

IMPACT

Manager Supplement

January—March 2003

Did you know?

- Free “Simple Will” Kits are available from Claremont EAP
- A free credit report is available once per year
- Claremont EAP provides legal referrals for family law, consumer issues, traffic violations, and personal injury
- Referrals are available for child care, adult/eldercare, adoption assistance, school/college selection, and pet care

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Active Listening</i>	1
<i>Teamwork</i>	2

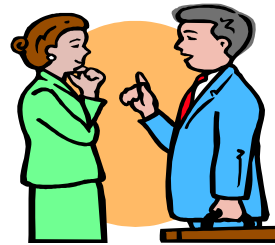
ACTIVE LISTENING: MUCH MORE THAN HEARING

Active listening occurs when one person tells something to another, then the receiver responds by repeating it in their own words for verification.

The entire response may take several tries. An active listener uses open probes, or door openers, to verify the information coming from the sender. In other words, it allows for more information to be returned. If someone says, “I’m sick.” The listener can respond, “I understand that you’re not feeling well; can you tell me more?”

On the other hand, closed probes, elicit shorter, often yes or no, answers: for example, “Do you want to rest?” Closed probes do not allow for complete exchanges and often end the discussion before the parties have really communicated. The sender in particular feels shortchanged. It’s only when the topic comes up again later that the sender knows if the receiver understood the message.

The active listening process includes your acknowledgment that you



Active Listening can help you communicate in a caring, straight forward way

have heard the other person, that you understand and are interested, and that you want to learn more.

Steps To Develop Active Listening Skills

- Listen for understanding rather than spending the time in preparation for your next remark.
- Try to ask questions that result in a more informative answer than “yes” or “no.”
- Before agreeing or disagreeing, check to make sure you understand what the other person meant.
- Guard against assuming that you know what the person meant or felt by asking them questions to assure your understanding.
- Don’t jump in on a

silence: wait until the sender has more thoughts together.

- Encourage the other person to be relaxed and to take their time.
- Summarize points of agreement or disagreement.
- Identify what interferes with your listening.
- When you feel stressful, are you really listening or are you more concerned with formulating a reply?

Continued On Next Page..

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Continued from Page 1

Use Active Listening To Turn A Situation Around

Here's how to create a positive exchange out of a potentially stressful one. Imagine having an older relative who seems to complain frequently about the same situation. For instance, if the relative calls you up and says, "I haven't heard from you in so long," don't give in to the temptation to make excuses, and don't get angry. Try to respond with something like, "Gee, I'm glad you missed me and I appreciate your telling me that." The sender is likely sending a message of

loneliness or possibly trying to find out if something is wrong. You don't really know. Even if you hear this same opening line once a week for a year, try responding with and observation such as, "You sound lonesome" or "You seem worried." Then the other person will let you know whether you interpreted correctly. You can then move the conversation along and ask, "What can I do to help?" If the answer is unclear, ask for more information.

When you're sure you understand what the person wants, then you can decide what you can and want to do.

Make a clear statement, such as, "Mom, how about if I call Monday evenings while the kids are doing homework? I usually have 20 minutes to myself then." Often your answer will not be so simple. Try asking the listener to help you know if they understand. Ask the listener to describe the idea back to you. Then clarify it if necessary.

Active listening can help you communicate in a caring, straightforward way. No one will be left frustrated and both parties are more likely to get what they want.

20 TECHNIQUES FOR IMPROVING TEAMWORK

Quality is a team sport

Someone once defined teamwork in one sentence: Together Everyone Accomplishes More. Ken Blanchard said the same thing a little differently: "None of us is as smart as all of us."

Quality requires the integration of many individual efforts into a "whole." Teamwork means that people work together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect. When one member of the team falters, it affects the outcome of the entire process. The development of teamwork is not just one of the essentials of a quality effort, but one of its greatest benefits.

Over the years, successful quality groups have identified

the following activities team leaders can do to improve teamwork.

1. Help people get to know each other and build trust.
2. Provide structure for the group (but not too much).
3. Encourage open and honest expression of ideas.
4. Pay attention to what is said, what is not said, the mood of the group, the energy level, body language, feelings.
5. Make sure the atmosphere is relaxed, comfortable, and free of fear.
6. See that everyone has an opportunity to participate.
7. Keep the group focused on the present and not on the past.
8. Role model active listening (paraphrasing,

speaking less and listening more, listening for unexpressed feelings).

9. Help the group set norms, make effective decisions, formulate goals, and evaluate itself.
10. Keep thinking about what the group needs.
11. Invest leadership in all team members so as not to create a dependency on one person.



(Continued on page 3)

"None of us is as smart as all of us."

—Ken Blanchard

(Continued from page 2)

12. Help individuals balance their needs with the team's needs.

13. Provide the group with feedback on its achievements as well as its problems.

14. Resist the temptation to suppress conflict. Resolve it by keeping focused on the issues, not the personalities.

15. Remind the group that progress comes from the willingness to face problems and improve methods of dealing with them.

16. Focus on the process—how things are done, how information is gathered, how decisions are made, how problems are solved.

17. Design a physical layout that is conducive to team members being comfortable, feeling relaxed, able to see each other.

18. Develop an organizational context that supports the team by offering clear direction, and a reward system based on team performance.

19. Help team members develop their communication and team skills.

20. Help team members understand the consequences of their behavior by providing open, honest feedback when they ask for it.



CLAREMONT EAP

800.834.3773

www.ClaremontEAP.com

Managers can call Claremont for consultation regarding employees who appear to be experiencing personal problems, whether or not work performance has become an issue. The purpose of this consultation is to help formulate an approach that effectively facilitates the person receiving appropriate help. The Claremont consultant will review the do's and don'ts for handling these often delicate situations and suggest things you can say and do which are most likely to be helpful.