5 Communication Mistakes That Hurt Team Performance

Strong teams do not need identical personalities. They need a shared commitment to understanding one another. Use these five practical shifts to improve everyday communication.

1. Assuming everyone communicates like you

The mistake: Using your preferred communication style with everyone. **The shift:** Ask colleagues whether they prefer a quick summary, conversation, clear plan, or supporting detail. Adapt your delivery without changing your message.

2. Mistaking a different style for a bad attitude

The mistake: Labeling directness as aggression, enthusiasm as distraction, patience as resistance, or careful analysis as negativity. **The shift:** Get curious about intent before interpreting behavior.

3. Listening only to respond

The mistake: Planning your answer while someone else is speaking. **The shift:** Reflect back what you heard, ask one clarifying question, then respond.

4. Giving unclear expectations

The mistake: Assuming everyone leaves a meeting with the same understanding. **The shift:** State the outcome, owner, timeline, and what success looks like. Invite questions.

5. Treating conflict as a personality problem

The mistake: Making differences personal instead of identifying the underlying need. **The shift:** Focus on the shared goal, describe the specific behavior, and agree on a workable next step.

Try this with your team

At your next meeting, ask: “What is one thing I could do to make communication easier for you?” Listen without defending. Then choose one adjustment you can practice this week.

Remember: DISC is a framework for understanding behavioral preferences—not a measure of ability, character, or potential.

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