General Office Skills

Leader's Guide by: Carla Wooldridge, BA (Bachelor of Arts Communication Management)

Produced by VEA Pty Ltd Commissioning Editor Christine Henderson B.Sc. Ph.D. Dip.Ed. Executive Producer Mark McAuliffe Dip.Art (Film & TV) Dip.Ed. B.Ed. Ph.P Leader's Guide © Training Point.Net DVD © VEA Pty. Ltd.

TRAINING point onet

Australia-wide: t. 1800 141 510 f. 1800 146 513 e. info@trainingpoint.net c/o EMDC, 10 Fitt Court, Bendigo, VIC 3550

> New Zealand: t. 0800 872 464

f. 0800 329 178 e. info@trainingpoint.net PO Box 303-166, Auckland 1330

For Trainers:

Introduction

This program is about general office skills and focuses on the following areas:

- Office Skills Overview
- Presentation, work habits & office etiquette
- Communication
- Time management
- Team work

Working in an office can require some very specific skills, such as multi-tasking, using common sense and initiative, the importance of good personal presentation, listening skills and teamwork. Set in a fictional office, the program aims to highlight that the general skills required for effective office workers are transferable to any workplace.

Program Timeline

00:00:00	Introduction
00:00:51	Chapter 1 – Office Skills Overview
00:03:30	Summary – Office Skills Overview
00:04:17	Chapter 2 – Presentation, work habits and office etiquette
00:08:27	Summary - Presentation, work habits and office etiquette
00:09:12	Chapter 3 - Communication 1
00:11:53	Summary – Communication 1
00:12:37	Chapter 4 – Communication 2
00:16:01	Summary – Communication 2
00:16 48	Chapter 5 –Time Management
00:23:30	Summary –Time Management
00:24:16	Chapter 6 - Teamwork
00:25:19	Summary – Teamwork
00:26:00	Conclusion
00:26:35	Credits



Background Information

Office etiquette 'degenerating'

Adapted from an article by Myles Wearring

From: www.news.com.au/business

Impersonal emails, bitching about workmates, poor phone manners and dressin inappropriately are some of the sins we commit every day in the office.

Not knowing correct workplace etiquette has always been an issue with young workers and Gen-Y are generally the worst offenders. That's the opinion of two of Australia's leading business etiquette experts, June Dally-Watkins, who runs the Business Finishing College in Sydney, and Tracey Hodgkins of the Australian Experiential Learning Centre in Perth.

Send me an email

One of the worst office habits today was sending impersonal emails containing a cold request or comment, Ms Dally-Watkins said.

She believes pleasantries such as 'hello' and 'thank you' should not be forgotten in messages.

She also advised workers to be careful what they say in emails because they can be kept on record for a long time. "And avoid using office email for personal use, because your employer can access them."

Face to face

In today's workplace many people (particularly Gen-Y, according to Ms Hodgkins) are more likely to communicate with someone two desks away by email rather than get up from their desk and give the message in person.

It's a trend Ms Hodgkins doesn't like. "There's no replacement for face-to-face interaction," she said.

And when chatting to someone in person, don't lean in too close. Ms Hodgkins said personal space was an issue of concern regularly raised in her workplace etiquette seminars.

"Some people are just not comfortable speaking too closely to someone," she said.

Meet and greet

When shaking someone's hand look them in the eye and make sure your grip is firm. And when introducing people always mention the older person's name first, she said.

The walk-by

When workers walk around the office to go to the bathroom or kitchen, should they always greet the people they pass?

Ms Hodgkins says it's polite to do so, adding that office hallways are a great way to socialise and also have informal meetings.

Dress for the occasion

It's vital to dress appropriately in the workplace, Ms Dally-Watkins said, and women should be careful not to be too revealing. "Who wants to pay good money to someone who looks yucky and doesn't present a good image for their company? You want them to be clever, have the appropriate education and look all that your company stands for," she said.

On the phone

The correct way to answer an office phone is, "Hello, (insert name here) speaking." Speaking on the mobile phone in the office was fine, so long as it doesn't disturb your neighbours. But never SMS anyone over a work-related matter, Ms Hodgkins said, as it's unprofessional.

Online @ work

Policies on personal internet use differ from office to office. The general rule, though, is to do it in moderation.

Be polite

When it comes to those annoying or rude co-workers who get on your nerves, be polite, Ms Dally-Watkins said.

Key to workplace etiquette

The key to office etiquette is to communicate to staff what the local etiquette is. If people don't know the culture and the rules everyone will go about things differently, Ms Hodgkins said.

Top 10 list of Time Management Techniques

From an article by Tom Mochal

Taken from: http://articles.techrepublic.com.com

1. Create a list of things to do each morning

If you don't keep track of what you want to accomplish, you're not going to have a chance for effective time management. Create a to-do list at the beginning of each day or at the end of the prior day. The list can include business and personal items and can be put on paper, your workstation, PDA, etc. Refer to the list several times during the day. For example, if you have 10 minutes before a meeting, glance at your list. There might be an e-mail you wanted to send that would only take 10 minutes. When you complete each item, check it off. If you're like me, you derive satisfaction from being able to check off an item as complete.

2. Write down all follow-up items on your list

To keep trach of new things that come up during the day, place them on your daily list. If your list is full and the activity can be completed tomorrow (or the next day), place it on your list for a day or two out. Have you ever wondered why people tell you they'll do something and then don't follow through? It's because they don't write it down. When I was a manager, I would often talk to people about work we needed to complete. I never trusted their memory. If they didn't bring a pencil and paper, I gave them some so they could write down what needed to be done and the due date.

3. Carry forward unfinished work and follow up

Now you have a list of work for the day, and you've added new items for follow-up during the day. What do you do with the things you haven't completed at the end of the day? You carry them forward and add them to your list for tomorrow. But don't be a procrastinator. You don't want to carry an expanding list of activities from day to day to day. If the activity is important, get it done. If it's not important, follow up with the person who's expecting something from you and explain that the work hasn't been completed.

4. Keep track of due dates

Use your list to keep track of due dates. This includes commitments to work colleagues and friends. My experience is that people miss due dates more often than they hit them. If you're not clear, ask when an activity needs to be completed, write it down, and then use time management skills to make sure the work is done on time. If you can't meet the commitment, communicate that in a timely manner.

5. Create a list of priorities for this month and next

I know many people make lists for today. How many make high-level lists of the things they need to do this month and next? Unless you have a transactional job where your time frames are always short-term, you need to stop at the beginning of each month and determine what you want to accomplish. These lists are obviously at a high level, but again, they keep you focused on what you want to accomplish. As the month progresses, start adding items to your list for the next month.

6. Keep track of longer-term reminders

Your things-to-do list isn't going to help you for follow-ups you'll need to remember in the distant future. For instance, you may tell a colleague that you'll follow up with him to check progress in two months. You need to have a way to keep track of this follow-up and to remind yourself two months in the future. "ve always just used a calendar. Most online calendars have features for reminders. In fact, I place multiple reminders over multiple days, so that if I miss one, I'll catch the reminder the next day.

7. Keep a clean desk

I never knew of a good time manager who worked in a pigsty. In fact, it usually follows that people who have cluttered offices or cubicles aren't very good time organisers. I don't think you can be a good time manager when you spend a lot of time looking for stuff in a cluttered work environment.

8. Keep all of your current work in one area

Over time, you may work on many separate activities and initiatives. Keep your things organised. I always keep all of my current work papers in one area where I can get at them easily. When I'm finished with a project or initiative, I move the folder elsewhere (see tip 9).

9. Purge files and documents you no longer need

Hete's one that might startle you. For the past 10 years, I've had one file drawer where I keep all my papers from completed work initiatives. I keep adding new work folders to the front of the drawer, and when the drawer gets full, I throw out files from the back end. In other words, I never keep more files than can fit in one drawer.

Contrast that to your system of keeping endless years of paperwork that no one cares about anymore and no one will ever care for again. Of course, I'm not talking about users' manuals or reference material that you need. I'm talking about the work files you accumulate. And yes, once a year, I wish I could go back and find something I threw out. But I usually have the original documents online.

10. Back up online files and purge

I have a similar philosophy about online documents. I would guess that 95 percent of what you have online in your work files probably has a shelf life of three months or less. I periodically back up my files to CD (or disk) and then go through and quickly delete all the older junk I don't need anymore.

We have two ways in which you can use this program -

General Office Skills

If you have limited time use the first option – we have called it *Skills Tour of the Modern Office* – this session will take one hour. If you have around three hours we suggest that you use the plan for the *Modern Office Skills Overhaul*.

1. Skills Tour of the Modern Office

Phase One: Session starter – Balloon Frantic.
Phase Two: Discussion based on essential office skills and office etiquette.
Phase Three: Questions based on the key concepts covered in the DVD whilst viewing the program.
Phase Four: Breaches of Workplace Etiquette.
Phase Five: Personal Action Plan.

2. Modern Office Skills Overhaul

Phase One: Session starter – Balloon Frantic.

Phase Two: Breaches of Workplace Etiquette

Phase Three: Discussion based on essential office skills and office etiquette.

Phase Four: Communication Questionnaire.

Phase Five: Questions based on the key concepts covered in the DVD whilst viewing the program. Phase Six: Time Management and Teamwork Exercises.

Phase Seven: Personal Action Plan.



1. Skills Tour of the Modern Office

Phase One: Session Starter – Balloon Frantic

Use this game to demonstrate the benefit of teamwork.

Equipment: Two to three inflated balloons per person are needed and a stopwatch

Rules: Each person has a balloon, with the rest in a nearby pile. Everyone begins throwing their balloons in the air. Every five seconds, another balloon is added. See how long the group can keep the balloons in the air before receiving six penalties. A penalty is announced loudly (to create stress!) by the leader when a balloon hits the floor, or once on the floor, if is not got back into play within five seconds. The leader keeps a cumulative score by shouting out 'one', 'two', etc. When the leader gets to 'six', time is stopped. After some discussion, the group tries to better its record with another attempt.

Phase Two: Discussion based on essential office skills and office etiquette

Before viewing the program:

- 1. Make a list of the office skills you think are essential in the modern office.
- 2. What is your definition of office etiquett
- 3. What are some of the benefits of office etiquette?
- 4. What in your opinion are the benefits of verbal communication as opposed to email or letter?

Suggested participent responses to discussion based on essential office skills and office etiquette.

Before viewing the program:

- 1. Make a list of the office skills you think are essential in the modern office.
- Good written and verbal communication.

Decision making.

- Relate well to colleagues and customers.
- Use initiative.
- Work unsupervised.
- Make decisions.
- Teamwork.
- Organised.
- Work to task.

2. What is your definition of office etiquette?

A set of written and unwritten rules of conduct that make workflow and social interactions run more smoothly.

3. What is the aim of office etiquette?

To ensure all workers are considerate of others, eg. Keeping noise down when others on phone or trying to concentrate. Includes participation in meetings, noise level, within habits.

- 4. What in your opinion are the benefits of verbal communication as opposed to email or letter?
- No replacement for face to face interaction.
- Sitting at a desk all day is bad for you. Get up, have a stretch, walk a teve metres to speak to someone rather than do it all by email.

Phase Three: Questions based on the key concepts covered in the DVD.

While viewing the program

Complete the key points made from the text

- 1. What are the five principles of communication
- 2. List the various modes of communication
- 3. List the four skills involved in good time management
- 4. What are the four generations of time management?
- 5. List the eight vital skills required for team players.
- 6. What are the nine roles of a team member? Which of these roles have you played within your office team?

Suggested participant responses to questions based on the key concepts covered in the DVD.

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- 1. What are the five principles of communication?
- Content.
- Originates with one person or group.
- Must be physical or verbal form
- Travel through a medium.
- Must be received.

2. List the various modes of communication.

- Face to face.
- Landline telephones.
- Mobile telephones.
- Fax.
- Letters.
- Email.
- SMS.
- 3. List the four skills involved in good time management.
- Prioritising tasks.
- Delegating.
- Problem solving.
- Decision making.
- 4. What are the four generations of time management
- Reminders, to do lists.
- Planning, preparation.
- Planning, prioritising, controlling
- Determine difference between important and urgent tasks. Address important tasks before they become urgent.
- 5. List the eight vital skills required for team players.
- Listening.
- Questioning.
- Persuading.
- Respecting
- Helping.
- Sharing.
- Participating.
- Communicating.

6. What are the 10 roles of a team member?

- Coordinator.
- Shaper.
- Plant.
- Resource investigator.
- Implementer.
- Teamworker.
- Completer.
- Moniter evaluator.
- Specialist.
- Finisher.

Phase Four: Breaches of Workplace Etiquette

From: www.thejobbored.com

Read the following embarrassing breaches of workplace etiquette and in the space provided relate an experience from your office or think of a scenario when this could occur in your office.

- 1. Office gossip. There's nothing worse than sharing a juicy piece of semi-anonymous gossip with a colleague only to get halfway through the story and realise that it's about them.
- 2. Inaccurate blamestorming, ie. A meeting intended to determine why a deadline was missed or a project failed, and who was responsible.

3. Referring to a colleague by his nickname and only later remembering that, until you spoke to him, he didn't actually realise that people referred to him as Stalin.

- 4. Leaving the toilet in an unpleasant state. I don't know why people do this, but I hope that one day they step out of their stinky cubicle to discover that their manager is next in the queue. Maybe then they'll step back in and flush properly.
- 5. Mentioning a colleague's hangover/faked sickie/history of cocaine abuse in front of the boss. You think that you're being funny. Your colleague thinks that you're trying to get her sacked.

- 6. Hitting reply to all. By now there have been so many warnings about why not to hit this button that, if you do tell everyone in your company exactly what you think of your chief executive's dress sense, people are likely to think it's a deliberate ploy rather than a fit of idiocy.
- 7. Sending out a recall three days after the dodgy reply to all. If you've left in that long it's really too late. All you're doing is reminding people of your initial faux pas.

Phase Five: Personal Action Plan

In the light of what you have learned in today's session – what are you going to do differently back at work?

2. Modern Office Skills Overhaul

Phase One: Session Starter – Balloon Frantic

Use this game to demonstrate the benefit of teamwork.

Equipment: Two to three inflated balloons per person are needed and a stopwarch

Rules: Each person has a balloon, with the rest in a nearby pile. Everyone begins throwing their balloons in the air. Every five seconds, another balloon is added. See how long the group can keep the balloons in the air before receiving six penalties. A penalty is announced loudly (to create stress!) by the leader when a balloon hits the floor, or once on the floor, if is not got back into play within five seconds. The leader keeps a cumulative score by shouting out 'one', 'two', etc. When the leader gets to 'six', time is stopped. After some discussion, the group tries to better its record with another attempt.

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Phase Four: Communication Questionnaire

Answer the questions with your own job in mind. There are no right or wrong answers. Don't worry if you have trouble choosing between the answers, but answer every question. Enter your answers on the score sheet to determine your communication style. Each of the 10 statements is followed by four possible endings, which are labeled A, B, C and D. After reading each statement and its endings, place a '4' in front of the ending you most prefer' place '3' beside second best; '2' beside your next choice and '1' beside your final choice. In other words, '1' will indicate the ending you ke least, and '4' the ending you like the best.

1. When I communicate with others at work. I try to:

- (a) Give them an organised, systematic set of facts and figures.
- (b) Stress the common goals and values we have as human beings.
- _____ (c) Highlight those important items that require immediate attention.
- (d) Get them to see the overall picture and concepts involved.

2. When I am ready to act on something, I worry most about:

- (a) Whether I will see an immediate payback on my efforts.
- (b) The effect it will have on other people and how they are going to feel about it.
- (c) Whether it represents a highly ethical approach.
- (d) Whether I've carefully considered all the alternatives and if I really have the facts and figures to support my position.

I feel most pleased with myself in my job when:

- (a) I have understood other people's feelings and have been able to help them.
- (b) I have accomplished more than I thought I could.
- ____ (c) I have developed a whole new idea or approach to something.
- (d) I have solved a difficult problem through careful analysis and systematic approach.

4. I most enjoy those situations at work that involve:

- _____ (a) Doing things where I can achieve my goals and get quick feed back.
- (b) Using rational and systematic efforts to define, analyse and solve problems.
 - (c) Working with other people to understand their feelings, attitudes and emotions.
- (d) Looking at original new ideas and trying to understand the theories and principles behind them.

5. People who know me well say that at work I am mostly:

- (a) Creative, sometimes complex, a bit of a dreamer.
- (b) Hard-driving, maybe even a little pushy, practical.
- ____ (c) Analytical, deliberate, cautious and careful.
- ____ (d) Sensitive to others, empathetic, caring.

6. When I am working on an assignment, I emphasise:

- _____ (a) The implications of the solution for the future.
- _____ (b) A logical, systematic approach to what I am doing.
- ____ (c) Getting the job done well in the quickest, most effective wa
- (d) Doing the job so that the important people around me will approve and nobody's toes will get stepped on.

7. I get impatient with the people I work with when

- (a) They seem to take forever to consider all of the possibilities before making up their mind.
- (b) They are too aggressive and pushy and don't want to think things through before they act.
- (c) They don't seem to care about how what they do will affect other people.
- ____ (d) They are tied to the same old approach and won't consider anything new.

8. When I meet people, I like them best if they are:

- _____ (a) Neatly dressed and careful and concise in their way of thinking.
- (b) Warm and friendly and obviously interested in people.
- (c) Practical and to the point.
- (d) Creative and enjoy talking about ideas and theories, particularly about the future.

9. In picking someone to work with, I would most prefer a person whom:

(a) Thinks things through carefully, considers alternatives, and is a bit cautious about moving ahead.

Is loyal and supportive and takes my feelings into account.

(c) Is a high-energy, hard working person who likes to get things done.

(d) Comes up with new, creative ideas and enjoys working on long-range plans.

10. When I am trying to gain acceptance for my ideas, I:

- (a) Stress the logic and good sense of the facts I am presenting and how my proposal is the best way to go.
- (b) Try to understand other people's feelings and needs and how they will be affected by my idea.
- _____ (c) Try to demonstrate my creativity and how my ideas relate to corporate goals.
- _____ (d) Point out the practical benefits of my approach to both of us.

Communication Style Score Sheet

Copy your numbers from the questionnaire into the proper spaces on the score sheet. Begin on the first line. The number you put next to the 'A' in question 1 should be copied into space '1A', the number next to 'B' should be copied into space '1B' and so forth. Please note that the spaces aren't necessarily in the proper alphabetical order. Total each column and put the sum in the box at the bottom of the column. The four sums should add up to 100.

Analyticals	Expressives	Amiables	Drivers
1A	1B	1D	1C
2D	2B	2C	24
3D	3A	3C	ЗВ
4B	4C	4D	4A
5C	5D	5A	5B
6B	6D	6A	6C
7B	7C	7D	7A
8A	8B	8D	8C
9A	9B	9D	9C
10A	10B	10C	10D
Total:	Total:	Total:	Total:

The questionnaire measures which style yed prefer under normal circumstances. The higher the score the stronger your preference for that style. If you have an evenly distributed score across the four styles, you have many characteristics of all the styles. However, a caution here is that you may be found 'difficult to read' by others who can't pick up any strong clues about a given style. According to behavioural scientists, if you and your listener share the same communication style, chances are the rapport is good. To achieve the same smooth sailing with someone who has a different style, you'll need to tailor your communication in a way that's easy for the listener to understand.



Communication Styles

Expressive		Amiable	
+	-	+	-
Idea oriented	Unrealistic	People oriented	Unbusinesslike
Creative	Shallow	Loyal	Wishy-washy
Enthusiastic	Phony	Team Player	Gutless
Gregarious	Lack follow through	Accepting	Time Waster
Stimulating	Far out	Cooperative	Lacks focus
Energetic	Flaky	Friendly	Soft
Spontaneous	Out of touch	Understanding	Sentimental
Subjective	Impractical	Supportive	Illogical
Competitive	Unreasonable	Listener	Emotional
Driver		Analytical	
+	-		-
Goal oriented	Narrow minded	Task Oriented	Stubborn
Disciplined	Overbearing	Precise	Uncommunicative
Organised	Insensitive	Thorough	Picky
Efficient	Ruthless	Inquisitive	Dull
Pragmatic	Critical	Prudent	Perfectionist
Determined	Short Ranged	Stabilising	Indecisive
Directed	Self-centred	Rational	Over cautious
Competitive	Acts, then thinks	Objective	Over serious
Objective	Domineering	Introspective	Rigid

In light of this questionnaire what are your communication attributes?

What do you need to be aware of and try to overcome?

Phase Five: Questions Based on the Key Concepts Covered in the DVD.

While viewing the program

Complete the key points made from the text screens.

- 1. What are the five principles of communication?
- 2. List the various modes of communication.
- 3. List the four skills involved in good time management.
- 4. What are the four generations of time management?
- 5. List the eight vital skills required for team players.
- 6. What are the nine roles of a team member? Which of these roles have you played within your office team?

Suggested participant responses to questions based on the key concepts covered in the DVD.

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- Prioritising tasks.
- Delegating.
- Problem solving.
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- 4. What are the four generations of time management?
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- Determine the difference between important and urgent tasks. Address important tasks before they become urgent.

5. List the eight vital skills required for team players

- Listening.
- Questioning.
- Persuading.
- Respecting.
- Helping.
- Sharing.
- Participating.
- Communicating.
- 6. What are the 10 roles of a team member?
- Coordinator.
- Shaper.
- Plant.
- Resource investigator.
- Implementer.
- Teamworker.
- Completer.
- Moniter evaluator.
- Specialist.
- Finisher.

Phase Six: Time Management and Teamwork Exercises

1. Write out a list of effective aids that help you organise your work.

2.The table below lists the 10 roles of a team member.

After reading the definition of each role, tick the team member roles you have performed in your workplace.

Team Member Role	Definition	Tick if performed
1. Coordinator	Motivates to achieve goals.	
2. Shaper	Makes things happen.	
3. Plant	Offers creative aspect.	
4. Resource investigator	Provides external contacts.	
5. Implementer	Turns ideas into tasks.	
6. Team-worker	Resolves internal problems.	
7. Completer	Drives the team.	
8. Monitor evaluator	Takes strategic view	
9. Specialist	Provides specialist skils.	
10. Finisher	Make sure it's completed.	

3. List the eight elements of teamwork

1. Read the following description of a good team member

- to be a good team member you must:
- a) Herp other team members.
- b) Inform others of changes in routine.
- c) Ask for assistance when necessary.
- d) Use effective communication and interpersonal skills.
- e) Be willing to learn new skills and improve old ones.
- f) Be flexible in assisting other team members when they are busy and need help.
- g) Be honest; team members must be able to trust one another.
- h) Have a commitment to the goals and objectives of your team.

Do you agree with this description of a good team member? Why/why not?

Do you believe you are a good team member? Explain your answer.

Have you ever been in a team where you have had difficulties working co-operatively together? Explain your answer.

Suggested participant responses to Time Management and Teamwork Exercises.

- 1. Write out a list of effective aids that help you organise your work.
- Reminders.
- To do lists.
- Digital planners.
- Calendars.
- Appointment diaries
- 3. List the eight elements of teamwork?
- a. Listening,
- b. Questioning
- c. Persuading
- d. Respecting
- e. Helping.
- f. Sharing.
- g. Participating.
- h. Communicating.

Phase Seven: Personal Action Plan

In the light of what you have learned in today's session – what are you going to do differently back at work?

Useful Resources

- National Training Information Service (NTIS) unit BSBCMN103A -Apply basic communication skills
- National Training Information Service (NTIS) unit BSBCMN202A Organise and complete daily work activities
- National Training Information Service (NTIS) unit BSBCMN203A Communicate in the workplace
- National Training Information Service (NTIS) unit BSBCMN204A Work effectively with others

Website References

- www.ntis.gov.au
- www.news.com.au/business
- www.thejobbored.com
- www.techrepublic.com

Other Relevant Programs Available From Training Point

• The Office Administration Series