

4 ways to hone your digital communication skills

The digital landscape has turned created a whole new world of communication possibilities and turned traditional methods on its head - not only in general life but in business too.



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A few decades ago, being a good communicator referred to being in possession of a few commonly agreed-upon traits. It could mean you were an excellent public speaker, a talented conversationalist, or a manager that provided helpful feedback. In short, the parameters were narrow.

Today, communication in a digital world is more important than ever. In fact, in a recent ManpowerGroup survey, more than half (56%) of employers said communications skills, written and verbal, are their most valued human strengths followed by collaboration and problem-solving. “No matter how digital the workplace becomes, communication will remain of utmost importance to those making up the workforce and seeking employment. Digital transformation continues to change the ways in which we communicate and connect with others – and this can blur the lines and make it difficult for some people to communicate,” explains Lyndy van den Barselaar, managing director at ManpowerGroup South Africa.

Here are four tips to help you succeed when it comes to digital communication.

You don’t have to be “always on”

Mastering communication skills for a digital world doesn’t mean you have to be constantly connected. Quite the contrary, as that’s a recipe for diminishing returns and work burnout. You have to know when to walk away from the laptop, turn off the phone and take a break.

Embrace your edge

Digital formats are a blessing and a curse because there’s so much you can do it can become overwhelming. Digital communication doesn’t mean just one thing – it includes vlogging, blogging, audio podcasting, blog writing, Instagram stories, and much more. According to the Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends 2018 report, as new communication tools are rapidly entering the workplace about 70% of respondents believe workers will spend more time on collaboration platforms in the future, 67% see growth in work-based social media, and 62% predict an increase in instant messaging.

When considering how to communicate digitally, think about what you want to communicate, and in which format your message will best be received. An hour-long conversation in podcast form, for example, communicates a much different message than a single tweet. Find the singular format where your communication fits the best, rather than trying to do too much or nothing at all.

“Organisations need to embrace new communication technologies to ensure that the necessary collaboration is achieved in the social and digital-driven society,” says van den Barselaar.

Get outside your comfort zone

You have been alive for the first of many new types of communication: The first tweet, the first blog, the first podcast, and there will be many more digital firsts.

Here’s a secret: Everyone who was a pioneer on these experiences and platforms tried it out and learned as they went. It’s not natural for anyone, from a teenager to a philanthropist to a business influencer. Becoming a communicator in today’s digital world means stepping outside your comfort zone. Embrace new technologies and learn.

On to the next thing

In the digital landscape, like life, the only constant is change. The only difference is things change much faster online. Even after you feel secure in your digital communication, it’s time to keep adapting to the next new thing. Once you think you know the answer, you stop learning.

In today’s digital era, sharpened communication skills are crucial to an organisation’s overall success. The good news is whether you consider yourself a talented communicator or not, there are multiple ways to sharpen your communication skills and excel in the digital world. If you try one and it’s not for you, there’s always something else that might be a better fit. If not today, then tomorrow will bring something new.

“This new reality demands a fundamental shift in how organisations do business, develop strategies and stay relevant,” concludes van den Barselaar.

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