

Communication Skills for District Governors

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Course Overview

This course presents four modules designed to support your success when communicating with others.

- Course Overview
- Communication Process
- Follow-up Process
- Communication Flows

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Identify components of the communication process.
- Understand the importance of following up once information is sent and/or received.
- Use communication flows when collaborating with Lion leaders.

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Module 1: Course Overview

Before we begin our study, let's examine the definition of communication.

What is Communication?

“A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.” ~ Merriam-Webster

We Communicate with Lions for Many Reasons

- Perhaps there's a need to seek feedback from the council chairperson.
- Maybe questions must be answered in order to develop a new community service project.

Regardless of the need, communication is a two-way process that involves sending and receiving information.

When we communicate, we are simply transferring information from one place to another. This can be accomplished through correspondence, telephone calls or meetings. Read the following four examples of how information is transferred.

Example 1 – Written Communication:

- Sending correspondence to others involves written communication such as email, letters or postcards.
- As a best practice, always reread your message to check for grammar and misused words before sending to others.

Example 2 - Telephone Communication:

- Transferring information via the telephone involves oral conversations to be carried on between you and others. Speak clearly, listen carefully and ask questions to clarify any uncertainties.

Example 3 - Spoken Communication to Groups:

- Remain confident when speaking to a group of people to ensure your message is clear and easy to understand. Minimize filler words such as “um” or “like” to avoid distractions from the true meaning of your message.

Example 4 - One-on-One Communication:

- When communicating during one-on-one conversations, listen intently and concentrate on what is being communicated. Listen to understand, rather than to reply.

Active Listening

Communication also requires active listening. Most people believe that hearing and listening are the same; however, they have separate meanings.

Hearing is acknowledging that there is a message, while listening requires concentration on the speaker's words during a conversation.

Listening is an important factor in effective communication that allows you to:

- Understand what is being conveyed.
- Absorb information you receive.
- Provide feedback to the speaker(s).

For more information regarding effective listening, please visit the Lions Learning Center and search for the Effective Listening course.

As district governor, communicating effectively can help reduce conflict, build trust and improve productivity with all Lions.

Practice Conversations

Let's review two versions of the same conversation. The first conversation is vague, providing minimal information, while the second conversation is clear and concise, offering supporting details.

As you review the first conversation, think of clarifying questions you may have such as:

- Was the message clear?
- What important details are missing from the conversation?

Asking clarifying questions can help you understand the purpose of what is being communicated.

The first conversation involves 3 speakers: Tom, Peter and Dan

Speaker 1 (Tom): "Good morning, Peter and Dan. Did you receive the information about Linda?"

Speaker 2 (Peter): "Which Linda are you referencing? There are over 20 people named Linda in our organization."

Speaker 3 (Dan): "What happened to Linda? Did she resign?"

The conversation ends.

What is missing from Tom's conversation with Peter and Dan?

Take a moment to think about 1 or 2 details Tom should include to make his conversation clearer.

Tom's message was unclear because he did not include details regarding the following questions:

- Who is being referenced?
- What is the information about?
- Where did the information come from?
- When was the information sent?
- Why was the message sent?

Who, what, when, where and why are known as the 5Ws of communication. These 5 questions are used to gather basic information about a subject matter.

The 5Ws are discussed in greater detail in the next module entitled "Communication Process."

Inadequate details can lead to poor communication causing:

- Lack of unity among Lions.
- High membership turnover.
- Potential conflict with team members.

Now let's review a clearer conversation between Tom, Peter and Dan.

Speaker 1 (Tom): "Good morning, Peter and Dan. Did you receive the email on January 1st from our Club President Jon George regarding Linda Smith's community service fair idea?"

Speaker 2 (Peter): "Yes, I received the club president's email, and I think Lion Linda's community service fair idea is excellent."

Speaker 3 (Dan): "I also received the email and agree the fair is a great idea."

The conversation ends

In the second conversation, Tom did a better job summarizing the information about Linda Smith's community service idea to Peter and Dan.

He provided Linda's last name, eliminating confusion of which Linda he was referencing. Tom also provided the sender's name and date the email was sent, which made his message clearer.

Peter and Dan also demonstrated their listening skills by:

- Repeating key points from Tom's message.
- Giving Tom their undivided attention.
- These tips helped Peter and Dan acknowledge their own understanding of Tom's message.

“Communication is a skill that you can learn. It’s like riding a bicycle or typing. If you’re willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life.” ~ Brian Tracy

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Module 1 Summary

Many people struggle to communicate effectively. Their thoughts and ideas do not always reflect the intended meaning of their message, which can lead to misunderstanding, confusion and frustration.

Mastering communication skills may take some time; however, it’s never too late to improve them!

The next module entitled “Communication Process” will focus on sending and receiving messages.

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Module 2: Communication Process Introduction

In module 1, we discovered that communication is a two-way process that involves sending and receiving information.

When there are two or more people exchanging information, they are engaging in what’s known as the communication process.

The communication process includes two main components:

1. Sending Information
2. Receiving Information

Think of the communication process as steps taken to effectively communicate with others. Simply put, communication is successful when the sender and receiver have an understanding of the information exchanged. If the flow of information is blocked, the communication fails.

This module will introduce a case study where Club President Jon has asked Tom to assist him with communicating Lion Linda’s project idea to the club members. We will use the communication process to help Tom with this task.

Review of Tom's Conversation

Let's review Tom's original conversation with Peter and Dan from module 1.

Speaker 1 (Tom): "Good morning, Peter and Dan. Did you receive the email on January 1st from our Club President Jon George regarding Linda Smith's community service fair idea?"

Speaker 2 (Peter): "Yes, I received the club president's email, and I think Lion Linda's community service fair idea is excellent."

Speaker 3 (Dan): "I also received the email and agree the fair is a great idea."

The conversation ends.

Shortly after the conversation with Peter and Dan, Tom was approached by the club president requesting his assistance with communicating Lion Linda's project idea to the club members.

Here's the conversation between President Jon and Tom discussing the details of the project.

President Jon: "Hi Tom, I appreciate your assistance with communicating Lion Linda's project idea to our club members."

Tom: "I recall the discussion about the community service project during our last club meeting in April and I'm happy to assist."

President Jon: "I'm very excited about the project because it gives us an opportunity to raise awareness of how we serve our community."

Tom: "I agree. Do you know the details of the event?"

President Jon: "Yes. The community fair will be held in the parking lot at our club's main office, on Saturday, July 2nd, from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Food, games and prizes will be available to all participants. Information regarding our service work will also be distributed to those who may be interested in joining Lions clubs. I would like to inform our 85 club members about the event in hopes they will assist. Can you draft a communication by the end of this week for my review?"

Tom: "Yes, President Jon, I will be happy to draft a communication for your review. The communication will be ready by the end of the week."

The conversation between President Jon and Tom ends.

Tom realizes that before embarking on this task, he must have a clear understanding of the communication process, which will help him convey Lion Linda's project idea to the club members.

Communication Process

Let's review the communication process. The communication process contains three components: The Sender, The Message and The Recipient.

The Sender is the person who has information they wish to share with others, such as an important date change, an idea or an announcement. The sender must also establish how the message will be sent such as via correspondence, phone call or a meeting.

The Message is the information that the sender wants to convey. For example, you would like to notify the council chairperson of a new community service project in your district. Be clear about the purpose and importance of the message. Also, address pertinent dates and the advantages of how this could affect clubs within the district.

The Recipient is the individual or individuals who receive the sender's information. For example, you received a communication regarding the approved community service project in your district. Did you understand the message? Do you have additional questions such as "how will this information affect my district?"

After reviewing the communication process, Tom is ready to embark on his task; however, he must first determine the best method to communicate this information to 85 club members.

How will Tom communicate this information to 85 club members? In module 1, we examined how information can be transferred to others. Let's take a moment to review how information can be transferred:

Written communication involves sending correspondence to others such as email, letters or postcards.

Telephone communication involves transferring information via the telephone where conversations are conducted between you and others.

Spoken communication involves speaking to others in a group setting.

One on one communication involves two people exchanging information while also practicing their listening skills.

If you answered that Tom should use the written communication approach, you are correct!

Sending an email would be more practical in this scenario as it provides a way to instantaneously distribute information to many individuals.

Revisit the 5Ws

Now that Tom has established how the communication will be sent, he will begin drafting the message. But first, he should take a few moments to arrange his thoughts logically and think about the 5Ws discussed in module 1: who, what, when, where and why.

The 5Ws are questions used that will help Tom gather basic information about the message he should write.

- Who
 - The “who” is the description of the person or persons being referenced in the message.
 - For example, Lion Linda Smith’s community service project will be announced in President Jon’s email message to all club members.
- What
 - The “what” are the details of the message.
 - For example, Lion Linda’s project involves planning a community fair where there will be food, games and prizes for all who attend. In addition, information regarding Lions clubs will be distributed to those who may be interested in community service work.
- Where
 - The “where” is the description of the location.
 - For example, the fair will take place in the club’s parking lot.
- When
 - The “when” is the date and time of the event.
 - For example, the fair will take place on Saturday, July 2nd from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.
- Why
 - The “why” is an explanation of the event occurring.
 - For example, Lion Linda’s project idea will bring awareness to the community of how Lions serve others.

Draft Message

Tom is excited about the communication process! He understands that using the 5Ws is a simple approach to brainstorm for ideas before writing a message.

Let’s read the following draft communication that Tom will present to President Jon for his review:

Greetings Lion Members,

During our last meeting in April, Lion Linda Smith presented an exciting opportunity for us to become better acquainted with the families in this community. The opportunity involves organizing a fair where food, games and prizes would be available to all participants. We will also distribute information regarding Lions clubs for those interested in our service work.

The f-a-r-e will take place at c-o-r-p-r-a-t-e headquarters on S-a-t-a-r-d-a-y, July 2nd from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Our goal is to raise awareness about Lions, and how we serve our communities.

I am asking for everyone's support and participation on Saturday, July 2nd.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

Club President Jon George

The end of the draft message.

Tom's draft message is a great start with using the 5Ws; however, the following sections will need to be addressed:

Misused homophone word (f-a-r-e), misspelled words (c-o-r-p-r-a-t-e and S-a-t-a-r-d-a-y) as well as missing details about the event.

As we continue our studies of communication, we will review and correct these sections to ensure President Jon's message is accurately structured.

So far, we've examined two important components of the communication process:

1. The Sender
2. The Message

Let's wrap up this module with the third component of the communication process which is receiving information.

Receiving Information

The communication process begins with the sender; however, for communication to be effective, information must be accepted and understood by the receiver.

When President Jon sends an email message regarding Lion Linda's community service project, it will be received by 85 club members.

Here are tips to follow once you receive information from others:

1. Give your full attention: Minimize distractions that may interfere with reading information from others. For example, while reading President Jon’s email message regarding Lion Linda’s project idea, avoid phone calls, text messages and social interactions, which may interfere with your focus and concentration.
2. Check your understanding: Reread messages and ask questions for clarification. For example, after rereading President Jon’s email message regarding Lion Linda’s project idea, consider questions such as:
 - Why is this message important?
 - How will it affect the club?

Remember, asking clarifying questions helps eliminate misunderstandings.

3. Keep an open mind: Consider the viewpoints of others regarding new ideas, experiences and projects. For example, after reading President Jon’s email message regarding Lion Linda’s project idea, think about the benefits the club would gain from this experience.

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Module 2: Summary

We have learned that successful communication involves sending, receiving and understanding information; however, how can you ensure your communication was understood?

The next module entitled “Follow-up Process” will focus on how to ensure communications are understood by the intended audience.

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Module 3: Follow up Process Introduction

In module 2, we learned that successful communication involves sending, receiving and understanding information; however, how do you know if information you send is really understood by others?

The follow-up process allows:

- The recipient to clarify their understanding of information they receive.
- The sender to confirm if information was understood by their intended audience.

If you recall from module 2, per President Jon’s request, Tom drafted an email communication to 85 club members announcing Lion Linda’s project idea. Let’s quickly review Tom’s draft message:

Greetings Lion Members,

During our last meeting in April, Lion Linda Smith presented an exciting opportunity for us to become better acquainted with the families in this community. The opportunity involves organizing a fair where food, games and prizes would be available to all participants. We will also distribute information regarding Lions clubs for those interested in our service work.

The f-a-r-e will take place at c-o-r-p-r-a-t-e headquarters on S-a-t-a-r-d-a-y, July 2nd from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Our goal is to raise awareness about Lions, and how we serve our communities.

I am asking for everyone’s support and participation on Saturday, July 2nd.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

Club President Jon George

The end of the draft message.

Now that you’ve reviewed Tom’s draft message, ask yourself the following questions:

- Was the message clear?
- Are there misspelled words?
- Do I know the exact location of the event?
- Am I required to attend the event from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.?

Defining Your Understanding of Information Received

Let’s explore techniques club members can use to define their understanding of President Jon’s message.

Read the following best practices to examine how club members (also known as recipients) can define their understanding of President Jon’s message.

1. Admit if you are unsure about the information you receive. For example, consider stating the following:
 - a. “President Jon, I am unclear about paragraph two of the email communication you sent regarding the July 2nd event. Are you stating that club members should attend the event from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.? I can only attend from 10 a.m. to noon. Please clarify this information.”

2. Ask questions to avoid misinterpretations or confusion. For example, consider stating the following:
 - a. “President Jon, are you expecting all members to attend the fair on July 2nd? I will be traveling on this day.”
3. Avoid being judgmental and focus on the content of the information. The following is an example of criticizing others:
 - a. “This is the second community service idea from Lion Linda.” Be open-minded to new ideas and focus on the results.
4. Repeat and summarize the information you receive in your own words to demonstrate your understanding. For example, consider stating the following:
 - a. “I understand information regarding Lions clubs will be distributed at the fair, and I will be happy to assist.”

Clarification of information you receive is very important. Asking questions or paraphrasing will help confirm your understanding of the sender’s message.

Clarifying your understanding also reassures the sender that you comprehend the information they wish to convey.

The assurance of President Jon’s communication being understood begins with the structure of the message. Let’s explore a writing checklist President Jon can use to ensure his message is correctly structured prior to sending. Click [here](#) if you wish to review Tom’s draft message.

Writing Checklist for Senders

Read each section below to explore how President Jon can improve the structure of his message.

1. The communication should be clear. The purpose of the communication should be clear and easily understood by the audience.
2. The communication should be complete, including all relevant information to eliminate misinterpretation and improve comprehension.
3. The communication should be concise, short and precise.
4. The communication should be accurate with no spelling, punctuation or grammar mistakes.

Utilizing the writing checklist will improve President Jon’s email communication and increase the chance that his message will be understood by the club members. Let’s review improvements made to President Jon’s email.

Communication Improvements Made to President Jon's Message

President Jon's Final Email Message:

Greetings Lions,

During our last club meeting in April, Lion Linda Smith presented an exciting opportunity for us to become better acquainted with individuals in this community. The opportunity involves organizing a fair where food, games and prizes would be available to all participants. We will also distribute information regarding Lions clubs for those interested in our service work.

The fair will take place on Saturday, July 2nd from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. at 300 W. 22nd Street, Oak Brook, Illinois. Tents and booths will be assembled in the west parking lot.

Our goal is to raise awareness about Lions, and how we serve our communities.

If you are available on Saturday, July 2nd, please attend the event during a time that's convenient for you and your family. Volunteers are also needed on Friday, July 1st from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. to help assemble tables, chairs and tents. Additionally, there will be sign-up sheets for those interested in facilitating the food, games and distribution of Lions clubs information. Please respond to this email by 5 p.m. on Monday, June 27th, indicating your interest with assisting at the fair.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time and support.

Kind regards,

Club President Jon George

Using the writing checklist improved President Jon's chances that his message will be understood by the club members. Let's review the changes that were made to his message:

- Adding the address of where the fair will take place improved the clarity of President Jon's message.
- President Jon's previous message lacked certain details regarding the club member's involvement. The message is now complete, eliminating misinterpretation and confusion.
- Changing the greeting to "Greetings Lions" sets the tone of President Jon's message, making it more Lion friendly.
- Correcting the spelling errors made President Jon's message accurate and precise.

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Module 3: Summary

The follow-up process helps recipients clarify their understanding of information they receive. The process also allows the sender to utilize best practices, ensuring their message will be understood by the intended parties.

Although there is no means for President Jon to confirm receipt of his message, he can ask club members to respond to his email by a specific date and time. This will acknowledge receipt of his message.

The last module entitled “Communication Flows” will examine how you collaborate with Lion leaders.

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Module 4: Communication Flows Introduction

Throughout this course, we have:

- Examined the value of effective communication.
- Identified the components of communication.
- Analyzed the follow-up process when information is sent and/or received.

We will now study how information can flow in various directions within the Lions Clubs organization.

What is a Communication Flow?

In module 1, we learned the importance of communicating with Lion leaders. For example, you may receive an email message from the zone chairperson asking for your input regarding a new district project. Or, perhaps the council chairperson schedules a conference call with all district governors to communicate new policies and procedures to share with others.

Regardless of the need, information can flow in various directions. In Lions Clubs International, the flow is based upon a structure used to convey information to Lion leaders at all levels. The structure also helps establish a communication path so information can be easily distributed to others.

Simply put, a key part of your role is managing the flow of communication among various Lion leaders such as cabinet members, region/zone chairpersons, club leaders or the council chairperson.

Within the Lions organization, there are 3 directions in which communication can flow. Read through each of the following to learn about each direction.

1. Downward: The downward flow provides direction, guiding messages downward to other Lions. For example, you may receive correspondence from the council chairperson asking you to share new best practices on membership programs with the clubs in your district.
2. Upward: The upward flow directs messages toward a higher level in the ranked structure. For example, zone chairpersons may send an email to their district governor recommending improvements to the district newsletter. This type of flow encourages collaboration with the district governor.
3. Lateral: The lateral flow corresponds with members on the same leadership level. For example, district governors should coordinate activities with district Global Action Team members. When used effectively, this type of flow creates unity and builds relationships among Lion leaders.

The Importance of Communication Structure

Imagine if there were no communication structure established in your club or district.

- How would new goals and policies be conveyed to clubs and districts?
- How would you encourage leadership development?

The flow of communication creates a bridge for Lion leaders in order to effectively convey information. Therefore, selecting the appropriate path may reduce confusion when communicating with others.

Whether you are collaborating with the council chairperson or with first and second vice district governors, effective communication improves efficiency and fosters good relationships with all Lions.

The following section offers guidelines to follow when communicating with Lions at any level.

Sending Information:

- When sending information such as email messages or other types of correspondence, make sure the message is accurate, specific and clear.
- Use the 5Ws to gather basic information before writing the message. Click [here](#) to review the 5Ws.
- Use writing techniques to ensure the message is correctly structured. Click [here](#) to review suggested writing techniques.
- Reread your message to check for grammar and spelling errors.

Receiving Information:

- When reading information such as email messages or other types of correspondence, ask yourself the following questions:
 - Do I understand the message?
 - How will this information affect my club or district?
- Asking questions will help clarify your understanding of the message while minimizing misinterpretations and confusion.

Communicating Orally:

- When communicating orally, speak clearly, listen carefully and concentrate on what is being conveyed. Listen to understand, rather than to reply.
 - Avoid using filler words such as “um” or “like.”
 - Ask questions to clarify your understanding.

Following Up:

- When sending and/or receiving information, the follow-up process allows you to:
 - Verify if messages you send will be understood by others. Remember, the assurance that messages will be understood begins with message structure. Click [here](#) to review writing techniques.
 - Clarify your understanding of messages you receive. Click [here](#) to review techniques that will help improve your comprehension of information you receive.

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Module 4: Summary

Congratulations! You have completed the Communication Skills course for District Governors. Throughout this course, we have studied powerful techniques that will improve your communication skills when sending, receiving and understanding information you obtain from Lion leaders.

For in-depth information regarding “Effective Listening” and “Public Speaking,” please visit the Lions Learning Center and search for these courses.

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Contact

You can continue your education through the Lions Learning Center, which offers a variety of online courses to assist members with leadership development. Screen reader versions of all the club officer courses are available.

To receive completion credit for this course, if you have problems navigating through this course, or if you have questions about the topics discussed in this course, please email us at elearning@lionsclubs.org.

End course.

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Additional Information: The 5Ws

The 5Ws are questions used that will help you gather basic information when composing a message.

- Who
 - The “who” is the description of the person or persons being referenced in a message.
- What
 - The “what” are the details of the message.
- Where
 - The “where” is the description of the location.
- When
 - The “when” is the date and time of an event.
- Why
 - The “why” is an explanation of the event occurring.

Writing Checklist for Senders

The following are suggested writing techniques to help improve the structure of your message:

1. The communication should be clear. The purpose of the communication should be short, simple and easily understood by the audience.
2. The communication should be complete, including all details to eliminate misinterpretation and improve comprehension.
3. The communication should be concise, short and precise.
4. The communication should be accurate with no spelling, punctuation or grammar mistakes.

Defining Your Understanding of Information Received

The following best practices are used to help define your understanding of information you receive from others:

1. Admit if you are unsure about the information you receive.
2. Ask questions to avoid misinterpretations or confusion.
3. Avoid being judgmental and focus on the content of the information.
4. Repeat and summarize the information you receive in your own words to demonstrate your understanding.

Clarification of information you receive is very important. Asking questions or paraphrasing will help confirm your understanding of the sender’s message. Clarifying your understanding also reassures the sender that you comprehend the information they wish to convey.

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