Texas Police Chiefs Association

New Supervisor #3737

1

Texas Police Chiefs Association

Unit 2 Bridging Gaps: Communication and Conflict Resolution for New Leaders

2

Lesson Objectives for Unit 2 Bridging Gaps: Communication and Conflict Resolution for New Leaders

Upon successful completion of the course the student will be able to:

(2.1) Identify effective communication skills.
(2.2) Identify types of ineffective communication styles.
(2.3) Discuss consequences of ineffective communication.
(2.4) Describe the five (5) conflict resolution styles.
(2.5) Identify mediation strategies to facilitate conflict resolution.

3

3



4

TASK FOCUSED

Which of these groups do I need to have a successful team?



All of them!!!!

ASSERTIVE

PASSIVE

PEOPLE FOCUSED

5

5

Know Your Audience

- Use Emotional Intelligence
  - Understand emotional dynamics in the room
  - Pause and assess: Is this the right time to give feedback? Is this officer receptive right now?
  - Example: After a stressful call, choose to debrief gently rather than correct in front of others.

6

6

Know Your Audience

- Ensure Understanding
  - Ask clarifying questions such as, *What's your understanding of this directive?*
  - Use plain language to explain tasks, especially with newer officers or civilian staff, not police jargon
  - For example, don't just say *I need that by the end of the shift*. Instead, say, I need *your supplement completed, uploaded, and logged into the case file by 1900 hours*.

7

7

Transparency Builds Credibility

- Align efforts and goals, measure what you expect
- Share the *why* behind new policies or operational changes
- Inspire Trust
  - Be honest when you don't have all the answers
  - Follow up when you say you will
  - Admit when you make a mistake, it encourages openness
- Stay focused on the Big Picture.

8

8

Be Assertive, Not Aggressive

- Assertive communication means being clear and direct, while still being respectful and professional
- This is the most effective style for supervisors
- Unlike passive (indirect) or aggressive (hostile) styles, assertive communication maintains both authority and approachability.

9

9

Be Assertive, Not Aggressive

- Use clear, concise, professional language
  - Eliminate vague language like *maybe, sort of*, or *if you could*.
  - Use *I statements,* not *You* statements, to take ownership and prevent defensiveness
  - Don't say, *You always get this wrong.* Say, *I need this report completed correctly before it's turned in.*

10

10

Be Assertive, Not Aggressive

- Emphasize accuracy
  - Avoid exaggerations or generalizations
  - Speak to what you know, not what you assume
- Encourage two-way communication
  - Be patient and open-minded
  - Team members may ask questions or express needs that are valid and necessary.

11

11

One classic study by Albert Merhabian and M. Weiner concludes that 93% of all communication is nonverbal. In their analysis, a message is comprised of the following:



12

12

Non-Verbal Cues

- Open body language signals confidence and respect
  - Uncrossed arms
  - Relaxed posture
  - Leaning slightly forward when listening
  - Maintaining comfortable eye contact
  - Nodding or small gestures that show attentiveness.



13

Non-Verbal Cues

- Avoid
  - Eye-rolling
  - Looking away while someone speaks
  - Turning your body away from the speaker
  - Eliminate distractions
  - Being present and focused shows respect and improves communication quality.



14

Best Practices

- Silence phones, radios, or other devices during important conversations
  - Don't check your watch or laptop
  - Avoid side conversations or multitasking
  - Practice active listening. It is one of the most underrated tools of effective supervisors
  - It prevents conflict, improves problem-solving, and shows that you value your team.



15

Best Practices

- Avoid Interrupting
  - Let the speaker finish before forming your response
  - Use pauses to reflect rather than jumping in
- Use Reflective Listening
  - Paraphrase back key points: *So what I hear you saying is...*
  - Confirm understanding before responding
- Respond to what they actually said, not what you assume they meant.

16

16

Best Practices

- Prevent reactive responses
  - Listen to understand
  - Suspend judgment of what they are saying
  - Don't plan your response while the other person is still talking
  - Hear the full story
  - Avoid cutting someone off or filling in the gap
  - Let each person speak before making a conclusion.

17

17

Best Practices

- Stay neutral and professional
  - Even if you feel attacked, avoid defensiveness
  - Use facts, empathy, and professionalism to maintain control of the conversation.



1

18

Four Ineffective Styles of Communication

Competitive/Combative Communication

- Defending or promoting one's own perspective rather than understanding others
- The key characteristics are
  - Listening only to find flaws or rebut what someone else has said
  - Interrupting others or dominating the conversational exchange
  - Shifting the conversation from dialogue to debate.

19

19

Four Ineffective Styles of Communication

Competitive/Combative Communication

- The consequences of using this style are
  - Others shut down, refuse to talk, or stop offering input
  - Results in escalation of minor disagreements into major conflicts
  - Results in damaged working relationships and missed opportunities for collaboration.

20

20

Four Ineffective Styles of Communication

Passive Communication

- Prioritizes avoiding conflict over expressing honest thoughts, needs, or feedback
- The characteristics of this style of communication are
  - Saying *It's fine* or *Whatever you think* to avoid disagreement
  - Failing to voice concerns or correct misunderstandings
  - Struggling to set or enforce boundaries because of fear of confrontation.

21

21

Four Ineffective Styles of Communication

Passive Communication

- The consequences of using this style are
  - Team members feel unsupported or confused about the conversation
  - Resentment will build toward the supervisor over time
  - Mistakes or inefficiencies will continue due to a lack of clarity or holding people accountable.



22

Four Ineffective Styles of Communication

Aggressive Communication

- The speaker dominates interactions through volume, criticism, or control
- The speaker expresses their needs with little regard for others on the team
- The key characteristics of the style of communication are
  - Yelling or raising their voice to assert control
  - Blaming, belittling, or using harsh language
  - Interrupting others or simply talking over everyone else.



23

Four Ineffective Styles of Communication

Aggressive Communication

- The consequences of this style of communication are that it
  - Creates fear and/or tension in the workplace
  - Lowers morale and discourages upward communication because people have a fear of upsetting the boss
  - Reinforces power imbalance and resentment. In other words, it tells employees that neither they nor their opinions are valued.



24

Four Ineffective Styles of Communication

Passive-Aggressive Communication

- Communication that expresses anger or dissatisfaction indirectly so that the speaker avoids confrontation while still acting out
- The key characteristics of this style of communication are
  - Sarcastic comments or jokes masking the speaker's frustration
  - Intentional inefficiency or missed deadlines as a form of resistance
  - Withholding information that should have been shared or "*forgetting*" to complete tasks.

25

25

Four Ineffective Styles of Communication

Passive-Aggressive Communication

- The consequences of this style of communication are that it
  - Breaks down trust among team members
  - Confuses and/or frustrates coworkers
  - Issues remain unresolved because of how they are being openly discussed, which then leads to further dysfunction.

26

26

Consequences of Ineffective Communication

- Ineffective communication
  - Leads to confusion about roles, responsibilities, and expectations
  - Leads to work suffering because the expectations are not clear
  - Ultimately, this leads to inaction, finger-pointing, or duplication of efforts.
- The impact is
  - Makes it safer to do nothing than to do the wrong thing
  - Trust in leadership declines when expectations shift or are unclear.

27

27

Consequences of Ineffective Communication

Ineffective communication leads to loss of morale
- Employees disengage and attempt to get through the day without being noticed
- Supervisors develop a bunker mentality, meaning they also want to do as little as possible, which is evident to employees

The impact is that
- Team members stop volunteering ideas or participating in group discussions
- Low morale spreads, making the team less effective overall.

28

28

Consequences of Ineffective Communication

Ineffective communication leads to increased interpersonal conflict within the team
- When team members misunderstand
  - the tone of a message
  - the intent behind someone's actions
  - who is responsible for certain tasks
  - It creates unnecessary tension and conflict within the group
- When communication is unclear, incomplete, or poorly delivered, employees fill in the gaps with assumptions.

29

29

Consequences of Ineffective Communication

- Ineffective communication leads to failure to address performance or behavior issues
  - When feedback is avoided or watered down, employees don't know they're underperforming
  - Supervisors who fail to confront behavior or performance issues are viewed as weak, passive, or unwilling to lead
  - This leads to a loss of respect from their team members.

30

30

Consequences of Ineffective Communication

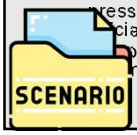
- Ineffective communication results in a breakdown in critical incident communication
- In a law enforcement environment, precision in communication is not optional; it is essential
- A single word, if misheard, misunderstood, or misused, can completely alter how a message is interpreted, potentially leading to serious consequences.

31

31

Consequences of Ineffective Communication

- Ineffective communication can damage the organization's reputation
  - If supervisors don't fully understand a situation, policy, or decision, they are not equipped to communicate it clearly to others
  - This can happen when:
    - Staff receive limited or conflicting information about an incident or policy change
    - Front-line employees are not informed of talking points or ress releases and may unknowingly contradict the cial message
    - pervisor makes a public statement based on nplete internal briefings, leading to misinformation.



32

32



33

33

Conflict Resolution Techniques

- Two Key Dimensions of Conflict Behavior
  - Assertiveness
    - How much you advocate for your own needs
    - The degree to which you stand up for your own interests or concerns during a conflict
  - Cooperativeness
    - How much you prioritize others' needs
    - The degree to which you are willing to work with others and prioritize their needs or concerns in order to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

34

34

Conflict Resolution Techniques

Competing (High Assertiveness, Low Cooperativeness)

- Pursues one's own goals at the expense of others; the goal is to win
- Used when quick decisions are needed or unpopular decisions must be made
- Can damage relationships and escalate tension
- Use sparingly, stay professional and transparent.

35

35

Conflict Resolution Techniques

Collaborating (High Assertiveness, High Cooperativeness)

- Works with others to find a solution that satisfies all parties
- Used when building trust, handling complex issues, or seeking long-term solutions
- It requires time, emotional intelligence, and trust
- Use when relationships and outcomes are equally important.

36

36

Conflict Resolution Techniques

Compromising (Moderate Assertiveness, Moderate Cooperativeness)

- Seeks a middle ground with mutual concessions
- Use this style when time is limited, or full collaboration is not feasible
- Solutions may be temporary or leave everyone only partially satisfied
- Use this for short-term resolution or when collaboration is stalled.



37

Conflict Resolution Techniques

Avoiding (Low Assertiveness, Low Cooperativeness)

- Delays or withdraws from addressing the conflict
- Use when emotions are high, the issue is minor, or more information is needed
- The challenge is that conflict may fester, or that this is viewed as evasiveness
- Use this strategically, not habitually, and be transparent about the postponement.



38

Conflict Resolution Techniques

Accommodating (Low Assertiveness, High Cooperativeness)

- Prioritizes the other party's needs over one's own
- Use when preserving relationships or goodwill is more important than the issue
- Can lead to resentment or being taken advantage of
- Use when making small concessions for the greater good or defusing low-stakes conflict.



39

Mediation

- A structured process where a neutral third party helps individuals in conflict discuss their concerns, perspectives, and desired outcomes
- Mediator does not impose solutions but guides the conversation to promote understanding, collaboration, and mutually agreeable solutions
- Goal is to create a safe environment where both parties can express themselves without fear of retaliation or judgment.

40

40

Purpose of Mediation

- Ensure disputes do not escalate by addressing conflicts early so small issues do not grow into larger problems
- Maintain team morale and cohesion by fostering trust, improving communication, and reinforcing a positive team culture where members feel heard and valued
- Focus on resolution, not punishment by emphasizing problem-solving and relationship repair.

41

41

Process of Mediation

- <u>Step 1: Set The Stage</u>
  - Location: Choose a private, neutral space
  - Seating: Sit in a triangle or circle formation rather than across a desk
  - Ground Rules: There are to be no interruptions while someone is speaking and maintain a respectful tone and body language. Speak from your own experience using "I" statements (e.g., "I felt…," not "You always…").
  - Set expectations., *This is not about blame but about moving forward.*

42

42

Process of Mediation

- Step 2: Facilitate Open Communication
  - Give each person equal time to speak
  - Avoid making judgments or offering solutions yet
  - Make eye contact, nod, lean slightly forward to signal attentiveness
  - Use phrases like:
    - *I hear you*
    - *That sounds frustrating*
    - *Thanks for explaining that.*

43

43

Process of Mediation

- Step 3: Identify Root Causes
  - Ask open-ended, non-accusatory questions
  - Redirect if participants fall into blaming or repeating old grievances
  - Ask clarifying questions
    - *What led to the issue*
    - *When did things start to feel off for you*
    - *What were you hoping would happen instead*
  - Focus on behaviors, not personalities.

44

44

Process of Mediation

- Step 4: Collaborative Problem-Solving
  - Refocus on team success, mission, and common ground
  - Avoid imposing solutions unless necessary; if possible, let them create solutions.
  - Reframe negative statements. Instead of, *He never helps with reports!*, say, *You'd like to feel the load is being shared. What would help with that?*
  - Encourage accountability. Ask what each one will do going forward to change things.

45

45

Process of Mediation

- Step 5: Follow-Up
  - Schedule a follow-up meeting (1–2 weeks later)
  - Continue to observe interactions for improvement or regression
  - Offer continued support
    - *How have things been going since our last meeting?*
    - *Is there anything you still need from me to support your success?*

46

46

Mediation Key Points

- Mediation is not about control, it's about guidance
- Supervisors should model neutrality, empathy, and problem-solving
- Mediation builds ownership, mutual respect, and trust, without formal discipline
- See Appendix E in your handouts.

47

47

Unit Review Questions

- List effective communication skills that were discussed in class.
- List ineffective communication styles.
- Name a consequence of ineffective communication and give an example of when it might occur.
- Identify at least two mediation strategies that were discussed in class.

48

48