

10 annoying workplace communication behaviors to avoid

Are you an interrupter or a story topper? Do you suffer from listening intolerance? Kick these irksome habits to salvage your reputation and credibility.

By Dianna Booher | Posted: May 15, 2018

Few people admit to bad communication habits—much less conduct that can cost you a job or a contract or ding your reputation.

Yet we see irritating behaviors in the workplace just about every day. Here are 10 that can alienate colleagues, undermine your influence and ruin relationships:

1. Interruptions and/or changing the subject

Interrupters think nothing of inserting themselves into a conversation and promptly derailing it. Do it once, and people will probably forgive you. Do it repeatedly, and people will start viewing you as downright disrespectful.

Stop this annoying habit immediately.

2. Story topping

After someone tells a story—about horrible customer service, what their bright child accomplished, how hectic their workload has been, how well their team has performed on a key project, etc.—resist the urge to top it with your own story. You've just shoved them out of the spotlight to take your own bow.

3. Name dropping

Do you know someone who's constantly referencing a famous colleague, friend or client they have? It's annoying, right?

Name dropping is meant to toot one's own horn, but it communicates a lack of confidence and credibility.

4. All-about-me dumping

When working with clients to craft presentations, the most frequent mistake I see is the "all about us" opening.

It's tempting to start a client meeting or presentation with, "Let me tell you all about me, mine, our team and what we can do for you." That's the wrong approach. People are interested in how you can help them. That takes precedence over your credentials, interests and "core values."

5. Listening intolerance

You've heard of lactose intolerance. How about *listening* intolerance? You might know someone who suffers from this affliction. The most telling symptom is a steady stream of one-way communication. The listening intolerant might ask questions, but their follow-up actions demonstrate that they did not hear the input, ideas and feedback that others offered.

6. Glancing around for greener schmoozing grass

You've probably been a victim of this incredibly rude move. We all have.

While shaking your hand or feigning attention, they're glancing over your shoulder to see if there's someone more interesting in the room. They seem eager to escape at the first opportunity to go somewhere more intriguing.

Giving someone the "glance over" communicates: "You're unimportant to me and actually blocking my way."

7. The brush-off

You send a pleasant email with a couple of questions and receive a curt response with no answers. You text a congratulatory message and get no response at all. Perhaps you're talking to someone at a networking event, and they nod a couple of times to your comments and turn to engage a passerby in conversation.

The brush-off can be subtle, but small slights can erode trust and damage your reputation. Rudeness in the workplace almost always comes back to haunt you.

8. Non-responsiveness

Non-responsiveness shows up in several forms around the office. Among the most aggravating is "forgetting" to respond to an email. "Forgetting" to answer questions in an email or text is annoying as well.

[FREE GUIDE: [10 ways to help your email engagement skyrocket](#)]

How about nonparticipation in meetings or refusal to cooperate with policies procedures? When passive-aggressive behaviors become habitual, you run the risk of becoming known as a "difficult" or "toxic" colleague. That's no way to get ahead.

9. Lack of punctuality

Habitually joining conference calls late, arriving to meetings late, sending reports after deadlines, responding to emails later than the cultural norm—all this communicates one of two things:

- You consider your time more valuable than other people's.
- You can't handle your work responsibilities.

Neither message paints a positive picture of your character or competence.

10. Moodiness

Your colleagues expect you to maintain a reasonable measure of mastery over your moods. No one wants to deal with Delia the Dragon one day and Sam the Lamb tomorrow.

If co-workers call a strategy meeting with a supplier, they need to know which personality will show up at the conference table. Habitual mood swings make communication—and business—risky.

Good communication is the shortest distance between you and new customers—not to mention genuine friendships. That's the key to creating a healthy, productive, uplifting workplace culture.

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