



The manager's **mini** **guide to effective** **communication**



Introduction

Good communication is more than speaking clearly - it's about making sure your message lands and your people feel heard. As a manager, the way you listen, respond, and show empathy shapes how your team performs and how much they trust you. This guide gives you practical tools to build clarity, trust, and connection in every conversation.

Claire Brumby

Coach, speaker and trainer

"Communication is the rock bed of everything we do in business and life. The better and more refined we become at speaking, listening and really engaging, the greater success we'll have as leaders and managers."



1. Active listening – a foundational skill

Why it matters

When people feel unheard, they disengage. Active listening helps you understand not just words, but emotions and intentions.

How to practice it

- **Ask meaningful questions:** Go beyond "Are you alright?" to "How are you finding your role right now?"
- **Notice tone and body language:** Words may say one thing, but crossed arms or closed posture can tell another story.
- **Listen to understand, not reply:** Resist the urge to jump in – your goal is clarity, not just finishing the chat.

Stephen Covey

"The biggest communication problem is that we don't listen to understand, we listen to reply."

Shared by Claire Brumby in our webinar.

[View Webinar](#)

Quick win

At your next 1:1, summarise back what your team member said: *"So what I'm hearing is that you're concerned about workload – is that right?"* This shows you're tuned in and gives space for correction or clarity.



2. Clear and concise messaging

Why it matters

Miscommunication leads to wasted time, frustration, and mistakes. Managers set the tone for clarity.

How to practice it

- **Check for understanding:** Use questions like “Can I just make sure I explained that clearly?”
- **Keep your tone friendly:** Avoid sounding critical – genuine curiosity works better than interrogation.
- **Summarise and simplify:** Repeat the key point in plain language.

Katy Wade

“Wouldn’t life be easier if we just spoke to each other, instead of assuming people knew what we were thinking?” – Learning & Development Manager at Bespoke HR

Quick win

Before sending an email or Slack message, ask: *“Would I understand this if I was new to the team?”* If not, rewrite it.



3. Empathy and emotional intelligence

Why it matters

Empathy turns transactions into relationships. When your team feels understood, they’re more motivated and collaborative.

How to practice it

- **Acknowledge emotions:** “I can see this deadline feels stressful for you.”
- **Show genuine interest:** Ask about both concerns and wins.
- **Offer support, not solutions:** Sometimes listening is more powerful than fixing.

Katy Wade

“You don’t need to be best friends with colleagues, but you do need to understand the impact of how you work together on morale and results.”

Quick win

Next time someone shares a challenge, pause before offering advice. Instead, ask: *“What support would be most helpful for you right now?”*

4. Putting it into motion

Why it matters

Communication isn't just for the day-to-day - it's critical in moments of change, crisis, or challenge.

Claire Brumby

"We sometimes overestimate a conversation and get stressed about it, but also underestimate it because it's simply talking. Communication is powerful when we stop avoiding it."

How to practice it

- **Use trust as your baseline:** When tough times come, open communication gets faster buy-in.
- **Link back to shared goals:** Show how changes connect to the bigger picture.
- **Be consistent:** Mixed messages erode confidence.

Quick win

Before announcing a change, jot down how you'll explain both the "what" and the "why". The context matters as much as the details.

Final Thoughts

Effective communication builds trust, teamwork, and performance. By listening actively, keeping things clear, and leading with empathy, you'll not only handle tough conversations better but also build a culture where people thrive.

Put great communication into practice with Breathe

Katy Wade

Learning and development manager,
Bespoke HR

"Respect is key. You can deliver bad news or constructive feedback, but if you do it respectfully and thoughtfully, that's the mark of a great manager."

Active listening and clear feedback are at the heart of effective performance conversations. With Breathe's Performance Management tools, you can turn these skills into structured, regular check-ins that boost trust and engagement.

- ✓ **Schedule and track 1:1s**
- ✓ **Record goals and feedback in one place**
- ✓ **Build a team culture of open, ongoing conversations**



[Discover Breathe Performance Management](#)

