

Learn to speak up in office meetings for career development

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'If you just communicate, you can get by. But if you communicate skilfully, you can work miracles'.



Office meetings provide a great platform for an employee to make oneself visible and be heard. The success of any meeting lies in the effectiveness of the ideas communicated. Thus it becomes imperative that you should speak effectively and make people take note of you.

These meetings should be viewed as an opportunity to showcase your abilities. If you want to see yourself placed high up in the career ladder, you need to take advantage of these opportunities and speak up.

With the advent of technology, verbal communication has often taken a backseat with many people interacting mainly through messages and emails. However, during office meetings one needs to be vocal. It is very important to communicate your views and ideas effectively and assertively. It might seem to be a daunting task, especially for introverts, but to prove your worth in the organisation you need to do it. By not speaking up adequately in meetings, you run the risk of remaining unnoticed and thereby putting a dampener on your career progression.

Reiterating the case for speaking up in a meeting

Silence is often considered tantamount to approval. If there are grievances which have to be addressed, staying silent wouldn't help. Sometimes people tend to be silent to avoid unnecessary criticisms and also to avoid offending anyone. But that doesn't serve the purpose. Issues concerning people have to be addressed and resolved.

Sometimes people miss out on the obvious. You might feel that certain things are quite obvious and that they don't need to be specifically articulated but could be wrong. In such situations, speaking up will be good to all the parties concerned.

It is common for other people to also have the same thoughts as you have, but they shy away from speaking, worrying about what others might think or say. In such cases your being vocal will benefit others also.

You are in the organisation for your talent and skill, hence, share your expertise. Even if you don't have a concrete plan you should lay your ideas on the table.

You are there in an office meeting for some reason. Show your commitment by actively participating in the meeting rather than being a mute spectator.

How to speak up in an office meeting:

Communication opens barriers and eliminates misunderstandings.

Effective communication encompasses not just a mere exchange of information but also understanding the intentions of other members, lending a ear to what they would have to say and conveying your message in such a way that the listeners hear and understand you.

Here are a few ways to make an impression:

Start the conversation tactically and speak confidently – You need not wait for the others to speak first. Be proactive and initiate the communication. Speak with conviction and others are likely to listen to you and believe you. By beginning the conversation you are at an advantage of not being judged. The others will not compare you with anyone else. Once the discussion gains momentum, comparisons are bound to occur.

Speak without hesitation – You might not be a good public speaker but when it comes to something that concerns your working environment and policies, you have to speak up without reluctance.

Foster the habit of listening – To become a good speaker, you need to be a good listener too. Respect others' ideas and don't heckle them when they share their thoughts and views. Practice listening, instead of interrupting the speaker, pay attention to their verbal and non-verbal cues.

Ask for clarification – You may ask questions whenever you need clarifications. This would show that you are truly interested in the discussion.

Be assertive not aggressive – There's a thin line between assertiveness and aggression. Ensure that your points are taken note of but at the same time avoid bombarding others with your ideas. Diplomacy can win you some extra credits.

Be clear and concise – Nobody likes speeches. Keep it short and crisp and ensure that you have put your ideas across.

Careful with your body language – Your body language speaks volumes about you. Hence carry yourself in such a way that you exude confidence. No slouching, no fidgeting in your seat.

Support your arguments - When you say something you should have enough facts, statistics and documents to support your claims.

Strike a delicate balance – Refrain from talking too much. And also don't be a mute spectator. Give insightful ideas.

You can even do a little pre-meeting homework. Try to find out the agenda of the meeting, the number and names of people going to attend it and also who has called for the meeting. These inputs might give an added advantage while speaking up in the meeting.

So, next time you have an office meeting, speak up!

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