

Career Advice

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How to communicate effectively at work



It's crucial to find balance between clearly communicating your professional wants and needs, and being mindful of others' needs within the workplace. By using assertive communication, you can gain some perspective of others' expectations, control your work load and earn respect from your peers.

Q. What is assertive communication?

A. Generally, being assertive means communicating your thoughts in an open and honest way, as well as standing up for

yourself, while still being mindful of others' thoughts and feelings. In the workplace, specifically, it's about balancing getting what you need to achieve your tactical and strategic goals while also respecting and considering your colleagues' rights and perspectives.

Q. How can I tell if I'm communicating assertively?

A. Assertive communication includes being concerned with both your needs as well as other people's needs. It also means being able to respectfully say no to people and projects that you don't want, by responding in a respectful manner. Assertive communication conveys confidence and the ability to make firm decisions, without coming off as difficult.

Q. What's the difference between being assertive and being aggressive?

A. Aggressive communication can be self-serving — this could involve losing one's temper, bullying people, openly criticizing people or acting confrontationally. Assertive communication is being firm with your wants and needs without making others feel inferior.

Q. How do I start implementing assertive communication in my career?

A. Pay attention to your body language — make direct eye contact without appearing to be challenging the person you're speaking with; be open with your physical stance; talk clearly and calmly; and keep the tone of your voice even. Make direct requests when speaking with your colleagues. Lastly, summarize your main thoughts to help your team be clear about your plan and expected outcomes.