

Collaborative Economy without Barriers

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Guidelines

How to structure learning sessions about communication



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Start your workshop with a practical exercise:

Be silent

Ask to the learners to be silent, don't give to them other instruction and observe what will happen. Early the participants unavoidably will start to look for eye contact with others, possibly somebody will start to laugh or to make some movements or gestures, maybe somebody will start to speak even if you asked to be silent. This simple and short exercise demonstrates how it is natural and spontaneous for the people to communicate.

Develop reflections and considerations from this concept with the participants, help them to share their opinion asking: "how did you feel when I asked to be silent? Was it difficult?". To facilitate this reflection you can also ask some questions about their reaction and their behaviours during the exercise, like: "why were you looking at Maria? Or why did you start to laugh?"

Complete this activity reading and commenting the following sentence:

"Humans cannot not communicate."

(Paul Watzlawick)

Continue the workshop asking to the learners:

What is communication? What does it mean communication?

With the method of **brain storming**, collect the answers in a poster, give to each learner the possibility to express his answers, respect the time needed by every learner, help the learners to be actively involved in this process of sharing of thoughts.

- Through the reading of all the answers take the final conclusions with a definition of communication created by the whole group of learners.

In simple words **communication** is a process of transmitting and sharing ideas, opinions, facts, values etc. from one person to another or one organization to another. Communication is to exchange of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium (music, art, technologies).

Awareness of communication

Awareness of communication means that you know how your thoughts, emotion and behaviours constantly send to the others some messages regardless of your willingness to communicate. Help the learners to start a reflection about their awareness of communication asking them: **Are you aware that you're communicating in every moment? How?**

We're constantly communicating in every moment, through various forms, channels, gestures and expressions, all as a natural reflection of ourselves. We simultaneously use multiple means of communication also unconsciously: gestures, changes facial expression, body language or physical distance from a counterpart. The entire spectrum of human behaviour has informational value and is communicative in nature; it is not merely a question of the spoken words.

Explore different type of communication:

- **Based on communication channel:**

Verbal communication stands out in spoken (face to face and distance) and written communication. Humans are able to exercise a high level of control over their verbal communication.

Verbal communication can be:

- Intrapersonal: this form of communication is extremely private and restricted to ourselves.
- Interpersonal Communication: this form of communication takes place between two individuals and is thus a one-on-one conversation.
- Small Group Communication.
- Public Communication.

Non-verbal communication includes all non-linguistic expression: facial expression, gestures, eye contact, body language, body movements, intonation, tone of voice and manner of speaking. Non-linguistic expression is just as important as linguistic expression. Non-verbal expression is quicker, more direct and less filtered than verbal expression, and thus provides important clues and signals for interpreting verbal expression.

- **Based on style and purpose:**

- **Formal communication** formal communication represents a repertoire of communication genres that are goal oriented and function related, flow through the hierarchy, follow prescribed norms, and transcend time and space. Formal communication may vary in substance and form, but all formal communication shares the characteristics of being rational, structured, and goal oriented. The strength of formal communication lies in its capacity to standardize communication to ensure reliability and in its capacity to document.

- **Informal communication** refers to communication which is multi-dimensional. Informal communication moves freely within the organization and is not bound by pre-defined channels and communication routes. Informal communication is particularly quick. Informal communication is far more relational than formal communication and is by nature, a very natural form of communication as people interact with each other freely and can talk about a diverse range of topics, often extending outside of their work duties. Due to the inherent nature of informal communication, it moves a lot faster and does not have a paper trail.

This distinction will be useful to explain how communication must differ from person to person according to their level of confidence and the purpose of the communication.

Acting practical examples shows how the style of communication changes according to different situations, for example you could show a typical conversation when interlocutors are friends or family, how the communication changes in the work context or between buyer and seller.

Personal attitude in communication

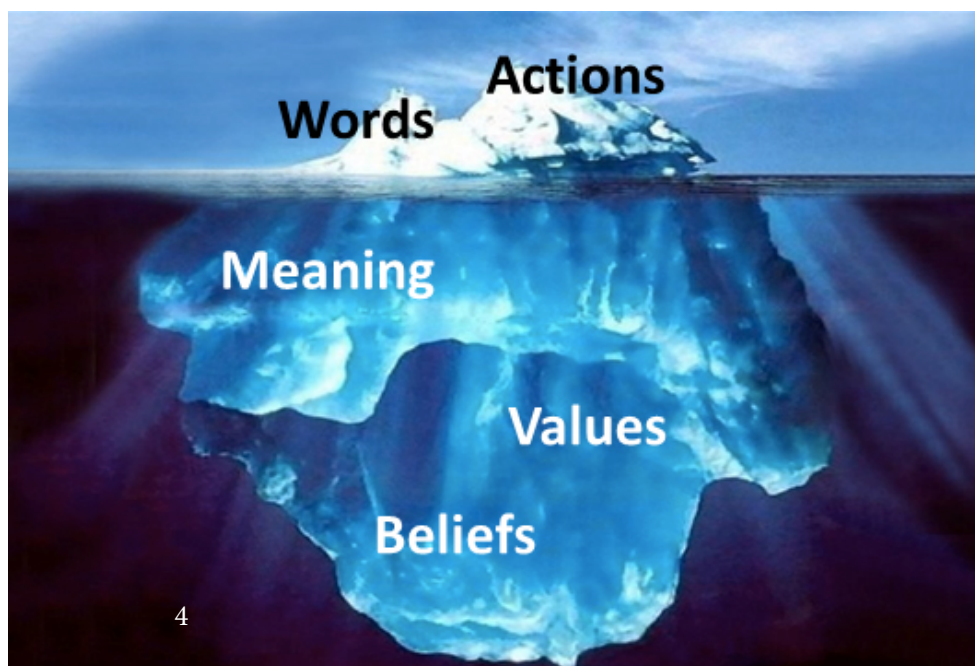
Communication is strongly influenced by our personal attitudes and feelings towards ourselves and towards those with whom we are communicating.

We catch information seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or touching and we interpret and elaborate this information attaching meaning to what we have perceived and we respond to it with a feeling.

Perception - Interpretation - Feeling

In every act of communication there are two levels: a level of content and a level of relationship that will determine how the communication progresses (Watzlawick's second axiom). Content refers to the actual subject matter of what is being discussed. The level of relationship of a communicative act has to do with how the two communicators see one another and how they convey it.

Just as in the case of an **iceberg**, the largest part of human communications lies "beneath the surface", seemingly invisible and, in many cases, subconscious. This part of human communication is often conveyed by body language (intonation, facial expression, gestures).





Practical exercises to explore communication

Collective Portrait - from non verbal to verbal communication

The persons should sit in two lines, so that every person has another person seated in front. Give to everyone a sheet of paper and a pencil/pen/colour. The activity start asking to the group to hold the hand of the person in front and telling her/him your name. Everyone should write the name of the person in front on the top of the paper. Look the face of the person in front and start his portrait by drawing the shape of the face, step by step ask to focus first on the eyes, the nose, the lips, the hair and adding more details, observing deeply. When the people is satisfied and the portrait is finished they can ask something about the person in front and write this information down in the paper (about age, hobbies, favourite food...). Now the participants can exchange the portrait so that everyone has his own portrait.

If you have lot of space and the participants don't have physical difficulties in movement you can make this activity in a more collective and funny way. You can ask after every step or every 40 seconds to stop drawing and pass to the next chair (every person move of one place like in a circle so that every stop has a different person in front) continuing the portrait already started from the previous person. At every stop the person should give the portrait to the owner and the owner need to give the portrait to the new person in front to be continued.

Doing in this way at the end of the activity every participant will have a collective portrait realized from many people. (this exchanging of sitting and portraits can be funny but also can create lot of confusion, It could be not good if you don't have enough space or if you have a big group of people).

At the end of this activity in a circle setting one by one the participants can show the portrait introduce themselves saying: "That is me, I'm Laura, I'm 20 years old and I like...."

This activity is a good exercise to observe the person, to create a visual contact, to explore the facial expressions and how you feel while you are observing and while other people are observing you.



Did you get my fax? - to explore non Verbal communication

The participants should be divided in two lines (parallel lines), standing one behind one. Give to the first person of each line a sheet of paper and a pencil.

Show only to the last person of each line a simple drawing and ask them to draw what they saw, by touching with the fingers, on the back of the person in front, it's not possible to speak; when the participants finish to "draw" they should touch the shoulder of the person in front to pass the message to the next person in the line, if who receive the message want to feel again the message needs to shake the body. The message should pass from person by person till arrive to the first person of the lines that should draw it on paper.

Now you can compare the 2 drawings from the 2 lines to discover how the communication is going. Continue the game: the first person of each line will go at the end of the line, show them a new drawing and let them send the message. Continue till every participant tried the experience of transfer on paper the message. At the end it is interesting to notice from the drawings the differences from the original, something can be invented or forgotten... from here you can start a reflection about the feelings, responsibility on giving clear information and listening with concentration, the frustration from misunderstanding...

Speaker and illustrator - to explore Verbal communication

In couple, seated back to back. One person will be the illustrator and the other the speaker. Give to the illustrator a sheet of paper and a pencil and show only to the speaker a picture. The speaker should describe the picture, in a detailed way, so that the illustrator can represent the same picture. During this process the speaker cannot see what the illustrator is representing, so he needs to be more specific as possible. When they finish the speaker can have a look on the drawing and if it's needed can give to the illustrator (again back to back without seeing the drawing) some more information to add or to modify the final picture. Finish the game comparing the results, reflecting about the communication efficiency, how an information need to be shared to be clear and understandable, difficulty to communicate and to catch the right information, if it was necessary to change the way to pass the information, wich strategy was used and wich one can be the most effective.

You can repeat the game with a new picture, this time exchanging the roles (the speaker of the previous time will be the illustrator and the illustrator will be the speaker).



Walk - reaction to the instructions and mistakes

The participants walk around the room in silence, each for himself. The facilitator gives instructions when to stop, by using the instruction Stop or Freeze, followed by the Start instruction when to continue walking. When participants have mastered these instructions, new ones such as Jump and Squat are added, followed by Quiet (meaning to say their name quietly) and Loud (pronounce their name out loud). When the participants have mastered all the instructions, explain to them that further instructions will have the opposite meaning e.g. Jump means Squat and vice versa. Variations: Because of the specificity of the group, you can use Look Up or Down instead of Jump and Squat.

This exercise stimulates the participants' capacity to listen and on time react to the instruction. If they will be not focussed on listening the facilitator their reaction will be delayed or wrong, especially when the facilitator will ask to react to his instructions with the opposite meaning.

Ask for the participants' feedback and develop a reflection on the characteristic of an effective communication.

Make me - the importance of a clear communication

Description: The participants are divided into smaller groups. Each group is tasked with explaining to the leader what actions he or she should perform in the space. The action is predefined e.g. to take a notebook and transfer it to another table, then sit in a designated chair. Each group alternately receives 30 seconds each to give their instructions to the leader. The leader executes their instruction only exactly as they are told, that is, nothing is implied to the leader. For example, if he is told to take a notebook, he takes any notebook. If he is told to sit, he sits on the floor.

Guidelines: The task or sequence of actions should be chosen so as to enable the leader to "misunderstand" the "instructions". The leader also needs an assistant who will measure time with the groups and encourage them not to give up. After the exercise, it is possible to talk about how important it is to communicate clearly with one another, as some things are not understood. It is also possible to talk about how they collaborated within their teams.

Misunderstanding

After the experienced derived from the previous practical experiences the participants are more aware of the possible mistakes and variations that can come out communicating.

Misunderstanding in communication can derive from many causes:

- Interruptions during the speech;
- To take things for granted;
- Non active listening and inattention;
- Sarcasm. Sometimes a joke can create tension and conflict, sarcasm can create embarrassment or make people feel humiliated.
- Shout. Shouting doesn't mean to be heard, instead it will make the interlocutor think that the person is not able to manage his emotions.
- Verbal and non verbal language do not match. The body language should reinforce the verbal language and do not show contrast with it.
- Repeat. To repeat the same concept several times can be boring and irritating, who becomes logorroic loses effectiveness.
- Look elsewhere. The look has strong effect in the course of a conversation, to look in the eyes of the interlocutor show interest and respect.
- Mood. Our mood influence our thoughts and decisions, if we don't manage the emotionality it will manage our communication and impact on the others. It is important to be aware of the personal mood and how it can affect the communication.
- Confusing messages. Difficult words, too long phrases and mince words slow down the communication and make it complicated.

To avoid mistakes in communication, it is important to learn how to be gentle and good listener. Communication is not a competition on who speaks more, an effective communication cannot be without **active listening**. Never forget that the interlocutor can have a different opinion, doubt and questions that should be take in consideration.

“The concept of active listening goes back to **Thomas Gordon** (Gordon, 1974, 1977; Gordon & Burch, 1974), but has its roots in Carl Rogers' client-centered therapy and nondirective counseling (Rogers, 1951). Inspired by his professor's work on reflective listening, Thomas Gordon started to apply the communication skills used in therapeutic settings in rather everyday situations. Meanwhile it has become a widely-know ingredient in a variety of contexts that involve gathering information and solving problems (Rautalinko & Lisper, 2004). Basically, active listening requires the listener to capture what the sender is communicating from the sender's point of view (Rogers & Farson, 1957). Trying to keep distortion at a minimum, the listener has to continuously validate the accuracy of understanding (Gordon, 1977), whereby active listening captures also the feelings that come with what is said. In its essence, to listen actively means to listening for total meaning, responding to feelings, and paying attention to all cues (Rogers & Farson, 1957). The commonly used techniques are: paraphrasing (restating), verbalizing emotions, asking, summarizing, clarifying, encouraging, and balancing (Decker, 1989).”

Role games

Through the use of role games investigate with the learners the most common mistakes that are cause of misunderstanding in communication. This practical exercise will help the participants to understand how avoid the risk of uncorrect communication.

Role games are useful also to experience different type of language to communicate, formal/non formal communication and the right attitude towards the interlocutors.

Conflict management

Uncorrect communication or interpersonal tension can easily cause simple disagreements to flare up into resentment or worse. Conflicts and disagreements are part of the human nature, this is why it's only partially possible to avoid any conflict and it's necessary to be aware that communicating with other people you should be ready to meet diversity of opinion and point of view.

Prepare the learners to be ready to resolve the divergence in an effective manner clarifying that from a resolved conflict there will be no winner and no loser but people satisfied for the meeting point found.

How to manage conflict?

- Communicating clearly, empathetically, and patiently;
- With good self-control;
- Keeping tones gentle and calm;
- Being patient;
- Accepting criticism;
- With active listening;
- Meeting with Parties;
- Opening dialogue;
- Negotiating to reach a point of agreement;
- With appropriate no verbal communication;
- Being Adaptable;
- Showing Respect;
- Asking for Feedback;
- Developing the ability to "Let It Go".

Group discussion - problem solving

Start a group discussion asking the learners to share their own experience about situation of misunderstanding or conflict. Let the participants reflect on the situation and facilitate the group discussion exploring affective and uneffective way to face the situation and to solve the problem. Let them define the problem, brain storm possible solutions, evaluate and select the best solutions, implement the solution, review the results. After the discussion ask the learners to represent the situation with the method of role play to evaluate if the solution found could really be effective or asking them to try with other solutions.

Communication and collaborative economy

Focusing the discussion in the field of collaborative economy explain the importance of an effective communication.

How collaborative economy and communication are connected?

In case of selling, exchanging or renting a product, this should be properly presented and described. A good communication between seller and buyer or property owners and the purchasers will be essential to reach the expected results. In this section the participants need to learn the language to be used with the customers, when they can assume a more confidential attitude and when they should be more formal. Make practical example about how to act and how to contact to the customers.

In this field some specific situation may occur, and the learners should be aware and able to face them.

An example can be costumers that want to negotiate for the price, or unsatisfied costumers, bad reviews or unfair competition.

Prepare the learners to deal with situation that can be unpleasant, so that they will be able to manage them without taking them personally, to preserve their serene mood. To explore different kind of possible situations that could happen ask also to the participants to make some examples, or to share situations that really happend to them while they where buyng/exchanging somethings.

Role games are appropriate to experience the correct way to communicate with the costumers and to expirience possible situations that could really happen, a good exercise is to experience how to negoziare in case of buyng/selling/exchanging of products. Important in this step will be to teach to the learners to keep calm and to mantain self-controll also in difficult situations and to be aware that if a situation of conflict that they are facing is causing them fear or frustration they should ask for the help of an educator/volunteer.

Often the contact with the costumers require the use of digital channels and consequently the use of **written communication**.

Make a distintion between verbal and written communication and how the language to be used changes, how to sell or buy, talk about the time of answering, time reaction that will be fundamental to engage the customers: fast and simple reply will lead to reach the goal.

Make practical exercises to expirience the use of written communication in collaborative economy, in couple the participants will act as sailer and buyer and they will communicate through digital channels.

Using digital channels it is possible to encounter dangerous situations, this subject will be treated in the Guidelines "Risks about the use of online platforms - How to support the users to prevent dangers".

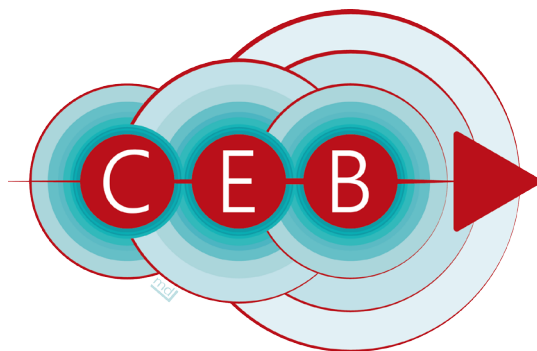
This guideline was realized during the Joint-short term staff training event: Mutual learning for the best support. The training event was held in Palermo on 04.02.2020 -08.02.2020. The guideline aims to support the work of educators and social workers in guiding the adult learners with disability in participating to collaborative economy. It is a product of the Project Collaborative Economy without Barriers – CEB, a Strategic Partnership for the exchange of good practices in the field of adult education, Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

All the guidelines realized during the Project Collaborative Economy without Barriers – CEB and informations about the project and its activities are published in the following web-site: <https://partnershipceb.blogspot.com>

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Sitography

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<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118955567.wbieoc083> A type of verbal presentation or document intended to share information and which conforms to established professional rules, standards and processes and avoids using slang terminology.
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Collaborative Economy without Barriers

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