



DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AND ADVOCACY SERVICES

communicating with employees of a business service

a fact sheet for contractors and suppliers



Communicating with our employees

Communication only happens when the people you are trying to communicate with receive your message, understand it and respond as you intended.

As a supplier of goods and services you may need to communicate with many different people in business. This will include employees with disability, and in some cases you or they may find this communication difficult.

This fact sheet is designed to give you some communication tips and help make your interaction effective, appropriate and satisfying.

Who are we?

People coming to our business for the first time are often confused about who we are and what we do. Some are nervous about how to act, what to say and what to do.

We are a business. We have employees who undertake all the roles that you would find in any other business in our industry. This includes managers, administration staff and production staff. You may need to communicate with any of them about a range of work related matters.

A feature of our business is that we provide employment opportunities for people with disability and support them to do their jobs and learn new skills. That means that our 'mix' of employees probably includes more people with disability than you may meet in other workplaces you go into.

The impact of disability on communication

Not all people with disability have difficulty with communication. Those who do will have differing degrees of difficulty with different aspects of communication.

While this fact sheet does not provide a 'script' for communicating with our employees, it does suggest key points that can guide your communication and help it to be appropriate and effective.



Key points to remember

You are communicating with workers in a workplace

Our employees have the same working conditions and individual rights as other Australian workers.

We expect that you will follow our workplace rules especially in regard to communicating with individual employees. Some employees may find your presence distracting and this can be disruptive to their productivity. If you are unsure about our rules, ask.

You are communicating with adults

All our employees are adults and we expect you will treat them as adults. This includes showing respect for their right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality.

Strategies

Get information about how best to communicate with particular people

People who work together learn the best ways to communicate with each other. If you are having difficulty communicating with an employee, ask the people who support that person how best to do that. Communication can then be more efficient, effective and easier for everyone.

Use simple, straightforward language

- ▶ Ask about one thing at a time.
- ▶ Give people time to respond. Some forms of disability mean people need longer to think about their response.
- ▶ Listen to the answer you get before you decide on your next question.

Ask for a demonstration not an explanation

It's often easier for a person to show you what happened than to tell you about it.

“Communication is two-way. I don't have to dominate. I've learnt to listen and watch more carefully and talk less. Sometimes all I need to do is ask one question then watch and listen and the solution to the problem I've come in to fix is obvious.”

Contractor

After you've explained to someone how to do something, check that they have understood

The best way to check that you've got your message across is to get the person to tell you or demonstrate what they will now do. You may find you need to explain (or better still, show them) again.

Keep your cool

Sometimes communication is hard work. It can be frustrating for everyone – not just you – if the messages are not getting through. Showing your frustration (swearing, muttering under your breath about the other person, speaking more loudly, throwing your hands up and walking away) won't help. Take a deep breath and try some of these strategies just one more time!

