



Make a Plan to Grow Your Communication Skills

By Julie Ruben Rodney

It is a common misconception that payroll practitioners work mainly with numbers and only use technical skills. According to the Canadian Payroll Association's (CPA's) Skills and Competencies research, communication is one of the most important skills required for a payroll job and is the most common requirement of every position in payroll at every level. Today's reality requires payroll professionals to use both effective written and oral communication through various methods, including face-to-face interactions, e-mail and telephone. As a payroll practitioner, you are required to interact with a variety of stakeholders on a regular basis regarding inquiries and legislative changes. Strong communication skills are not a 'nice-to-have', they are a 'must-have'.

Although people may assume that good communication skills come naturally to everyone, a significant amount of practice and training is necessary in order to effectively deliver a message. The way you send a message, interpret a message, react to a message, or adapt to a message can all determine how effective you are as a communicator.

While you may not be able to change the way others communicate, you can continuously hone your own personal communication skills. Adjusting the way you communicate with others, not just in face-to-face situations, but also over telephone and e-mail will help you achieve the outcomes you desire.

How well do you understand the process of communicating? The first step to becoming an effective communicator is to understand the elements of the communication process. This entails sending a message, receiving it, interpreting it, and providing feedback. The communication process is crucial because often we send a message that is interpreted differently than we intended. Having a clear

understanding of this process will enable you to determine the best way to communicate with others. Being misunderstood is a common reason for conflict in the workplace.

Written communication is a major part of payroll's daily activities. As a payroll practitioner, you are required to write e-mails, memos, policies and perform analysis. How can you achieve success in your written communication? It is important to first set out a well-defined purpose. This purpose must be clear. Your purpose could be to inform on a matter or subject, advise a recipient of changes, make a request for something or obtain information needed for your work.

Second, how can you reach the "right" audience? You should consider your audience type, their position, knowledge level, writing style, and your relationship with the recipient. Clearly defining your audience can help you match your communication to the likely needs, wants, and interests of the audience.

Third, what is the best medium to deliver your message? This could include e-mails, documents, PowerPoint presentations, and so on. Once you understand your audience and have chosen a medium, the fourth step is to begin composing your message. Remember to ensure that it is engaging, concise, cohesive, and error free!

The final step in this process is to effectively summarize your message. What is the crux of your message? Your summary should re-state the topic, summarize the key points, and provide the reader with a clear conclusion.

Nowadays, we need to be especially mindful of the messages we send, who we are sending them to and how they may come across. An important component of communication is grammar mechanics. These mechanics help determine the way information is formed both in written and oral communication. While you may send a message to your friends using slang like “lol” and “u r”, this would not be appropriate in a professional setting. Without an understanding of good grammar, clear communication is nearly impossible.

Consider the following questions when communicating in your workplace:

👉 **How well do others understand you?** It is important that you are able to express your thoughts and ideas in a way that is easily understood by the recipient. When you are able to write and speak correctly, you appear credible. This is especially important when you are attempting to build a solid positive reputation as a payroll professional.

👉 **Do you communicate with influence?** In order to successfully deliver your message face-to-face, it is also important to communicate with influence. There are a variety of guidelines that you can follow to create a strong influential presence.

👉 **Who is your audience?** It is essential to learn about the beliefs, values, tastes and preferences of the people that you are communicating with. You can have an impact on key stakeholders simply through your words and actions. Ensure your message and actions will build a relationship of trust that enables them to feel understood and cared about. To be a strong communicator with influence, it is also imperative to show your expertise by listening carefully in face-to-face situations.

Position yourself in a way that will help you gain credibility and influence in varying situations. One way to do this is by asking yourself who you look up to as a leader. Whether these are influential leaders like Oprah or Obama, the goal is to understand why these individuals have a strong presence using communication skills.

👉 **How does your communication impact your delegation skills?** Another way you can be a successful communicator is through delegation. At times, you may feel as though you do not have authority to delegate; however, learning to delegate tasks will enable you to coach your people and boost the productivity of your team. When delegation is done well through thoughtful communication, it is a powerful management tool that will help you optimize your time and meet your priorities.

Overall, communication is a critical competency for payroll. In order to be effective at your job, you need strong written, verbal and non-verbal communication skills when interacting with internal and external stakeholders. So, how can you develop your communication skills?

New Payroll-Centric Communication Workshop Scores High Marks!

The CPA, in fulfilling its mandate to deliver services that its members want, has collaborated with MaxPeople, an HR consulting firm to offer a new workshop to help payroll practitioners and professionals develop their written, verbal, electronic and non-verbal communication skills. This workshop, **Communication for the Payroll Professional**, was developed based on member feedback and from the CPA's Skills and Competencies research confirming that communications skills are among the core competencies required by payroll.

Running across Canada in the fall of 2016, this workshop will give you the necessary tools to enhance your communication skills, to contribute even more to the success of your organization. Designed specifically for payroll practitioners, this seminar will enable you to improve your writing skills, develop active listening skills, communicate with influence and delegate for results. It is a highly interactive workshop offering in-depth coaching using payroll-specific content and scenarios. The pilot seminar, which ran in July 2016, received rave reviews from participants. To register for a seminar near you, visit payroll.ca → Professional Development → PD Seminar Topics. ■

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