

COMMUNICATION





In order to run a program at a high level, you have to be an effective communicator. You can never communicate too much! Keeping your participants, staff, referees, coaches, and other volunteers in the loop in every aspect of your program is key and can only help your operation. Communication is engrained in every aspect of your program.

HERE ARE EIGHT TIPS TO BE A GREAT COMMUNICATOR WITHIN YOUR LEAGUE

USE MULTIPLE PLATFORMS TO COMMUNICATE

Email, social media, apps, websites, phone calls, text, and face to face meetings are all examples of ways to communicate to your participants and those interested in your program. If you are using multiple communication channels both internally and externally, and your participants know where to find the information, there should be no reason a participant tells you “they didn’t know” when something comes up.

COMMUNICATE BEFORE AND AFTER YOUR SEASON

Once you release your initial dates, make sure to remind people as you get closer to registration. Don’t just assume they will remember. Once your league ends, let your participants know the next start dates before they finish. When you have them in the door, keep them in by always letting them know when the next program takes place.

COMMUNICATE DURING REGISTRATION

Whether your participants register online or in person it is important that they have all the needed information for the upcoming season. Make sure your participants are ready and prepared for their first day. If you have a registration window, make sure you are sending several reminders leading up to your first date.

SEND WEEKLY COMMUNICATIONS DURING THE SEASON

At a minimum you should send your parents and coaches an email at least once a week. In the email recap the week and give any updates or important information for the coming weeks. If there is nothing to report on, it can be as simple as letting them know it was a great week and you look forward to the next week while outlining upcoming activities. You can turn this into a program newsletter, add pictures or multi-media, and showcase all those special moments you had that week of games. Don’t hesitate to use your other communication channels regularly throughout the season as well.

SET UP A LINE OF COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF AND REFEREES

Make sure everyone involved in the daily operation of your league is in the loop on your operation each week. Sometimes, the most frustrating thing for a staff member or referee group is being left out and having to figure things out themselves with little to no direction on what you need. Review the game day schedule before your games start to evaluate things that may have come up the previous week and what is expected moving forward. This way everyone is on the same page and each field or court is consistent throughout the season. Check in with your staff when time permits throughout the day to ensure things are going as planned.

BE RESPONSIVE

If you get a question or concern that comes in person, email, or over the phone make sure you respond to the inquiry as soon as you can. At the very least, acknowledge you received the message within 24 hours even if you need time to research the situation. This will go a long way in keeping your participants happy and trusting you will address their needs.

BE CLEAR AND CONCISE

Ensure your messaging is clear and concise. Whether in writing, in person, or over the phone, you want to make sure everything you are sending out is clear to your participants to avoid confusion and miscommunications.

ACTIVELY LISTEN

Make sure you are actively listening to those you are communicating with and ask for feedback when necessary. Many times you will be communicating regularly with large groups of parents and coaches participating in your program in which most will be outgoing communications. As questions, concerns, or feedback comes in make sure you are listening too.

Here are several ways for you and your staff members can be better communicators:

CREATION

The first step in communicating a message is creating the message. This requires that the individual sending the message decide what he wants to say, and selects a medium through which to communicate this information.

IDENTIFY THE DESIRED OUTCOME

Be clear on the message you wish to convey. What is the outcome you are trying to achieve? What is the take home message? Understanding the outcome you want helps you refine your communication by removing all the extraneous content of your message. Stick to the point. Less words means less chance for misunderstanding.

TRANSMISSION

After a message is created, it must be transmitted. This transmission may be as simple as meeting with the intended recipient of the message and orally sharing the message, or calling the individual to communicate orally over the phone. If the message is written, it could include distributing a paper memo or sending an email. Often, the number of individuals that the message must reach will influence the transmission.

CONSIDER YOUR TONE

The tone in which you deliver the message is often more important than the message itself. Tone exists in both written and verbal communication. A harsh verbal tone will undermine a positive message. A gentle or cheery tone can take away the seriousness of a disciplinary message. So a mismatched tone can actually block the message from being understood. Tone is important in written communication too. A harsh written tone includes capital letters and bolded words as well as short, sharp sentences. If something is serious enough to be communicated in capital or bolded letters it may be better expressed in person. If you are looking for understanding, considering tone is vital to a constructive two way communication.

RECEPTION

After transmitting the message, the communication duties change hands and fall upon the receiver of the message. This individual must obtain the message either from the written format the sender selected or by listening carefully as the message is delivered orally.



TRANSLATION

Once receiving the message, the recipient must translate the message into terms that she can easily understand. To do this, she must listen to or read the message in question and paraphrase it within her head, turning the potentially complex contents of the message into more manageable and meaningful components.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Look for non-verbal cues in communication. Nodding, facial expression and body language need to be processed by both sides in order to understand if the message is being accurately received. Ask the listener to paraphrase what you have said and check for understanding. Look for inconsistencies or misunderstandings and address them immediately and clearly.

RESPONSE

Communication is a two-way street and response is often necessary. Message recipients take the lead in concluding the communication process by crafting a response to the message. This response may be verbal and immediate, which would commonly be the case if the communication is face-to-face. It may also be a written response that either expands upon the message or simply indicates receipt of the message in question.

ASK FOR FEEDBACK

Listening is one of the most important art-forms in communication. With complicated or important messages, ask for feedback on what you have said and listen without interrupting. Finding out how what you have said has impacted on the other person can help you improve your messages for the future, as well as clear up further misunderstanding at the time.

Being an effective communicator is essential in both personal and professional settings. It involves not just speaking clearly but also listening actively, understanding your audience, and conveying messages in a way that resonates with them. By mastering these strategies, you can enhance your ability to connect with others, convey ideas effectively, and build stronger relationships in both professional and personal settings.