PA ENTERPRISE

DeskDemon's Magazine for Executive PAs, Office Managers and Secretaries

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Effective training tips that employees will actually care about

Essential Communication Skills for any Workplace (and how to Improve them)

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Milne

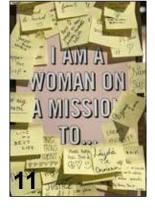


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New Year's Resolutions You Can Actually Keep in 2022

A go-to (and diet-free) list of achievable changes you can make in the new year.

Even though the past couple of years have been strange to say the least, it's likely you've already thought about what your New Year's resolutions 2022 might look like. Is it a list of simple New Year's resolutions for the upcoming year (don't hit snooze in 2022!)? Or are you up for a more challenging, unique New Year's resolutions (finally training for that marathon)? One easy way to get started is to write out a few new goals for 2022 and decide what is actually achievable for you. We've seen all those popular New Year's resolution lists before-the ones with the complicated cleanses, intense workout plans, and sincere intentions to create new healthy habits. By January 20th, most people have already fallen back into the same old, same old, which begs the question, "Are New Year's resolutions effective at all?"

We say they can be! This year, pursue some choice goals in small steps. After all, change doesn't have to come all at once. To help spark some ideas, we've compiled a list of top New Year's resolutions to help you celebrate what's to come in 2022.

Get Outside

Even if you don't consider yourself the outdoorsy type, it's a proven fact that connecting with nature reduces stress. So take a hike (or even a stroll), watch a sunrise or sunset with someone you love, or take that extra lap around the park with your dog. The fresh air will do you good!

Compliment Someone and Mean It

Although this may be harder for some than others (introverts, we see you), go the extra mile and pay someone a compliment whether it's a coworker who has just killed it on her quarterly report presentation or the person in front of you in the coffee line whose jacket you love. A simple sentiment can go a long way in boosting the recipient's mood, and yours as well. It may be a while since you told your significant other how pretty their eyes are or your kid that you noticed them practicing good manners.



Make Your Bed

You've likely heard this your whole life, but really: Make your bed every day. It seriously only takes a few minutes (if even!). Plus, it makes your whole bedroom feel neater and cleaner. And chances are if you don't do it in the morning, you'll end up straightening it up at night when all you want to do is go to sleep!

Grow Something

So you don't have green fingers. Although gardening can be intimidating to some, start small. Try your hand at growing indoor house plants, air plants (you practically do nothing!), or even container vegetable garden (who doesn't love fresh herbs and tomatoes?).

Shed Some Weight by Decluttering

The turn of a new year is an ideal opportunity to get organized! Spend some time going through all that stuff you've accumulated lately, one room and cupboard at a time. The freedom you feel from a decluttered home will be worth all the effort.

Read More

If you love to read, commit to reading one new book (or more) a month. One good way to keep yourself accountable is to join or start a book club. It's a great way to discover new books and connect with friends, new and old.

Paint a Room

Freshening up your walls with a coat of paint is like a clean slate for your decor. Once you've picked a color, set yourself up for success by studying up on how to paint a wall and the materials you need. For paint palette inspiration, check out best bedroom paint colors, kitchen paint color ideas, and best paint colors for small spaces. If you're not ready to tackle an entire room, consider painting your front door a pretty hue or updating your kitchen cabinets.

Write Snail Mail

The past couple of years have shown us all that staying in touch with loved ones is important. Sure, you can send a text or an email, but we say step it up a notch and send actual mail! Start this goal by sending a few letters or cards over a couple of months. Think beyond holidays—a "just because" note will totally make someone's day!

Drink More Water

Here we are...another year of wanting to drink more water. Start small by replacing 1-2 drinks a day with water. Maybe you replace that second cup of coffee with a glass or two of water. Next, buy a fun water bottle or cup, like this one from Ban.do. Level up your resolution by trying some healthy add-ins like fresh lemon or lime, fruit, or cucumber.

Try Something New Each Month

Who says your resolution has to be sticking to just one thing? Shake things up by setting a goal to try something new and different each month. If you're a foodie, consider trying a new restaurant, recipe, or ingredient. Whatever goal you pick, start small, and work up to signing up for that pottery or Barre class. Get creative and don't forget to get your friends and family involved—they might help keep you accountable!

Learn a New Hobby

Everyone needs a little down time, and a hobby is an excellent way to force your mind





to think about things other than the kids or your job. When you're looking for something to keep your hands busy (and, let's be honest, give you a little zoning-out kind of therapy), try one of the many hobbies out there, like knitting, sewing, or embroidery. If getting outside is a goal, try your hand at gardening. Whatever you pick, remember that easing yourself into a new activity will help you stick with it if it's something you enjoy doing.

Print & Hang Some Pictures

You don't have to complete the gallery wall of your dreams, but this year get one step closer by picking a few favorite photos to print. Start with just a few. Sorting through your entire phone photo roll can be overwhelming, so look to your social media accounts for direction. What were your favorite photos you posted this year? Identify your top 10 or 20 and print them in various sizes for framing and hanging. If you want to up your resolution game, create a photo book for yourself or to share with others.

Stay in Touch

If there's one thing the past couple of years has proven, it's that there's no excuse for not staying in touch with those we love. With so many ways to connect - from texts and phonecalls to email and virtual celebrations there are endless ways to stay in touch from afar. Try to connect with a few people every week or so who aren't on your favourites list.

Send Birthday Cards

Sure, you could write a Facebook post for your friends and family like everyone else, but this year go the extra mile and send actual birthday cards instead. Be on the lookout at different shops or paper stores that have fun cards on sale and create a collection to pull from throughout the year. Level up by making your own cards by buying simple blank cards and adding your own artwork and personal birthday message.

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How can I impress in my new job?

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When you start a new job, try to give off good vibes from day one

Starting a new job can be quite a shock to the system getting to know what you're supposed to do and how you're supposed to act. Everybody knows first impressions count, and when start a new job you have an excellent – but also vital - window of opportunity. It's a chance to start off on the right foot and build from there, whereas a negative start can be difficult to shake off.

When you start a new job most people will give you the benefit of the doubt, so mistakes and honest misunderstanding will be acceptable up to a point.

Most of your co-workers will also remember their first days only too well. Given this readymade goodwill, the trick is not to take it for granted, or abuse it. Go in with the wrong attitude and you'll build up almost unshakable resentment – even unreasonable resentment.

Here are few tips for getting it right:

Be punctual and presentable

Once you settle in you can go with the flow on punctuality, dress sense and language. On your first day you need to be acting almost as you did in your interview. Creating a good impression and not looking like you don't want to be there.

Don't try too hard

If you're the confident type you might want to try and impress your new workmates by being pushy or sharing your ideas openly. Try not to do this; you'll have time later on and you won't be expected to come into a new situation and have all the answers.

Ask questions

If you're given a job, do it as well as you can and don't be afraid to ask questions. Better to ask a question than sit silently hoping that what you need to know will turn up.

Get a notepad

Even if you have to quietly write down people's names, do it on a notepad - it helps you break through the communication barrier. It also avoids you having to ask someone else: "what's that person's name I was just talking to?" You can also jot down any other rules and ways of doing things so that you're not blundering along and making obvious bad moves.

Volunteer

All of your new colleagues will be busy doing their own jobs. Sometimes you may feel neglected or under used. There's no harm in asking for a job or volunteering to do something for somebody. You may be new, but your offer will go down well and put you in some small measure of control in your new surroundings.

Generally, you're looking to be positive and start with small wins. You don't need to come in with all guns blazing. Let your work and your attitude speak for you. After a few weeks, you'll have built up enough confidence and goodwill to be yourself.



Be part of the team

Let your enthusiasm for being part of the team and the organisation show to everyone you interact with. Being a part of the set up means you want to be there and like the people you're working with.

You are now part of a work team, and teams work together to solve problems and get the job done. That said, on your first day, you should never try to guess the group or team culture. You need to find this out slowly.

Remember, it is your willingness to be part of the team, rather than your attempts to be part of the team, that counts.

Dressing the part

On your first day it pays to look smart. Casual dress codes are often the norm, but on your first day if you walk in looking too casual it suggests you are not taking your situation seriously. You can dress down – or to fit the workplace style - later on. Whilst looking smart means efficient and reliable, too casual could mean disorganised and uncaring.

Most workers know that this is not necessarily true – but, remember, it's still all about first impressions – and you won't have had a chance to let everyone know how efficient you are by your actions alone. That's why you need to look smart and professional on your big day one.

The end of the day one

You've made a good impression. You've been positive and helpful. So don't go and ruin it all by rushing to get away before everyone else. Remember that there are subtle rules about who can leave first and why. If everyone is working late or on a difficult time-consuming job, they may not want to stay late either. In this case, the very least you can do is to make sure you are available to do something or help somebody, right up until leaving time.

Disappearing on time, unless you been told you can go, is not creating a good impression – worse, it's creating the wrong impression.

And finally

As a general rule for your first day, don't stiffen up and be fearful. You might find that you're scowling or not smiling because you are afraid or feel intimidated. Don't worry: You'll meet lots of new faces, but most people will recognise you for what you are and be helpful.

The office politics also need not concern you; you are a newcomer. It's unlikely you'll be treated to any adverse remarks about the company or its people, and any you may hear, you need not comment on.

On day one, you are very much a guest. Take any advice you can get and don't offer too many opinions. It's also a good idea not to make personal phone calls or disappear for a long lunch break. Making a phone call to a friend for half an hour will be remembered, even if you think nobody is paying you any attention. People at work don't always tell you what you are doing wrong.

Having said all of the above, you should still enjoy your first day. Goodwill is on your side. You are new and fresh and an unknown quantity. There is everything to play for and if you aren't afraid, and you aim to be positive, you'll be a winner without even having to do too much.

monster.co.uk



How to Develop a Positive Attitude in the Workplace

Your attitude at work can impact your career as well as your general outlook on life.

When something is going wrong, the first thing people usually say is to "stay strong" and "stay positive." Those little affirmations sometimes do work, and it's important to remember that words can go a long way during a time of negativity, especially in the workplace.

Always looking on the bright side "may sound cheesy, but just positive thinking, smiling and positivity in general are the main staples of a positive personal attitude," said Amy Finlay, co-founder of Edinburgh IFA. But what does a positive attitude have to do with the workplace?

Having a positive attitude in the workplace won't necessarily make you better at your job, but it will improve the way people view you as a person, so they may be more inclined to help you succeed and cheer you on.

"A positive attitude is important for many reasons, but one of the main reasons for having a positive attitude in the workplace is because it can rub off on everyone else," Finlay said. "Exuding positivity can be infectious and, over time, can influence your co-workers."

The importance of a positive attitude in the workplace

It seems like the importance of a positive attitude would be obvious, but it's so easy to become consumed with our own thoughts and dramas. In those times, whether you're going through a hard time or one of your co-workers is, you have to try to keep the negativity at bay.

"Misery may love company, but negativity has never lifted anyone up," said Deborah Sweeney, CEO of MyCorporation. "You feel better when you surround yourself with positive people. They encourage you to reach for the stars, work hard and stay focused on fulfilling your dreams. Positivity begets more positivity. Over time, you may find that even the most stubborn person in the office who



refuses to enjoy something has a change of heart and changes to be more positive, all because you had such a great attitude."

Negative versus positive attitudes

Understanding what makes for a negative attitude at work can help you work toward promoting and practicing a positive attitude.

"Negative and positive attitudes affect the workplace massively," Finlay said. "An employee with a bad attitude can really upset the apple cart in an office and create a really toxic environment. Positive attitudes can make the work environment happy and a joy to be in. I would happily take an office full of positive attitudes over negative ones, without a doubt."

Sweeney also knows how important attitudes are to the success of a workplace. "They either move the needle forward or keep it still. A positive attitude keeps everyone trying new things, feeling brave about brainstorming new ideas, and makes people feel excited to go to work with their co-workers."

Showing positive attitude in the workplace as easy as saying yes

Preaching positivity is easy. Putting it into practice and being genuine about it is more difficult.

"You can show a positive attitude through the words you use," Sweeney said. "Become a 'yes' person and try new things to see how you do. Give your time and ask co-workers how you can help them out if you have a free moment. Volunteer to take the lead on new assignments. Be kind to everyone and genuine – do not gossip constantly or spread rumors." Rachel Sheerin, keynote speaker on burnout and happiness, says that positive people radiate a different energy.

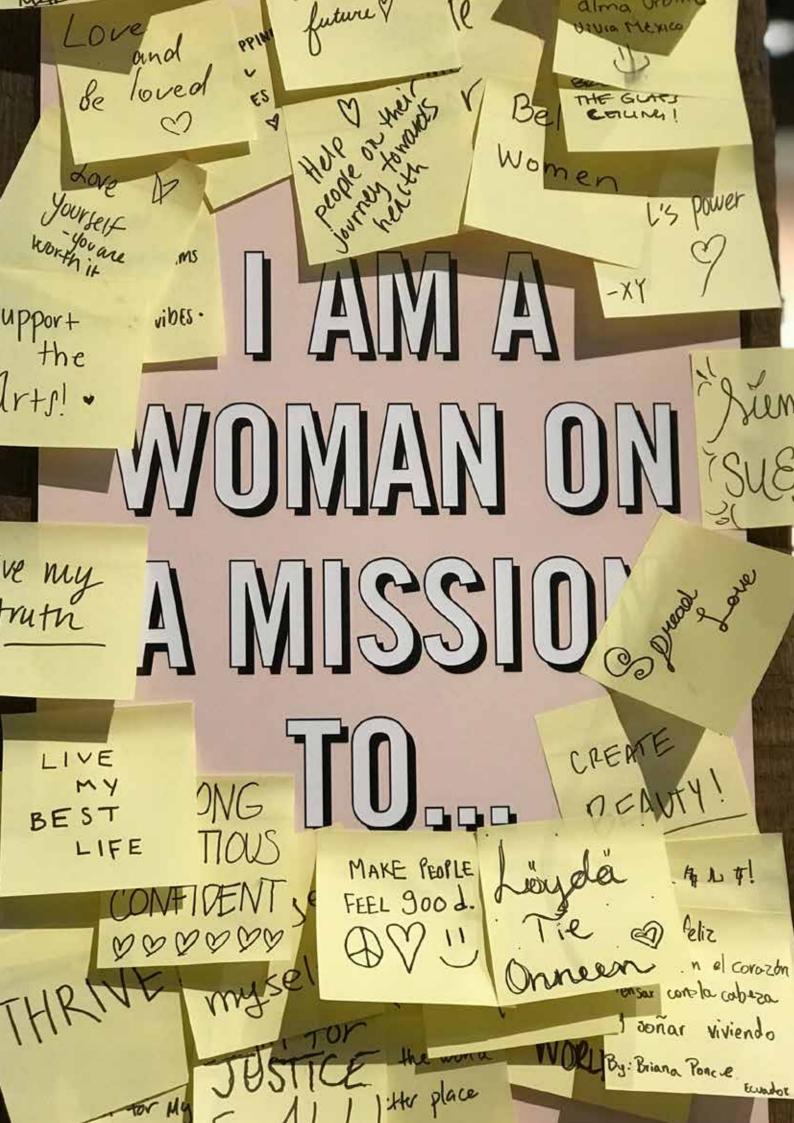
"Positive people show their positive attitude in their words, actions and feelings," she said. "Positive people radiate differently, just by walking in a room with their energy – it changes the world and people around them."

The general consensus among experts is that showing a positive attitude is all about your demeanor. Speaker and personal development coach Jessi Beyer said that showing a smile rather than looking miserable can alter the mood of an entire office. She also said that the way you react to situations and relate to co-workers can make a big difference.

"Not only does having a positive attitude in the workplace make your day much more fun and more productive, but it affects your co-workers as well," Beyer said. "Would you prefer to be surrounded by co-workers with negative attitudes who all hate their lives and their jobs, or would you prefer to be surrounded by co-workers who are focusing on their wins, no matter how small, and learning from their failures?"

How to deal with negative attitudes and feelings

Not everyone is going to be positive all the time. That's an unrealistic idea. But even when people are down and at their most negative, there are things one can do to deal with those emotions and actions around the office to keep them from impacting others. Even if it's just one co-worker causing an issue, take matters into your own hands for your own happiness at work.





1. Choose who you associate with

carefully. "If you find yourself surrounded by negative co-workers, see if you can switch cubicles or teams within the same department," Beyer said. "Make conscious decisions with your space and your time at work that will result in surrounding yourself with co-workers with positive attitudes."

In that vein, "I am someone who will deliberately avoid spending time with people who have a bad attitude at work, or anywhere for that matter," Finlay said. "As a positive attitude can be contagious, unfortunately, a negative attitude can also spread through people, and before you know it, your mindset can completely change with too much exposure to these types of people."

2. Be encouraging. "I encourage my clients and their teams to remember that everyone is trying their best," Sheerin said. "No one wakes up in the morning wanting to screw up or do a bad job – so give some consideration and empathy to others."

3. Ask questions and don't assume. "No matter the positive or negative attitudes at work, it's important to be mindful in the workplace," said Lizzie Benton, culture consultant at Liberty Mind. "Rather than letting yourself be consumed by a negative attitude, question why that person might be coming across in that way. Don't take it personally, and do your best to build a barrier against negative comments or behaviors."

Negativity bias built into us as people

Psychologists generally agree that our brains are hardwired to put more of our focus and energy on bad news. Maybe it's because we are surrounded by it, now more than ever in the age of instant news and videos of tragedies being uploaded seconds after they happen. But does that mean the human race is doomed to live in a cloud of negative energy? Most experts say no.

"The thought that you need 10 positive experiences to write over one negative one can definitely be true," Beyer said. "One way to combat this is to approach the outcomes of negative situations with a learning mentality. Find one small takeaway from a situation and your perception of that situation as negative will start to shrink."

Many people believe you can train your brain to combat the negativity bias.

"I think there is probably something to it, and like anything else with the human brain, we can train ourselves to ignore it," Finlay said. "I believe that everything we do that becomes a habit can be changed if we continue to work on it hard enough. If you are constantly reverting to negativity, it will take an applied and concentrated approach to break this habit, but stick with it and eventually you'll see that the grass is actually greener on the bright side of life."

Maintaining a positive attitude takes work; it won't always be easy.

"A good example of keeping a positive attitude is to stop complaining," Sweeney said. "This can be hard to do, I know! If the company you work for experiences changes, like new management, don't complain endlessly about what is happening and how it may impact you negatively. See change as a good thing that leads to growth and success for the business and you personally."

businessnewsdaily.com



Effective training tips that employees will actually care about





If you don't try to get the best out of your employees, how do you expect them to contribute towards company culture? Richard Branson says it well: 'Train people well enough so they can leave, treat them well enough so they don't want to.'

But how do you effectively lead good training in the workplace? How do you encourage professional and personal development so that your employees are happy and committed to the business? How do you build culture and get people interested in learning and training initiatives?

Here are some top tips for effective training that will actually make a difference.

Communicate better and avoid mass training

It's tempting to bulk your team training, but this isn't a productive option. While sometimes necessary, it's rare that a one-off, one-sizefits-all approach to training will be effective.

Train beyond the basic needs of your employees, and make it personalised. Why? Nobody likes to be lectured about something they already do. That's a waste of time, money and resources.

Instead, invest in individual training. By tailoring your training to individuals, you can help bring the best out of everyone and address clear role expectations, existing problems, the positives and the weakness of your team in a respectful way. This way, your employees will clearly understand their individual strengths (and their weaknesses) and they'll be able to effectively action change.

Avoid mass feedback, too

Like training, when it comes to appraisals

or discussions around performance - good or bad - it should be individual. That way, employees will have clarity around where they can work to become better. And everyone can be better.

You can easily apply both these systems by implementing a coaching system. Work with staff to decide on an action they'll take, then ask them to evaluate it and discuss how it could be improved. From here, your employees can make those improvements.

Consider exactly how people learn

Everyone reacts to and absorbs information differently. There are a few insightful approaches to consider when you're thinking about pedagogy. By thinking about thinking, we can overcome the challenges and fix the faulty processes and overwhelmed employees.

The Kolb four stage learning cycle is effective for this. It summarises:

- 1. Concrete experience The idea of learning from doing.
- 2. Reflective observation We learn by reflecting on past experiences.
- 3. Abstract conceptualisation We form new ideas based on past experience.
- 4. Active experimentation We take those ideas (the good ones, at least) and test them out.

This approach actively engages employees in the learning process and provides them with the experience that they're most likely to learn from, which in turn encourages more reflection and continuous learning.





Give responsibility as well as training

With the Kolb theory in mind, there is also the idea of letting people get on with it so they can find out for themselves. People need responsibility. And meaningful work can make for mistakes, and mistakes can be learned from (assuming they don't jeopardise the company).

To do this, deploy the 70:20:10 model. This theory argues that 70 percent of lessons are learned through doing, 20 percent from other people and only 10 percent from courses. This helps empower company culture, along with a shared purpose, and will nurture motivation.

Keep enabling learning and development

Alongside the actions to cultivating good training, you need to enable this training to develop culture beyond just the training programs. Good communication and continuous learning must be built into daily working life.

 Tools like Slack can be really useful for achieving this. It's social so it doesn't feel like work, yet employees will be sharing (and accessing) useful and insightful material, which will increase knowledge and awareness on relevant topics

 Rewards and incentives are also effective. Praise and rewards for doing good work will push people to learn and do more. Just remember: Balance short-term recognition with long-term purpose. Are they getting rewarded by seeing the results of their hard work, for example? Or do their efforts go unnoticed?

Businesses must adopt an environment of continuous learning. Without it, your employees' motivation levels will dry up within a matter of weeks.

Know your people

Ultimately good training is all about identifying your team's individual needs. Companies that have a strong sense of purpose are proven to perform well financially as a result. Take the time to establish company culture, your business's success depends on it.

By Callum Sharp

Essential Communication Skills for any Workplace (and how to Improve them)



Without great communication skills in the workplace, any business will simply grind to a halt.

There's nothing worse than miscommunication between individual staff and entire departments that causes utter chaos, frustration, lack of progress, missed deadlines, and quite possibly staff that decide to leave.

Why are communication skills important?

Communication is basically the grease that makes any business run smoothly.

If you're in a supportive company where everyone knows what's going on, what the business is aiming for in terms of long and short-term goals, and more importantly, why, you have the best possible place to work.

With good workplace communication, staff feel engaged and enthusiastic, and they feel a part of something. They work without needing to be micro-managed, and they come up with ideas and solutions, because they know they will be heard and that there's a very good chance what they suggest will be implemented.

So, if you're hoping to make sure your business is the kind of place where everyone is engaged and enthusiastic, what are the skills you need to have and encourage to make it happen?

1. Listening skills

First and foremost, people need to listen to each other. More than that, they need to hear each other, think about what is being said, acknowledge it and understand.

The worst miscommunications happen because people fail to listen properly, and then go off to do what they *think* was said, rather than what was actually said.

Active listening is one of the most important skills anyone can develop, from directors down.

2. Empathy

After listening, the most important thing anyone can do is understand and empathise with other people. If you can put yourself in other people's shoes, you can understand how they feel, get more of a sense of how you can help them, understand their frustrations and pain points, and you can communicate with them better.

And that goes for other staff members, management, AND your customers.

3. Patience

Along with empathy, having just a little bit of patience can help you calmly communicate how you're feeling, even when you're frustrated and annoyed, which gets your point over better and is far less likely to get someone's back up or cause an argument.

4. Positive attitude

Taking a positive approach makes life so much easier and an awful lot nicer both for you, and those around you. If you're always positive, you tend to assume that things can



be done and problems solved, rather than that they can't. You feel better, you look for the good in things, and you find it.

That's a far better way to work, than being the one who always shoots down every idea and assumes things will always go wrong.

And when things do go wrong, you'll deal with them a whole lot better with a positive attitude.

5. Being honest and open-minded

Going back to the positivity, being openminded and open to possibilities will get you much further forward than naysaying every idea before it's had a chance to work.

Along with that, being honest is a must. Trust is hugely important in any situation, and when people are working in a team, they need to know they can rely on each other to do what they say they will, and be honest about it.

And yes, that includes when you're the one who made a mess of something. It happens, but it's not the end of the world. Remember, people can't help you fix it if they don't know about it.

6. Giving and receiving feedback

Yes, it doesn't feel good if you haven't hit a standard or you've done something wrong, but being able to accept genuinely well-meant feedback gracefully helps an awful lot in moving forward after a problem.

Likewise, being able to give great, positive feedback is a skill that can make anyone you work with feel good.

7. Body language

Watch your body language when you're



communicating and when you're listening. Open, relaxed shoulders, and leaning forward show you're engaged, really listening and open to ideas, whereas folded arms, and leaning back can make you seem like you're distant, not involved, and not open to new ways of doing things.

8. Clarity and shortness

There's no need to write an essay or make a speech to express an idea or get your point across. Time is precious in any business, and your colleagues' time is just as valuable as yours. Be brief, to the point, and only include necessary information.

And follow up in writing, so you have a copy of what you've said for confirmation, and your audience has a copy they can refer to, to check what was said and what they need to do.

9. Self-improvement

Continuous improvement isn't just for the business. Life-long learning is good for you, giving you new perspectives and ideas, and widening your experience and your viewpoint.

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Happy New Year from DeskDemon

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