# Certificate IV in Electrical Equipment And Systems

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# Required Skills and Knowledge

- T1 Communicating with personnel
- T2 Communicating with suppliers
- T3 Communicating with customers
- T4 Purpose and extent of maintaining work activities records in an enterprise
- T5 Techniques of analysis
- T6 Summary of statistics
- T7 Correlation and regression
- T8 Investigation and reporting

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Assessment:

Will be via written submission

Sample Submission

- Communicating with staff:

In fact, communicating with employees is one of the most important things you do as a leader.

Scads of research shows that people derive greater satisfaction from their jobs and perform to a higher standard when they are engaged in their workplace. Effective communications is an essential feature of engagement.

Communicate effectively and you'll have a more fully engaged and more productive workforce.

And remember, while the stakes are high, the hurdle isn't.

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You can learn to communicate effectively with your staff. It takes some planning. It takes practice and commitment. It's a skill you can continue to hone.

Internal communications is critically important, but it isn't rocket science

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- From a communications perspective, employees feel appreciated and valued when
- they are the first to hear important news
- they are regularly consulted
- they are listened to
- their suggestions are acted upon.

## Principles of effective internal communications

- Internal communications is essential to the government's overall effectiveness.
- Internal communications is a responsibility of a department's management; not its communications section. Communications can, however, provide managers with guidance and coaching.
- Internal communications is meant to help inform decision making and influence employee behaviour in ways that benefit government, the public, and employees themselves.
- Internal communications consists of accurate, consistent, and timely information.

- Internal communications is always two-way communications. Employee feedback helps managers decide if the communication has been received and understood. As well, employees have important operational information that can help to make the government more successful in achieving its goals.
- Internal communications never stops. It is a continuous interactive process.

# Why Communicate?

Effective managers and supervisors already know a few things about communicating with employees. Communication helps to build relationships, promotes mutual understanding, and enables employees to contribute to organizational success. Moreover, it's a skill that can be learned – but it takes practice.

- Effective managers and supervisors also know that communicating with employees is not solely the responsibility of the organization’s professional communicators, any more than managing their office’s budget is the sole responsibility of the organization’s finance professionals. The communications folks can help and can provide advice, but the “heavy lifting” remains the manager’s responsibility.

## THE ROLE OF THE MANAGER AND SUPERVISOR

Studies have long shown that employees prefer to receive information from their supervisors. They like to get the “big picture” information from the organization’s leaders, but they want to hear the impact on their workgroup directly from the people to whom they report.

For many types of information, employees also prefer to receive news face to face. This allows for interaction and a chance to close the communication loop: the supervisor “sends out” the message, the staff receive it, and their reaction or response shows if they understand and accept the information.

# COMMUNICATION THAT WORKS

After studying 10 international companies and conducting an exhaustive literature review, Deloitte & Touche identified four communication related factors that help organizations achieve their goals.

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- 1 Clarity of purpose

Successful organizations and initiatives focus on a few key messages. Leaders in successful organizations are consistent in their messages and ensure that everyone involved understands the goals and how to achieve them.

- 2 Effective communication methods

The level of trust and openness in various key activities is also critical for success. Employees at all levels can ask for information and receive honest, useful answers.

- 3 Effective sharing of information

Information sharing is effective when systems and networks enable managers and employees to have the right information at the right time to do their jobs, to share opinions and discuss ideas, and to circulate best practices and learn from each other.

- 4 Walking the talk

Leaders must also be good communicators themselves, so they can convey their ideas convincingly. Their behaviour must be consistent with what they are saying, both formally and informally.

## How . . . and When?

The challenge for managers and supervisors is to find the time and the most effective methods for communicating information in a timely and open way to their staff. When faced with a specific message to convey, managers must decide which internal communications tool(s) will be most effective. First, consider the following:

# The nature of the message

How important is it? How complex is it? What impact will this information have on operations? What impact will this information have on employees? Will it have any impact on employees' families? When will these impacts be felt? Generally, the more complex or the more important the message, the more likely that face-to-face communication is warranted. This should almost always be supplemented by a printed or electronic version for clarity and consistency of message. E-mail or voice broadcast can be used as a reminder or update.

# The messenger

Who is the most appropriate source of this information: the employee’s supervisor, manager, director, executive director, deputy minister, or minister? Employees generally prefer to hear from their direct supervisor

- The timing of the message

When should the message be delivered? The cardinal rule on timing is that employees should always know about something that affects them before anybody else knows. Employees feel more valued if they become aware of information before it is public knowledge.

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- Prepare a release to your staff for the requirement and level of savings required to achieve a preconceived energy management target the method of delivery is your choice – oral – newsletter- group meeting – video conference.

# Communicating With Suppliers

- Supplier relationship management (SRM) consists of managing and planning constructive interactions with the third-party vendors that supply your business with goods and materials. This is an important part of both supply chain management (SCM) and effective small business management.
- When you communicate effectively with your suppliers, the entire supply chain process, including managing inventory and acquiring goods, will run smoother and be more efficient. Although buying SRM software is a good place to start, there are four other steps you can take to build relationships and partnerships with your suppliers to measure and increase performance.

- 1. Most important: clear, regular communication with suppliers gets results – so decide on a way to *automate communication with suppliers*. For instance, a mail program that you can set in advance to contact suppliers every two weeks, like Constant Contact, is better than trying to remember to email suppliers by hand and track whether they responded and what they said in your Microsoft Outlook email folders. Automate, automate, automate.

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2. Establish the vision: the big picture goal is better products; the way that is going to happen is by getting the cleanest, most reliable data from suppliers.

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- 3. Get executive buy-in, both upstream, downstream and in your own organization; then create your “tiger team” of internal evangelists and data gatherers. Talk with the marketing team. They will get excited about Quality, Green and CSR. You need this – your toughest sell is internal and marketing will do a lot of that work for you.

4. Talk with suppliers: make sure they know how a system benefits them, e.g., by eliminating duplicate data capture they save time and money, a reputable data warehouse can be safer than in-house storage, etc.

- 5. Draft a plan to educate suppliers to clarify requirements and unify goals.

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6. Evaluate and make inventory of your extant data in the ERP system, PLM, and procurement software (most compliance software will be able to “talk to” these systems, so decide which data you want to work with).

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- 7. Decide on at least some specifications for an easy-to-use web-based (accessible 24/7) portal where suppliers could enter chemical, ingredient, raw material and/or BOM information – usually a portal with a compliance database to screen data against regulations and global zip codes. At least know loosely what your specs would be if you were to go the software route, because those specs will help you design your own program either way

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- 8. Find, update and freshen records about product and part ingredients for measuring and communicating corporate-wide progress.

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9. Design a program that collects data on tomorrow’s chemicals-of- concern as well as collecting data on known toxics

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10. Verify supplier compliance equally with all suppliers (don’t play favourites): data integrity depends on consistency, data integrity itself benefits both you and your suppliers.

*Do not* impose too much restriction on suppliers right away – asking for too much too soon can cause unintended consequences, such as “pushing” or “hiding” the undesirable chemical back into the supply chain, only to have it pop up later in a context beyond your control. Instead, an automated, gently tiered data gathering program is recommended. This will avoid overwhelming supplier-partners with demands they cannot meet. Again, think “alliance,” not “compliance.”

# Communicating With Customers

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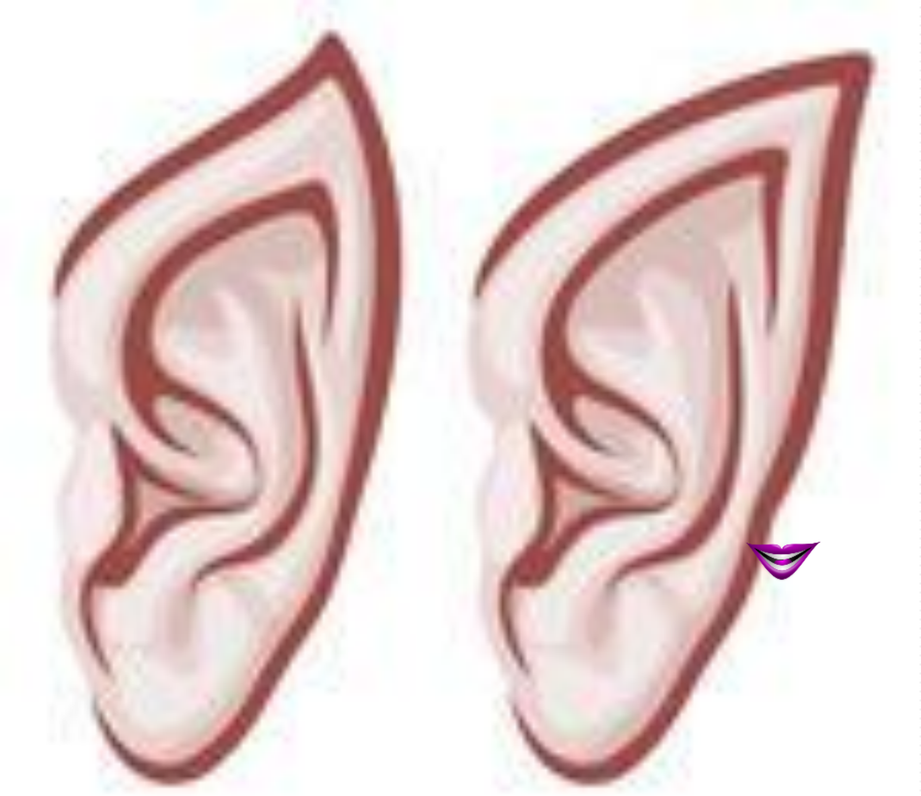
- We all know what happened to the *Titanic*. Clearer communications could have prevented the tragedy and the loss of more than 1,500 lives. Communications plays just as important a role in your careers. When asked to name the top three skills they believed their subordinates need, 70 percent of the readers of *business* magazines listed communications as one of them.
- Here are some tips on how you can communicate more effectively with people at work, be they customers, co-workers, subordinates, or superiors.

## #1: Beware of interrupting

- *Titanic* wireless operator Jack Phillips interrupted a wireless message from a nearby ship, telling them to shut up. In doing so, he prevented that ship from sending *Titanic* an iceberg warning.
- Be careful about interrupting others, particularly your customers. They'll be especially upset if, while they're explaining a problem, you interrupt them and start offering a solution. If you feel you *have* to interrupt, at least cut to the chase and tell the other person what you think his or her main idea was. That way, the other person at least can confirm or correct you, and in either case save time.

## #2: Listen actively

- Did you ever get the feeling, when talking to someone, that you were really talking to a wall? The person may have heard you but gave no indication of it at all. Avoid doing the same thing. When communicating with others, it's just as important that people be*aware* that you're listening as it is that you're actually listening. For that reason, be involved with and react to what the other person is saying, either via a nod, or an "I see," or a paraphrase of the other person's statements. You'll strengthen your own understanding and make a better impression.



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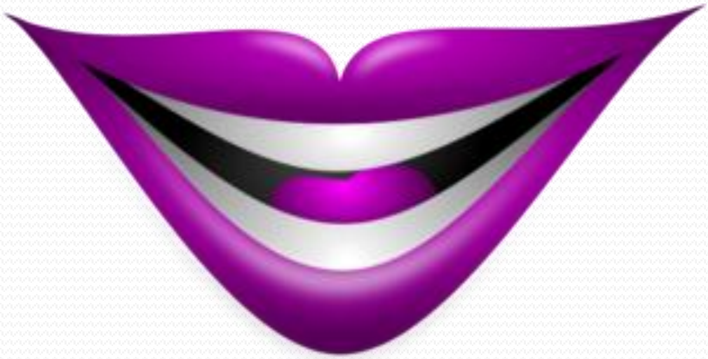

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# Use them in that ratio

# #3: Avoid negative questions

- Suppose you say to a customer, "You don't have Word installed?" and he answers "Yes." What does he mean? Yes, you're right, Word is not installed? Or yes, he DOES have Word installed?
- Asking a negative question creates confusion. It's clearer if you phrase the question positively (e.g., "Do you have Word installed?") or ask an open-ended question ("What applications do you have installed?"). If you *must* use the negative, try a question such as "Am I correct that you don't have Word installed?"

## #4: Be sensitive to differences in technical knowledge

- Chances are, your customers have less technical knowledge than you do. Be careful, therefore, when explaining things to them. If you use acronyms, be sure you identify what the acronym means. The same acronym can mean different things, even in an IT context (for example, ASP can refer to "application service provider" or "active server page"). Be careful that you don't make two opposite mistakes: either talking over their head or talking down to them. Keep your eyes on customers when you talk to them and be alert to cues indicating that they don't understand. Ask them whether they understand what you're saying, if necessary.

# #5: Use analogies to explain technical concepts

- A good way to explain a technical idea is to use an analogy. Though they have limitations, analogies are helpful in explaining an unfamiliar idea in terms of a familiar one. One of the best analogies I ever heard compared a firewall to a bank teller. When you enter a bank, you don't just go into the vault and get your money. Instead, you go to a window, where the teller verifies your identity and determines that you have enough money. The teller goes to the vault, brings it back to the window, gives it to you, and then you leave.

# #6: Use positive instead of negative statements

- Your customers are more interested in your capabilities than in your limitations. In other words, they're interested in what you *can* do, rather than what you *can't* do. The way you say things to them influences how they perceive you and your department. You, as an IT department or individual, can be seen as a roadblock or you can be seen as a partner. So, for example, instead of saying, "I can't help you unless you log off," consider saying, "Please log off so that I can help you." Your statements often will be easier to understand as well.
- Here's another reason to avoid negative statements. Have you ever experienced gaps of silence in your telephone calls, where the conversation breaks up? Usually it happens when using a cell or a VoIP telephone. If the gap occurs as you're saying "not," your recipient could get the opposite message from what you intended

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## #7: Be careful of misinterpreted words and phrases

- Sometimes we say something with innocent intent, but the other person misinterprets it. We mean to say one thing, but our pronunciation or inflection causes us to convey something else. For example, in Chinese, the sound "ma" said in a high level tone means "mother in law." However, said in a falling and rising tone, it means "horse.“

- Be especially careful of the word "you." Overusing this word can make the person you're talking to feel defensive or threatened. Instead of saying, "You need to speak louder," try saying, "I'm having trouble hearing." Another issue involves the dual meaning of "you." Unlike other languages, English uses the same word to refer to an actual person (for example, the person you're talking to) as well as to a hypothetical person. Suppose you said to someone, "You never know what's going to happen next," and meant to equate "you" with "people in general." The other person might think you're referring to him or her specifically and take offense. A better alternative might be, "It's really unpredictable here.“

- If someone is upset, one of the worst things to say is "calm down." It might work one half of one percent of the time, but generally all it does is make things worse.
- In general, think before you speak. I'm not saying you always have to be polite or diplomatic. Sometimes you do need to (figuratively, of course) beat people up. However, do consider the alternatives before speaking. As the proverb goes, "He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity."

- **#8: Remember that technical problems involve emotional reactions**
- When customers have a technical problem (for example, they're having trouble printing), keep in mind that they'll almost always have an emotional reaction as well. Those emotions can range from simple annoyance to outright panic, depending on the importance of the document and the time element involved. I'm not saying you have to be Dr. Phil, but it's important to acknowledge and recognize these emotional reactions. If all you do is solve the technical problem and walk away, chances are the customer will still be upset.
- In these cases, simply saying something like, "Pain in the neck, isn't it?" or "I hate when that happens to me" can help the customer feel better about the situation and possibly feel more positive about you.

## #9: Anticipate customer objections and questions

- In his book *The Art of War*, the ancient Chinese author and strategist Sun Tzu said, "If you know the enemy and you know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles." Apply this principle when communicating with customers. In particular, try to anticipate the objections your customers will have to your message and address those objections.
- For example, suppose you're sending out a directive regarding the downloading and application of Windows updates. Suppose further that you have customers who know enough to be dangerous. Such a customer might think, "Well, I'm current in my virus definitions, so this update is unnecessary for me." Your communications with such a customer will be more effective if you anticipate and address that issue. Consider, therefore, a sentence such as, "This Windows update is necessary even if your virus definitions are current."

## #10: Keep the customer informed

- The area where I live, has a large agricultural presence, in particular involving the production of mushrooms. While they are growing, mushrooms are kept in a dark building and are covered with fertilizer.
- Your customers will become upset if you treat them the same way. Keep them informed of developments involving them, particularly with regard to technical problems and outages. In particular, keep them apprised even if nothing is going on. For example, let them know you've contacted the vendor but still haven't heard anything back. No news is still news.
- If a customer leaves you a request via voicemail or e-mail, let the customer know you received it, even if you are still in the process of handling it. Doing so gives the customer one less matter to worry about.
- When a problem is resolved, let the customer know that, too. Nothing is more frustrating to customers than finding out that they could have been working sooner if they had only known.

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