</li> <li>• emails or other correspondence following up areas of concern</li> <li>• emails or other correspondence providing information or ideas</li> </ul>

## Communicating with Colleagues

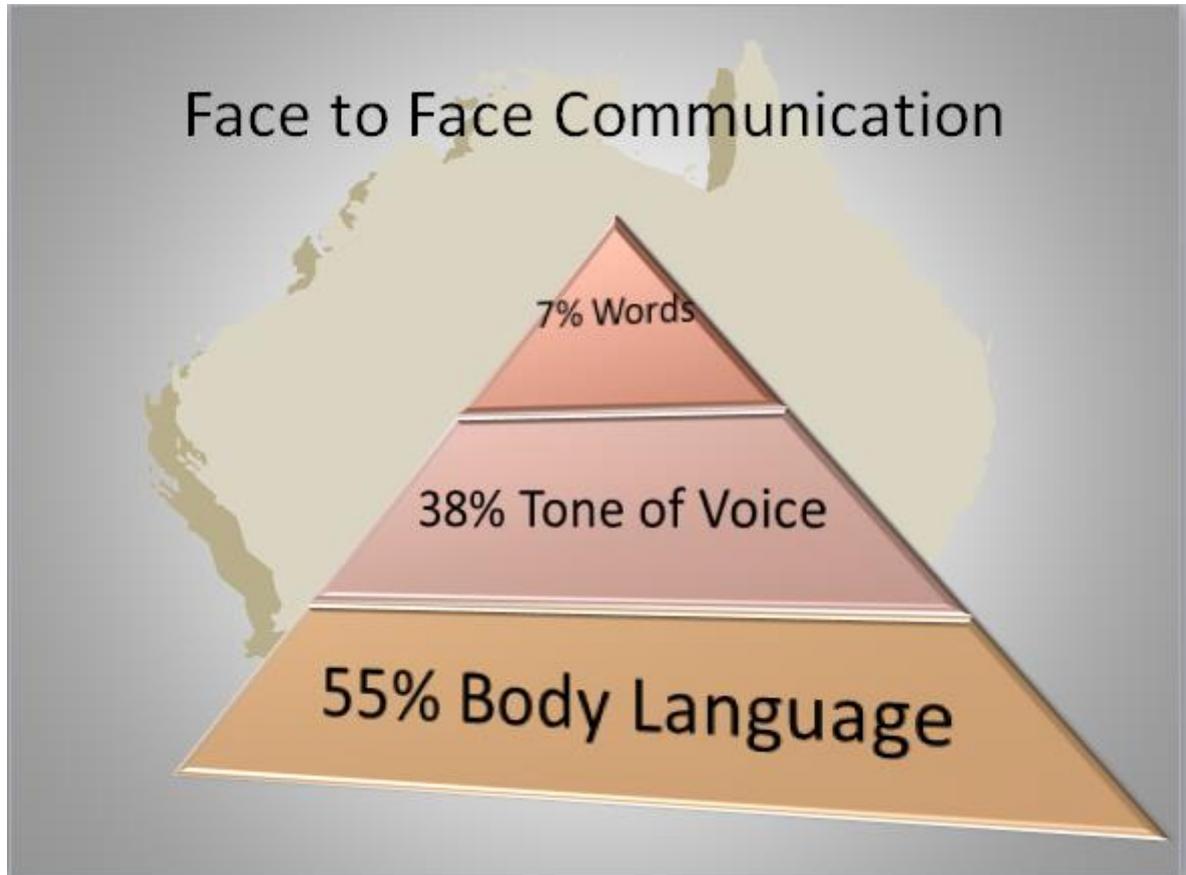
Unless you are in a small business, there will be other departments in your organisation. Each department is dependent upon the others. A team leader needs to build relationships that will help their team work with other teams to achieve the organisation's objectives.

Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at meetings, so as to achieve a shared vision and approach</li> <li>• to individuals, so as to understand their point of view, issues, interdependencies and ideas</li> </ul>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emails, reports etc., so as to have the "big picture" and apply it to your own team's operations</li> </ul>
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at meetings, so as to present your own team's vision and approach</li> <li>• to individuals, so as to build a shared understanding and work more effectively to achieve organisational objectives</li> </ul>
Writing/Drawing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emails, reports etc., so as to keep other departments in the loop so that they have the "big picture" and can apply it to their team's operations</li> </ul>

### Assessment Task 1

Now refer to your assessment task workbook and complete assessment task 1

## Body Language



As we have discussed already, communication is a two-way process to achieve a shared understanding. As a workplace leader, you need to be able to identify any potential barriers to effective communication and overcome them.

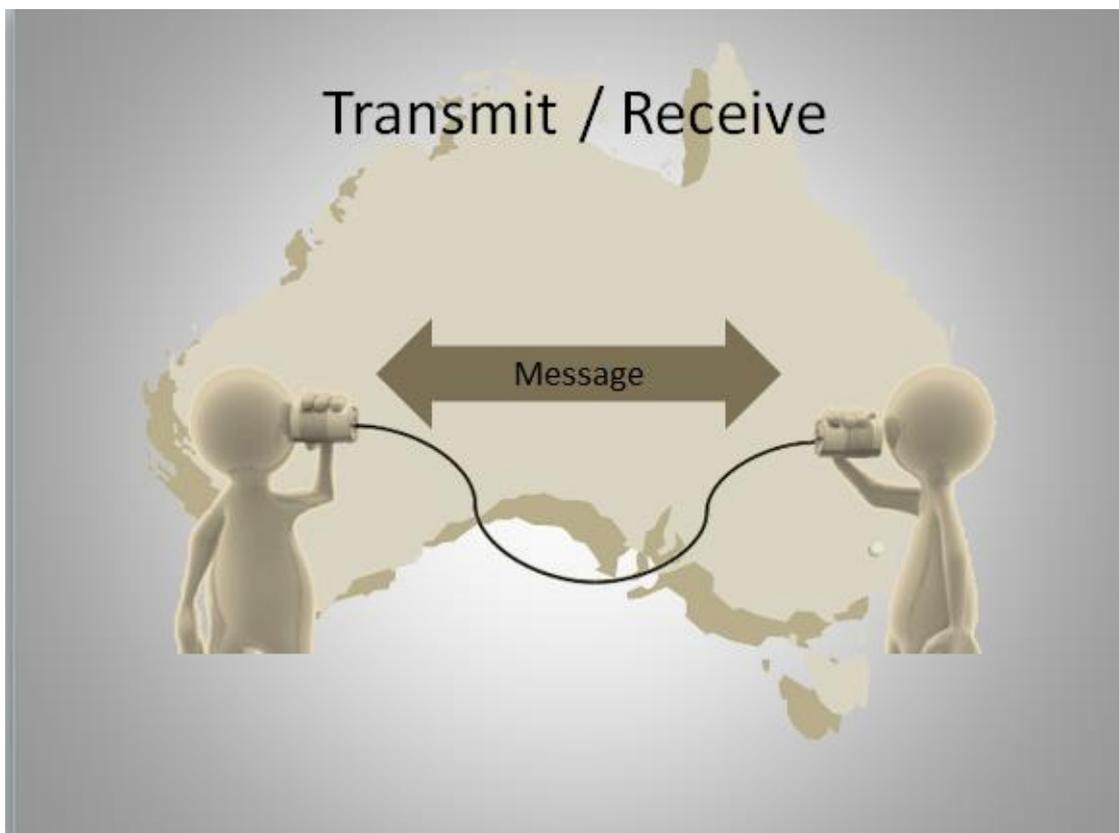
### Body Language

The percentages shown on the slide are based upon research by Professor Albert Mehrabian. These statistics have often been quoted in an over-simplified way to apply to any face to face communication and the way messages are received. His research was actually based on the feelings and attitudes of people, i.e. how they responded emotionally to one another in face to face communication.

This research is important for you, as a workplace leader, because it shows the importance of body language when you are communicating face to face. Negative body language will cause a negative response in the receiver of the message. They will be less likely to “trust” your message. They will look for a hidden agenda.

As a workplace leader, you need to recognise positive and negative body language so that you can read the responses of receivers. You need to use positive body language when communicating face to face, so that it promotes communication rather than becoming a barrier.

## Communication: Transmitting the Message



There are two sides to communication: transmitting the message and receiving the message. As a workplace leader, you need to be skilled in both sides.

### Face to Face

In a face to face communication context, both parties are continuously transmitting and receiving. One person may be explaining or instructing. They are the primary transmitter. The receiver is also transmitting messages via their body language and vocal responses. This helps the transmitter know whether their message is being received and understood.

### Telephone / voice transmission

In a telephone call, the parties cannot see each other. For this reason, the transmitter cannot observe the body language of the receiver. However, they can receive clues to the way the message is being received and understood by listening to the receiver's tone of voice and verbal responses.

In both of the above situations, the receiver is in a position to ask for clarification of the message.

## **In writing**

Transmission via email, writing a report, memorandum or notice does not have the benefit of immediate feedback from the receiver. For this reason, you need to take extra care when writing to consider how you express your message. It is necessary to try and put yourself into the position of the receiver and ensure that your message is clear and precisely stated in order to avoid misunderstanding.

## Communication: Receiving the message



### Active Listening

It is possible that Active Listening is an even more important skill for a workplace leader than the ability to clearly transmit messages. In fact, people who actively listen are more likely to also be expert transmitters.

The purpose of Active Listening is to accurately receive the message being transmitted. In reality, few people actually do this. If you listen to a conversation between two people, you will often find that they are not really paying attention to what the other is saying. They are probably thinking about what they will say next. In other words, each person is concentrating on their own point of view, rather than being open to the other person's message.

### Paying Attention

Active Listening is paying attention, so that you actually hear what the other person is saying. You need to focus on the person and avoid distractions. Think about what they are saying, rather than about what you wish to say. This is the way to overcome the main barrier to effective listening.

Use all of your senses. Pay attention to the speaker's body language. Listen, look directly at the person, make eye contact, notice their tone of voice, facial expressions, posture and

movements. This will help you understand the feelings and views of the person and provide greater insight into what they are saying.

Suspend judgement and allow the person to talk without interruption. Making premature judgements before the person has finished speaking is a barrier to effective communication. Be patient so that you can be sure you have heard everything they wish to say. Otherwise you will only hear part of the message and this can cause misunderstanding.

## **Show you are Listening**

In face to face discussion you can use your own body language to show the person that you are listening. This includes making eye contact, perhaps leaning a little forward towards the person and nodding at appropriate times. You can also use voice to demonstrate that you are paying attention (“um”, “I see” etc).

If you are talking on the telephone, you cannot encourage the person with body language, but you can still use voice.

Think about times you have tried to talk to a person while they are busy texting on their phone, crossing their arms and looking away or otherwise showing that they are not paying attention. This is a barrier to effective communication because the speaker will feel discouraged and devalued. They are unlikely to make much effort to communicate their message.

## **Ask Open Questions**

Open questions cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no”. If you need further clarification, then you can ask open questions that will help the person elaborate on what they wish to say.

As an example, if the person is making a suggestion or recommendation, you could ask them why they think this will be an improvement.

Closed questions can be a barrier to effective communication. If the speaker can only answer “yes” or “no” they cannot fully explain their point of view.

Make sure that you don't interrupt with questions. Wait for an appropriate pause. It is disrespectful to interrupt. Lack of respect between individuals is a major barrier to effective communication

## **Paraphrase**

Frequently, two people will end a discussion with the opinion that they understand the other person's point of view, where in fact they do not. Misunderstandings and confusion result. In the workplace this can be a significant barrier to effective communication and can cause later friction when one party claims the other said something which in fact they did not.

Paraphrasing is the best approach for the listener, so as to overcome this barrier to communication. The purpose of paraphrasing is to give the person speaking an opportunity to confirm that you have reached understanding. You re-state what you understand to be the person's point of view.

As an example:

“So I understand that you are suggesting that we ..... because it will ..... Have I got that right?”

Notice that paraphrasing is usually in the form of a closed question that can be answered with “yes” or “no”.

This approach provides closure at a point of mutual understanding.

This is the time when, if necessary, you can put your own point of view which may differ from the speaker.

## **Assessment Task 2**

**Now refer to your assessment task workbook and complete assessment task 2**

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