

Communicating with Impact

Teaching Toolkit

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Additional Print Out Materials (Not in this document)	

- IDF A Physical Science Zeolite Catalyst
- IDF B Life Science Purification of Viruses
- IDF C Stretchable Electronics
- Worksheet - KTSS Stakeholder Map
- Slides - Communication Module

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Communicating with Impact

Syllabus

Duration: Approx. 4 hours

This course introduces some essential communication skills that represent the cornerstone of personal and professional success. Effective communication ensures clarity, fosters collaboration, and strengthens relationships. Whether in organizations, personal interactions, or global networks, communication plays a critical role in achieving goals and driving progress. Communication skills can be broken down into specific aspects of communication.

In this course, verbal, written, and visual communication are considered. Listening skills are covered as well. By considering theories and real-life cases and theories concerning knowledge transfer, the course will enable the participants to learn key strategies and approaches to enhance written communication proficiency, to develop awareness of body language and tone, and understand the fundamental aspects of listening, among others.

The focus on knowledge transfer ensures that learners will be able to apply communication strategies and tools in their professional knowledge transfer activities, in interactions with a range of varying stakeholders: researchers, business partners and peers.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

General objective

Learn effective communication strategies tailored to the knowledge transfer sector, including conveying complex technical concepts in an accessible manner to diverse audiences, and mastering the art of clear communication in both written and verbal forms.

Specific ILOs

- ILO-1: Crafting clear written messages by rephrasing ambiguous or technical content for different stakeholders
- ILO-2: Applying key communication frameworks, including the transactional model of communication and 5Ws to everyday knowledge transfer work
- ILO-3: Creating stakeholder maps and applying tailored communication strategies for diverse audiences such as researchers, investors, and businesses
- ILO-4: Applying practical techniques for managing difficult conversations, including how to say "no" effectively and empathetically.
- ILO-5: Designing and implementing a personal action plan to improve your communication skills in real-life KT scenarios.

Methods & Materials

Teaching Method(s)

- Group discussions
- Role-playing simulations
- Frontal Lecture

Required Learning Materials (during-course)

- Course slides
- Stakeholder map template for KT processes
- KT Stakeholder Table template

Additional Learning Materials (post-course)

- The Art Of Saying NO: How To Stand Your Ground, Reclaim Your Time And Energy, And Refuse To Be Taken For Granted (Without Feeling Guilty!), Damon Zahariades
- The Article by by Derek Gaunt from Black Swan Group:
<https://www.blackswanltd.com/newsletter/how-to-say-no-in-a-negotiation>

Lesson Plan

30 min	<p>Introduction & Icebreaker - Trainer introduces the session objectives and participants play an icebreaker game called “2 Truths and a Lie”.</p> <p>2 Truths and a Lie: All participants are asked to prepare three statements about themselves—two truths, one lie. Each participant tells those 3 sentences to the rest of the group. The group guesses the false one.</p> <p>Depending on the group size, you can decide to split the classroom into smaller groups. This exercise would work well for up to 7-8 participants per group.</p> <p>Objective: Highlights varied communication experiences and builds engagement.</p>	Group discussion
30 min	<p>The Email: Participants in smaller groups receive a vague or ambiguous email from a researcher about a potential discovery. Participants are asked to rephrase the email clearly. Then each participant shares their version with the rest of the group.</p> <p>They will later discuss the elements of a good email. They are encouraged to share their experiences with the rest of the group.</p> <p>Detailed instructions can be found at the next section.</p>	Interactive activity & discussion
15 min	Break	-
30 min	<p>Fundamentals of Communication in KT - Trainer introduces theories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three critical elements of communication • Types of communication • Communication process & its elements 	Mini-lecture & Q&A

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5Ws of Communication• Stakeholder Map	
30 min	<p>The Translator</p> <p>Participants are placed in groups of 3 or 4 people. They are given a technical document about a research discovery (IDF). Each group will prepare a 3 min pitch / email to be shared with potential business partners.</p> <p><i>Detailed instructions can be found at the next section.</i></p>	Pitching / presenting
15 min	<p>Break</p>	
45 min	<p>How to Say “No”?</p> <p>Participants are placed in groups of three (KT Professional, Researcher, and an observer). The KT Professional's Role: to explain that the discovery is not suitable for IP protection. The researcher's role: actively respond and ask for additional details to clarify the explanation.</p> <p>The observer notes where breakdowns occur and suggests improvements.</p> <p> Confidential Briefs - How to Say No</p> <p><i>Detailed instructions can be found at the next section.</i></p>	Role-playing
15 min	<p>Feedback & Discussion - Trainer and peers provide feedback on the roleplay activity. Guided questions & follow up discussions</p>	Peer feedback

Detailed Instructions for Group Activities

The Email

Use **Slide 6** to explain the task to the participants. Split participants into smaller groups (3-4 participants per group). This exercise can be organised in two different ways:

Option 1: Each participant prepares an individual email – they rewrite their own version of the email provided on **Slide 7**. When everybody is ready, each participant reads out their version of the email in the group. They discuss the differences between different versions. As the final step, the debriefing questions are discussed all together.

An example timeline:

5 min.	Explaining the exercise
7 min.	Time to rewrite the email
6 min.	Reading the emails & brief discussions within the group
12 min.	Discussion in the classroom

Option 2: Each group prepares one email together – each group rewrites only one version of the email provided on **Slide 7**. When all groups are ready, all letters are read out loud in the classroom. They discuss the differences between different versions. As the final step, the debriefing questions are discussed all together.

An example timeline:

5 min.	Explaining the exercise
12 min.	Time to rewrite the email
3 min.	Reading the emails
10 min.	Discussion in the classroom

The Translator

There are several versions of Invention Disclosure Forms – each referring to a different technological field - in the course materials folder. Participants are asked to decide which IDF to work on.

When explaining, emphasize that this is an informal pitching without any slides which could be a literal “elevator pitch”. We are not looking for anything perfect. It is about filtering information and translating the IDF into something very simple and relevant for the investor.

An example timeline:

5 min.	Introduction of the exercise
15 min.	Preparation for the pitch
10 min.	Pitching & feedback (3 min. pitching + 2 min. feedback per group)

How to Say “No”?

Use Slide 39 to explain the exercise. There are two alternative ways to run this exercise. Each group should consist of 2 or 3 people.

Option 1 – Improvised roleplaying (recommended)

Don't show the slides 40 – 41 – 42 in the classroom. Instead, give confidential briefs ([you can find the printout versions below](#)) to participants. They should not see the confidential briefs of their peers.

They will have only 2-3 minutes to prepare themselves to the role. Then they will put themselves into the role that was given to them. They will improvise as requester or responder.

An example timeline:

5 min.	Introduction of the exercise
20 min.	2-3 Rounds of Roleplaying (<i>2-3 minutes to prepare + 3-4 min. to roleplaying</i>)
20 min.	Discussion & Debriefing

Option 2 – Pre-planned roleplaying

Show scenarios on slides 40 – 41 – 42 to everyone. Ask participants to select one scenario and prepare a “play” together. Participants together will discuss how can this situation evolve. When the teams are ready, they play their previously planned roles in front of the other participants.

An example timeline:

5 min.	Introduction of the exercise
10 min.	Preparation of the Roleplay
10 min.	Playing the scenario in front of the classroom (<i>3-5 minutes per group</i>)
20 min.	Discussions & Debriefing

Debriefing session: All participants share their experience, give feedback to each other. The instructor explains tactics for “how to say no”.

Scenario 1: A recent lab finding

Role: Researcher

Context:

You've made a promising lab discovery and want it patented. You believe it has strong commercial potential and is similar to other inventions came out of the university that has patented.

You're emotionally invested – this is the culmination of months of work, and you believe this could attract industry interest and funding.

Your Position:

- You think the invention is novel.
- You may be frustrated if your ideas are dismissed too quickly.
- You've seen "less impressive" things get patents.

Your Goals:

- Convince the KTO to file the patent.
- If refused, ask for a second opinion.
- Avoid delays – you're worried about competitors.

Scenario 1: A recent lab finding

Role: Knowledge Transfer Officer

Context:

You're a Knowledge Transfer Officer responsible for evaluating invention disclosures and advising researchers on protection and commercialization. You've assessed the invention of a researcher with legal input and concluded it **lacks novelty** – it doesn't meet patent criteria.

You're aware the researcher may take this personally – it's part of your role to deliver the news constructively.

Your Position:

- Filing would be costly and likely rejected.
- You must explain this clearly but tactfully.
- You value the researcher's work – just not as patentable.

Your Goals:

- Help the researcher accept the decision.
- Maintain a good relationship.
- Offer next steps: publish, improve the idea, or explore non-patent options.

Scenario 2: PoC Funding

Role: Researcher

Context:

You are a leading researcher in your field. You've applied for PoC funding from the University Knowledge Transfer Office to build a prototype based on your recent work. You believe this innovation represents the future of your field. You plan to talk to the KT officer to convince them for a positive decision.

Your Position:

- You're passionate and excited – the positive decision would be great!
- You hope that reviewers understand the idea's potential.
- You see long-term impact, even if short-term applications aren't clear yet.

Your Goals:

- Push back on any potential negative signal.
- Try to change their mind or ask for reconsideration.
- Get advice on how to improve your chances.

Scenario 2: PoC Funding

Role: Knowledge Transfer Officer

Context:

You're a Knowledge Transfer Officer responsible for evaluating the Proof of Concept (PoC) funding applications. You reviewed a recent PoC funding application and, with the evaluation panel, concluded it does not meet key criteria — the commercial potential is unclear, and the use case is not well defined.

Your Position:

- You must stand by the decision.
- You understand the researcher's frustration, but criteria must be applied fairly.
- Your role is to protect the integrity of the fund and maintain trust with researchers.

Your Goals:

- Communicate the rejection clearly and respectfully.
- Help the researcher understand the reasoning.
- Keep the door open for future collaboration or revised proposals.

Scenario 3: Publishing the Paper

Role: Researcher

Context:

You are a leading researcher in your field. You want to publish a paper about your recent research results. These results are linked to an ongoing licensing negotiation handled by the Technology Transfer Office of your university.

Your Position:

- Publishing is critical for your academic career and visibility.
- You believe delaying publication might hurt your progress or recognition.
- You feel the TTO's restrictions are frustrating and slow.

Your Goals:

- Persuade the TTO to allow you to publish now.
- Argue that academic priorities should be considered.
- Seek compromise if possible (e.g., limited disclosure).

Scenario 3: Publishing the Paper

Role: Knowledge Transfer Officer

Context:

You're a Technology Transfer Officer responsible for managing the IP and licensing process. A researcher reaches out to you about publishing the latest research results which are under confidentiality obligations due to active licensing negotiations.

Your Position:

- Publishing now risks weakening the IP and harming licensing potential.
- You must enforce the timing and protection rules strictly.
- Protecting university and researcher interests long-term is your priority.

Your Goals:

- Clearly explain why publication must be delayed.
- Emphasize confidentiality and commercial risk.
- Maintain a good relationship and offer support for future publication timing.

Scenario 4: Last Minute Support

Role: Researcher

Context:

You are working on a major grant proposal with a deadline tomorrow morning. At 6 PM, you urgently emailed the KTO asking for review and editing support – this is the third last-minute request you've made this month.

Your Position:

- You feel this grant is critical for your career progression.
- You believe securing the grant would enhance the university's reputation.
- You expect the KTO to support researchers, even under time pressure.
- You may be frustrated if they refuse, as you feel this is part of their job.

Your Goals:

- Convince the KTO to prioritize your request tonight.
- Appeal to the importance of this grant for both you and the university.
- If refused, push for at least minimal assistance or quick feedback.

Scenario 4: Last Minute Support

Role: Knowledge Transfer Officer

Context:

You received another urgent after-hours request from the same researcher to review a grant proposal due tomorrow. This is their third such request in a month. You have other priorities and cannot work on it tonight.

Your Position:

- You must set boundaries – the KTO cannot provide last-minute editing every time.
- You want to maintain professionalism and avoid damaging the relationship.
- You recognize the grant is important, but it's not feasible to help right now.

Your Goals:

- Say **no** clearly but respectfully.
- Explain why repeated urgent requests are unsustainable.
- Suggest constructive alternatives:
 - o Submitting as it is,
 - o Planning earlier support for future proposals,
 - o Directing to writing workshops or other resources.