

Communicating Up: How to Share What You Need

Introduction


Contributing to a positive workplace culture isn't just about team collaboration—it's also about **effectively communicating up** to leaders and decision-makers. Many professionals hesitate to express their needs, whether it's for resources, support, or career growth. This guide helps you **advocate for yourself with clarity, confidence, and alignment with business goals** while reinforcing a culture of **accountability and care** in your workplace.

Step 1: Reframe the Mindset – Communicating Up is Leadership

Many employees see "asking for what they need" as being a burden, but strong workplaces rely on leaders knowing what is required to support their people. **Communicating up is not complaining—it's leadership in action.**

 **Reflection:**

- What prevents me from asking for what I need?
- How can I shift my mindset from "asking for help" to "providing valuable insight for decision-makers"?

 **Key Takeaway:** You're not making a demand—you're ensuring leadership has the right information to make better decisions.

Step 2: Clarity First – Define What You Need & Why It Matters


Before communicating up, refine your request to ensure **clarity, relevance, and alignment with workplace priorities.**

Ask yourself:

- **What do I need?** Do you need more time, clearer expectations, leadership support, growth opportunities?
- **Why does this matter?** How does this impact the business, team performance, or long-term outcomes?
- **What are the potential solutions?** Can I offer a proposal instead of just identifying a problem? Can you state that you need support in seeing better solutions?

 **Action:** Write down your request in one clear sentence. Example:

- "To meet our project deadline effectively, I need clearer priority alignment on key tasks from leadership. I propose a 15-minute weekly check-in to ensure we stay on track."



 **Key Takeaway:** A well-defined request is more likely to be taken seriously and actioned.


Step 3: The Strategic Ask – Framing Your Message for Impact


Now that you know **what** you need, frame your message strategically to ensure it lands well with decision-makers:

- **✓ Lead with business relevance:** Start with how this affects performance, efficiency, or results.
- **✓ Use facts, not feelings:** Data-backed requests get more traction than emotional appeals. Also, by sorting through the data, you will find possible solutions to your problems – the emotional reaction to the situation can be a blockage for you. Breath. You've got this.
- **✓ Propose a solution, not just a problem:** Leaders are more receptive when a path forward is included. But if you can't see one, be real about that – Try *"I don't know all of the challenges the organisation is facing, I feel I need more information to provide a solution here, can you bring more clarity to the situation for me please?"*
- **✓ Anticipate concerns & address them upfront:** Show you've thought through the task from their perspective, and ask for any gaps to be filled in.

 **Example Communication:**

-  *“I feel overwhelmed with my workload and need support.”*
-  *“Our current workload is exceeding capacity, leading to slower turnaround times. If we redistribute X tasks or adjust deadlines, we can maintain quality without bottlenecks.”*

 **Action:** What is a comment you’ve made that didn’t get the response you were looking for? Now try re-wording it in a strategic way:


 **Key Takeaway:** Positioning your request strategically increases the likelihood of a positive response.


Step 4: Navigating Pushback – Handling ‘No’ & Finding Alternatives

Sometimes leadership can’t immediately fulfill a request. Instead of stopping there, **use the moment to explore alternatives and reinforce accountability.**

If you hear “**No**”, respond with:

- **Clarifying Questions:** "What factors influenced this decision?"
- **Alternative Solutions:** "Would there be another way to achieve a similar outcome?"
- **Time-Based Follow-Up:** "Can we revisit this in a month after we assess workload impact?"

 **Action:** Prepare 1-2 responses to potential objections in advance.


 **Key Takeaway:** A “no” today doesn’t mean a “no” forever—stay engaged in the solution.

Step 5: Building the Habit – Making Communicating Up a Leadership Strength

Consistent, clear, and solution-focused communication builds **trust** and **credibility** with leadership over time.

Checklist for Communicating Up Effectively:


- ✓ Have I defined what I need and why it matters?
- ✓ Is my message framed around business outcomes and solutions?
- ✓ Have I anticipated concerns and offered alternatives?
- ✓ Am I committed to following up and adjusting based on feedback?

 **Final Thought:** Leaders value team members who communicate with clarity and confidence. The more you practice **Communicating Up**, the more you contribute to a **positive, high-trust workplace culture**—and position yourself as a leader in the process.

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