

# Guide to Managing Workplace Relationships



Boost productivity and protect your reputation by delivering clear, positive and actionable messages. This guide will help you become a more confident and respected communicator.

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## Communication Tips That Protect Reputation

Inconsiderate communication can prevent you from reaching your career goals. The most trusted and respected leaders always speak favorably about themselves and others. Here's how to keep your reputation spotless.

**Never bad mouth an employee or colleague:** There's no such thing as "off the record." Cast everyone in as favorable a light as possible. You'll demonstrate diplomacy and integrity. Plus, you will encourage similar behavior, which promotes a healthier, more productive workplace.

**Speak the truth, but do it considerately and objectively.** There are always two sides to the story. If you omit your opponent's point of view, you make him or her the underdog which could damage your credibility. Listeners almost always align their sympathies with an underdog.

**Know how to accept a compliment.** Simply say, "Thank you. I appreciate the compliment."

**Speak in sound bites.** Stay high level when forced to comment on something you're unsure about. Stick to key business themes: productivity, engagement, quality and profit. Make clear statements that link the topic at hand to desired outcomes.

**Don't say anything that would damage a person's morale or self-worth.** Always assume the person you're talking about is in the conversation with you or that they will hear you. That way you'll naturally be more diplomatic. So, a comment such as "He's completely incompetent" becomes "I have concerns about his performance."

**Don't beat yourself up.** If you fall short of your target, deliver the bad news to your worst critic — you — in the best possible way. Tell yourself that it's harder to set a new goal and stick with it than it is to achieve the original challenge.

**Think twice about slashing prices.** When a client fails to jump at an offer, we immediately assume it's because of cost. A sheepish note from you about other, more affordable options won't enhance your credibility. It diminishes it. If you call your value into question, why shouldn't your client?

## Responding to Criticism and Negativity

As a rising professional, you may be confronted by colleagues who are determined to block your path or break your spirit. When confronted by negativity and criticism, avoid retaliating with the same style of language. My challenge to you – and myself – is to mindfully pursue the high road.



Living honorably in these mean-spirited times isn't easy, but it's worth the effort. Positive and people-focused leaders are valued – even if their business unit is struggling – because they possess the soft skills needed to develop teams, manage change and boost productivity.

Here's how to lead with integrity, regardless of the situation.

### If someone discredits or condemns you ...

- **Refuse to engage in mean-spirited hate talk.** Responding to slurs with more slurs can only result in an ugly confrontation.
- **Offer a disarming comeback.** Have a handful of “magical phrases” in your hip pocket, ready to go. Savvy professionals use this image-saving tactic to exude confidence under pressure. When the accusations fly, calmly reply, “I wouldn't say that,” “Here's what I can tell you” or “Not exactly; let me explain”
- **Stop engaging.** Never give anyone permission to mistreat you. If the insults continue, walk away, get off the call or end the email chain as quickly as possible. By disengaging from an out-of-control situation, you demonstrate professionalism and self-respect. Simply say, “Thanks for sharing your insights with me,” and walk away.
- **Mentally flip their slight into an accolade.** In other words, take what was said and translate it into a decisively positive thought. So, if they say you're a loser, tell yourself you just won an Olympic gold medal.
- **Above all, stay focused on the positive.** Save your energy for the things in your life and business that deserve attention.

## If someone always interrupts you ...

- **Be diplomatic, but hold your ground.** Say, "Please make your point when I've finished mine."

## If someone is taking credit for your work ...

- **Speak up, but keep emotions out of it.** Stick to the facts. Say, "Perhaps you're unaware of my role in . . . "
- **Clarify your role.** Some people have trouble articulating their point of view, so they'll repeat yours instead. When a copycat comment echoes in your ears, rather than say, "I just said that," try this: "Thanks for affirming my position."

