



FUTUREquipped

Meta Skills

Communication (Social Intelligence)

UNIT

4

Funded by:



Scottish Funding Council

Promoting further and higher education

Designed and delivered
in collaboration by:

CONSTRUCTION
SCOTLAND
INNOVATION
CENTRE



DIGITAL
HEALTH & CARE
INSTITUTE



Communication

Introduction

Communication is the ability to openly and honestly share information in a way that creates mutual understanding about thoughts, intentions and ideas.” (Skills Development Scotland, Skills 4.0, 2018).

In practice, this means being able to provide and receive information, in multiple formats, to people from different backgrounds and with potentially different interests or agendas.



Why Communication?

Communication is a critical skill that enables us to use other skills. For example, being able to find, understand and process information can support your ability to be creative or to think critically. Similarly, being able to actively listen will help you to more effectively collaborate with or lead other people.

When we collaborate with those from outside our own disciplines, differences in language or the 'jargon' used has the potential to cause confusion or miscommunication. It is important, therefore, to work with others and find a common language or shared meaning in order to work more effectively together.

In the health and care sector, good communication is essential. Practitioners deal with multiple client groups every day and being able to listen and receive information will support them to provide a person-centred approach to health and care delivery. As SMART technologies develop, we will communicate using a range of media types and good communication skills will support your own efforts to familiarise with these, while also helping clients to do so.

In the construction sector, effective communication between colleagues is critical for maintaining acceptable levels of health and safety. As the use of robotics, drone, exoskeleton and artificial intelligence technologies change the face of our building sites, the nature of and reasons for communication will naturally change too. Despite increasing automation and the adoption of artificial intelligence, the need for a communicative human presence will therefore remain critical.

Computing technologies can often be at the front end of innovation and technological change. Through having well-developed communication skills, those working in related sectors will be able to understand the needs of others, simplify the complex for different audiences and develop an accurate understanding of user needs.

Ways to develop your communication skills

The methods for communicating are many, yet the danger is that we gravitate towards the ones we are most comfortable with, at the expense of those which we favour less. It is therefore important to spend some time out of your comfort zone working to develop a rounded and holistic set of communication skills.

There are many ways that you can develop your communication abilities.

Some suggestions include:

- **Volunteer to give a presentation** - a lot of us can find speaking in front of others a challenge, but even more reason to have a go. Perhaps you could organise a TED style presentation event in your school, college, uni or workplace?
- **Produce a vlog** - if you find speaking in front of others too daunting to begin with, perhaps you could prepare a video blog on a topic of your choosing. This is something you could work on as an individual or as part of a team.

A fun activity that you can use to develop your active listening, verbal and graphical communication skills is the “Listen, Interpret, Draw” exercise. Working in pairs, carry out the following tasks:

1. Participant 1 draws a picture on a piece of A4 paper - participant 2 is not allowed to speak to participant 1 or see what they are drawing during this time. Allow 3 minutes for this step.
2. Participant 1 must then describe their drawing to participant 2 in as much detail as they can, while participant 2 attempts to recreate their partners drawing based on the guidance being supplied. Allow 5 minutes for this step.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 with the roles reversed.
4. Compare and discuss each other's efforts and share your reflections on the experience - what did you find challenging, what did you learn?

References

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These materials were produced by college lecturers as part of the FUTUREquipped project in 2018. The project was funded by the Scottish Funding Council and designed and delivered in collaboration by the Digital Health and Care Institute and the Construction Scotland Innovation Centre.