



THE HIDDEN EFFICIENCY OF EVERYDAY CONVERSATIONS

BY GRETA A. DAVIS

We often see communication as an extra task: another meeting, another message, something that takes time away from “real work.” But in practice, effective communication is what makes work smoother. It prevents rework, clears up misunderstandings, strengthens relationships, and builds alignment that saves time and energy for everyone involved. When done well, communication doesn’t add weight; it lightens the load.

START WITH YOURSELF: AWARENESS THAT REDUCES FRICTION

Before we communicate with others, the process should begin internally. Many of our most stressful work moments come from conversations we postpone or avoid. Research from the Center for Creative Leadership indicates that we can spend up to eight hours thinking about a single avoided conversation — time lost not because of the discussion itself but because of the worry around it.

Checking in with ourselves helps break this cycle. What assumptions am I making? What’s holding me back? How can I prepare so the conversation is more productive? Taking time to regulate our energy — through reflection, grounding, or simply pausing — sets the stage for clearer, calmer, and on-time communication.

ONE-ON-ONE: FEEDBACK THAT KEEPS WORK MOVING

Once we have internal clarity, communication with others becomes easier. One of the most impactful ways to do this is through regular feedback. Feedback is not about criticism; it’s about improving workflow. Small misunderstandings, unspoken frustrations, or unclear expectations can quickly become roadblocks if they aren’t addressed.

The key is trust, and trust grows from balanced communication. Think of it like a bank account. Instances of positive feedback are the deposits, which make the occasional withdrawal (a corrective comment) easier to receive, according to research from the Gottman Institute. A consistent ratio, such as five positive messages for every corrective one, helps maintain strong working relationships.

Simple frameworks can also help keep feedback constructive and clear. The SBI (Situation–Behavior–Impact) concept focuses on observable facts rather than assumptions. SSG (Specific–Supportive–Generous) encourages clarity and empathy. These tools make feedback feel less like confrontation and more like collaboration.

ACROSS THE TEAM: COMMUNICATION THAT BUILDS CULTURE

Effective individual communication scales up to the team level. When people feel safe asking questions, sharing updates, or raising concerns, teams operate with greater alignment and trust. Author Judith Glasser refers to this as “conversational intelligence” — the ability to move beyond surface-level exchanges toward conversations that strengthen relationships and shape culture.

This shows up in everyday practices: quick check-ins, conversations with employees, intentional meeting habits, or simply choosing how you want to show up in a group setting. These are not extra tasks; they are how healthy team cultures are built. Transparent communication keeps people informed, reduces duplicate work, and ensures

that everyone is rowing in the same direction.

It also matters during high-stakes moments — times when the outcome could significantly impact a relationship or project. Slowing down, asking questions, and approaching the conversation with curiosity can shift the dynamic from tension to problem-solving.

THE COMMUNICATION CASCADE: FROM CLARITY TO PRODUCTIVITY

When communication begins with self-awareness, extends to thoughtful feedback, and expands into team-level dialogue, it creates a cascade of benefits:

- Better alignment because expectations are clear.
- Increased productivity because less time is spent reworking or guessing.
- Enhanced trust because people feel seen and supported.
- Lighter workloads because teams collaborate instead of compensating for miscommunication.

These benefits don’t require major changes — just small, consistent practices that build momentum over time.

START SMALL, START TODAY

Think of one conversation you’ve been postponing. What would change if you approached it with intention instead of avoidance? Or choose one simple communication habit to try this week: a daily positive comment, a brief check-in with a colleague, or a clearer request in your next email.

Communication is more than a soft skill — it’s a work strategy. And when we practice it regularly and transparently, work doesn’t just get better. It gets easier.



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