

PM & KO Communication

As the requiring activity representative, Program Manager (PM), or Contracting Officer (KO), you are an essential member of an Integrated Product Team. Your ability to communicate effectively will greatly impact your Team’s capacity to meet mission requirements and obtain favorable results. This tool provides suggested questions to open a dialogue, as well as resources and training to strengthen your teamwork and communication skills.

Kick Off a Conversation

To communicate for clarification, increase collaboration, and achieve successful acquisition outcomes...start with these questions:

Program Overview	Stakeholders
Where can we find the original requirement documents? Are they current? Are there any undocumented requirements?	Who are the key stakeholders involved in this acquisition (e.g., customer, user, funds holder, test agency)?
Can we provide a concise overview of the acquisition’s goals and objectives?	Which agencies and organizations have we established partnerships with? Are the partnerships effective?
What are the critical success factors for the acquisition?	What government agencies or organizations are providing similar products and services?
How does this acquisition align or conflict with other initiatives and agency priorities?	Who are the champions of the acquisition? Who are obstacles?
Risk Management	Resource Allocation
Where are risks, issues, and opportunities documented (e.g., Risk Register)? What is the process to identify, mitigate, and update status?	How are resources (funding, personnel, equipment) allocated for this program (e.g., incremental funding, funding anticipated in FYXX...)?
How will we manage unexpected challenges or changes during execution (e.g., Risk Management Plan)?	What is the current funding profile (e.g., POM input, NDAA approved budget)?

What are the highest risks we foresee for this acquisition? How do we plan to mitigate them?	What strategies will we use to optimize resource utilization?
Contract Management	Communication and Reporting
How will we ensure compliance with contractual requirements?	How will we communicate acquisition updates to stakeholders and leadership? How will we communicate internally and externally (e.g., communication plan)?
What mechanisms are in place to monitor contractor performance? Who will be responsible for contract administration (e.g., DCMA, procuring office, other Contract Administration Office (CAO))?	Where can we access historical acquisition information?
Have Contracting Officer's Representatives (COR) been identified? How are postaward findings documented and communicated across locations and representatives?	How will contractual documentation be shared over the contract lifecycle? Where will it be located?
What incentives and penalties could be used to incentivize contractor performance?	What reporting mechanisms will be used to provide transparency and acquisition status?
Schedule and Milestones	Change Management
What are the critical milestones for this acquisition, and how will we track and share progress?	How will we manage changes to acquisition requirements or scope?
How will we manage schedule delays or adjustments?	What analysis will we conduct prior to implementing changes?
Compliance and Reporting	Lessons Learned and Continuous Improvement
What are the reporting expectations, deadlines, and formats?	What lessons have we learned from previous acquisitions and how should we apply them here?
Who will take the lead on each required report or acquisition document?	How will we document lessons learned and where will they be archived?
	How will we foster a culture of continuous improvement within our Acquisition Team?

Resources to Sharpen Your Communication and Teamwork Skills

Use these tips, tools, and training courses to help you communicate and collaborate more effectively and build stronger relationships. You can always utilize these resources for personal development. Even better, review these tips and learning assets as a Team to find ways to improve and evolve collectively!

Employ a Visual Frame of Reference During Discussions

Utilizing a visual tool can help illustrate discussion topics and create mutual understanding, especially between multi-functional teammates who can sometimes seem to be speaking different languages. Here are some DAU tools that can help:

[Contracting Subway Map](#): an interactive guide to the acquisition contracting process

[Adaptive Acquisition Framework](#): website outlining the 6 pathways with policies & guidance

[Contracting Cone](#): outlines the full spectrum of available FAR/Non-FAR contract strategies

Follow the Three C's of Establishing Relationships

Healthy work relationships lead to people feeling supported and secure, driving productivity and innovation. Establishing and maintaining positive, resilient relationships depends on the three C's – communication, collaboration, and commitment.



Communication

Effective communication allows for understanding other perspectives and appreciating each other as individuals. It moves through four stages: exchanging information, ensuring understanding, establishing trust and belief, and committing to action.

Effective communication starts with exchanging information. Once we know our message has been received, we move to the next stage, which is to ensure the receiver understands the message and its intent. This requires some back and forth between the communicating parties. Techniques to ensure understanding include being a good listener, asking relevant questions, and giving meaningful feedback.

After we have ensured the other party understands the message, we must establish they also trust and believe it. Think about this. What if the person you're communicating with understands the message you're conveying, but doesn't trust or believe it's reasonable or the right thing to do? Your conversation or request will stall. Establishing trust and belief may not always be easy, but it's necessary if we want to secure a commitment to action.

The final stage of effective communication is to get some type of commitment to action. This might be a statement or agreement on what the next actions are based on the message and your interaction. It might simply be a promise of support. You must listen for the commitment. If it doesn't come up naturally during the interaction, you may need to ask for it. Sometimes this process goes quickly and smoothly, but other times it's slow and deliberate. It takes skill and effort, but strong relationships require us to understand and appreciate other points of view to create a shared vision. Need to brush up on your communication skills? Check out the Suggested Training section of this tool for online courses that can help.



Collaboration

Collaboration occurs when people work together, often to create something or achieve a goal. Successful collaboration requires a commitment from team members to be respectful, have a positive and open mindset, and constructively handle differences. Collaboration is so important in the workplace because it leads to improved, more innovative problem-solving because the team shares expertise and learns from one another.

Healthy relationships depend on your ability to productively work with others. This means ensuring the tools in your skills toolbox are always sharp. Find online training to help improve your self-awareness, social, conflict management, time management, and collaboration in the Suggested Training section below.



Commitment

Commitment to ensuring a relationship thrives means fulfilling your responsibilities, caring about the success of others, being dedicated to shared goals, and seeking out opportunities for improvement and personal development. Strong, positive relationships require trust, respect, and genuine interest. This means being accountable to agreed upon deadlines and

milestones, honest and straightforward about potential issues or shortfalls, a good listener, and open to giving and receiving constructive feedback.

The only way for any of us to improve and grow is with experience and meaningful feedback. This is also true for relationships. That means regularly and consistently talking about what is going well and what could be better. For feedback to be constructive it should be provided in terms of clearly stated goals, be specific, and descriptive rather than judgmental. Want to learn more about giving and receiving feedback or being a good listener and valued teammate? Take a look at the online training courses in the Suggested Training section.

Suggested Training

DAU Learning Assets

[WSD 005 Crucial Conversations Workshop](#): Provides solutions on how individuals, teams, and organizations can overcome problems stemming from under-communicating, withholding information, or failing to act with unity and conviction.

[CON 0010 Getting to Yes](#): Learn valuable interest-based negotiation (IBN) techniques in the book “Getting to Yes,” to find creative, integrative solutions that satisfy each party's interests and needs, resulting in the best possible negotiated outcomes.

[CALD 001 Resilience Credential](#): This credential is designed to equip you with tools to navigate the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous work of Defense Acquisition.

Find the complete listing of available DAU training courses, credentials, and workshops in [DAU's iCatalog](#).

Commercial Learning Courses

Self-awareness is the ability to identify and understand what makes us unique as individuals, our values and beliefs, how we will likely act and react in certain situations, and how others see us. It leads to improved communication, stronger relationships, and better decisions. Turns out, most of us are less self-aware than we think! Improve your self-awareness through training found on the DAU Virtual Campus.

[Developing Self-Awareness](#)

[The Power of Insight: How Self-Awareness Helps Us Succeed at Work and in Life](#)

Social skills are the tools we use to communicate and interact with others. Remote work began as a necessity, but as remote and hybrid work becomes the norm, we need to evaluate whether we can effectively engage in this type of environment. Have your tools become rusty in the world of virtual collaboration? Sharpen your skills through training found on the DAU Virtual Campus.

[Refresh Your Workplace Social Skills](#)

[Digital Body Language](#)

[Skills to Build Stronger Work Relationships](#)

Our time is limited and precious, so we need to make sure we're making the most of it. Setting the right priorities and staying focused can make us more productive and can even result in gaining extra time throughout the week. Learn some practical tips for increasing productivity and earning more time with this training found on DAU's Virtual Campus.

[Time Management Fundamentals](#)

[Finding Your Time Management Style](#) (Take after *Time Management Fundamentals*)

[How to Manage Your Attention and Your Priorities](#)

No matter what job you have, you're likely part of a team (or teams). So, what makes a team great and how do you become a valued team member? Learn more with this training located on DAU's Virtual Campus.

[Teamwork Foundations](#)

[Teamwork Essentials: Stand Out as a Valuable Team Member](#)

[Becoming a Successful Collaborator](#)

A successful communication process results in the sender and receiver ultimately having a shared understanding and meaning for the transmitted message. There are so many ways this can go wrong! Effective communication is crucial in the workplace, but it's not always easy. Check out this training found on DAU's Virtual Campus to help you improve this skillset.

[Communication Foundations](#)

[Expanding Your Communication Skill Set](#)

[Interpersonal Communication](#)

Feedback is information about past behavior and actions, delivered in the present, which may influence future behavior and actions. For many of us, giving and receiving feedback can be very uncomfortable (some might even say scary). Giving and receiving feedback is a relevant skill for employees at all levels within an organization. The training below is a good starting point for anyone, but you can find additional, role-specific training on DAU's Virtual Campus.

[Giving and Receiving Feedback](#)

[Taking the Fear Out of Feedback](#)

[Asking for Feedback as an Employee](#)

Being a good listener requires us to not just acknowledge the sound, but to hear something with thoughtful attention, giving consideration. This means paying attention, withholding judgment, reflecting on what was said and getting clarification if anything was unclear or confusing, summarizing to confirm understanding, and waiting to share or answer until we understand the other person's perspective. While not simple, this is something that can be learned. Start with this training on DAU's Virtual Campus.

[Effective Listening](#)

[Improving Your Listening Skills](#)

[Enhancing Communication through Listening](#)

Conflict happens in the workplace. How to handle and constructively work through conflict is a critical skill to maintain personal and professional relationships and get teams cooperating. Learn how to turn disagreements into positive outcomes in this training found on DAU's Virtual Campus.

[Fred Kofman on Managing Conflict](#)

[Conflict Resolution Foundations](#)

[Managing Team Conflict](#) (Specifically for team leaders, but good for any team member)

Browse all available commercial learning courses and resources on [DAU's Virtual Campus](#).