

Communication Skills

Verbal Skills

Verbal communication skills come into play when you are selling yourself to potential clients. Especially if you are dealing with corporate clients, chances are they are **articulate** and **professional**, and are likely to be comfortable hiring an event planner who “speaks their language.” To improve your verbal communication skills, ask friends or a vocal coach for feedback on any areas that could be improved, such as: use of slang, proper grammar, or altering your tone of voice to eliminate any harshness.

Listening

Being a good listener can help ensure you come up with something that the client wants. While listening seems like an easy skill to master, most of us experience challenges in at least one of the following areas involved in listening: **paying attention, understanding, and remembering**.

You can improve your listening skills by focusing fully on someone when they are speaking. Here are some ways to do that:

- Don't interrupt the other person. Hear them out.
- Keep listening to the other person, even if you think you know what they will say next. If you make assumptions, you may miss the point they're making.
- Pay attention to the other person's nonverbal signals (tone of voice, facial expression, body language, etc.). These signals can give you valuable clues about what the other person is thinking.
- Ask questions in order to clarify what the other person has said. Try repeating what they have said in your own words to make sure you understand. Take notes if necessary.
- Don't be distracted by outside interference. Loud noises, the other person mispronouncing a word, or even an uncomfortable room temperature can break your concentration and distract you from the conversation.
- Give feedback to the other person. Nod occasionally; say things like “I see,” and smile, if appropriate. Let them know you're listening.
- Use **paraphrasing**. In other words, repeat back your understanding of the wishes of the client. It can help alleviate misunderstandings later on.

For example, you could say: “So, Mr. Smith, would I be correct to say you envision a casual yet elegant, warm and inviting setting for your dinner party and wine tasting complete with a live jazz combo, for up to 50 guests to be held sometime between the third or fourth week of July and the middle of August?”

Reading Non-verbal

Being a skilled reader of people can not only help you get the job, it can help ensure you keep your clients satisfied. In addition to hearing what people say, a skilled event planner also notices **non-verbal communication**. For example, did a prospective client fold their arms when you made a particular suggestion? If so, they may be communicating that they disagree, even if they don't actually say so.

Although body language can't tell you precisely what someone is thinking, it can give you **clues** so you can ask **follow-up questions**, even as basic as “How do you feel about that?” If you want to improve this skill, you can find some excellent advice in this book:

Reading People, by Jo-Ellan Dimitrius

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0345425871>

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