Communication Hacks — FOSDEM 2021

Nuritzi Sanchez · FOSDEM 2021, Community

Slides from FOSDEM, used under CC BY 2.0 BE.

Speaker slides additionally marked CC BY-SA 4.0

Source: https://video.fosdem.org/2021/D.community/community_devroom_communication_hacks.webm

Converted with Video2Any · video2any.com

Not affiliated with or endorsed by FOSDEM.

Communication Hacks

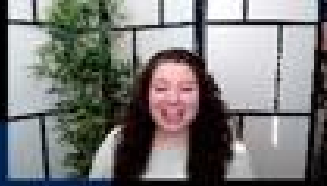
Strategies for fostering collaboration and dealing with conflict in open source communities

Nuritzi Sanchez

D.community

2021-02-07





Communication Hacks

STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING COLLABORATION AND DEALING WITH CONFLICT IN OPEN SOURCE

BY NURITZI SANCHEZ
SR. OPEN SOURCE PROGRAM MANAGER, GITLAB





Nuritzi Sanchez

Sr. Open Source Program Manager, GitLab

@1nuritzi



Today we'll cover

Navigating cultural differences

Improving feedback

Active listening

Favorite hacks



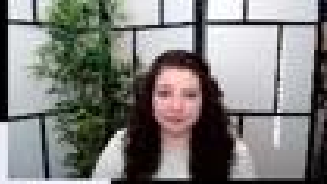
Today we'll cover

Navigating cultural differences

Improving feedback

Active listening

Favorite hacks



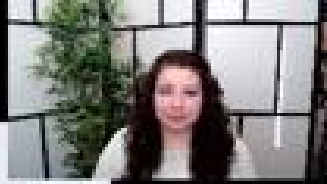
We need to understand cultural differences

Low-context	COMMUNICATING	High-context
Direct Negative Feedback	EVALUATING	Indirect Negative Feedback
Egalitarian	LEADING	Hierarchical
Consensual	DECIDING	Top-down
Task-based	TRUSTING	Relationship-based
Confrontational	DISAGREEING	Avoids Confrontation
Linear-time	SCHEDULING	Flexible-time
Principles First	PERSUADING	Applications First

Countries are ranked along these 7 indicators:

1. Communicating
2. Evaluating
3. Leading
4. Trusting
5. Disagreeing
6. Scheduling
7. Persuading

Source: The Culture Map by Erin Meyer via https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/

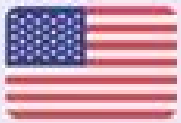


What it means

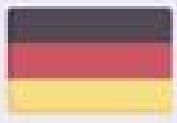
Communicating

Low context: good communication is precise, simple, and clear. Repetion is often used to avoid misunderstandings.

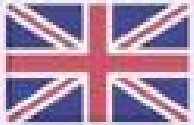
High context: good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered. You must read between the lines.



USA



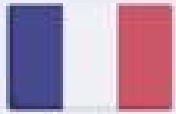
Germany



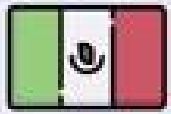
UK



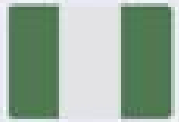
Spain



France



México



Nigeria



India



China



Indonesia

Low Context — High Context

Source: The Culture Map by Erin Meyer via https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/

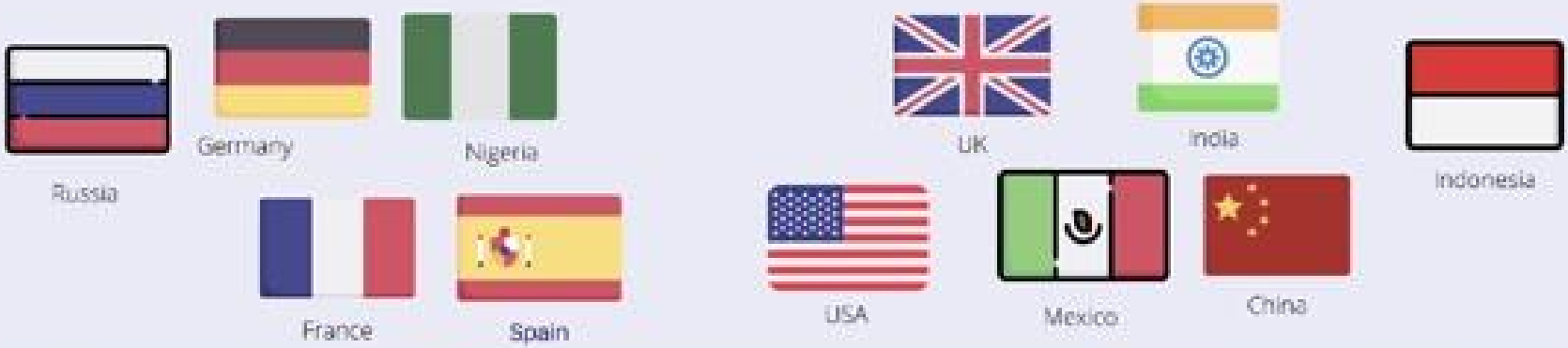


What it means

Evaluating

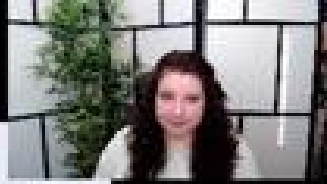
Direct negative feedback: delivered frankly, bluntly, and honestly. Negative messages are not softened by positive ones. Absolutes are used. Ok to give in front of groups.

Indirect negative feedback: delivered softly, subtly, and diplomatically. Positive messages wrap negative ones. Qualifying descriptors are used. Feedback must be given in private.



Direct Negative Feedback — Indirect Negative Feedback

Source: The Culture Map by Erin Meyer via https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/



What it means

Persuading

Principles first: Value the "why" first. Have been trained to develop the theory or concept first before presenting the fact, statement, or opinion.

Applications first: Value the "how" or "what" first. Trained to begin with a fact, statement, or opinion and back it up or explain the conclusion as necessary.





Principles First — Applications First

Source: The Culture Map by Erin Meyer via https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/

What it means

Persuading

Principles first: Value the "why" first. Have been trained to develop the theory or concept first before presenting the fact, statement, or opinion.

Applications first: Value the "how" or "what" first. Trained to begin with a fact, statement, or opinion and back it up or explain the conclusion as necessary.





Principles First — Applications First

Source: The Culture Map by Erin Meyer via https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/

Culture Map Example: 2021 GNOME Foundation Board of Directors

In 2021 there are Directors with backgrounds from:

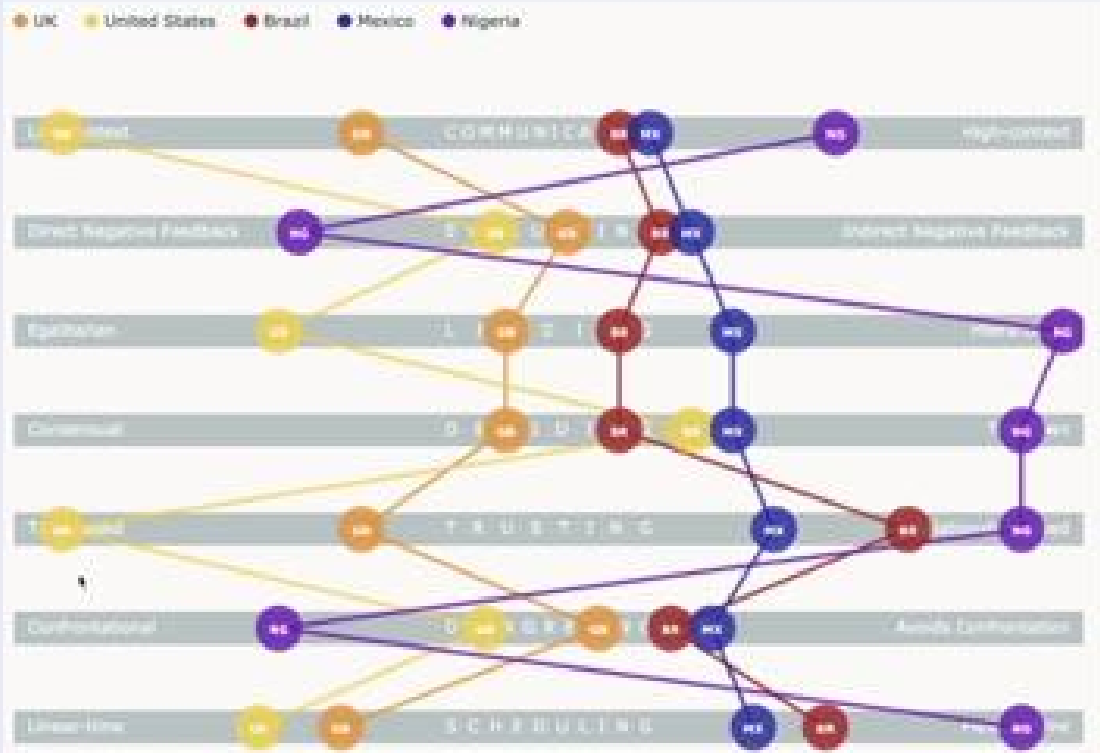
UK

United States

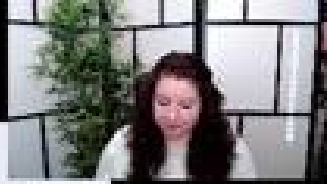
Brazil

Mexico

Nigeria



Source: The Culture Map by Erin Meyer via https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/



Tips for navigating cultural differences

Invest time in getting to know the people you work with

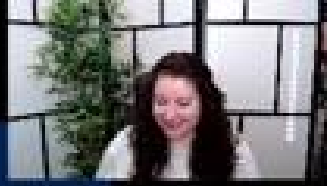
Don't make assumptions

It's ok to establish expectations, but make sure you understand the tradeoffs.

Let empathy be your guide.



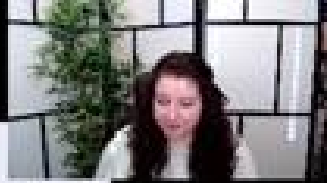
GitLab Cross-Culture Collaboration Guide: https://about.gitlab.com/company/culture/cross-culture-collaboration-guide/



Improving feedback



Feedback is a gift,
but most of us
find it challenging



FEEDBACK



Giving and receiving feedback is a skill that we can build!

Be aware of underlying biases or tendencies
As we just learned, real cultural differences exist that we need to be aware of. When we give or receive feedback, we are influenced by our own stereotypes and biases.

Feedback is a good thing!
Feedback-seeking behavior has been linked to higher job satisfaction, being more creative on the job, and adapting to things more quickly.

Seeking negative feedback is associated with higher performance.

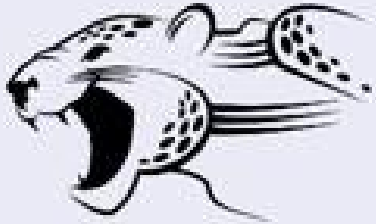


RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Receiving negative feedback is tough!

We feel bad emotions more strongly than we feel good ones because our brains are wired to detect threats to help us survive.

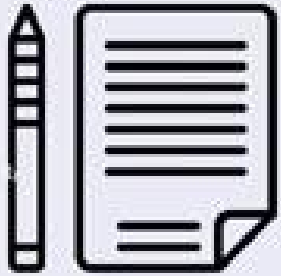
Our fight, flight, or freeze instincts can kick in when we receive negative feedback.



TIPS FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Create a script

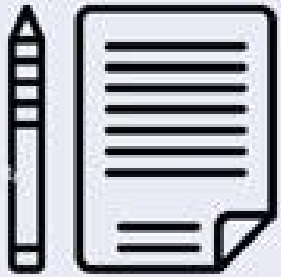
Make taking a time out a part of your process and develop a script to help: "Thanks for the feedback. I'm going to take some time to process it and will come back to you later."

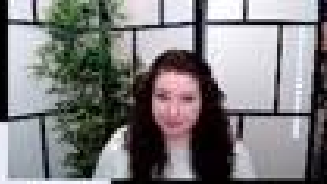


TIPS FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Create a script

Make taking a time out a part of your process and develop a script to help: "Thanks for the feedback. I'm going to take some time to process it and will come back to you later."



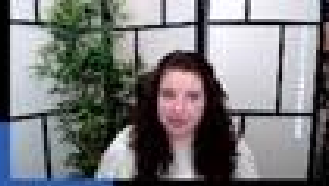


TIPS FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Process the feedback

Ask yourself: What is true about what you heard? What do you think is biased? How can you use this to progress?





Identify your triggers

Truth Triggers
Set off by the substance of the feedback itself. We feel that it's somehow off, unhelpful, or simply untrue.

Relationship Triggers
Set off by a particular person who is giving us this gift of feedback. Our focus shifts from the feedback itself to our relationship with the person giving us the feedback.

Identity Triggers
Causes us to question our sense of identity. We feel overwhelmed, threatened, ashamed, or off balance. We're suddenly unsure what to think of ourselves and we end up just trying to survive.

Source: Thanks for the Feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well



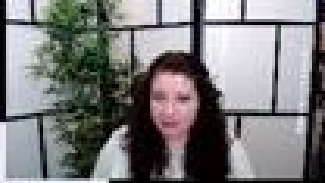
Identify your triggers

Truth Triggers
Set off by the substance of the feedback itself. We feel that it's somehow off, unhelpful, or simply untrue.

Relationship Triggers
Set off by a particular person who is giving us this gift of feedback. Our focus shifts from the feedback itself to our relationship with the person giving us the feedback.

Identity Triggers
Causes us to question our sense of identity. We feel overwhelmed, threatened, ashamed, or off balance. We're suddenly unsure what to think of ourselves and we end up just trying to survive.

Source: Thanks for the Feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well

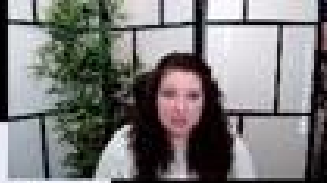


SBI MODEL

Use the SBI-model to understand intent:

S - Situation: Describe the situation, be specific about where it occurred.
B - Behavior: Describe the observable behavior. Don't assume you know what the other person was thinking.
I - Impact: Describe what you thought or felt in reaction to the behavior.

Intent. Ask about the person's original intentions. This enables you to close the gap between impact and intent.



SBI EXAMPLE

Situation -- When you responded to the email I sent about engagement ideas last Friday...

Behavior -- You said that I didn't have a background in design so my opinion shouldn't count. *(instead of saying "you were rude" which is a judgement)*

Impact -- That made me feel excluded from the conversation even though it's a community-wide topic and I felt hurt by the public comment.

This helps us understand intent -- What were you hoping to accomplish with that?



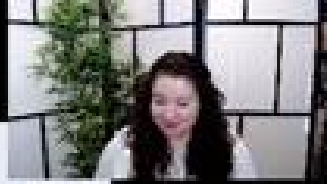
SBI EXAMPLE

Situation -- When you responded to the email I sent about engagement ideas last Friday...

Behavior -- You said that I didn't have a background in design so my opinion shouldn't count. *(instead of saying "you were rude" which is a judgement)*

Impact -- That made me feel excluded from the conversation even though it's a community-wide topic and I felt hurt by the public comment.

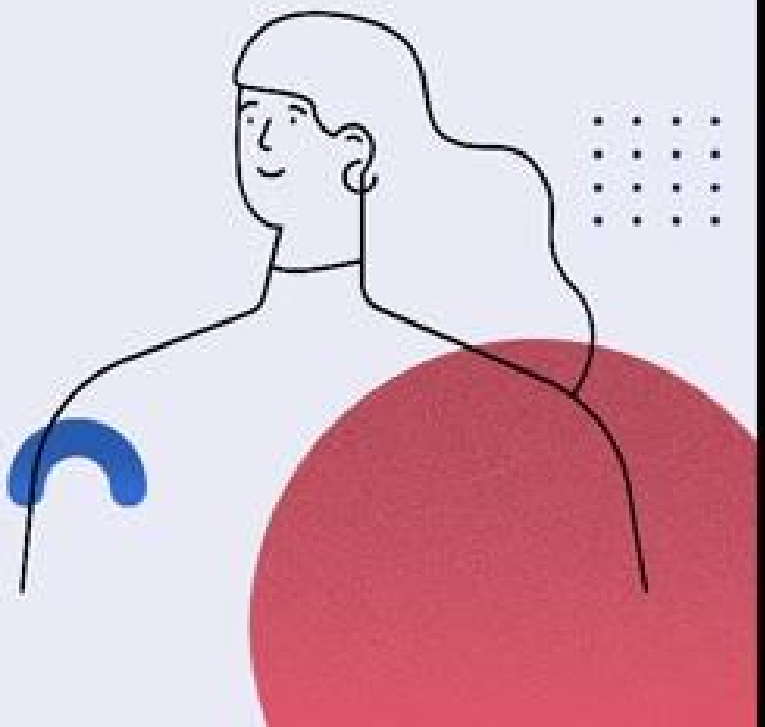
This helps us understand intent -- What were you hoping to accomplish with that?



TIPS FOR GIVING BETTER FEEDBACK

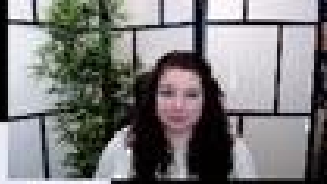
Think about what kind of feedback you're giving:

- **Evaluation:** helps you understand where you are and expectations
- **Coaching:** helps you improve
- **Positive / Appreciation:** motivates and encourages



Right person, place, and time.

Positive feedback public, negative feedback private

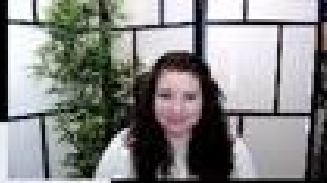


TIPS FOR REQUESTING FEEDBACK

Make it specific
It's easier for people to give feedback on specific things.

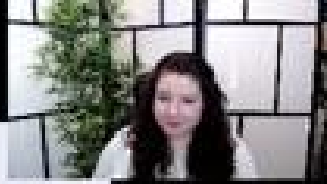
For example: "Can you give me feedback on my presentation" vs "Can you give me feedback on how quickly I talk during my presentation, and if I make eye contact with the audience?

Solicit feedback from multiple sources
Different perspectives might help you discover something you wouldn't have otherwise.



"Being heard and understood is one of the greatest desires of the human heart."

- Richard Carlson



Types of Listening

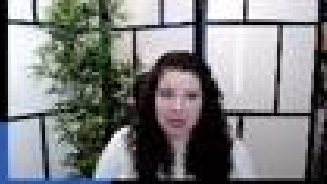
Distracted Listening - multitasking or preoccupied.

Content Listening - listening to the facts and planning how to respond.

Identifying Listening - responding with a similar situation to show you understand.

Problem Solving - listening with the intent to provide feedback and ideas on how to solve the situation.

Active Listening - you hear the facts and the feelings and respond appropriately to both.



ACTIVE LISTENING

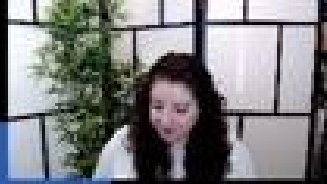
Simple Signals and Questions

Cues help us understand what to do. For example, traffic signals let us know if we should stop, go, or yield to traffic.

Our actions and words do the same. Looking at people in the eye, putting down our phone, or looking away from our computer may signal that we're interested and listening.

Verbal cues that show we're listening may include:

- Really?
- Uh huh
- Interesting
- Wow!
- Tell me more about that
- What's going on?
- What do you think?
- How are things?



ACTIVE LISTENING

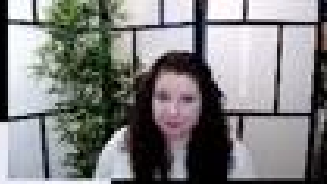
Simple Signals and Questions

Cues help us understand what to do. For example, traffic signals let us know if we should stop, go, or yield to traffic.

Our actions and words do the same. Looking at people in the eye, putting down our phone, or looking away from our computer may signal that we're interested and listening.

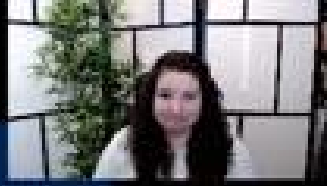
Verbal cues that show we're listening may include:

- Really?
- Uh huh
- Interesting
- Wow!
- Tell me more about that
- What's going on?
- What do you think?
- How are things?



Active listening is important for building relationships

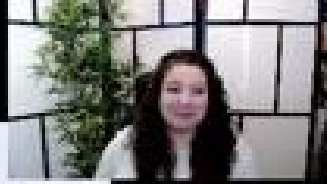
You can employ these principles in the virtual world, but more importantly, you can use them in person at events to build relationships that carry on into the online world!



Favorite Hacks



Practical advice
you can try out
immediately

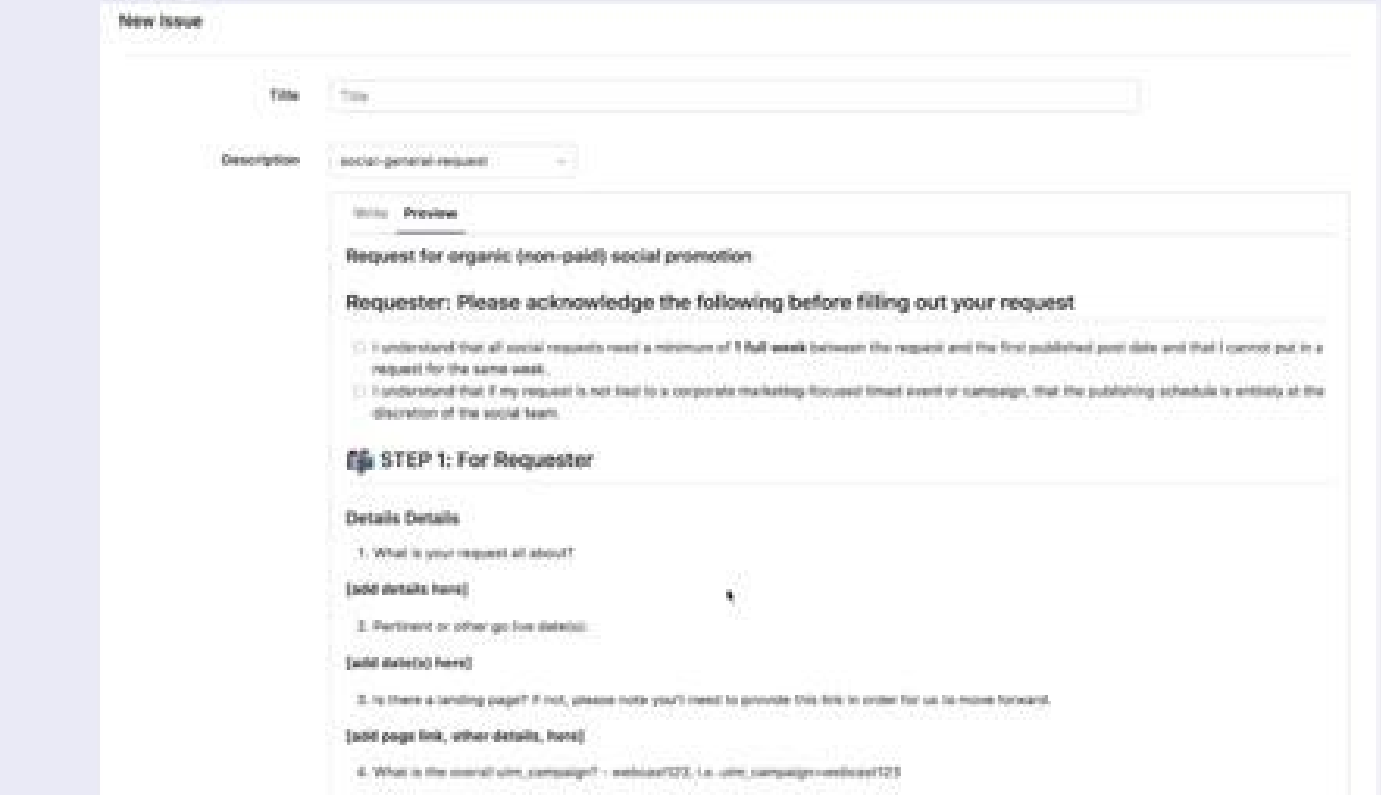


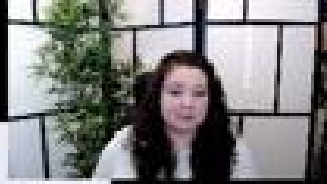
It's the writer's job to be understood!

Formatting helps.

- **Avoid long sentences.** Whenever you see yet another "and," break it up into two sentences.
- **Don't assume previous knowledge.** Try to make it easy for someone new to jump into the conversation.
- **Skim test.** See if you can skim through and get the main points.
- **Call to action.** Make your call to action clear and state who needs to do it, and by when.

It's the writer's job to be understood!



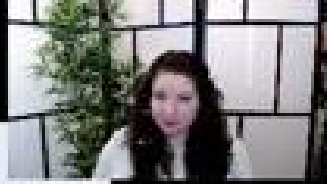


Yes, and...

Instead of saying, "No" or "Yes, but," use "Yes, and."

This acknowledges what people say and still gives you room to disagree with them.

People are more likely to listen to you if they feel like you listened to them.



Yes, and...

Instead of saying, "No" or "Yes, but," use "Yes, and."

This acknowledges what people say and still gives you room to disagree with them.

People are more likely to listen to you if they feel like you listened to them.



Collaborative Phrases

How might we...

Might I suggest we...

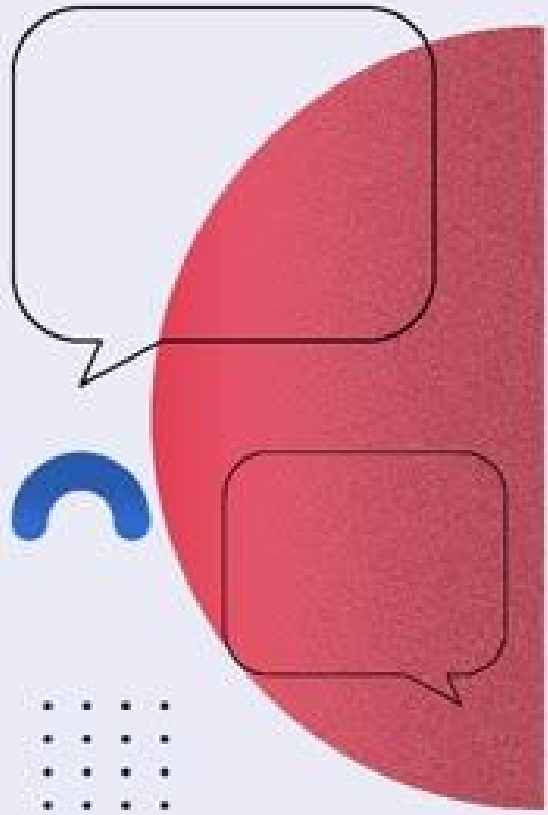
What are your thoughts?

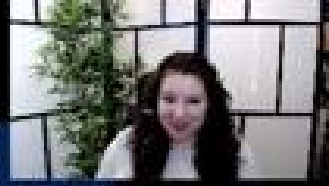
From my perspective, it's a little bit different. Let me explain...

I hear what you're saying, and I have a different perspective...

Let me see if I understand what you're saying....

I like your idea, have you thought about...





Thank You!

Slides can be found: bit.ly/communication-hacks-ns

CC-BY-SA 4.0