

# COMMUNICATION

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## LISTENING

*“Since we have two ears and one mouth, perhaps we should listen twice as much as we speak.”*

*-Anonymous*

*November*

## Communication Key Concepts

As the quotation on the section cover suggests, there are two important aspects of the communication process: *sending* and *receiving* information. Too often when we work on developing communication skills, we focus more on the speaking than we do on the listening. Perhaps it's because studies have shown that one of the greatest fears among people is getting up and speaking before a group. Perhaps it's that we know that effective leaders have excellent presentation skills and the ability to influence others. Or perhaps it's because when most of us think of leaders, we think of the person standing up at the front of the room doing most of the talking. Although each of these statements is true, it is imperative as well that a leader be able to listen to the needs of his constituents in order to be a more effective team member.

Therefore, as you conduct the activities in this section, remember the importance of the receiver as well as the sender of the message. Help the students understand that communication is a cornerstone of an effective team. While one member of the group is sharing information that may prove vital to the group, it is important to listen and pay attention to what is being said. Through reflection and observation, we may gain the missing piece of the puzzle.

# **Communication Activity 1**

## **Improving Communication**

**Purpose** (Objective): The purpose of this activity is to illustrate techniques we can use to improve our communication skills through use of giving and following directions.

**Materials Needed**: Each participant will need two 8" x 8" square sheets of paper, one blue, the other yellow. The facilitator will need two sheets as well.

**Group Size**: Entire class as one group

**Total Time Required**: 15-20 minutes

**Instructions**: Participants will be given two pieces of paper and then be given verbal directions as to what to do. Each person will need to have space in front of them cleared to complete the exercise.

**Awareness**- Discuss with the audience the importance of communication in the workplace. Give examples, such as when the teacher gives you directions to do something, or when you are first learning the project from someone else.

**Assessment** - Have participants consider how effective they are at giving and following directions. Have volunteers give examples of times they followed directions, either correctly or incorrectly.

**Plan** - Tell the students that you will be leading them through an exercise that will assist them in understanding the importance of giving directions in an effective manner. They will be constructing two different items. Each time, they are to listen to you and do exactly as you tell them.

**Action** - Have the participants take the blue sheet of paper. Tell them that you will give a list of directions. They are not to interrupt you, nor ask questions - simply do as they are told. Ask "are you ready?" and begin giving the following directions in order, without pausing, but rather going straight through non-stop. Also, do not demonstrate the directions, just read them to the audience.

Hold the sheet in front of you so that it looks like a diamond.

Fold the right corner over to the left corner and crease down the center.

Open the paper and now fold the right corner along the center crease.

Fold the left corner along the center crease.

Fold the bottom up so that you now have a triangle.

Fold the bottom edge up one inch.

You should now have a sailboat

By this point, nearly everyone will be confused and lost. Hardly anyone will have the same item, and most will complain that you went too fast, or didn't show them, etc. Now tell them to put that piece of paper to the side and you are now going to give another set of directions for another object. This time, they ask questions at any time. Also, you will demonstrate making the object at the same time they are, so that they can see what to do.

Here is the second set of instructions:

Hold the yellow sheet in front of you so that it looks like a diamond. (Hold it up for them to see)

Fold the right corner over to the left corner and crease down the center. (Do the same) Hold the paper up so that the triangle points up. (check to make sure everyone has done it correctly)

Fold the right corner up so that it touches the upper left side of the triangle and the top of this new fold is parallel with the bottom edge of the triangle. (Do the same) Hold the paper up to match it with mine. (check to make sure everyone has done it correctly)

Fold the left corner so that the point touches the corner created by the last fold, so that the top is parallel with the bottom edge. (Do the same) Hold the paper up to match. (check to make sure everyone has done it correctly)

You now have two flaps at the top. Holding the paper so that the folds are facing you, take the flap nearest you and fold down towards you over the fold. (Do the same) Hold the paper up so that the single flap points up. (check to make sure everyone has done it correctly) Holding the paper so that the folds are facing **away** from you, fold the flap down towards you. (Do the same) Hold the paper up so I can see. (check to make sure everyone has done it correctly)

Now, insert your finger in the opening at the top. You now have a paper cup. This time, everyone in the room will have done it 100% correctly and will have all done it at the same time, with you showing them.

### **Debrief:**

Ask the participants why the difference in performance from the first time to the second time. Answers will include:

You went slower.

You modeled what we were to do.

You checked for understanding to make sure we each had it right.

You watched us to make sure we were with you.

You paused between steps.

Remind them how much easier it was the second time than the first and why. Tell them this is the same for the workplace. We can't just give directions and expect some one to do them unless we use these basic rules of communication.

**Variations:** You can have students make just about anything, just make something that includes only a few steps to make. Don't make something too complicated. You could also have the students follow this guide and lead other students in performing simple tasks of the occupational area you are teaching.

**Helpful Hints:** It is imperative that the first time be very quick paced, with no interruptions or time for questions and that you model the sailboat after they attempt to follow your directions. When making the second item, go slower, pause, and check continually to make sure no one is left behind. If you need to, step around and assist them to make sure they are with you.

## **Communication Listening Skills Activity 2**

### **Wright Family Story**

**Materials Needed:** One item per participant, i.e., pencil, pen, note card, etc.

**Total Time Required:** 20-25 minutes

**Group Size:** Entire class will work together as one group.

#### **Instructions:**

1. Seat everyone in a circle
2. Give each person a pre-selected item (can go with whatever theme, or piece of candy, pen, etc.)
3. Tell the everyone that you will be reading them a story. Tell them that they are to pass item to the right when they hear the word "right", and left when they hear the word "left".
4. Read the following story. (Note that you may have to stop a couple of times for the group to get reorganized and stop laughing.)

#### **WRIGHT FAMILY STORY\***

One day the Wright family decided to take a vacation. The first thing they had to decide was who would be left at home since there was not enough room in the Wright family car for all of them. Mr. Wright decided that Aunt Linda Wright would be the one left at home. Of course, this made Aunt Linda Wright so mad that she left home immediately yelling, "It will be a right cold day before I return."

The Wright family bundled up the children Tommy Wright, Susan Wright, Timmy Wright and Shelly Wright and got in the car and left. Unfortunately, as they turned out of the driveway someone had left the trashcan in the street so they had to turn right around and stop the car. They told Tommy Wright to get out of the car and move the trash can so they could get going. Tommy took so long that they almost left him in the street. Once the Wright family got on the road, Mother Wright wondered if she had left the stove on. Father Wright told her not to worry. He had checked the stove and she had not left it on. As they turned right at the corner, everyone started to think about other things that they might have left undone.

No need to worry now, they were off on a right fine vacation. When they arrived at the gas station, Father Wright put gas in the car and then discovered that he had left his wallet at home. So Timmy Wright ran home to get the money that was left behind. After Timmy left, Susan Wright started to feel sick. She left the car saying she had to throw up. This of course got Mother Wright's attention and she left the car in a hurry. Shelly Wright wanted to watch Susan get sick, so she left the car, too. Father Wright was left with Tommy Wright, who was playing a game in the back seat.

With all of this going on, Father Wright decided that this was not the right time to take a vacation, so he gathered up all of the family and left the gas station as quickly as he could. When he arrived home, he turned left into the driveway and said, "I wish the Wright family had never left the house today!"

This story was provided by \*Tom Jackson, "Activities That Teach", Active Learning Foundation.

5. At the end, ask them to tell you the story.

**Debrief:**

How easy was it to listen to this story?

Did listening for a particular word make it harder to listen to the "whole" story?

What can we do to improve our listening skills?

Why is it important to listen?

## **Communication Activity 3**

### **Hand Clap**

**Purpose:** To teach attentive listening skills, and to demonstrate the power of “modeling”. To begin to demonstrate what it means to form a community and the importance of being “in sync” to get things done.

**Materials Needed:** None

**Total Time Required:** 5-10 minutes

**Group Size:** Two students per group

**Instructions:** Facilitator asks participants to stand and face him/her with their hands raised and ready to clap.

Facilitator explains that most people think they are good listeners and this activity will confirm that they are. Ask each student to write down a grade on the palm of their hand as to how they consider their listening skills, using this scale:

A= Excellent listener

B= Good listener

C= Easily distracted listener

D= Poor listener

F= No listening skill

Ask each student to have their hands in the ready-to-clap position, and explain that he/she will count to three and then ask everyone to clap in unison.

Facilitator begins the count down, saying “1, 2” and then facilitator claps and says, 3.”

Most people will clap when they see the facilitator clap, even though he/she has said to wait until the count of 3.

Facilitator tells the group they have another chance to get it right and repeats the process. Usually fewer people clap. Keep doing it until the entire group clap is in unison.

Facilitator uses the quote, “What you DO sends the most powerful message to others,” to emphasize the importance of this message to their community work. People react to the DOING, not the words.

## **Communication Listening Skills Activity 4** **Everybody Hears Things Differently**

**Lesson Objective:** Learners will be able to recognize that all people think and see things differently.

**Materials Required:** 8 ½ x 11 inch sheets of white paper.

**Time Required:** 5-10 minutes

**Procedure:** Introduce by telling the group that everyone hears and sees things differently. No two people are alike. You will illustrate this through a simple exercise.

**Ask these questions:** Have participants consider when they were given a group assignment and another member saw it completely different than they did.

**Procedure continued.** Hand everyone a 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper. Tell them to fold the paper in half. Fold it in half again. Fold it a third time. Now tear a corner out. Tear another corner out. Finally, tear a notch out of one side.

Have everyone hold their opened sheet up for all to see.

No two will be the same. Although they heard the same instructions, they all produced something different.

**Ask these questions:** Ask the participants what they see? (everyone's is different)

How are they different?

Why are they different?

Does it matter?

What does this tell us about communicating to others?

**Summary:** Its important to understand differences and seek to identify strengths of the team. Since team members have different functions, we should seek to identify members with the traits best suited for that performance.