M.Y.M.
Personal Development Plan: 5 Skills to Make Your Mark

Skill #5: Communication

Cornell CALS
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
How Will You Make Your Mark?

M.Y.M. Personal Development plans are designed to supplement the M.Y.M. Skills Assessment tool. Each plan will help you think about...YOU! You the team member. You the colleague. You the person unlike any other.

Use the following creative exercises to prompt insights about your qualities, talents, perspective and opportunities for growth. What is your communication style? How do you present yourself to others? How can you become more aware of your approach and how other perceive you? Find out how with this Personal Development Plan for Communication.

A Checklist for Communication

Communication skills are a cornerstone of interpersonal and career success. Mastery of these skills allows you to express ideas clearly and simply through verbal, written and technological means.

I have the ability to...

- Identify with an audience, understand what needs to be achieved, and put together a convincing case
- Adjust my communication style and method to meet the needs of the situation
- Write clearly, persuasively and professionally
- Get to the point quickly when speaking and writing
- Express ideas and concepts clearly and simply
- Disagree with others in a way that is calm and rational

I am comfortable with...

- Recognizing and respectfully pointing out faulty logic or false statements
- Embracing new technology and mediums of communication
- Communicating in front of small and large audiences
- Communicating across a variety of populations
Exercise 1: Listening Questionnaire

How well do you listen? Answer the following questions and evaluate your listening skills. Score your level for each question and award points based on the scoring key listed below. Total your points and review the scoring ranges listed at the bottom of the page.

**Scoring Key:**
Always = 1 point  Usually = 2 points  Often = 3 points  Rarely = 4 points  Never = 5 points

**Questionnaire:**
Answer the following questions using one of the five scoring categories listed above and write your response in the line provided.

When listening to another person I…

- Get distracted ________________________________________________________________
- Listen only to facts __________________________________________________________
- Interrupt _________________________________________________________________
- Assume the other person already knows ________________________________________
- Prejudge _________________________________________________________________
- Tune out _________________________________________________________________
- Ignore nonverbal cues _______________________________________________________

Point total: _______________________

**How did you score?**
31 – 35 points = Effective Listener
21 – 30 points = Good Listener
14 – 20 points = Not-so-good Listener
13 points or less = Did you say something?

**Reflection:**

What can I change to become a more effective listener?

How will I know if I have achieved this?

Exercise adapted from Peter Garber’s 50 Communications Activities, Icebreakers, and Exercises
Exercise 2: Communication Shutdowns

When we interact with others we sometimes use words or phrases that can shut down a conversation. Review the statements below and create an alternative response that would be more positive and effective.

We don’t have time

That’s not my responsibility

We tried that before and it didn’t work

It’s not really our problem

That’s not how we’ve done it in the past

Don’t be ridiculous

Reflection:

Have you ever used one of these phases before? What was the outcome?

Have you heard someone else use one? How did that make you feel? What did it make you think about the person?
Exercise 3: Personal Branding Statement

Create a personal branding statement to market yourself to a potential employer or graduate school.

A personal branding statement is a distinctive written description that establishes and promotes what you stand for and how you add value to an organization/institution/team. It highlights your unique skills, strengths, characteristics, beliefs, values and/or experiences. It answers questions such as: How do you add value? What are your career/education goals and how have you worked towards achieving them, and the results? Who are you?

Use the space below to write your statement

Take your personal statement to the next level

Use your statement to create a 1-2 minute branding video. When completed share with family, friends, or an advisor to solicit feedback. (Find samples on Youtube.) Below are a few things to keep in mind when creating your video.

- Look towards the camera when you speak
- Produce your video using a professional background without distractions
- Be natural and relaxed, but maintain good posture
- Don’t display nervous habits such as touching your hair, shaking a leg, clicking a pen, etc.
- Speak in a clear and concise way
- Be confident
- Target the content to your audience

Who will you show your video to gain feedback?

Is there anything you can do to make your video better?
Exercise 4: Non-Verbal Communication Skills

It’s not always about what we say, but how we say it. Only about 7% of our meaning comes from our actual words. Non-verbal communication can come from eye contact; head movement; hand gestures; posture; tone, volume, and emotion of voice; our walk; etc. What is your non-verbal communication saying about you?

How do you feel when someone...

1. …has his or her arms crossed when talking to you?
2. …makes eye contact with you when speaking?
3. …is shaking his or her leg up and down during a conversation?
4. …stands very close to you when speaking?
5. …smiles during your conversation?
6. …speaks very loudly?

What messages are you sending others?

1. What are some of the non-verbal cues you use that you are aware of?

2. Ask others to observe your non-verbal communication style and give you feedback.

Who can I ask?

What feedback did I receive?

What did I do well?

What do I need to be more aware of and adjust?
Exercise 5: Communication for Your Job Search

Throughout the job search process you need to effectively use a wide variety of communication skills including verbal, listening, written, non-verbal, etc. For each of the job search communication categories below, identify at least one resource you can use to learn more about/become more effective in the area and one resource to help you evaluate and gain feedback. Note what you need to work on and create an action plan of when and how you will accomplish it.

**Resume**
- Resource to be effective:
- Resource to evaluate:
- Deadline:
- What to work on and action plan:

**Cover Letter**
- Resource to be effective:
- Resource to evaluate:
- Deadline:
- What to work on and action plan:

**Social Media** (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook)
- Resource to be effective:
- Resource to evaluate:
- Deadline:
- What to work on and action plan:

**Email Correspondence** (e.g., setting up an interview)
- Resource to be effective:
- Resource to evaluate:
- Deadline:
- What to work on and action plan:

**Interview** (e.g., phone, video, in-person)
- Resource to be effective:
- Resource to evaluate:
- Deadline:
- What to work on and action plan:

**Offer Negotiation**
- Resource to be effective:
- Resource to evaluate:
- Deadline:
- What to work on and action plan:
Congratulations!

You have completed your Personal Development Plan for Communication skills. Now take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned or to jot down any remaining questions while they are fresh in your mind.

Reflections:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Questions:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Want more? Have a Coaching Conversation!

Make an appointment with your advisor to hear their perspective on effective communication. Or check out CUELINKS (A university-wide alumni platform) to make an appointment with an alum. These “coaching conversations” are a great way to learn how others connected their goals to the resources and people of Cornell.
Here. There. And Everywhere.

Your future comes down to two things: the stuff you should do to meet your personal goals and the stuff you want to do because it sounds great. CALS Student Services can support you on both of those paths. Course selection, academic support, extra-curricular activities, study away programs, career search prep and more!

Come see us to discuss your career and academic plans, and help you figure out your future, your way.

Appointments can be made using our online scheduling tool or by calling 607.255.2257

Resources You Will Want to Check Out!

M.Y.M. Skills Assessment and Skill Library can be found on the CALS Career Website.

The CALS Career Team – Use our online scheduling tool to make an appointment to meet with a member of the CALS career team to learn more about how to effectively market yourself to your target audience.

CUeLINKS - an online database of 1000+ alumni mentors on call to support you with career conversations, resume critiques, mock interviews and more!