Quick Training Tips

Pick-A-Communication-Card

Focus: Communication Skills, Team Building

Time: 5 minutes

Objectives:

1. Improve participant’s ability to function as a team member
2. Encourage objective, orderly discussion
3. Enhance participants’ communication skills

Materials needed:

1. Copies of Listening Cards (enough to distribute one card per person)

Introduction:

A lack of effective interaction skills is common in departments, and manifests itself in department meetings, missed deadlines, and conflict. In fact, even just one person’s ineffective interaction can interfere with the ability of the entire group to work productively. Valuable time is wasted, productivity suffers, and work relations become strained. Increasing each department member’s interaction skill can harness the power of dynamic collaboration and process learning.

Directions:

1. Ask each participant to select one card from deck.
2. Each participant will read the card silently.
3. Each participant will utilize the suggestions on the card for communication throughout the rest of the meeting. When using a phrase or question from their card, the participant should state, “I am using a communication tip from my card,” and then proceed with the question or statement suggested by the card.
4. Allow five minutes at the end of the meeting to discuss the following points.

Discussion Questions:

1. Were the communication suggestions helpful to you in listening actively, encouraging others, and including others during the team meeting?
2. How did you feel when your peers made comments or asked questions that were suggested by the cards?
3. What suggestion did you find most valuable and/or useful?
4. Will you utilize any of these tips in future meetings? Future conversations?
5. How does this type of communication help build better team/departmental relations? Personal relations?

Reference: Adapted from: Beans, I. (2002). InterAct. HRDQ, PA
SEEK OPINIONS

Invite others to speak freely and offer their reactions to an idea. Encourage others to mention their concerns.

Say Things Like:

I’d really like to hear how others are feeling about this.

Let’s feel free to share our concerns.

I suggest that we openly share both the pros and cons of this idea.

SEEK INFORMATION

Solicit facts, data, or experience from others. Encourage experts to contribute.

Say Things Like:

I feel the need to understand this idea better. Here is what I need to know...

What information do we need? How can we get it?

Who has information or expertise on this sort of thing?
PROPOSE IDEAS

Put forward an idea or suggestion. Contribute your experience. Suggest alternatives or offer data.

Say Things Like:

How about...as a possibility?

I think I’ve got some insights I’d like to share.

I’ve been looking into this, and...

BUILD ON IDEAS

Develop or expand on another person’s idea. Explore ideas before they’re discarded.

Say Things Like:

I’d like to add something to the idea on the table.

What do the rest of you think of this idea? Can we kick it around?

Before we jump into the next topic, I think we should spend another couple of minutes and consider this.
**CLARIFY IDEAS**

Repeat another team member’s key points to let him or her know he or she was heard and understood.

**Say Things Like:**

Are you saying...?

Here’s what I’m picking up...Have I got it right?

I’m afraid we may have missed a point made earlier.

**TEST CONSENSUS**

If a consensus has been reached, make sure that each member’s views have been considered. Test each person’s commitment to the final proposal.

**Say Things Like:**

Have we considered everyone’s ideas in this decision?

Let’s go around the table and check with each person to make sure that each of us can really live with this.

Let’s talk about all the things that could undermine this decision and think of ways to head them off.

**HARMONIZE DIFFERING OPINIONS**

Reconcile disagreements by pointing out areas of agreement. Help the parties identify what separates them and what would bring them closer to agreement.

**Say Things Like:**

Although you two disagree, I’ve noticed that you are both saying essentially the same thing about...

Your main differences seem to be...

What would it take for either of you to accept the other’s suggestion?

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**CONDUCT INTERVENTIONS**

Draw the group’s attention to any problems that need to be corrected. Describe what you see and suggest specific behaviors or actions to correct the situation.

**Say Things Like:**

I’ve noticed that...(describe the problem, e.g. people keep coming and going from the meeting; people arrive late to the meeting, etc.)

I’m concerned that...(describe the impact, e.g. we won’t finish all of our agenda)

I suggest that we...(suggest corrective action, e.g. all make a commitment to stay to the end).

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SUMMARIZE

Offer a review of what has been discussed to either bring closure or spark more ideas. Mention areas of agreement as well as differences of opinion.

Say Things Like:

Here are the main points that we have made so far...

Is there anything I've missed or that others would like to add to this summary?

The things we've agreed to are... The items we haven't agreed on yet are... The next steps are...

OFFER FEEDBACK TO GROUP

Raise members’ awareness of how they are doing. Provide praise if things are going well. Point out issues and seek improvements.

Say Things Like:

I think we are making excellent progress on...!

I’m noticing that we’re....

I’m concerned that we’re....

What can we do to improve....?

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