

## 5 tactics for effective workplace communication



It's not easy to achieve, and everyone wants it: effective workplace communication. We've collected several reliable tactics you can employ to make communicating at work much smoother.

Tori is deeply frustrated by her colleague Tony every Monday morning. He owns the data she needs to complete her weekly reports but when she messages him for clarifications, he takes hours to reply.

Sandeep is in sales for a technology company. As a fairly new employee who works remotely, he wonders whether the systems he's creating to generate new leads will be effective in the long run. He's not sure how other sales reps handle their territories.

The bi-weekly meeting at Candy Apple Creative Agency is a hot mess. The agenda is ignored. People talk over each other. Things get heated, fast. The meeting easily runs over every single time.

What do all of these workplaces have in common? You've got it — they lack effective workplace communication. Tori doesn't realize that Tony has back-to-back client meetings every Monday from 9am-12pm. Poor Sandeep is so out of the loop he doesn't know the other sales reps have a template they work from to generate sales leads. And the communication tactics over at Candy Apple have devolved past unproductive and into the toxic realm.

If these issues seem familiar, it's because poor communication in the workplace is a common problem. According to a [2018 Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. study](#), 60 percent of companies don't have a long-term internal communication strategy. IBM found that [72 percent of employees](#) don't fully understand their company's strategy. And a [Salesforce study](#) revealed that 86 percent of employees and executives surveyed blamed lack of collaboration or ineffective communication for workplace failures.

## Why is communication important in the workplace

The benefits of improving communication in the workplace extend beyond reducing conflict, keeping employees informed, and providing information they need to do their job well. When you have an organization that feels connected and communicates well, you can expect:

- Improved employee engagement
- Better colleague and client relationships
- Higher productivity
- More buy-in for new initiatives
- Increased innovation
- Less turnover

## Ways to improve communication skills in the workplace

Unfortunately, there's no magical fairy that can establish effective workplace communication for you overnight. We do have some ideas to implement over time, though, that can help your team make more of an impact by communicating better.

### Create a company handbook

Here at Front, company culture is super important to us. That's why we created a 'culture book'—a fun, easy-to-read, and informative guide for all Fronteers. (Want to see? [Take a peek here.](#)) In it, our founder Mathilde Collin shares the history and five core values of the company, including what each of them looks like in action. There's also a section on inclusion and 'how will I be successful at Front?' to help Fronteers understand what to focus on in order to thrive here.

If Tori and Tony worked at Front, their conflict would have been nipped in the bud. Since collaboration is one of our values and our product happens to be a tool that helps us do just that, it would have been quickly uncovered that Tony isn't available for questions Monday mornings because of his client calls. Tori would find another time to work on her weekly report and there would be no hard feelings.

Other helpful elements to consider adding to a company handbook include:

- Common industry/company terms so new employees aren't going, "Huh?" every time someone whips off a wild acronym in an email
- The company communication culture, i.e.
- When to email/IM/call/drop by
- Guidance around giving and receiving feedback from leaders and peers
- Company policies
- Processes for mediating conflict
- Employee benefits and perks
- Information on where to find helpful documents (Sandeep would be thrilled to learn where the sales templates are!)

## **Make user guides for every teammate**

The standardized workplace can be a stifling place if we're all expected to operate the same way. Some progressive organizations ask employees to create a user guide to themselves so their colleagues and leaders can better understand how they "work".

Abby Falnik, founder and CEO of Global Citizen Year, [wrote about what she learned](#) and shared that her template includes:

- My style
- What I value
- What I don't have patience for
- How to best communicate with me
- How to help me
- What people misunderstand about me

Having access to the user manual of every one of your colleagues is like being handed the cheat codes to a complex operating system. It also helps humanize people we don't know (or like) well. "Ralph finds it really hard to get back on track once his concentration is broken, so I'm going to wait until this afternoon's meeting to bring up this issue."

## Send weekly newsletters

Hear ye! Hear ye! Employees are more engaged, productive, and satisfied with their workplace when they feel informed about what's happening throughout the organization. Even small businesses can benefit from regular communications about what's going on in the company and the industry.

Just like a tight-knit community, co-workers are naturally curious—some would even say nosy—about what's going on in other departments. And that's a good thing. When everyone knows that the sales team landed a big new client, HR has a new onboarding process, and Rami in IT is having a baby in June, they feel connected to each other and engaged with the team. If employees trust that leadership is being transparent, it cuts down on office gossip.

Some companies stick with just the news in a bulleted format. Others have a small staff devoted to writing articles on the work that's happening in-house, dispatches from leadership, and profiles of the people who make up the organization, complete with slick photos. The most important thing about a newsletter is that it is honest and released in a predictable pattern, preferably weekly.

A newsletter can take many forms:

- Email blasts
- A company podcast people can listen to on their commute
- An old-fashioned intranet news bulletin
- A Slack channel devoted to company news

At Front, our CEO Mathilde Collin sends a weekly newsletter every Monday morning of what's happened last week and what's coming up for the week ahead. Here's what it looks like, for your inspiration:

**From:** Mathilde Collin

**Date:** December 10, 2018, 8:25 AM PST

**Subject:** Summary week 49 - Roadmap week 50

Hi Fronteers,

**Revenue**

For December, our goal is \$XXXXX. This means that we have hit X% of our December goal, with \$XXXXX to go for the month.

### **Last week at Front:**

#### Recruiting:

- Offers accepted: X
- Offers declined: X
- Offers outstanding: X

#### Product:

- User provisioning - admins can set up notification settings and individual canned responses for users
- Forward in new conversation + setting to default forward/reply in new conversation
- Pipedrive update - actions will be attributed to individual teammate

#### Marketing:

- Front recognized as #25 Glassdoor's Best Places to Work Small and Medium Companies
- Mathilde recognized in The Bloomberg 50's Ones to Watch list
- New Front lead reactivation campaign results: XXX
- New use case landing pages: [Travel](#), [Hospitality](#), [Logistics](#), [Customer Success](#)

### **On the roadmap this week:**

- Mon-Fri: Shiplt Campaign: Holiday wishes granted by Front
- Featuring daily email, [blog posts](#), [videos](#)
- Tues: Mathilde speaking at Fortune's Most Powerful Women Next Gen conference
- Wed: 2019 Product Requests email campaign from Mathilde
- Thurs: Front recognized in Zapier's Fastest Growing Apps List
- Blog: [How to integrate Front with Aircall](#)
- Blog: [7 fresh customer appreciation ideas to try in the new year](#)

*Have a great week!*

*Mathilde*

## **Implement regular meetings**

If the troubles at the Candy Apple Creative Agency have taught us anything, it's that meetings can make communication in the workplace worse, not better. But regular face-to-face communication—even if it happens via video conferencing—is important. It reminds people that they're working together toward a common goal and the work they do is connected to others' work.

How can we avoid rambling, out-of-control meetings and host ones that contribute to effective communication in the workplace? There are a few best practices:

- **Set an agenda and stick to it.** Create a predetermined time for each item and make sure there's a sound when time is up. People will learn to be efficient with their allotted minutes.

- **Make time for feedback.** Some companies start or end meetings with positive feedback or recognition for a job well done. This might be a leader sharing with the entire team or one colleague giving kudos to another. It's a great way to get good vibes flowing.
- **Get a conch.** In *Lord of the Flies*, the shipwrecked kids learned that meetings get out of control quickly if everyone is speaking at once. Their rule was that only the one holding the conch could speak. If this is an issue in your workplace, consider bringing in a symbol to pass around that will help cut down on cross talk.
- **Have a facilitator.** It's helpful if one person takes the lead on moderating the meeting. They'll hold the timer, make sure the agenda is being followed, park topics that don't relate to the intended discussion, and manage the conch.

We've got some more tips on holding effective meetings (and when it should be an email, or Slack message, instead), in our [Guide to effective and productive internal communication](#).

## Start some regular team building activities

If you want to take effective communication in the workplace to the next level, introduce an element of fun—not the forced kind, but something that's actually fun. Finding team building activities that appeal to everyone can be a challenge, but the effort is often worth it.

### Fun ways to improve communication in the workplace through team building activities

- Volunteering together for a meaningful cause
- Hosting an off-site retreat in nature (take a hike!)
- Holding a weekly happy hour, trivia challenge, or ping pong tournament
- Having a board game tournament (Catan, anyone?)
- Doing a role-switch up: every person is teamed up with another teammate to do each other's job for a day

Effective communication in the workplace is not the result of one activity. It's a natural byproduct of strong company values and a commitment by leadership and employees to stay connected and collaborative. There are plenty of things you can do to improve communication in your organization, but the first place to start is usually by asking employees about their experience and what they believe could be done better.

If you've got a culture like Candy Apple Creative Agency... maybe don't start with a meeting.