

Tool: Jumping over communication barriers



What can I do with this tool?

This tool helps you jump over Communication barriers. It increases your insight in your Communication challenges. It shows you risks and opportunities. The tool provides you choices for solutions as well. When you signal communication problems and identify barriers, it is easier to cope with them. Using this tool regularly will make it your second nature to identify symptoms, understand causes and develop solutions for your communication challenges.

For whom is this tool meant?

For professionals who help implement international agreements on biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development

What knowledge is presumed for using this tool?

To effectively use this tool, it is required to understand Key subjects 1-5 of the [course Strategic communication](#) on [Frogleaps.org](#).

When can I use it?

It is never too late to analyze the Communication challenges, but we advise you to do it as a first step even before starting a Communication project. The sooner, the better! You never start communicating from scratch. Your audiences mostly have been approached before by others or by yourself, sometimes with the same or similar messages as you have. It is important to analyze why such messages have not had the desired effect, and how you can improve.

How can I jump over communication barriers?

Step 1

Select diagnosis methods: how will you check if there are communication barriers?

Step 2

Identify symptoms: Check if your message is heard, understood and agreed upon. Then check if your message results in behavior change.

Step 3

Diagnose: Find out which barriers cause failing communication. When your target audience hears, understands and agrees with your message but does not change behavior, you are facing a bigger problem. Go back to and analyze the problem, people and stakeholders to understand where you are and where you want to go

Step 4

Develop solutions: decide how to remove these barriers.

Frogleap!

Get in touch with your target audiences & stakeholders and jump over communication barriers!

Symptoms, diagnosis methods, barriers & solutions: explanation

What are symptoms of communication barriers, which diagnosis methods are smart to use and what are possible solutions? For easy understanding, read Key subjects 1-5 in the [course Strategic communication](#).

Which symptoms point to a communication problem?

Symptoms of a communication problem:

- Message not heard
- Message not understood
- Message not agreed

Symptoms of a larger problem:

- Message heard, understood and agreed but behavior not changed, desired actions not taken

Which diagnosis methods are best to identify barriers?

Face to face communication is a very powerful method. Of course you can also use phone calls and email but best is:

- Asking questions, listening, two-way communication
- Kitchen & pub and office talks
- Focus groups
- Observing behavior

Barriers causing communication problems

Symptom: Message not heard

- Selected channels don't connect to target audience
- Other problems more important for target audience
- Sender lacks credibility

Symptom: Message not understood

- Lack of previous knowledge needed to understand new knowledge
- Message too complicated
- Wrong language

Symptom: Message not agreed

- Different knowledge
- Different attitude
- Different believes
- Different values
- Sender lacks credibility

Barriers causing larger problems

Message heard, understood and agreed but behavior not changed or desired action not taken, because of:

- Social pressure
- Habit
- Infrastructure
- Costs and benefits of current behavior
- Costs and benefits of desired behavior

How to remove barriers and solve communication problems?

- Select different channels
- Connect with other issues which are high on agenda
- Select different senders
- Create different messages
- Use different language
- Offer missing knowledge

How to solve larger problems? Go back to the [Understanding phase](#) of your project! What needs to be changed in social pressure, habit, infrastructure and costs and benefits of behavior to succeed?

Symptoms, diagnosis methods, barriers & solutions: explanation

Step 1: Select diagnosis methods	Step 2: Identify symptoms	Step 3: Diagnose the barriers causing failing communication	Step 4: Develop solutions to jump over barriers
<p>Asking questions, listening, two-way communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Did you get my email , read the newsletter, see the poster, get my message? -Which issues are on top of your list? On which position is our problem? -How do you feel about the sender? - How could I reach you best? 	Message not heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Selected channels don't connect to target audience -Target audience preoccupied with other issues -Sender lacks credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Select different channels and/or senders and resend messages -Connect to more important issues
<p>Asking questions, listening, two-way communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Can you tell the message in your own words? -Can you explain the message to other people? -Can you tell me what you are asked to do? 	Message not understood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of previous knowledge needed to understand new knowledge -Message too complicated -Wrong language -Desired new behavior unclear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create different messages -Use different language -Offer missing knowledge -Clarify requested behavior change
<p>Asking questions, listening, two-way communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Do you agree? -Why not? Explore attitudes, believes and values. -How do you feel about the sender? 	Message not agreed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Different knowledge -Different attitude -Different believes -Different values -Sender lacks credibility 	<p>Create different messages which connect to current attitudes, believes and values</p> <p>Select different senders</p>
Diagnosis: observation combined with asking questions and listening.	Message heard, understood and agreed but behavior not changed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Social pressure -Habit -Infrastructure -Costs and benefits of current behavior -Costs and benefits of desired behavior 	<p>Go back to understanding: Re-analyze the problem, people and stakeholders.</p> <p>What needs to be changed in social pressure, habit, infrastructure and costs and benefits of behavior to succeed?</p>
Monitor behavior, observe, ask questions	Behavior not sustained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Target audience forgets to repeat behavior -Change in determinants of behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Give positive feedback -Use reminders -Look for motivators

Example: Our case of Simona

Step 1: Select diagnosis methods <i>How did Simona identify barriers?</i>	Step 2: Identify symptoms <i>Which symptoms did she find?</i>	Step 3: Diagnose <i>Which barriers caused failing communication?</i>	Step 4: Develop solutions to jump over barriers <i>How did Simona cope with the new information?</i>
<p>By observing and asking questions.</p> <p>Simona remembered her mother always saying: <i>“you have a mouth to ask questions!”</i></p> <p>Simona talked with her target audiences in kitchens, in the pub, in the park and in focus groups.</p> <p>She did not send her messages as usual, but listened and observed carefully.</p>	<p>Simona found out that her audiences did not hear her message, did not understand it and did not agree with her either.</p> <p>Simona’s original message was: <i>‘The biodiversity of park Boč is damaged by visitors behavior. Everybody should help us to stop all damaging behavior by all visitors all year’.</i></p> <p>Simona found out that part of her audience did not hear her message. Talking with the people during lectures, she realized that they attended because of social reasons – to meet people of the community - and not to listen to her. And the people that heard her message, misunderstood it. Worse, the few people that understood her, did not agree with her.</p>	<p>Printing leaflets and giving yearly lectures in the local community hall about the importance of nature conservation in Boč to raise awareness and change people’s destructive behavior, proofed a waste of time. It did not lead to any behavior change at all. The channels proofed wrong, the language too scientific, the message not clear and the desired action was not supported by common behavior drivers or infrastructure.</p>	<p>Through focus groups Simona found out that her main message should not focus on behavior of all visitors of the park during the whole year, but on visitors’ behavior during the 1st of May Celebration threatening one special protected species. She started exploring with the major stakeholders how to best tackle the 1st of May event and to how to communicate it. This way she found out that new infrastructure was needed for behavior change. And Simona found out that the best communication channels were those of the stakeholders. Not only the channels but also the new message was completely different than the original : <i>‘We all love our Boč mountain meadows, that’s why the 1st of May all mountain roads are closed; so please park your car and use our free bus service to the park’s inn where you can drink, eat, camp safely, play games, enjoy nature and have fun!’</i></p>

Now it's your turn: fill in the template

Decide which symptom or symptoms you are dealing with, select a diagnosis method and analyze which barriers you have to deal with. Then develop solutions to jump over these barriers. For inspiration you can look at our case of Simona above.

Step 1: Select diagnosis methods	Step 2: Identify symptoms	Step 3: Diagnosis to see which barriers cause failing communication?	Step 4: Develop solutions to jump over barriers
	Message not heard		
	Message not understood		
	Message not agreed		
	Message heard, understood and agreed but behavior not changed		
	Behavior not sustained		