

4 ways to build your people skills



Top leaders connect with others easily. They exhibit bridge-building communication skills by emphasizing shared interests and minimizing resistance.

Try these techniques to communicate better with colleagues:

1. Use affirming language. Speak in positive terms and avoid negatively worded comments. Beware of any sentence that starts, “I don’t” or “I won’t.”

Replace “I didn’t know you wanted me to do that” with “I understand what you want me to do.” This assures others that you’re on the same page and you intend to follow through.

2. Offer suggestions, not criticisms. Displeased with an employee’s actions? Rather than dwell on what went wrong, look ahead to forge a better way.

Replace “I would have preferred if you read my memo first” with “In the future, please read my memo first. That’ll save time and prevent errors.”

3. Limit how often you express unsolicited opinions. If you volunteer too many opinions, you can sever potential connections with others. Habitually saying, “I think you’re trying to ...” can trigger a “No I’m not!” reaction.

Instead, ask neutrally worded, non-accusatory questions. Examples include, “What do you conclude from this?” or “Can you elaborate on how that will help us reach our goal?”

4. Adjust your preferred communication style. Modify how you speak and listen to align yourself with others. If an employee tends to avoid eye contact, don’t overdose on eye contact or you’ll come across as domineering. If someone speaks slowly, cut your tempo.

— Adapted from “[Potent Communication: 9 Easy People Skills Tips To Use Immediately](#),” Kate Nasser, www.katenasser.com.