

# The Levels Of Communication, And Why They Matter

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in [CWA Blog](#)



Communication is the tool we use to reach goals or accomplish tasks that we can't achieve on our own.

"Homo sapiens conquered the world thanks above all to its unique language."

Now, you may not be planning to conquer the world, but if this simple statement from Ph.D. historian Yuval Noah Harari doesn't drive home the importance of communication in your organization, you're probably doomed to forever dealing with meetings that should have been emails, text messages that should be conversations, and a never-ending game of organizational broken telephone.

Harari lays out how the development and use of language was the catalyst for all human progress in his popular book, "Sapiens". Many animals communicate, but Homo Sapiens developed nuances that allowed us to convey more and more complex ideas...any animal can start chirping, squeaking, or woofing to say something like "OMG a predator, hide!!", but only humans can say "OMG the youth team just rolled in, let's get outta here before these children warm-up on my project and annihilate my self-confidence."

This complexity in our language allowed for a never-before-seen level of cooperation that led to the forming of tribes, societies, and civilization as we know it. And even though cooperation was the multiplier needed to really make things happen, communication was foundational – how can you cooperate on something if you don't know the vision, goals, or limitations?

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And while you might be thinking that it's a bit of a stretch to correlate the pre-historic development of language with modern business communication, consider Harari's comments on the importance of communication today...

"Even today, a critical threshold in human organizations falls somewhere around this magic number (150 people). Below this threshold, communities, businesses, social networks, and military units can maintain themselves based mainly on intimate acquaintance and rumor-mongering... **But once the threshold of 150 individuals is crossed, things can no longer work that way...** Successful family businesses usually face a crisis when they grow larger and hire more personnel. If they cannot reinvent themselves, they go bust."

And now, everyone other than the multi-gym groups is thinking '150 individuals? We don't have that many staff!'

But how many members do you have? Are they part of the community that contributes to the success of your organization? Do you communicate with them? If you answered, "more than 150, yes, and yes", keep reading!

When your community of staff and members grows beyond 150 people, it becomes impossible to keep everyone on the same page without organized communication – as Harari puts it, "most people can neither intimately know, nor gossip effectively about, more than 150 human beings."

But when you view communication as a tool, you can scale it to reach more than "150 humans" without having the message lost or distorted. Organizing your communication is the key to reaching beyond where word of mouth will get you.

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Humans have been doing this for a long time by using myths, tokens and symbols, and written texts to foster collaboration. This has been done so successfully that we have created laws, societies, and cultures that billions of use and agree on.

What better place to draw inspiration for communication strategizing than from the very forming of “civilization” as we know it!

To bring it a bit closer to home, we can see the same principals in action within the world of the indoor climbing industry – from the casual communications of your inner circle or leadership team, to the organized and intentional messages shared with the entire company, and then eventually reaching your entire community to spur collaboration.

## **Inner Circle / Leadership Team**

When Harari warns against using informal, personal communication with larger organizations or groups of people, he is also saying that it can work with smaller groups. This is the land of natural communication – in-person chats, text-message-clarifications, quick phone-calls – and work-culture development that happens from working closely with the same small group over a period of time.

Just because the communication here can happen ‘naturally’, doesn’t mean you can’t apply strategy or intention. Communication at this level will obviously impact whatever projects or areas the team is working on – the very basics of communication will have an impact on performance here: clearly stated vision and goals; concise action-items with stated deadline; adapting to your team’s communication strengths and weaknesses.

Also, if your inner circle is part of a larger organization, you are planting the seeds for organizational and cultural level communication...there are many forms of communication, and at this personal level, our actions are an inescapable way that we communicate our values, work-ethic, boundaries – all important aspects of your organization’s culture.

## **Company / Organizational Level**

When everyone in your inner circle has a team or department of their own, it’s time to start thinking about and even managing what they’re communicating with their teams. Ensure communication is happening to begin with, and fix that broken telephone before anyone even picks it up.





I always assume miscommunications can occur, so when I need to communicate with larger groups of staff, I see an increased need to over-manage messages that I think are important. This is where more organized and formal communication starts to become important.

Scaling your communication like this requires you to know what you need to communicate, and which details are crucial to get right. Have and implement an organizational communication plan that systemically ensures those bases are covered.

Onboarding and formal staff-training are excellent areas to look-at from the organizational-communication perspective. Regular staff meetings are a common go-to for a reason – [check out our article on staff meetings here](#) - as are written company statements in the form of policies and procedures or memo's to staff.

When everyone in your organization feels connected to the inner circle by way of organized and consistent communication, staff buy into your company's values and goals. This serves as a primary motivator for organization-wide collaboration.

## Community Level

When your organization is communicating and collaborating effectively, the result is felt across your entire community.

Note that the organization and your inner circle are within the community; these elements all work together, not independently. You will always have these levels of communication that need to be tended to, with each level not just affecting the next, but being part of it.

At this level of communication, we rely on both the seeds of culture we planted in our inner circle, and the organized approach of the company level. We communicate with the wider community directly – through organized, planned communication like websites, written policies, or social media posts – and indirectly – through your facility's overall culture, the level of professionalism and service, the events you hold, the programs you run.

This direct and indirect communication, starting with your inner circle and working out through the organization is a process that takes time but ultimately leads to the highest form of collaboration and cooperation – the same form that makes the development of entire societies and cultures possible. Not a bad example to follow.

Being intentional and organizing at these levels of communication is how you keep your

being intentional and organizing at these levels of communication is how you keep your message, mission, and culture going in the right direction as your company and community grow.

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## About the Author



Brendan is a Canada-based climber and a Manager for the [Calgary Climbing Centre](#). He has 10 years of management and leadership experience, and a passion for supporting the climbing lifestyle. With the Rockies as his playground, he is drawn to the incredible ice, alpine, and multipitch lines that define the local landscape.



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