7. Email communication

Aim: This activity explores our effectiveness of using email communication as part of our professional practice. It is ideally done with another person or in a small group. This activity can be done in conjunction with the "Reflecting on work relationships" and "Pros, Cons and Questions" activities.

Instructions

- Each group member looks back into their email history and counts how often the intentions of emails were misinterpreted by recipients in the past two months?
- Compare the totals with the other members of the group.
- Then select and print a copy of an email conversation which resulted in an unexpected response.

> Note to Critical friend: To ensure anonymity members of the group should remove identifying features before sharing their selected email.

Group reflection

Each member of the group passes their email to the member on their left. As an outsider to the email conversation this member of the group will hold greater objectivity.

Organisation based on four members in the group 'W','X','Y' and 'Z'. Member 'W' gives their email communication to member 'X', 'X' to 'Y' and so on.
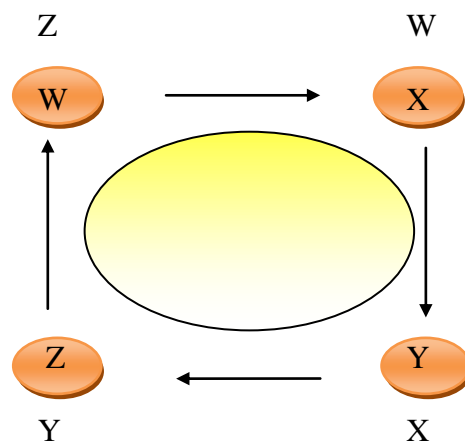

To guide the analysis, individually:

1. Read the email conversation. Describe in a few words an initial holistic impression.
2. Reflect upon the mood created through language. For example, is the language informative, conciliatory, demanding, defensive, matter of fact?
3. Identify what action was to be taken? Who had to complete the action? And Why?
4. Identify where the differences in intent or expectations may have occurred.
5. Does the initiator of the email have the same expectations as the respondent?
6. Write onto the printed copy any questions that result from your reading as a form of feedback to the owner of the email communication.

Annotate and/or use a colour highlighter to identify responses onto the printed copy of the email communication.

Working in Pairs

Work with another member of the group who is not the owner of the email conversation.

For example, members 'W' and 'Y' work together to develop the analysis of emails by 'X' and 'Z'.
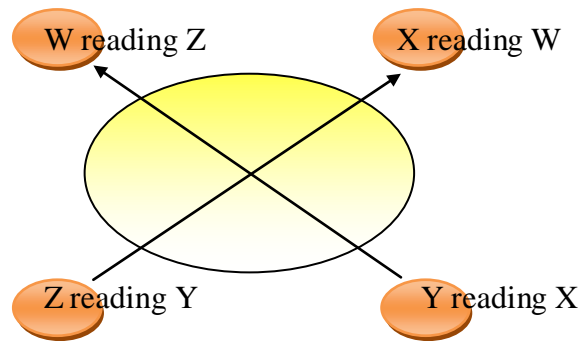
7. Collaborate with each other to add to the analysis of the email communications.
   Briefly explain the findings of each email.
   Do you both agree? Disagree?
   What does the second "pair of eyes" see?
   Write additional feedback as questions to the owner on the printed copy of the relevant email communication.

8. Return the email communication analysis to the original owner to read.

Group discussion

9. Discuss the question: What changes will I make to my email communication habits to ensure effective communication?

Further reflection and/or discussion

Is emailing an effective form of communication if we wish to build relationships with those we are sending the email?