DiGREEN
GO FOR A GREEN BUSINESS

MODULE 13

I mobilise and work with others

Learning outcomes

You will learn here:

- How to communicate effectively in a business environment.

- How to identify and select collaboration and communication digital tools.

- How to apply argumentation techniques and provide evidence for your arguments.

Figure 1: Collaboration

Basic information

In this module, you will learn methods to keep on top of your green business.

This module contains three exercises.

You will need 15 h to finish the module.

You need 66% correct answers to pass this module.

Your lecturers are Amer and Ahmad.

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Content

Welcome to Module 13

The first part of this module is about communication. More specifically, we will show you some techniques that you need to have to be successful in business and all aspects of our interactions with other people.

In the second part of this module we will look at accessible digital tools and technologies for collaborative processes. We will summarise the most common tools and describe their areas of application.

The last part of this module is about argumentation techniques. We will introduce you to a simple concept that you can use to support your arguments based on facts.

The importance of effective communication and some basic techniques

Figure 2: Business Discussion

Communication is one of the essential codes of life, and one who masters it can make life relatively easy. Effective communication in business makes things go smoothly and help us avoid many complications.

The lack of effective communication can cause many troubles and make our lives more difficult. In business, the lack of effective communication causes problems with our colleagues and can lead to a loss of productivity and profit. Therefore, mastering effective communication skills is essential for any business's success. But what are some of the most effective communication skills we need to have to be successful in business and all aspects of our interactions with other people? Here are some of them according to Instagantt:

1- Be an attentive listener

Even if it sounds obvious, it is still important to mention that listening is one of the essential elements of effective communication. People who are active listeners understand things better and maintain insightful conversations.

Remember: In **Module 3** in the chapter **Empathy towards others and active listening - other opinions as an opportunity for new ideas** you dealt intensively with the topic of **Active Listeining**.

It means active listeners understand what the other is trying to say, even if the speaker could be more effective in their communication. This means a good listener tries to understand what others tell them.

Sometimes people, particularly in the workplace, do not listen to what other people say. They ignore it or do not listen with full attention. All of this causes a loss of valuable information and reduces the quality of effective communication, which can harm the work environment.

Furthermore, being an active listener also helps you identify the current mood of a speaker, and the intentions behind it, which in turn helps build a deep connection with the speaker. And build trust among your team members.

2- Be clear with your message

Another important skill you should learn to be an effective communicator is to be precise and unambiguous with your message. Your audience can understand you better when you are specific with your message. Being concrete with your message also means providing clear details about the information you deliver, including facts and figures.

Furthermore, you should also be clear and to the point with your message. You want your message to be well-defined and clear so others can understand you better quickly. The clarity in a message is crucial as it ensures that every member of the work team can understand you without any problems or wrong interpretations. To be clear in your speech, use simple words, use an active voice, and be clear about what you want.

3- Your Body Language is important

Body language is as important as your words. How you move your hands, posture, and facial expressions can send positive or negative messages to the listener. For example, hand moves and posture can tell whether you are confident or nervous, and that would affect the quality of communication and how much effort the listener puts into understanding your message.

Using non-verbal communication can build trust with others and improve relationships and the effectiveness of communication. Some ways to improve your non-verbal communication can be by learning about different hand gestures, tones, and stances. Also, pay attention to other people's body language to better interpret the message.

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4- Try to be Relaxed

Anxiety and stress can affect our communication negatively and demotivate us. When stressed, we tend to choose the wrong set of words, making it difficult for others to understand us. Hence, remaining relaxed and stress-free is very important for effective communication.

When we are relaxed and stress-free, we can express ourselves better and understand what others say. Also, it helps us decide when to stay quiet during a conversation and when to share our thoughts and add to the discussion.

5- Be Visual

Presenting the information, you want to display in front of your audience in a visual form helps them remember it for a long time. According to studies, it is embedded in human psychology that the information that we process information a lot faster than is expressed in the form of pictures. This means that pictures and visual figures are a more effective communication and help others remember the information for a longer time.

Being an effective communicator is mostly about making your ideas and points clearly and respectfully understood by your audience. And to do this, you are highly encouraged to choose the right info-delivering strategies like visual communication. Visual communication means representing information through charts, maps, images, and graphs.

6- Show Empathy

Showing empathy means showing understanding. There are times when your opinions and views contradict other members or members of the team. But in a situation like this, you should not be angry or frustrated. Instead, you should respect their opinion and admire their courage and

openness. You can think of it as a healthy competition among team members.

Remember: In **Module 3** in the chapter **Empathy towards others and active listening – other opinions as an opportunity for new ideas** you learned about **Empathy** already.

To show and practice exceeding levels of understanding and make sure that other people consider you an effective and competitive communicator, use statements like "I know what you are trying to say, but….", or "Sorry, but I think…." Statements like these would help others know that you were paying attention to their views and boost their morale.

7- Completeness

This means completing our sentences and points while communicating with others. Sometimes people get distracted while explaining their views and start talking about other irrelative points. This can confuse the listener and make the communication less effective. Hence, it is important to focus on each point and view you are making and make sure to say complete sentences. Also, it is better to complete explaining a particular point of view on a matter before moving to another point. In this way, you ensure that the listener understands and that you deliver your points in a clear and structured manner.

Conclusion

You can acquire the above-listed communication skills in the top 10 effective communication skills. Mastering these skills is not only important for the success of your business but also for improving daily interactions with others and improve our relationships.

EXERCISE 1

M 13_E 1: effective communication – the most important points

Open a writing programme or take a sheet of paper. On the top, write the number of the module and the number of this exercise.

Search and select three YouTube videos on effective communication, watch them and write down the most important points from these videos. Keep the YouTube videos as a practical reference.

When you have completed the exercise, name your digital document after the number of this exercise and save it in the folder to Module 13! If you did the exercise on paper, take readable photos and keep them.

Appropriate and accessible digital tools and technologies for collaborative processes and cultural and generational diversity aspects

Figure 3: Collaboration tools flowchart

More information is being disseminated online than ever before. Because of our growing online presence, online communication is becoming just as crucial as face-to-face conversation. Online communication refers to how people use digital media to interact, connect, and transact in order to send, retrieve, or receive information of any sort over the internet. Online communication refers to all communication that takes place via the internet. The types of online communication vary greatly since the growth of online communication is fast and rapidly replacing traditional communication methods. People have been using various internet communication methods for the past few years. While email was formerly the primary mode of communication, today's internet communication employs various methods. Selecting the best communication channels for your business might be a complex issue. This is essential for proper communication with your team, consumers, and partners. The different

communication tools are suitable for the different auditory. Knowing the specifics and the characteristics of the communications tools allow one to select the right one for internal communication (communication among the business team) and external (with the business partners, the customers, and the public, as potential customers).

E-mail

Email, often known as electronic mail, is one of the oldest and most traditional forms of online communication. It allows users to exchange text, files, obtain news, and from all around the world. Email is cheap, reliable, and supports most regular attachments with ease. Emails are formal communication channels that might be seen as an alternative to traditional mail.

Although email is an essential and longstanding communication channel, its delivery is instant and unreliable for time-sensitive messages or conversations requiring urgent actions.

In some countries in Europe (Germany, Italy, Switzerland) are also available and use another type of email - **Certified Email**. A certified email can only be sent using a special Certified Email Account provided by a registered provider such as Gmail or Hotmail. When we exchange emails, the certified email provider will share with us a receipt of the successful (or failed) transaction. This receipt is legally valuable since and includes precise information about the time the email was sent.

Email services may be slower and less practical than communication platforms, but some of them, Gmail and Thunderbird, are known to be accessible.

Examples for email platforms: Google Mail, Hotmail, ProtonMail, Outlook, Yahoo!, Zoho, Yandex.

Instant messaging

Instant messaging (IM) is what most of us use daily, where we directly exchange info either via SMS or mobile apps such as WhatsApp. The key advantage of instant messaging over email is that it can be a fast and informal approach for business teams and customers to exchange information, clarification, etc. Depending on the technology and program, sending a quick instant message with a simple query may be easier than writing a short email. Instant messaging requires that both parties be available and willing to communicate in this manner. Both will need to read and respond to messages relatively quickly, which may be challenging for some.

Examples of instant messaging tools: Viber, WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, Facebook Messenger, and others.

Online forums

Forums, like email, have existed since the beginning of the Internet. Forums are places where people can share messages and engage in discussions. The key distinctions between forums and instant messaging are that forums are generally open to the public, and communications are not in real time. With their regular poster and readership, forums build communities that might benefit your business. Many businesses and people promote their websites in signatures, which are automatically added to each post they make on a forum.

Examples of online forums: Reddit, Quora, and others.

Online meeting platforms

Platforms that bring people together over the internet are known as virtual meeting platforms. This software typically incorporates video conferencing as well as options like chat, responses, and screen sharing. The online meeting platforms became more and more popular, because they are reliable alternatives to the live meeting, as they can connect people in a virtual meeting all over the world as well as they can bring people together virtually if the situation doesn't allow live meetings in force major situation (like pandemic).

Zoom is one of the most used video conference services and is also accessible.

Note that Zoom by itself is not enough to make a videoconference inclusive for all kinds of disabilities. You may need to add other features like sign language interpretation or live captions and send documents before the meeting.

Examples of online meeting platforms: Zoom, Webex, Google Meet, Jitsi and etc.

Communication platforms

Communication platforms like Slack and Discord are useful tools for communicating in an organization or in a project. Unfortunately, these tools are not currently accessible.

To communicate in an accessible way, use email services instead.

While communication allows people with various backgrounds and knowledge to communicate, collaboration allows two or more people to work on the same project simultaneously through different digital tools. Online communication and collaboration naturally exist together, and their aspects overlap, each concept relying on the other has a unique dynamic.

Without communication, collaboration would be impossible, but communication doesn't always mean collaboration.

Most collaboration tools are also considered communication tools to a large extent. These include shared calendars (google calendar), live chats, whiteboards (Miro), videoconferences (Zoom), and instant messaging applications (WhatsApp and Slack). Collaboration is a bridge that connects many forms of thought and creativity to the same page or work. Just like communication, collaboration comes in many different shapes and forms. Online collaboration allows people to work and contribute together to the development of products, services, documents, and processes. Online communication and collaboration are coming closer and closer and, in many cases, they are overlapping and merging.

This is seen in the different online tools and solutions for collaboration and communication. Many of the online solutions are providing complex functions both for collaboration and communication, while others are only stuck to communication and collaboration.

Example for the distinction between communication and collaboration tools:

Communication	Collaboration
Email	Shared files and folders
Messenger	Project management platforms
Conference	Enterprise Resource Planning
Platform	Systems (ERP).

Although some platforms provide both communication and collaboration functions, many practitioners use tools for communication and collaboration. The main reason for that is flexibility - the practitioners have the freedom to select the most suitable, appropriate and efficient tool for online collaboration and a different one for communication.

With the development of the information technology sector and the business needs digital collaboration tools, software and platforms has increased significantly. Many things that started with simple functions in the beginning are now developed extraordinarily, opening the horizons for new opportunities. There are many tools that businesses can acquire to support the collaboration. Some of the tools that are commonly used in the business are the following:

File sharing tools

The file-sharing tools provide the opportunity for the team members to work together in shared documents and folders. The file-sharing tools are more and more integrated with the existing software for the development of content like text, graphics, and slide processing (for example, One Drive as a file-sharing tool has the web-based version of Microsoft Office, as well might be synchronized with some desktop versions of the Microsoft Office). Moreover, the file-sharing tools might even have their own tools for developing content (for example, the file-sharing tool Google Drive has integrated Google Docs for text processing, Google Sheets for table processing, and Google Slides for presentation creations).

Document Management Systems (DMS), also called Document Repositories, are another type of file-sharing system. It acts as a digital archive or repository of important documents for the business.

Google Drive, Google Slides, and Google Docs are accessible. They also have accessibility features that allow them to create accessible content.

We will discuss it in Module 14. Other collaborative tools may be used during videoconferences, like online whiteboards like Kanboard, a Google Drive service. Kanboard is not compatible with keyboard navigation. In this case, you will have to describe aloud what is added to the whiteboard for blind and visually impaired people and complete the whiteboard for them.

Calendar sharing tools

The shared calendar simplifies the scheduling of appointments and meetings by eliminating the need to consult with all participants. The person planning the event selects a time interval and checks the other attendees' availability and the meeting room before sending out an invitation. These technologies save much time when it comes to encouraging teamwork.

Business coordination tools

These tools support the team in the planning and monitoring phases of projects and connect them by giving information. Project team members can use the software, app, or platform to make invoices, track budgets and progress, view their tasks, evaluate deadlines, and review previous time sheets. These business coordination tools facilitate the management of processes, resources, teams, clients, etc. The business coordination tools might also be called Enterprise Resource Planning systems (ERP systems) which are very popular among large-scale businesses, as well as gaining popularity in the small sized businesses.

ERP systems are software or platforms businesses use to deal with daily company activities such as accounting, procurement, project management, risk management and compliance, and supply chain operations. A full ERP package also includes enterprise performance management software, which supports the planning, budgeting, forecasting, and reporting of an

organization's financial outcomes. These systems create bridges between the company operations and allow data to move across the different units.

ERP systems are now essential for managing thousands of enterprises of various sizes and sectors. ERP is as essential to these businesses as the power that keeps them running. Some of the most popular ERP systems used in the large companies are Microsoft Dynamics, Oracle Peoplesoft or SAP, but there are also ERP systems suitable for small businesses. Some Of the solutions for the small business have a free or open-source version for example, WebERP, ERPNext, Bitrix24, and others.

Understanding the digital divide to use communication and collaboration tools efficiently

Although the use of online and collaboration channels is expanding very fast, a digital divide exists, and it becomes a more and more serious issue in the digital world. According to the United Nations, 3.7 billion people are still offline. People from all areas of life are affected by the digital divide. This is a multidimensional problem, but two primary criteria characterize it: access to high-speed internet and access to trustworthy gadgets. Many people who are affected by the digital divide are affected by both.

The digital gap is seen in many businesses, including stores, restaurants, and consumer goods firms. It is present across all businesses, from healthcare and education to manufacturing, sports and entertainment, and professional services. Such gap can affect the business culture from the inside and impact its revenue stream. In this context, digital businesses should build bridges to overcome the digital divide. The business must put efforts in this direction, and the goal has to be to provide optimal channel coverage for clients and partners, even those with no or restricted digital access. This includes acknowledging that certain clients are increasingly

using digital and social media while simultaneously preserving conventional channels.

Additionally, it is critical to know and understand your audience so having a mix of channels does not always imply supplying every channel; rather, it implies providing the optimal combination for existing clients and the new clients.

A general tip for accessibility

Sometimes it is difficult or not possible to stop using a digital tool that is not accessible, for example, because there is no alternative. You can get around the problem with other tools or inclusive practices in these cases. This is the case when you use emails instead of communication platforms or when you describe aloud what is on a whiteboard.

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EXERCISE 2

M 13_E 2: different communication tools – different target groups

Open a writing programme or take a sheet of paper. On the top, write the number of the module and the number of this exercise

Go through the list of communication tools listed above and do the following:

List which tools you already use

Note what tools you use to communicate with whom (friends, family, colleagues, authorities) and why you think using each tool is appropriate in communicating with different people in your life.

When you have completed the exercise, name your digital document after the number of this exercise and save it in the folder to Module 13! If you did the exercise on paper, take readable photos and keep them.

Applying argumentation techniques and providing evidence for your arguments

What is an Argument?

To start with a clear understanding of what argument is in our context, according to the Cambridge dictionary, an argument is "a reason or reasons why you support or oppose an idea or suggestion, or the process of explaining these reasons".

Arguments don't always look good from the outside; people sometimes get into heated discussions where much tension can be present. They also sometimes resort to saying false things and treating each other with no respect. We all have seen such situations. In the middle of these situations we tend to be defensive and make our points look strong and better so we can win the discussion. But this is different from how respectful persuasive arguments should happen.

Respectul persuasive arguments

Persuasive arguments are presented in a logical and structured manner and supported by facts, evidence, and sources. In persuasive arguments, we want to give the person/s in front of us a chance to arrive at the same conclusion we arrived at while using logic and facts. Your audience will expect you to treat them with respect and to present your argument in a way that does not make them defensive.

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┌─────────┐      ┌─────────┐      ┌─────────┐
│  claim  │  ➤   │  data   │  ➤   │ warrant │
└─────────┘      └─────────┘      └─────────┘
```

This three-part rhetorical strategy is useful in that it makes a claim explicit, clearly illustrating the relationship between the claim and the data and allows the listener to follow the speaker's reasoning. You may have a good idea or point, but it is always important to remember that the listener might also be interested in. The warrant often addresses the inherent and often unspoken question, "Why is this data so important to your topic?" and helps you illustrate relationships between information for your audience. This model can help you clearly articulate it for your audience.

Table: Respectul persuasive argument

Element	Description	Example
Claim	Your statement of belief or truth	It is important to start a green and sustainable business
Data	Your supporting reasons for the claim	Businesses contribute to % of the global pollution
Warrant	You make the connection between the claim and the supporting reasons you have	Many countries are placing regulations on businesses and pushing for more green ones.

EXERCISE 3

M 13_E 3: Using respectful persuasive arguments

Open a writing programme or take a sheet of paper. On the top, write the number of the module and the number of this exercise.

Find three examples of argumentation in which you describe the following areas:

- claim
- data
- warrant

When you have completed the exercise, name your digital document after the number of this exercise and save it in the folder to Module 13! If you did the exercise on paper, take readable photos and keep them.

Congratulations!

You finished Module 13. You are now able to take a quiz on the platform to test your knowledge and apply for a certificate with ECQA.

Reference list

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List of Figures

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