

Practical Guidelines for Communicating Ethically at Work

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Guest Post by Author, Coach, Career/Professional Development Expert, Dr. Laura Hills, President, Blue Pencil Institute

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Practicing ethical communication at work isn't always easy. Often, you'll find it easier to say nothing rather than to tell the truth. However, ethical communication means being truthful and upfront and saying what needs to be said, even when that's difficult. Fabricating false information is clearly unethical, but so, too, is exaggerating or omitting important information that others need to know.

Ethical communication expresses care and respect for others. Everyone in your workplace deserves to be respected, regardless of the individual's job, socioeconomic status, gender, race, or age. Communicating ethically means that you speak, write, and behave in ways that demonstrate that respect. It also means that you don't tolerate communication from others that degrades individuals and humanity through the expression of intolerance and hatred – even if that communication is intended to be humorous.

Career professionals who practice ethical communication also support others as they share information, opinions, and feelings. A person who communicates ethically supports diversity of perspective and freedom of expression in the workplace. He or she believes wholeheartedly that unethical communication threatens the well-being of others and the integrity of all communication. Therefore, an ethical communicator is a thoughtful listener who keeps an open mind.

Badmouthing or gossiping about your employer or colleagues is unethical communication. Even after work hours, you need to be very careful about what you say about your employer, colleagues, and customers, and to whom. Avoid negative communication about your workplace in a public place where your conversation may be overheard. The most ethical behavior is to keep your thoughts to yourself and to address important matters directly with the individuals involved, at appropriate times, in an appropriate place, and in appropriate ways.

Finally, a career professional who communicates ethically

maintains confidentiality. Once you've agreed to work in your profession or your place of business, you've also agreed to abide by certain policies and procedures for maintaining confidentiality. Breaching these rules, except with prior and appropriate permission and under very special circumstances, is unethical communication that carries with it severe consequences. You have an ethical duty not only to keep things confidential by not sharing them wrongfully, but also, to safeguard confidentiality by making sure you're not overheard and by keeping documents from wandering eyes. Be careful when handling confidential documents or computer files to ensure that others without need don't have access to the information. Close doors, keep your voice low, and do whatever else you must do to ensure confidentiality.



Dr. Laura Hills is an author, speaker, trainer, and coach who specializes in personal and professional development for career professionals.

She is the president of Blue Pencil Institute, www.bluepencilinstitute.com.

Join her mailing list for updates about her latest books, articles, and programs at: <http://eepurl.com/0wd55>.

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Enough? Almost! If you are in Toronto, I hope you will join me for the following events. If you are in London and NYC...stay tuned, coming to you later this year!

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