

An Active Listening “PROPOSAL”**

To become a better active listener and thus reap the benefits of better relationships, less frustration and improved results, consider this PROPOSAL:

- P** *Probe for understanding.* As a listener, your role is to understand what the speaker is saying and meaning. This may require you to **ask questions** and dig for deeper understanding. Use open-probed and neutral questions.
- R** *Reflect and restate.* One of the best ways to make sure that you understand the speaker is to reflect back to that person what you have heard. Opening phrases like. “So what I am hearing is...” or “Is this what you mean?” are only two of many ways to begin reflective statements.
- O** *One thing at a time.* When you are listening, LISTEN. Ignore distractions around you. Do not shuffle papers or mentally plan your response. You have plenty to do just listening!
- P** *Pause.* You do not have to respond to the speaker’s comments immediately. When you allow yourself a momentary silence, you free your mind to form your response during that silence.
- O** *Observe nonverbal behavior.* Much of what is being said is not being “said”! To truly understand, you must pay attention to body language, gestures, facial expressions, vocal inflections, and so on. These clues will help you to understand the speaker’s message.
- S** *Summarize.* To make sure that you comprehend the speaker’s message, summarize his or her comments. This will assure that you do understand the speaker, and the speaker will appreciate that you are checking your understanding!
- A** *Acknowledge the message and the speaker.* This does not mean you must agree. It simply means that you let the speaker know you are really hearing the message and acknowledging the speaker.
- L** *Let the speaker finish.* Interrupting is a waste of time. You frustrate the speaker and sacrifice a complete understanding of the message. Pause to reflect before responding as appropriate.

** Taken from WC Learning Center's *Communication Skills* training

Feedback Worksheet

(Used to prepare delivery of both positive & constructive feedback to employees)

Situation & Goal(s) (when/where; performance goals & supervisory expectations)	Behavior(s) (what was observed)	Impact (on others, results, environment, etc. Gap between expectations & behavior]	Recommendation(s) (suggestions for future behavior: continue, reinforce, change)	Consequences (what the likely impact of recommended behavior will be)
<p>Trainer Example: Workforce development goal: creating a positive learning environment which enhances openness, learning & exploration.</p> <p>During a customer service training class supervisor was observing last Tuesday, 6/16</p>	<p><i>Example:</i> During the class, trainer interrupted a participant who was expressing a concern, telling them abruptly, "We need to move on."</p>	<p><i>Example:</i> That behavior from an instructor may dissuade others from participating openly & asking questions, which will interfere with their learning.</p>	<p>[NOTE: Best practice is to ask employee for ideas before supervisor offers theirs.]</p> <p>What other options could you use to manage that situation?</p> <p>Offer the following recommendations as needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Allow the student to finish their thought completely. ✓ Breathe! ✓ Evaluate your options quickly. ✓ If you don't know how to respond, buy yourself time by asking others in class to comment. ✓ IF PRESSED FOR TIME: "That is a very important question. Let's put it on the parking lot to discuss a bit later in class." ✓ Offer to discuss at break or after class. <p>Trainer may need additional facilitation skills training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainer will be more successful at handling important learning moments. • Participants will be comfortable, open. • You gain trust & credibility as an instructor.

Frequently asked survivor questions



As a supervisor, you should be prepared to answer many questions and comments from the surviving employees, including the ones listed below. It is recommended that you discuss them with other supervisors and management in your department to establish a consistent message for employees throughout the department/division.

1. *How many positions were eliminated?*
2. *Why were these positions eliminated? Or, why wasn't _____ position eliminated?*
3. *Was there any way to save these jobs?*
4. *What happens to the work these positions were responsible for?*
5. *What will happen with their calls, mail and email?*
6. *How much does this reduction in force save our budget?*
7. *[as appropriate] How will outsourcing these responsibilities save our department money?*
8. *What is the organization doing to help the people about to lose their jobs?*
9. *What benefits will the employees who lose their jobs receive?*
10. *It sounds like we're piling more work on fewer people?*
11. *What are our strategic objectives and how have they been modified in light of the staff reductions?*
12. *When will the affected employees be leaving?*
13. *Will we have any additional layoffs?*

* Taken from WC Learning Center's *Maintaining Morale & Motivating Survivors* class



How well do you listen? ^{***}

Directions: Think about your one-on-one interactions on the job and in your personal life. For each item, indicate how frequently you practice a particular behavior. Place a check in the appropriate column.

	<i>Almost Always</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>
1. I maintain eye contact with the person talking to me.			
2. I allow others to finish their thoughts without interrupting.			
3. I refrain from engaging in other activities while someone is talking to me.			
4. I paraphrase what the other person has said to ensure my understanding of his/her message.			
5. I concentrate and focus on the other person's message even if I'm not interested.			
6. I refrain from forming a rebuttal in my head while the other person is speaking.			
7. I ask open-ended questions to clarify my understanding of the other person's message.			
8. I refrain from thinking of other things or daydreaming while the other person is talking.			
9. I use nonverbal cues such as head nodding to encourage the speaker to continue.			
10. I "tune out" sounds and other external distractions when listening to someone speak.			
11. I take notes, when necessary, to help me remember key points from the conversation.			
12. I do not overreact to emotionally charged words.			
13. I listen for the other person's main message.			
14. I pay attention to the other person's nonverbal cues that may contradict his/her message.			
15. I concentrate on the other person's message, not on his or her appearance or mannerisms.			

Staff Communication Ideas



“Behind the Scenes” . Brief notes taken during routine management or other meetings where departmental or program information or decisions are made. Provides immediate communication to staff on management topics.



Communication Huddles. Routine or “as needed” meetings held during lunch or other times convenient for staff to provide information regarding impacts to department/programs or address significant emerging issues. Attendance is voluntary. Guest may be invited depending on topic (HR, Department Head). Provides an opportunity to respond to rumors or questions from staff. Open format with content driven by employees.



Common Intranet Sites. Key documents are placed electronically accessible for staff review. Documents can be County, Department or Program specific. Direction can also be given to staff about where other key documents can be located.



Communication Logs. Key information written or documents placed in a central binder that staff can review when convenient. Staff signs to acknowledge receipt of information. Can also be set up to be an electronic communication log.



Brag Boards. Bulletin board for staff and leadership to acknowledge the efforts and contributions of individuals and teams. Staff recognition program driven by employees.



[Supervisor/Management Rounds.](#) Leadership walking around department having one on one or small group conversations with staff regarding current topics, concerns, or accomplishments.



[Employee Acknowledgments.](#) Hand written thank you notes, e-mails, recognition in staff meetings. Feedback should be specific and timely. Method of acknowledge should vary over time to maintain it's meaning and "freshness".



[Communication Training and Education.](#) HR representatives can be contacted to do department or program specific trainings or Just in Time (JTI) presentations. Informal training can occur by sharing articles and other materials that promote clear communication and enhance employee skills.



[Survey Employees on Effectiveness of Communication.](#) A quick e-mail or paper survey can determine if current communication methods are adequate. Survey monkey can also gather information on results of efforts.



[Acknowledgement of Significant Employee Life Events.](#) Departments can determine the most comfortable and appropriate way to celebrate Birthdays, Anniversaries, Graduation or other employee personal milestones. Social gatherings and forms of acknowledgement should be voluntary, inclusive and comfortable for all department employees.



[Ideas/Suggestions Board.](#) Post a board or identify space where staff can place pictures, article, quotes, drawings or other items that identify an idea or suggestion for the department.



Brainstorming Opportunities. Set up a specific “brainstorming” session for employees to share ideas or incorporate employee ideas into the agenda of regular meetings.



Team Building Exercises. Use “ice breakers” or other activities that encourage employees to get to know team members. Specific exercises are available in references on the internet and in books. HR also has many examples and resources on team building exercises. Team building exercises can be used to start meetings or other activities in a positive and informative way.



Meeting Facilitation. Request an experienced facilitator external to the department or program to facilitate a meeting. This allows leadership to participate as a member and provides a neutral approach to challenging or complex conversations or decisions.

Additional References from HR are attached including:

- Frequently Asked Survivor Questions --Attachment A
- A “Proposal” for Becoming a Better Active Listener -- Attachment B
- A How Well Do You Listen Assessment Tool --Attachment C
- A Feedback Worksheet (used to help prepare for the delivery of both positive and constructive feedback to employees)— Attachment D
- Coaching Suggestions for Training Interventions (tips on guiding employee to successfully use training) –Attachment E