Unit 17: Communicating Electronically

Unit reference number: A/501/7236

QCF level: 1

Credit value: 3

Guided learning hours: 30

Unit aim

In this unit learners will develop their skills in communicating electronically using different methods such as the telephone, emails, faxes and text messaging. Learners will be able to identify appropriate methods of communication and the correct protocols for communication using these methods.

Learners will also learn how to use the internet while maintaining safety and security.

Unit introduction

Most administrators need to be able to communicate electronically and there are many forms of electronic communication systems. This unit focuses on four different methods ie emailing, faxes, texting and the internet.

Learners need to know how to send, receive and forward email messages. They need to know the type of language used in emails and the potential ambiguities that may occur due to inappropriate language.

Learners will also learn how to prepare and send a fax. Many learners will know how to send text messages but once again the emphasis is on sending clear and accurate text. The final learning outcome focuses on the use of the internet in business. Learners may discuss situations where the internet may be used. They should also discuss security including the use of passwords and firewalls. Office procedures relating to the internet may also be discussed.

Essential resources

Centres need to have access to typical office equipment such as a telephone and computer so that learners can practise and develop their skills when interacting with others. Learners will also need access to research facilities and internet access. The use of DVDs and videos is useful to illustrate interpersonal skills and how 'not to do it'. Guest speakers can provide a valuable input to support the underpinning knowledge and understanding of the unit.

Learning outcomes, assessment criteria and unit amplification

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria determine the standard required to achieve the unit.

On completion of this unit a learner should:

Learning outcomes		Assessment criteria		Unit amplification
1	Be able to communicate electronically	1.1	Send, receive and forward emails	□ *Different people*: customers – internal, e.g. colleagues, peers, those more junior, those more senior, those in same team/department, those in other departments; external, e.g. people from different organisations, members of the public; people with individual needs, e.g. those for whom English is not the first language
				□ *Emails*: sending, receiving, forwarding, replying to emails; sending and receiving attachments; using cc, bcc; tone of email – appropriate language, clarity, politeness; risks, e.g. emails from unknown users; downloading documents or software, sharing information such as chains of emails, personal details
		1.2	Prepare and send a fax	□ *Faxes*: when to use faxes; layout, organisational templates; need for clear, accurate language; using fax cover sheets
		1.3	Prepare and send a clear and accurate text message	□ *Text messages*: when to use text messages; need for clarity, accuracy
2	Be able to use the internet securely	2.1	Log on to the internet	□ *Use*: types of service, service providers, levels of service, e.g. dial-up, broadband network connection; logging on, passwords; use of search engines; saving results of searches; use of appropriate and inappropriate websites
		2.2	Access an appropriate website showing awareness of security	□ *Security*: the need to keep passwords secret; software issues, e.g. viruses and virus protection, firewalls, updating; risks, e.g. dangers of file sharing, making personal details known leading to identity theft, loss of information

Information for tutors

Delivery

This is essentially a practical unit. It is important for learners to have the opportunity to demonstrate their communication skills in workplace situations. This may be under simulated conditions but within a realistic context. Learners can discuss, either in a group or one-to-one, different aspects of the unit such as the appropriate tone and language to use when sending an email to colleagues. This would be helpful in providing evidence for assessment. For example, learners can discuss the different types of electronic written communication, then divide into small groups to explore the situations these are most appropriate for.

Useful activities to support delivery include discussions, visits to commercial organisations, role play and other practical experience, including a work placement or evidence from a part-time or full-time job. Case studies, which help to identify a range of different types of communication, together with their associated advantages and disadvantages, may be useful.

Within the classroom, or within a learner's own job role if appropriate, there should be plenty of opportunity to develop skills in using electronic communication and there would be the opportunity to practise constructing emails, faxes and text messages, for example sending an email to a colleague confirming a meeting venue. Tutors can show examples of good practice in using electronic communication, and learners can then work in small groups to examine other documents for their accuracy.

Learners may have their own email account set up by the centre as part of their user account profile but they would also need to understand the principles of setting up a personal account. It is, therefore, encouraged that they set up a third party email account using a web-based provider (for example Hotmail). This will allow them to understand the importance of passwords and user names. Learners will be expected, through regular use, to familiarise themselves fully with all email services.

Learners should provide records to support how they have demonstrated good communication skills in a practical context. This may be in the form of a logbook, observations by the tutor or witness testimonies.

Discussion should also take place regarding the appropriate and inappropriate use of the internet and learner responsibilities, using concrete examples. Learners should be encouraged to use Safe Searching and Adult Filter options built into familiar web browsing software. If the organisation has an existing policy for the use of the internet and for email then this should be clarified before the programme gets underway.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities
Introduction to unit and structure of the programme of learning.   Tutor-led discussion on types of electronic communication.   Small group discussions on the range of different people that someone working in administration needs to communicate with, including internal and external customers and people with specific needs.   Tutor-led discussion on emails including: • the tone of emails, formal and informal language   • risks such as sending emails to or receiving emails from unknown users; downloading attachments; sharing information.   In pairs, learners to practise creating, sending and receiving emails to each other including attachments.
Tutor-led discussion on when and how to send a fax.   Activity – learners to practise sending a fax.
Tutor-led discussion on when to use a text message in a business situation, and the need for clear accurate language.   In pairs, learners to practise sending each other business text messages.
Assessment – tutor to provide a range of activities for the learner to demonstrate communication dealing with a range of customer enquiries which include communicating by email, fax and text message.   Learners to carry out an exercise according to a scenario set by the tutor. The learner must prepare a business email and send it to the appropriate person (e.g. the tutor or another learner). The email will be sent back to them with additional information. The learner will then have to forward the email to the appropriate person.   Learners to decide when it is appropriate to send a fax from a given scenario, and to prepare and send a fax.   Learners to decide when it is appropriate to send a text message from given scenario, and to prepare and send a business text message (learning outcome 1).
Tutor-led discussion on the centre IT and internet use agreement policy.   Tutor-led discussion on different services providers and levels of service.   Tutor-led discussion on appropriate and inappropriate use of the internet.   Learners to practise using 'Safe Searching' and 'Adult Filter' options.
Assessment – learners demonstrate correct and responsible use of the internet by practical demonstration during small group sessions, and through direct questioning (learning outcome 2).
Assessment feedback, review and evaluation of unit.

Assessment

Evidence for 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 may include a collection of documented evidence including printouts of faxes and emails sent, received and forwarded by the learner. The use of text messages should be evidenced by an observation report. The language and style of the email, fax and text message should be in line with the Level 1 Functional Skills for writing, and the learner should use language appropriate to the purpose and audience. It is important that the learner can establish they have used the most appropriate method of interaction and this may involve group discussion or one-to-one questioning with the tutor, ensuring that evidence is available for internal and external verification purposes.

Assessment Criteria 2.1 and 2.2 may be assessed by the use of a tutor witness statement that lists the learner's correct and responsible use of the internet. Learners should show that they are aware of the need for security when using the internet.

Suggested resources

Books

Barker A – *Improve Your Communication Skills* (Kogan Page, 2010)
ISBN 9780749456276

Tetley C – *Entry 3/Level 1 Business Administration Student Book* (Pearson, 2010)
ISBN 9781846909214

Websites

www.microsoft.com/atwork/getworkdone	Microsoft advice on how to construct written documents
www.skillscfa.org	The Council for Administration