COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE



FLOWING
VIDA AO SEU ESTILO

COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE

No matter your field or the technical challenges you face, everyone needs to interact with others in the workplace.

Workplace relationships are not something we can choose to avoid. People with different priorities, backgrounds, and goals share the same environment to deliver results and build their careers. That is why it is important to talk about this topic.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF A WORKPLACE WITH HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS?



More collaboration and less rework.
When there are healthy professional relationships, people feel more comfortable asking for help, sharing questions, and working together to find solutions. This reduces errors, increases efficiency, and prevents rework because people know how to work together.

A more positive and motivating work environment.
A team with strong relationships creates a more positive environment, where people feel motivated to work and connected to results and goals.

Fewer unnecessary conflicts.
Many tensions arise from misunderstandings or misaligned expectations. With healthier professional relationships, there is greater openness to honest and empathetic conversations, helping prevent conflicts before they escalate.

Stronger culture and better results.
Companies are made up of people. When connections are healthy, the culture becomes stronger and results follow naturally.

McKinsey & Company (2023) – Study on collaboration and productivity

AND WHEN RELATIONSHIPS ARE DYSFUNCTIONAL, WHAT NEGATIVE IMPACTS CAN THEY HAVE?

NEGATIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT AND LACK OF MOTIVATION

Workplaces marked by gossip, excessive competition, or lack of respect create anxiety and insecurity. The environment becomes negative, and people begin to feel frustrated.

Poor communication and rework

When there is a lack of trust, people avoid talking or do not say what they really think. This leads to misalignment, communication breakdowns, and wasted time.

Loss of focus and poor performance

Unresolved conflicts become distractions. Energy that should be directed toward achieving results is drained by tension and internal disputes.

Emotional strain and declining mental health

Hostile work environments can lead to chronic stress, lack of trust, and difficulties delivering results. In the long term, this can result in significant costs for the company and real suffering for employees.

Weakened organizational culture

When leaders tolerate or ignore dysfunctional relationships, this sets a negative example. A “bad work environment” becomes part of the culture, making it much harder to change later.

***Gallup Workplace** – Report on engagement and workplace relationships (2018).*



HOW CAN I HELP BUILD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK?

Be mature and separate the professional from the personal.

Professional relationships do not need to revolve around personal likes or affinities. What really matters is maturity: the ability to express yourself respectfully, deal with differences, receive feedback constructively, and change direction without turning everything into drama.
Being mature means being able to work with people who have different opinions without turning every disagreement into a personal attack. It means understanding that, at work, we are all working toward a common goal and that respect is the minimum we should show one another.

Daniel Goleman – Emotional Intelligence

Strive for efficiency — healthy relationships help make that possible.

When interactions are based on maturity, the result is a more efficient team. Meetings become more straightforward, and conflicts are resolved by focusing on the problem rather than on the people involved. The team learns to deal with everyday pressures without losing balance.
Instead of wasting energy on indirect remarks, workplace gossip, rumors, misunderstandings, or confrontations, everyone begins to act in a more aligned way, positively impacting results and deliverables. After all, no one wants to fall short or be inefficient, right?

Personal accountability: everyone should consider their own role in the bigger picture.

Having healthy and professional relationships does not mean achieving perfection. It means reflecting on your own role in those relationships. There is no point in always thinking that someone else is the one who needs to improve. Thinking about our own role is closely connected to personal accountability, because you are also part of that relationship. Before pointing the finger, it is worth asking yourself: “What can I do differently to improve this relationship?”

Stephen R. Covey – The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People – Habit 1: Be Proactive.

AND WHAT ARE THE PILLARS OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS (INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE WORKPLACE)?

The first major pillar is communication.

Communication is the foundation of relationships in the workplace.

It is not just about what you say, but how you say it, how the other person listens, and what is ultimately understood at the end of the conversation.

It is also worth remembering that today we have many different communication channels, which can often contribute to misunderstandings and communication gaps.
So, what communication formats do we use today, and how can we make better use of each one?

ASYNCHRONOUS

What it is: Communication that does not happen in real time. Each person responds when they are able to. It takes place through digital tools.

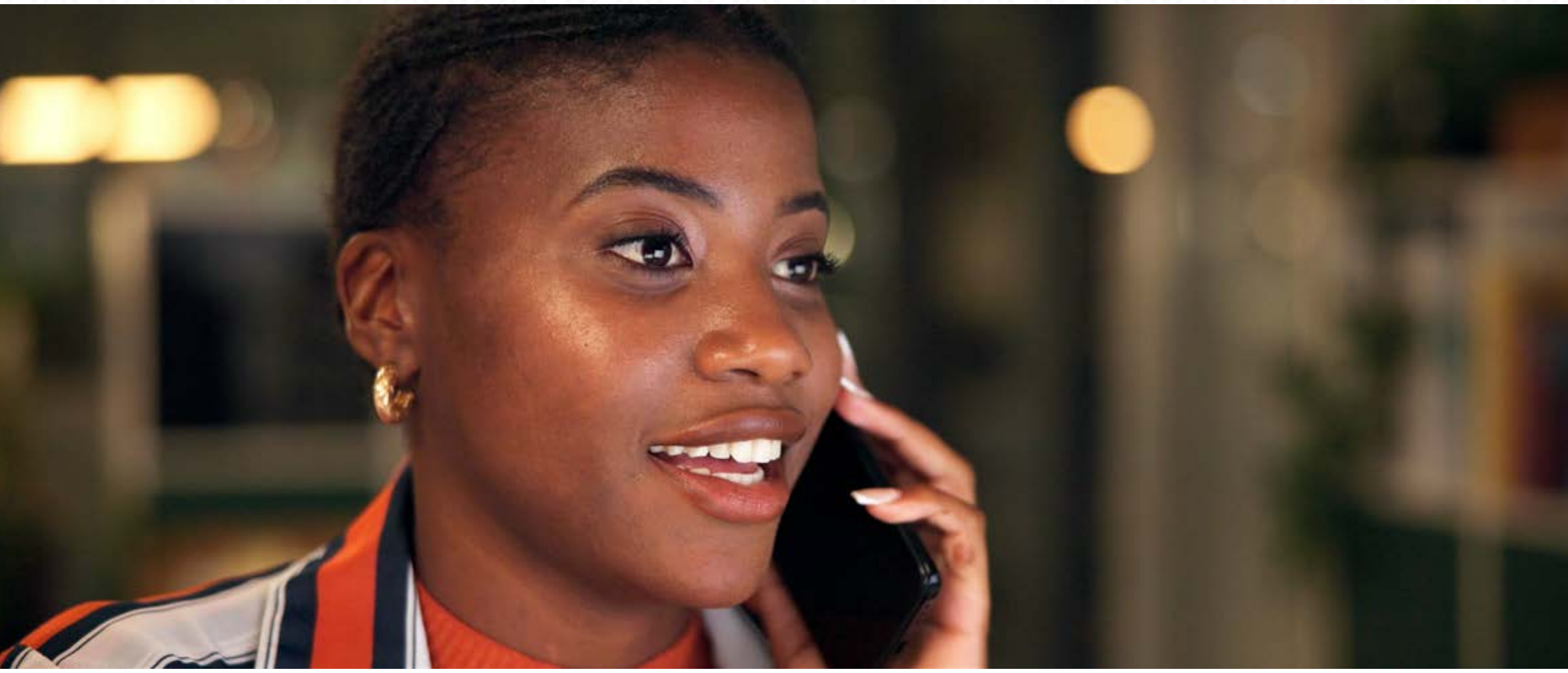
Examples:

Emails, recorded videos, and any other form of communication where you are not interacting in "real time."

How to be more effective:

- Use clear and objective email subject lines (e.g., "Action required by April 14").
- DClearly highlight deadlines and what you expect from the other person in the body of the message.
- Be direct but courteous. Don't write as if you were writing a book – but don't make it so brief that important information is missing.
- For critical messages, confirm that they have been received.
- Use the appropriate tool for each need. Need to send a file? Avoid WhatsApp and use email. Leaving a message on Teams? Make it clear from the start what you need.





SYNCHRONOUS

What it is: Communication that takes place in real time, with an immediate exchange of information.

Examples:

Live meetings, phone calls, WhatsApp voice calls, and chats with instant responses.

How to be more effective:

- Se polite, introduce yourself, and start with something like, “Hello, good afternoon. How are you?” – but don’t wait for a response before explaining the reason for your message.
- Use a calendar to schedule time with the person and avoid going beyond the agreed time.
- Organize the topics in advance. For meetings, whenever possible, include the topics directly in the calendar invitation.
- Avoid interrupting, regardless of the communication channel. Giving your full attention is important.
- Agree on the preferred communication format. Some people prefer voice messages, while others may not be able to listen to them. Ask before sending one. Otherwise, you may assume the person received the information when they did not, which can lead to misunderstandings or unresolved tasks.

VIRTUAL

What it is: Communication mediated by technology, which can be either synchronous or asynchronous.

Examples:

Meetings via Zoom/Meet, Teams, WhatsApp, messaging platforms, and online presentations.

How to be more effective:

- Test your audio and camera beforehand (no one wants to start a meeting with, "Can you hear me?").
- Make it clear that you are "present." Looking at the screen and turning on your camera may seem like small details, but they can completely change how communication is perceived.
- Take notes or save important messages, especially when they involve role definitions, deadlines, and other matters related to deliverables.

BE CAREFUL! Just because you are available at that moment does not mean the other person is. Avoid expecting immediate responses on certain channels – no one needs to be online all the time. Some tools, even though they allow instant messaging, may be used differently by each person.



IN-PERSON

What it is: Face-to-face communication without digital mediation.

Examples:

Meetings, hallway conversations, in-person presentations, and face-to-face feedback.

How to be more effective:

- Use body language to your advantage (posture, facial expressions, and eye contact).
- Be 100% present. Avoid spending too much time on your phone or computer when you are with other people, especially in one-on-one conversations.
- Avoid unproductive conversations. Be friendly and interested, but don't lose sight of your objective.
- Take the opportunity to strengthen relationships. Many cultures value face-to-face interaction and prefer certain topics to be discussed in person, so make the most of these moments.

Jason Fried & David Heinemeier Hansson- It Doesn't Have to Be Crazy at Work



HOW DO I KNOW WHICH CHANNEL TO USE AND WHEN?

If you need to...	***Use***	*Why?*
Align on an important topic that requires context	E-mail	Gives people time to think, creates a record, and does not require an immediate response
Resolve something urgent or that requires interaction	Direct chat / phone call	Enables a quick response and immediate exchange, ideal for moving things forward
Have a sensitive conversation (feedback, conflict)	In person or video call	Allows you to see reactions, encourages empathy, and reduces the chance of misunderstandings
Explain something in detail or demonstrate how to do it	Video or tutorial	Provides a step-by-step explanation and can be reviewed later
Engage the team or make group decisions	Online / in-person meeting	Enables live interaction, greater connection, and real-time alignment
Document decisions or agreements	Shared document	Creates a record and provides clarity about what was agreed upon

Harvard Business Review – How to Collaborate Effectively If Your Team Is Remote

In a busy workday, it is common to quickly send a message to a group or schedule a meeting without giving it much thought. But every channel has its strengths and limitations, and choosing the wrong one can lead to rework, misunderstandings, or even unnecessary friction.

The key question is::

"Does this conversation need to happen now, with everyone at the same time, or can it happen at a more convenient pace and be documented?"

Quando você escolhe o canal certo, você:

- Save time (fewer unnecessary interruptions).
- Avoid rework (clearer, documented messages).
- Respect other people's time.
- Strengthen the team culture (smoother communication and less stress).

GitLab Handbook – Diretrizes de comunicação assíncrona em ambientes distribuídos.

DON'T FORGET:

Before scheduling a meeting, ask yourself: could this be resolved with a well-structured email?

If you use chat, make the level of urgency and the objective clear (e.g., "I need this by 2 p.m. so I can send it to the client").

Avoid meetings without an agenda. No clear objective = wasted time.

After important meetings, always document what was decided (this can be done through an email or a summary in the group chat).

Consider your company's culture: everything depends on the context. Understand how things work today, what is effective, how you can suggest new approaches, and align them with your manager. Communication is not just about doing things the way you prefer, but also understanding what the environment requires.

Cal Newport – Trabalho Focado

AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION, REGARDLESS OF THE FORMAT

Know the difference between hearing and listening.
Hearing is physiological. Listening is a choice.

How many times have you truly listened to someone until they finished, without mentally preparing what you were going to say next?

Truly listening means creating space for the other person. It means focusing not on your response, but on being present.

Practice: The next time someone is speaking, try simply to be present. Don't plan your response. Just listen.

Marshall B. Rosenberg – Comunicação Não-Violenta

Be clear

If the other person did not understand, it is the communicator's responsibility to make the message clearer.

- Use short, objective, and unambiguous sentences.
- Give examples whenever possible.
- Avoid unnecessary complexity and focus on the message you want to convey.

Practice: Before finishing, ask: "Was I clear? Is there anything I can clarify further?"

Focus on your intention

Every communication has a "why." Ignoring it can lead to misunderstandings.

- Do you want to inform, persuade, align, listen, support, or solve something?
- Communicate according to your objective. If your communication style sends signals that differ from what you actually intend, it can create confusion for the other person.

Practice: Start with: "I wanted to talk to you about…" or "My goal here is…"

Listen (really listen)

Communication works best when there is genuine listening.

- Give your full attention and don't interrupt.
- Show that you are following the conversation through gestures, brief responses, or questions.
- Avoid multitasking. No information can be fully absorbed when your attention is divided.
- Confirm what you understood before responding.

Practice: Use phrases such as: "What you're saying is…" or "If I understood correctly, you mean…"

Empathy (put yourself in the other person's shoes)

It's not just about what you say – how the other person feels when hearing it also matters.

- Consider the other person's emotional state.
- Adjust your tone and choose your words carefully.
- Avoid judgments and comparisons.

Prática: Substitua "Você está exagerando" por "Entendo que isso está te afetando bastante"

Kim Scott – Empatia Assertiva

Seja coerente (tenha alinhamento entre o que você diz e o que você faz)

A comunicação não-verbal (gestos, expressões, atitudes) gera muitos impactos para nossa comunicação, principalmente na percepção do outro.

- Fale olhando nos olhos (presencial ou câmera).
- Cuide do tom de voz e da postura.
- Tenha coerência sobre o que fala e o que faz

Prática: Observe suas reações, expressões faciais e corporais, elas te ajudam ou te atrapalham no momento de comunicar?

Adapt to your audience and the situation

It's not about "how I express myself," but rather "how the other person understands best."

- With direct people: get straight to the point.
- With analytical people: provide context and data.
- With sensitive people: balance logic and emotion.

Practice: Ask: "How do you prefer to receive this type of information?"

Communication is a two-way street.

Speaking well is not enough. Communication is much more than that!

At the end of the day, it's not about what you say. It's about what you build with the other person.

Now it's your turn.

Choose one conversation today and practice active listening, clarity, or genuine presence.

Ask people you trust for feedback on your communication style. Reflect on how you communicate both inside and outside the workplace. Think about how communication has been affecting your relationships at work and what you can do differently to become an even better professional.

Sometimes, a small change in attitude is enough to transform entire relationships.



LEARN MORE



Books

Comunicação Não-Violenta
Marshall Rosenberg

Em Conflito: Por que as discussões estão nos distanciando e como podem nos unir
Ian Leslie

Como Fazer Amigos e Influenciar Pessoas
Dale Carnegie

Empatia assertiva
Kim Scott

**Comunicação Assertiva:
Fale de forma clara, segura e respeitosa**
Vera Martins



Podcasts:

Oratória – Dominando a arte de falar em público

CBN Comunicação e Liderança

Talk SOAP

Ep. 53 - CNV (Comunicação Não Violenta) | Love the Problem



TED:

Julian Treasure
How to Speak so That People Want to Listen (TED Talk)

FLOWING

VIDA AO SEU ESTILO

FLOWING.COM.BR