



Tool #9 - Part A

Active Listening

Part A Includes:

Lesson

Quiz

Goal Setting

(Each tool is presented in a 2 part lesson format.
Part B will follow in two weeks)

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Employee Success Toolkit

Tool #9 - Part A

Active Listening

Active Listening

Good communication skills are the key to success in your business and personal life. Successful communication is a two way street. Someone speaks to you, and your job is to listen and create a dialogue. It's not like a tennis game where you return the ball hoping that your opponent will miss. You must listen with understanding as your goal, not winning or being right. For most people, however, listening is an undeveloped skill.

"Listening is the art of truly hearing what a person is trying to say, not just what is said. The best listeners are people that hear the words and see the body language so they capture the whole message," says Anne Warfield, author of the book, *Communicating More Effectively*.

Be an Active Listener

We speak at the rate of 110-140 words a minute, but we think seven times faster. As a result, you may be thinking your own thoughts and not really listening to the speaker.

Have you had the experience of talking to someone while he or she was reading the newspaper? Even if the other person actually heard you, you probably felt ignored, unimportant, and frustrated. By using active listening skills you can make the speaker feel heard and respected.

Hearing and listening are two different concepts. Hearing is merely using your ears to acknowledge sounds. Listening means understanding the other person's point of view.

If you only hear the words that are spoken, your interpretation can lead to misunderstanding and frustration. When you learn to use *active listening skills* to interpret the thoughts, feelings, and concerns behind the words, you can create an understanding that leads to progress and mutual benefit.

Begin Your Active Listening Adventure

Mistakes, poor service and wasted time are results of inattentive listening. Stop whatever you are doing, and give your full attention to the speaker. This shows respect and allows you to see his or her body language. To demonstrate your interest, lean forward, look directly at the other person, nod, and make appropriate comments about what he is saying.

"If you have difficulty listening, then try a body language trick. Tilt your head to one side while you listen and it will trigger your mind to remember what is being said to you," suggests Warfield.

Elements of Active Listening

Words

Is the message clear and concise? What are the words alone trying to say?

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Tone of Voice

The tone of someone's voice reflects the person's emotional state. Does the tone sound hostile or nervous, or does it sound friendly, relaxed and sincere? Does the tone of voice match the meaning of the words, or is it sending mixed messages in the form of sarcasm or inappropriate laughter. When there are mixed messages, the tone of voice, rather than the words, reflects the true underlying message.

Pitch

A high pitched voice is usually the sign of nervousness, fear or anxiety. A lower pitch signifies confidence.

Pace

People vary in the speed of their speech. If the person has a Texas drawl and you are talking at racecar speed, he or she won't be able to connect with you. To overcome this, listen to the person's pace and try to match yours to it. Then the other person will feel more comfortable and more connected. If you try to match the other person's breathing rate, you will be able to match his tempo.

Eye Contact

You may have felt slighted when you were talking to someone at a social gathering and that person seemed to be scanning the room looking for someone else more important to talk to. Eyes are the windows to a person's feelings and are, therefore, very expressive. Good eye contact signifies honesty and confidence. To create good eye contact, position yourself so that you are at about the same eye level with the other person.

When you make an effort to look directly at the people you are talking to, you show them respect, make them feel important and create a more positive relationship.

On the other hand, avoiding eye contact can make you seem sneaky, guilty, bashful, or frightened. The common expression, "*He couldn't look me in the eye,*" is often used to describe the guilt of another person.

While using eye contact be careful not to stare, squint or blink your eyes rapidly. It's more natural to look away from time to time in a relaxed, comfortable manner.

Body Position

Did you know that the words you use only have a 7% impact on your communication? Your tone of voice amounts to another 38%, but your non-verbal body language amounts to a whopping 55% impact on the message you are trying to communicate.

Body language means the way you sit or stand, move and look. Without body language

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conversations would be boring and less effective. Worse yet, if your body language and your words are incongruent, you may be sending mixed messages.

Do not turn your body away from the person you are talking to. While standing side by side may disconnect you from your partner, standing directly face to face may seem confrontational. It is best to stand or sit at an angle toward the other person. In addition, sitting or standing at the same eye level with your partner sends a signal that you are equals and lessens any feelings of intimidation.

Whether sitting or standing, using good posture reflects your confidence and causes others to pay more attention to your message. Try matching the other person's body movements, but do it in a subtle way.

Gestures

Gesturing with your hands adds life and meaning to your message. Practice in front of a mirror using your hands to emphasize important points. When not gesturing, be careful not to cross your arms because that signals anger or a lack of openness, and don't play with your clothing, jewelry, or pencils, as this is distracting. Instead, simply let your arms be relaxed at your sides.

Facial Expression

A forced smile will come across as insincere. Tension can also be seen in your face through a wrinkled forehead or a pursed or tight-lipped mouth. Rolling eyes and disapproving looks can have powerful negative effects on communication.

If you have to say something negative, take time to sit down and have a meaningful discussion with the other person, and your body language will naturally become more reflective of your message. On the positive side, if you are excited about something, don't be afraid to show it. When your face lights up, the energy you create is contagious and spreads sunshine to others.

Are You Listening?

"If you want to find out how well you listen, repeat back what you think you heard the other person say before you respond to it. If you find that people correct you more than 20% of the time, you are hearing what you want to hear, not what is said," advises Anne Warfield.

The rewards of practicing active listening are worth the effort because mutual understanding in communication is essential for success, not only in your career, but also in your personal life.

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Expert quoted:

Anne Warfield, Certified Speaking Professional and author of the book, *Communicating More Effectively*, available at <http://www.impressionmanagement.com/>

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Tool #9 - Quiz
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Complete the quiz, and give the answers to your supervisor.

Name _____ Date _____

1. What is the best body position to assume when speaking to another person?

2. Why is the pace of someone's speaking important?

3. How can you know the gestures you use are effective?

4. How can you determine how well you listen?

5. Name 3 aspects of active listening.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Tool #9 - Your Goals for
Active Listening

Name _____ Date _____

What are your 3 main goals for this month for active listening?
Make a copy of this to give to your supervisor, and keep one for yourself.
Post your goals in your workplace where you can easily see them.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Signature _____

In two weeks you will receive Part B of this lesson. It will contain:

- The 7 key points from this lesson to refresh your memory, and
- A place for you to record your progress toward your goals.

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Additional Resources

All are available on The Confidence Center Web at
www.ConfidenceCenter.com

Free Resources

Email Newsletter:

Employee Morale and Confidence Tips

It has creative ideas you can use every week to keep up morale.

Sign up for Free at www.ConfidenceCenter.com

Assessments:

Are you happy at work? Take the [Employee Morale Assessment](#)

How confident are you? Take the [Confidence Quiz](#)

Articles and Past Newsletters

Calendar of Special Days:

Special days you can celebrate for every month of the year.

Fun Zone:

Jokes, cartoons, and more - when you just need a break.

Coaching:

Telephone coaching by our certified professional coach. To get one *free* coaching session.

Details at <http://www.confidencecenter.com/serv06.htm>

Low Cost Resources

Products:

Books, eBooks, videos, and other products to make you more successful at work.

Seminars:

We offer in-house seminars, customized for your company or organization.

Tele-seminars:

Telephone seminars on employee morale and employee performance. These will be announced in our newsletter and on our web.