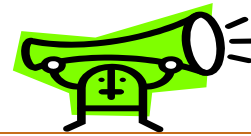


Unit 1 – Communications

Active Listening Tips

Most people speak at the rate of 110 to 140 words a minute, but we think at seven times that rate! Because of this, it's easy to get carried away by our own thoughts and not listen or understand the meaning behind what others are saying. Active listening engages the other person in an active dialogue, and helps us to slow down too. Consider the following approaches to become an active listener.



Unit 1 – Part 2: Active Listening

Listen for Meaning

- Listen for the person's entire meaning rather than to simply understand content.
- Pay full attention to nonverbal cues and the tone of the person's voice.

Reflect without Judgement

- To deepen your individual and the group's understanding of a person's message, consider reflecting back to the member without judging or evaluating.
- To reflect a statement, try asking an open-ended question. Open-ended questions are ones that cannot be answered simply with a yes or no. Here are some examples of questions you might consider to avoid sounding judgmental.
 - "How is that a problem for you in your department?"
 - "What are the reasons behind that statement?"
 - "You've given this some thought! What are the thoughts of others?"
 - "How does what you just described compare with Mary's situation. Are there similar characteristics?"
 - "What other choices do you have?"



Restate the Statement

- Restating a person's comment is among the easiest and perhaps best means to ensure that you understand his or her meaning.

Phrase Open-Ended Questions

- To help a team member explore and reach his or her own conclusions, consider framing open-ended questions.
- Questions that begin with "How" will invite team members to discuss their own views.

Closed-ended questions that can be answered either "Yes" or "No."	Open-ended questions that solicit more discussion.
"Do you think this is a good approach?"	"What about this approach, do you like or dislike?"
"Will this process work in your department?"	"How do you envision this process working in your department?"
"Should we have another meeting on this?"	"If we were to schedule another meeting, what would be on the road map?"

Focus on the Positive to Invite Solutions

- Framing questions in a positive manner engages a person to work on his or her own solution.
- A positive statement or question encourages the individual to move forward, to look ahead.

Negative statements	Same statement, posed in a positive manner
"What's wrong with this plan?"	"How can we overcome some of the issues we've raised in order to make this work?"
"We tried that once. It didn't work"	"We tried that once. What did we learn?"
"We can't do it that way, our budget lines are separate."	"Our budget lines are separate. What's our next step in making this work?"

Prepare to Increase Learning

- Active listening sounds easy to do, but rarely do we practice this approach. Be prepared!

- If you are called upon to be a facilitator or if you simply want to participate more effectively, write down questions ahead of time. Consider writing down some questions such as the following:

Restate the person's comment

"I heard you say...does that mean...?"

"If I understand you correctly, your opinion is...is that accurate?"

"It appears you feel strongly about...is that accurate?"

Reflect without judgement

"What is causing this to be a problem for you?"

"Are there other choices to consider?"

"That's interesting. What do you think others would say?"

Ask open-ended questions

"What about this program, do you...?"

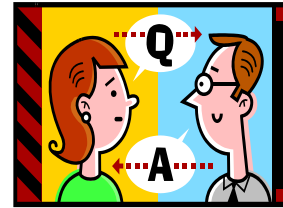
"Share with us how..." "How do you see...?"

Focus on the positive

"What are the next steps in order to accomplish...?"

"What are the good things in this proposal?"

"How can we use our existing resources to...?"



References

NYS Governor's Office of Employee Relations: Fundamental Team and Meeting Skills. (2003). Retrieved December 15, 2006, from <http://www.goer.state.ny.us/Train/onlinelearning/FTMS/600s3.html>