50 Communications Activities, Icebreakers, and Exercises

Peter R. Garber

HRD Press, Inc. • Amherst • Massachusetts

Copyright © 2008, Peter R. Garber

The materials that appear in this book, other than those quoted from prior sources, may be reproduced for educational/training activities. There is no requirement to obtain special permission for such uses. We do, however, ask that the following statement appear on all reproductions.

> Reproduced from *50 Communications Activities, Icebreakers, and Exercises,* by Peter R. Garber. Amherst, MA, HRD Press, 2008.

This permission statement is limited to reproduction of materials for educational or training events. Systematic or large-scale reproduction or distribution—or inclusion of items in publications for sale—may be carried out only with prior written permission form the publisher.

Published by: HRD Press, Inc.
22 Amherst Road
Amherst, MA 01002
1-800-822-2801
413-253-3488
413-253-3490 (fax)
www.hrdpress.com

ISBN

Contents

Part I. Communications Principles

1. Communications Is an Art 3
2. Communicating Time 7
3. Communications Is the Key 11
4. I Know You Believe You Understand 15
5. Communications Model 19
6. Listening Dilemma 23
7. Interactive Listening Tips 27
8. Listening Bad Habits 31
9. Listening Questionnaire 35
10. Seven Levels of Listening 41
11. Silent Messages 45
12. The Three Levels of Communications 47
13. Nonverbal Listening Test 55
14. Laws of Remembering 59
15. Laws of Forgetting 65
16. Meaning of Words 69
17. Communications Circles 73
18. Attention Spans 79
19. Meaning of Listening 83

Part II. Communications Icebreakers

20. Vanity Name Cards 89
21. Repeating Introductions 91
22. Circle, Square, Triangle, or Z 93
23. Introducing Each Other 95
24. Fantasy Career 97
25. Name that Participant 99
26. Story of Your Name 103
27. Nickname Game 105
28. Introduction Bingo 107
29. Card Match 111

Part III. Communications Exercises

30. Reading Test 125
31. The Longest Line 129
32. Color Block 133
33. Following Directions 135

34. Train Story 139
35. Count the Ss 141
36. Communications Shutdowns..... 147
37. Repeat the Question..... 151
38. Quick Answers 153
39. Rephrasing Exercise 155
40. Wedding Story 161
41. Who Done It?..... 167
42. Picture Puzzle 173
43. Creative Fairy Tale 177
44. Rumors..... 183
45. The Shoe Store 189
46. Two Moose Sitting on a Log 195
47. Communications Styles..... 197
48. "Oh" 203
49. Word Games 207
50. Trading Cards..... 227

Preface

Communications plays such a big part in our lives today. It is hard to think of a single activity that we engage in that doesn't involve communications in some way. In our busy world, we sometimes forget just how important communications are to our success, relationships, and, ultimately, happiness in life. But, indeed, communications does play a major role in achieving all of our goals.

These 50 communications activities are designed to help participants become more aware and prepared to deal effectively with the many types of communications challenges they face every day. Each activity is designed to help participants better understand some facet of communications and gain expertise in that communications skill or competency. These activities will make participants think about communications in new and different ways than they ever did before. They will also find these exercises not only useful but memorable as well.

I hope you enjoy learning and presenting these communications exercises as much as I have over the past three decades of using them to help people become better communicators. Each is time tested and ageless. Have fun presenting these activities along with those you present them to for many years to come.

Peter R. Garber



Part I: Communications Principles

1. Communications Is an Art

Description: This activity explains that communications is much more of an art than a science. There is no one right or wrong way to communicate—no set of absolute rules to be followed.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To emphasize to participants that each of us communicates in our own style and in ways most comfortable and effective for each of us. Like art, communications can take on unlimited forms and variations, each unique to the person engaged in the communications.

Resources: Handout 1-A

Presentation:

1. Present Handout 1-A to participants.
2. Ask participants if they agree or disagree with this statement and why.
3. Explain that communications does have certain principles and procedures (see other activities in Part I of this activity book). There are specific, sound principles and themes, but thousands of variations.
4. However, there is no right or wrong way to communicate effectively.
5. Everyone has their own communications style, and there are thousands and thousands of variations to effective communications. What is most important is that people communicate in a sincere and honest manner with one another, in a style in which they are most comfortable. Few if any people can communicate effectively in a manner or style that does not fit them personally or naturally.

Debrief: Ask participants if they have ever tried to communicate in a manner or style that was not natural to them, and, if so, how difficult was it to do this effectively.

Difficulty Rating: Low

Variations: Before showing or sharing Handout 1-A, ask participants if they believe communications is more an art or a science. If you hear the response from participants that they think communications is more of a science, ask them why they feel this way. Ask them what would define something as a science. Expect to hear comments that use terms such as *consistent, exacting,* etc. Ask if they feel that communications would really be defined in this way.



Communications is much more of an art than a science.

2. Communicating Time

Description: The amount of time we spend communicating with others is presented in this activity.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To highlight the great amount of time we actually spend communicating with others

Resources: Handout 2-A

Presentation:

1. Ask participants how much time they think they actually spend communicating with others.
2. Allow the group to provide their estimates. Write the estimates on a flipchart or piece of paper.
3. Present Handout 2-A. Emphasize the statistics presented in this handout: 70% of your total waking time is spent communicating in some manner. Of this time you spend communicating, you spend approximately 16% reading, 9% writing, 30% talking, and 45% listening.
4. Ask participants if they are surprised by these estimates of the average time that people spend communicating, especially the 45% listening statistic.
5. Point out that these percentages may vary from person to person. For example, some people may spend much more than 30% of their communications time talking and much less time listening!

Debrief: Explain that looking at these statistics, it makes even more sense that we should strive to constantly become better communicators. Our communications skills play an important part in our success and even happiness in life. Ask participants to think about how much communications time they actually spend on each of the

communications activities described in this activity. Ask them how changing these balances of time in each of these communications could make a difference in their lives.

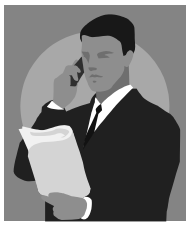
Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Handout
2-A

How do we spend our communications time?

We spend approximately 70% of our time communicating with others.

Of this communications time, we spend:

 16% Reading	 9% Writing
 30% Talking	 45% Listening

3. Communications Is the Key

Description: This activity consists of an interactive discussion about the importance of communications in the workplace.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To highlight the importance of communications in solving problems at work

Resources: Handout 3-A

Presentation:

1. Present Handout 3-A, which states the following: Communications is the key to achieving all of our goals.
2. Ask participants if they agree or disagree with this statement. You can expect that all or most participants will agree with this statement.
3. Ask participants why they believe this is true. Expect participants to volunteer any number of reasons.
4. Ask participants if they can think of a situation or problem in which communications was not critically important.
5. Challenge participants to thoroughly explain how better communications would not be necessary to correct the situation or problem.

Debrief: Emphasize again that communications affects virtually everything that happens in organizations. Communications can be one of the greatest strengths of an organization or one of its biggest weaknesses. Ask participants to specifically discuss how communications is important in their jobs.

Difficulty Rating: Low

Variations: Ask participants to share situations, problems, and challenges at work in which communications played a critical role, both in the cause and solution.

Handout
3-A



4. I Know You Believe You Understand

Description: A quote is presented to participants, and they are asked to explain what they believe its meaning is.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To highlight how unclear communications can lead to confusing interpretations and to emphasize the need for clarity when communicating

Resources: Handout 4-A

Presentation:

1. Present Handout 4-A to participants and ask them what they think the statement means.
2. Expect participants to have differing interpretations, if any, of this very confusing statement.
3. There obviously is not a clear explanation for this statement. Apparently, this speaker was trying to say something about being misunderstood, but it is unclear what he or she was really trying to say.
4. Reveal the source of this quote and expect comments from participants about trying to communicate with a government agency or official to resolve a problem or to cut through government red tape.

Debrief: Discuss what problems are created by these types of communications. Emphasize how much confusion ambiguous communications like this can cause in an organization. Ask participants to remember this quote when they are communicating with others as an example of how important clarify of communication is to being understood.

Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Variations: Use your own choice of confusing quote or ask participants to share some confusing quotes they know of.



“I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant!”

Quote from a U.S. government official

5. Communications Model

Description: A communications model is presented to help participants better understand what actually needs to occur for effective communications to exist.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To provide a conceptual model for participants to follow to help them become better communicators

Resources: Handout 5-A

Presentation:

1. Present Handout 5-A and explain that this represents a model showing how effective communications can be achieved. Although this may seem like a cumbersome process to go through, this model is used in some manner by many people in all of their communications.
2. Go through the four steps shown in the model. Highlight that in this model there is a SENDER and a RECEIVER.
3. Start with the SENDER, and point out that the first step in the communications process involves the SENDER sending the message to the RECEIVER. Explain that even at this early step in the process, many problems can occur. For instance, the message may not be clearly communicated by the SENDER. This could be a function of the SENDER's communication skills or even the effort that this person puts forth to communicate clearly.
4. The second step involved the RECEIVER both hearing and responding to the message. There can be problems with both. The RECEIVER may not be able to clearly hear the message for any number of reasons, including distracting sounds or competition for his or

Debrief: Explain that this model provides a communications format that could be followed in any number of different ways. Although it might not be practical to formally go through each of these steps in the model in every communication you have with others, ensuring that these concepts are used in some manner can help participants become better communicators. This is particularly important to ensure that the message is clearly communicated and understood.

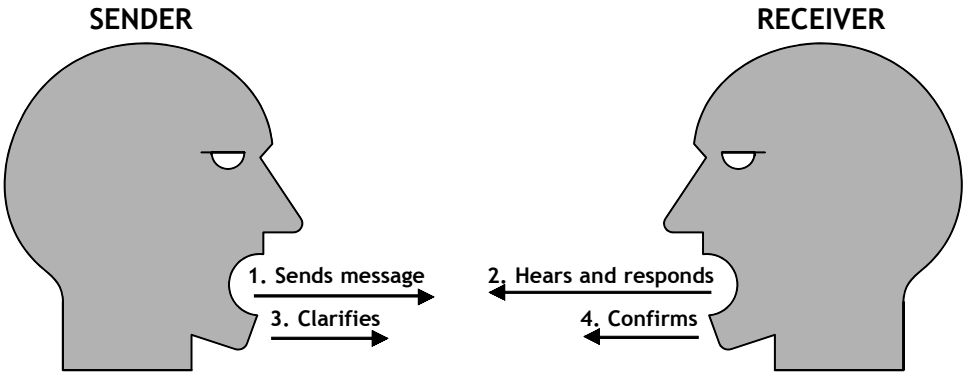
Tell the story about the supervisor who would ask employees to repeat back to him what he just said to them. By doing this, he taught his employees to be better listeners. They listened carefully to everything he instructed because they knew he would ask them to repeat what he said back to him.

Difficulty Rating: Medium to high

Variations: Have volunteer participants demonstrate how to use this model in a role play.

Handout
5-A

An Effective Communications Model



6. Listening Dilemma

Description: Interesting facts are presented concerning the rate of words that we are able to hear versus the rate at which we speak and the dilemma this presents.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand why listening is such a big challenge for most people.

Resources: Handout 6-A

Presentation:

1. Distribute or present Handout 6-A to participants.
2. Explain that listening is a big challenge because you spend so much of your communications time listening—over 45%. If you are not a good listener, you will be a less effective communicator.
3. Explain that the average person speaks at about a rate of 150 words per minute (wpm). The problem is that we can hear at about a rate of 1,000 wpm. This obviously gives us a lot of extra time.
4. Ask participants what they do with this extra time. It is likely that they will say that they think about other things rather than what the other person is saying.
5. This is a big problem for many people and the reason why they are not good listeners. This creates the listening dilemma.

Debrief: Discuss with participants some things they could do to stay focused on what the other person is saying and not be distracted by their own thoughts. For instance, the following listening tips can help you be a better listener:

1. Concentrate on what the speaker is saying, both with his or her words as well as with voice inflections, rate of speech, body language, etc. There are many things that can influence these communications, and paying attention to as many as you possibly can will help keep you focused.
2. Try not to think about how you are going to respond to the other person while he or she is speaking to you. This will cause you to lose your concentration on what the other person is saying.
3. Interact nonverbally with the other person with small gestures or verbal affirmations, such as nodding your head or saying very brief comments such as "I see" or other words that would not interrupt the other person. This tells the other person that you are fully engaged in listening and also keeps you involved in the process.
4. Do not interrupt or finish the other person's sentences. This takes your concentration completely away from what the other person is saying and focuses your attention on your own words.

Difficulty Rating: Low

Variations: After reviewing these four listening tips, have participants practice listening to each other while trying to focus totally on the other person's words without being distracted. Have participants break up into pairs and take turns being the communicator and listener. Instruct each communicator to speak for about two to three minutes while their partner listens. Suggest that they describe their job duties to each other. After completing this exercise, discuss as a group how successful participants were totally concentrating on the other person's words and not being distracted.

Handout
6-A

The Listening Dilemma

- We speak at a rate of about 150 words per minute (wpm).
- But we can hear at a rate of about 1,000 wpm.



- This gives us a lot of extra time!
- What do we do with this time?

7. Interactive Listening Tips

Description: Five interactive listening tips are presented to help participants learn to become better listeners.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To provide a quick and easy-to-remember list of suggestions to help participants become better listeners.

Resources: Handout 7-A

Presentation:

1. Distribute present Handout 7-A.
2. Review these listening tips:
   a) **Paraphrase** the message to the speaker in order to confirm your understanding.

      Explain that by putting the message in your own words, you concentrate more on what was said, making you listen better.

   b) **Repeat** the message to help you remember what was said.

      Explain that by doing this to the other person's satisfaction that you have heard his or her message correctly; you ensure that you not only are listening but really understand what was said.

   c) **Probe** for missing information.

      Explain that by requesting or asking questions, you find out any information that may have been missing in the communications or that you need or want.

   d) **Clarify** any points that you might not completely understand.

      Explain that this also ensures that you have heard exactly what the other person intended to communicate.

e) **Remember** the important points of the message for future application.

Explain that this helps you retain the most important points of the communication.

Debrief: Ask participants how often they use these tips in their communications with others. It is likely that they use some or all of these tips on a regular basis, probably without being aware that they are using the tips. Ask participants how they could use them more often and what effect this would have on their listening skills.

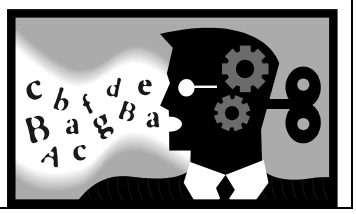
Difficulty Rating: Low

Variations: Ask participants to share listening tips of their own with the group.

Handout
7-A

Listening Tips

- **Paraphrase** the message to the speaker in order to confirm your understanding.
- **Repeat** the message to help you remember what was said.
- **Probe** for missing information.
- **Clarify** any points that you might not completely understand.
- **Remember** the important points of the message for future application.



8. Listening Bad Habits

Description: A list of listening bad habits is presented for participants to evaluate their listening skills.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To help participants better understand areas in which they can improve their listening deficiencies.

Resources: Handout 8-A

Presentation:

1. Distribute Handout 8-A to participants and ask them to complete it.
2. Explain that each participant will use this list of listening bad habits to honestly evaluate his or her listening skills or lack thereof.
3. Explain that participants are to check the bad habits they may be sometimes guilty of committing when communicating with others.
4. Emphasize that most people have some problems being good listeners and these bad habits are not unusual for people to demonstrate.

Debrief: Emphasize again that most people are, at least from time to time, guilty of many or most of these listening bad habits. The most important thing is to be aware of your tendency to fall into these bad habits and consciously try to avoid making these mistakes. Tell participants not to be too hard on themselves if they check many or even all of these bad habits. It is all part of human nature!

Difficulty Rating: Medium to high

Variations: Ask participants what other listening bad habits they can think of and share with the group.



Listening Bad Habits

Following is a list of ten bad habits of listening. Check those listening bad habits that you are sometimes guilty of committing when communicating with others. Be honest with yourself!

- ☐ I interrupt often or try to finish the other person's sentences.
- ☐ I jump to conclusions.
- ☐ I am often overly parental and answer with advice, even when not requested.
- ☐ I make up my mind before I have all the information.
- ☐ I am a compulsive note taker.
- ☐ I don't give any response afterward, even if I say I will.
- ☐ I am impatient.
- ☐ I lose my temper when hearing things I don't agree with.
- ☐ I try to change the subject to something that relates to my own experiences.
- ☐ I think more about my reply while the other person is speaking than what he or she is saying.

9. Listening Questionnaire

Description: A listening test is presented to participants to measure their effectiveness as listeners.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To help participants better understand their weaknesses and strengths as listeners.

Resources: Handouts 9-A and 9-B

Presentation:

1. Distribute Handout 9-A to participants.
2. Ask participants to evaluate their listening skills.
3. Tell participants to write the number in the column that most accurately describes their listening skills for each of the statements.
4. Point out that the best score for each statement is 5, indicating that the participant never has that particular listening problem.
5. Give participants about 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire.
6. After participants have completed the questionnaire, display the scoring key in Handout 9-B.
7. Have participants total the number of points for the seven statements. A perfect score is 35 points.
8. Ask if anyone had a perfect score.
9. Review the scoring ranges for being an *effective listener, good listener,* and *not-so-good listener,* and if anyone scores less than 13 points, their listening skills might be best described as HUH?

Debrief: This exercise and the results should be fun and not taken too seriously. The purpose of the exercise is to allow participants to give some

thought as to how they can specifically improve their listening skills. The statements are all phrased in the negative to point out many of the most common problems that people have listening.

Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Variations: Ask participants to rate someone else whom they have difficulty communicating with concerning his or her listening skills. The purpose would be to better understand that person's listening skills and think about how best to communicate with this individual given these results.



Listening Questionnaire

When listening to another person, I…	**Always** (1 pt.)	**Usually** (2 pts.)	**Often** (3 pts.)	**Rarely** (4 pts.)	**Never** (5 pts.)
Get distracted					
Listen only to facts					
Interrupt					
Assume the other person already knows					
Prejudge					
Tune out					
Ignore nonverbal clues					
Total	+	+	+	+	+



Listening Questionnaire Scoring

31–35 points = Effective Listener

21–30 points = Good Listener

14–20 points = Not-so-good Listener

13 points or less = Huh?

10. Seven Levels of Listening

Description: Seven levels of listening, from the lowest level to the highest, are presented.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To illustrate that there are different levels of listening that can determine how effectively you communicate with others.

Resources: Handout 10-A

Presentation:

1. Distribute Handout 10-A and review the seven levels of listening.
2. Point out that each involves greater levels of involvement and commitment to listening on the part of the listener.
3. Give examples of each type of listening from your own experiences. For instance, ask participants if they have ever experienced level 1 or level 2 listening when someone just was not listening to them when they had something to say. Or ask if they have ever been given only part of someone's attention when trying to communicate with another person. Ask participants how that made them feel.
4. Explain that levels 5–7 involve higher, more involved levels of listening. Explain that the last three levels of listening involve not just hearing the words but trying to understand the meaning behind them from the other person's perspective as well as your own.
5. Explain that Level 5, interpretive listening, involves really trying to hear not only the person's words but the feelings and emotions of the communication.

6. Level 6, interactive listening, involves becoming part of the communications process. It involves asking clarifying questions and acknowledging understanding of the other person's words and emotions being conveyed.
7. Level 7, engaged listening, involves not only hearing and understanding the other person but also expressing your feelings and emotions as well. Explain, however, that truly engaged listening doesn't compete with the other person's desire to communicate his or her feelings. In engaged listening, each person provides the other the opportunity to fully express himself or herself.

Debrief:

Explain that not every communication with others is the same and at the same level. The level of listening involved should be appropriate for the situation. Even some of the first levels of listening may be appropriate given the situation.

Ask participants if they can think of a situation in which this might be true. For example, often when waiting for some form of transportation, such as at an airport, you might only listen for information concerning your own flight and tune out the rest of the information you might hear.

There are other times when all you need to do is focus and understand the other person's message, and interacting or interpreting is not appropriate or necessary for the situation. An example might be when receiving directions from someone.

Ask participants if they can think of other examples in which each of these levels of listening may be the most appropriate.

Difficulty Rating:

Medium to high

Variations:

Ask participants to role play or demonstrate for each other these different levels of listening.



Seven Levels of Listening

1	**Not listening:**	Not paying attention to or ignoring the other person's communications.
2	**Pretend listening:**	Acting like or giving the impression that you are paying attention to another person's communications, but in actuality not really paying attention to that individual.
3	**Partially listening:**	Only focusing on part of the other person's communication or only giving it your divided attention.
4	**Focused listening:**	Giving the other person your undivided attention to his or her communication.
5	**Interpretive listening:**	Going beyond just paying attention but really trying to understand what the other person is communicating.
6	**Interactive listening:**	Being involved in the communications by asking clarifying questions or acknowledging understanding of the communication.
7	**Engaged listening:**	Being fully engaged in communications involves listening to the other person's views, feelings, interpretations, values, etc., concerning the communication and sharing yours as well with the other person(s). In engaged listening, both parties are given the opportunity to fully express their views, feelings, and ideas.

11. Silent Messages

Description: The concept of what happens when one doesn't communicate or say anything is explored in this activity.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To explain that not communicating sometimes sends a stronger message than if you did say something.

Resources: None

Presentation:

1. Explain that many times when we think we are not communicating we are actually sending a very strong message. These are the "silent" messages that sometimes get inadvertently sent to others.
2. Make the point that often when we say "nothing" we are actually saying a lot.
3. Being silent and not saying anything may actually be sending a strong message to others. This is particularly true for supervisors, managers, or anyone in a position of authority. For example, if you see inappropriate or unproductive behaviors by employees and don't say or do anything to correct the situation, you are actually saying a great deal. Your lack of communications could be misinterpreted as condoning these behaviors. This may be completely opposite of your intent.
4. Ask participants to provide examples of these silent messages.

Debrief: Conclude the activity by emphasizing that especially individuals in leadership positions must be conscious of the fact that if they don't say anything when behaviors need to be corrected or complimented that unintended messages may be sent. We need to be careful about these "silent messages."

Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Variations: Give others examples of your own concerning how lack of comment or communications can give the wrong message to others.

12. The Three Levels of Communications

Description: This activity presents statistics relating to the way we receive communications and the true messages being sent by others.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand what an important part nonverbal behaviors and voice inflections play in how we both send and receive messages.

Resources: Handouts 12-A and 12-B

Presentation:

1. Introduce the activity by explaining that when we communicate face-to-face with others, we receive messages on three basic levels: *verbal behaviors, voice inflections,* and *vocabulary*. Distribute or present Handout 12-A.
2. Explain that vocabulary messages consist of the actual words we use to communicate with others.
3. Explain that voice inflections consist of the way that someone says something. This would include tone, speed, emotions, pace, volume, etc. The way someone says something can dramatically change the meaning of the words being spoken.
4. Finally explain that nonverbal behaviors include body language, facial expressions, gestures, etc., that someone might use while communicating with others.
5. Ask participants which of these three factors—nonverbal behaviors, voice inflections, or vocabulary—is most important. In other words, which is most influential in sending a message from one person to another?

6. Distribute or present Handout 12-B. Explain that studies have shown that
   - 7% of what we communicate is based on vocabulary;
   - 38% of what we communicate is based on voice inflections; and
   - 55% of what we communicate is based on nonverbal behaviors.
7. Ask participants if these statistics surprise them.
8. Explain that so much of the messages we get from others is from their nonverbal behaviors. Ask participants to share their perception of what nonverbal behaviors are. Explain that nonverbal behavior is also called body language. You don't have to be an expert to learn to read other people's body language such as crossed arms, a defensive posture, or even facial expressions. Ask participants if they ever had the experience of knowing what someone was going to say by his or her body language before he or she even began talking.
9. Explain that 38% of a message is sent via a person's voice inflections. Explain that voice inflections are how you say things. The very same word or words said another way with different voice inflections could take on an entirely different meaning. For example, ask a participant to say the word *no* with a voice inflection indicating doubt. Ask another participant to say this same word with a voice inflection indicating a definitive negative answer. Comment on the dramatic difference in meaning between these two different interpretations of the way this same two-letter word was just spoken.
10. Ask participants what they think happens on the telephone to voice inflections. The answer is that because there are no nonverbal cues to observe, the influence of voice inflections dramatically goes up, accounting for 88% of the message being sent to the person on the other end of the phone.

11. Finally, point out that there is only 7% left for the actual words themselves. The actual words themselves account for such a small percentage of the total because there can be so many different interpretations of a message based on such things as nonverbal behaviors or voice inflections that may not have been initially intended. This is why it is so important to pay close attention not only to *what* is being said, but *how* something is being said, because this is where the true meaning of the communication can be found.

Debrief:

Explain to participants that to become more effective communicators they need to pay attention to these three levels of communications when communicating with others. By becoming more conscious and even in control of the way you say things, you can help ensure that you are being understood by others. We need to be careful in our communications not to send what is often called "mixed messages" to others. A mixed message in this sense is when the actual words being spoken are not consistent with the speaker's voice inflections and/or body language. This confuses others and makes them unsure of what was the real message being sent. You will notice that the most effective communicators present a consistent message concerning these three levels of communications.

Difficulty Rating:

Medium to high

Variations:

Demonstrate examples of where these three levels of communications are inconsistent. Make a statement but say it in such a way that your voice inflections and nonverbal behaviors are not consistent with the message. For example, you might say, "I am really very excited about being here," however, say this in a monotone, low voice, lacking any enthusiasm. In addition, cross your arms and look down with a disgusted look on your face. Ask participants what the real message was in your communication and how it was different than the words you spoke.



The Three Levels of Communications

1. Vocabulary
2. Voice Inflections
3. Nonverbal Behavior



How We Really Communicate

- 7% of what we communicate is based on vocabulary
  - 38% of what we communicate is based on voice inflections
  - 55% of what we communicate is based on nonverbal behavior

13. Nonverbal Listening Test

Description: A brief test is presented to help participants better understand the importance of nonverbal communications.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To emphasize how critical it is to be aware of nonverbal communications in our interactions with others.

Resources:
Handout 13-A
Pen or pencil for each participant

Presentation:

1. Distribute Handout 13-A to participants.
2. Introduce the activity as a test of participants' understanding of nonverbal communication.
3. Instruct participants to spend the next 5 minutes completing this brief test.
4. Allow participants time to complete the test.
5. After everyone has completed the test, review the suggested correct answers. Ask participants to correct their own tests if they have marked the wrong answers.

Answers

1) Communications other than the actual words spoken; includes all forms of body language, eye contact, and other cues that one might send that give indications of what the person is really communicating.
2) Examples: smiling, maintaining eye contact, arms unfolded
3) Examples: frowning, arms crossed, avoiding eye contact
4) (1) Eye contact, (2) Body posturing, (3) Position of arms and hands
5) 7%

6) Less voice inflections and emotion in voice; makes understanding what the person is saying harder to understand
7) The ability of a speaker to use inflections and pitch
8) He or she is ready to listen to you attentively
9) The person may not be in agreement
10) True

Debrief: Discuss differences participants may have had with these recommended correct answers. Explain that with nonverbal communications there may be many different interpretations of what is really meant.

Difficulty Rating: Medium to high

Variations: Present the test as a group exercise.



Nonverbal Listening Test

Answer as many of the following questions as you can in the next 5 minutes.

1. What does the term *nonverbal communication* mean?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Give three examples of positive nonverbal communications:

   1) _____
   2) _____
   3) _____

3. Give three examples of negative nonverbal communications:

   1) _____
   2) _____
   3) _____

4. Rank order from most influential to least the following forms of nonverbal communications as the best indications of what a person may actually be communicating to you:

   _____ Body posturing

   _____ Position of arms and hands

   _____ Eye contact

5. How much of the meaning of a spoken statement comes from the actual words spoken? (check one)

   ☐ a) 75%

   ☐ b) 7%

   ☐ c) 20%

Handout 13-A (concluded)

6. If someone speaks in a monotone, what does this mean and what influence does this have on his or her communications?

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. "Vocal variety" means which of the following? (check one)

   ☐ a) Traveling comedy shows of the 1920s

   ☐ b) The ability of a speaker to use inflections and pitch

   ☐ c) The ability of the speaker to use breathing techniques and do impersonations

8. During a meeting between you and a co-worker, he or she moves a chair from behind the desk and asks you to sit down to discuss something. You could interpret this nonverbal communication to mean: (check one)

   ☐ a) He or she is trying to conclude this meeting quickly.

   ☐ b) He or she is distracted.

   ☐ c) He or she is ready to listen to you attentively.

9. When a person crosses his or her arms during a conversation, this is an indication that: (check one)

   ☐ a) The person may not be in agreement.

   ☐ b) The person is totally supportive of the other person's views and opinions.

10. Nonverbal communication skills are important to be a good communicator. (check one)

    ☐ a) True

    ☐ b) False

14. Laws of Remembering

Description: This activity involves introducing participants to the Laws of Remembering, which consist of four principles concerning how we remember things.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To provide tips to participants to help them remember information better

Resources: Handout 14-A

Presentation:

1. Present Handout 14-A to participants. Introduce the Laws of Remembering, which can help participants become better at remembering.
2. Review each of these principles.
3. First, explain to participants that we remember best what we heard last or heard most recently. This is why we often repeat the most important part of the message before ending a conversation with someone or giving instruction: “And don’t forget, you need to make sure that you…” is often said in these circumstances.
4. Next, explain that we also remember information that we hear most frequently. This helps keep this information in our minds. This is why we remember things that we come in contact with every day, such as work procedures, names of people we see regularly, etc.
5. The third principle concerns the impact of what we hear on our remembering something. The significance of the impact that something has on us causes us to remember it. The greater the impact, the longer we remember. Think about famous lines from movies that you remember for years, even decades. We remember these famous lines because of their

impact. For example, consider the most famous line from the *Rocky* movies that began in the 1970s. Ask participants what famous line comes to mind. They will very likely tell you it was Sylvester Stallone playing the role of beaten up Rocky Balboa, standing in the middle of the boxing ring after losing the Heavy Weight Boxing Championship, and screaming the name of his girlfriend: "ADRIAN!"

6. Finally explain that we remember what we have a use for. A good example is your password for your computer. A password is typically a random word and/or group of numbers that would have little or no meaning otherwise. But you remember this letter/number combination because you have to use it every day. Your social security number is another good example of something you remember because you have used it all your life. Before what about driver's license numbers? Most people don't remember their driver's license number because they don't have to use it frequently. The same is true for automobile license plates. Ask participants how many know these two things. Then ask them how many know their social security numbers. Expect to find out that few, if any, participants know their driver's license numbers or license plate (except for vanity plates), but just about everyone knows their social security number. This is because this is a number that you have a regular use for in your life, proving this last principle.

Debrief:

Conclude the activity by suggesting that using these four Laws of Remembering can help participants become better at remembering important information. Participants can also help others become better at remembering as well as using these principles when communicating with them.

Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Variations: Ask participants for examples of each of these four Laws of Remembering from their own experience after presenting these principles using Handout 14-A.



The Laws of Remembering

- **Recently:** We remember best what we heard last.
- **Frequently:** We remember what we hear most often.
- **Impact:** We remember most the things that are presented dramatically.
- **Application:** We remember most the things we have a use for.

15. Laws of Forgetting

Description: This activity involves presenting to participants the Laws of Forgetting, including some of the reasons why people tend to forget.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To provide participants with factors that often influence why we forget things.

Resources: Handout 15-A

Presentation:

1. Present Handout 15-A to participants to introduce the Laws of Forgetting.
2. Explain that these principles help us better understand why we forget things.
3. Review each of the three points on the handout. Begin by asking participants why it is actually good that we don't remember everything that we hear.
4. The answer is that we simply can't retain all the information we receive on a daily basis. We need to forget information so that new information can be remembered—much the same way as memory in a computer.
5. When explaining the last point, ask participants what "adding things that were never said in the first place" reminds them of. The answer should be *rumors*. See Activity 44 for an exercise on rumors.

Debrief: Conclude the activity by emphasizing that forgetting information is a natural and, actually, necessary part of communications. We all need to be aware that we can only retain a certain amount of information at any given time. We need to make sure that this information is timely and accurate so that we can make decisions based on this type of quality information rather than rumor or forgotten facts.

Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Variations: Ask participants to share any tips they use to keep from forgetting important things that they need to know.



The Laws of Forgetting

- We forget 50% of what we hear immediately.
- We forget 75% of what we hear within two months.
- Of the 25% we do remember, only 60% is correct, plus we add things that were never said in the first place!

16. Meaning of Words

Description: Different definitions of the same word are presented as examples of how a single word can have multiple meanings.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To emphasize that even the same word can be interpreted and misinterpreted in many different ways. This is just another reason why effective communications is such a big challenge and often so difficult to achieve. Understanding this can help us be more aware of this challenge and better able to deal with different interpretations of words when they arise in our daily communications and interactions with others.

Resources: Handout 16-A

Presentation:

1. Distribute or present Handout 16.A.
2. Review the different interpretations for the word *fast* as described in Handout 16-A.
3. Ask participants if they can think of any additional meanings or interpretations.
4. Discuss the challenge that this presents to being able to clearly communicate with others. Ask participants how this communication challenge can best be met.
5. Expect to hear suggestions that relate to telling others what your interpretation is of words or concepts that you are communicating to others. Asking others for their interpretation or understanding of certain words or concepts that might easily be misunderstood is another good communication technique.

Debrief: Conclude the activity by re-emphasizing that the same word can mean different things to different people. Gaining a better understanding of how people interpret or understand the meanings of words can greatly enhance the chance of clearly communicating with others.

Difficulty Rating: Low

Variations: Pick a different word and provide multiple definitions for the word from a dictionary.



Meaning of Words

The Oxford Dictionary records an average of 28 separate meanings for each of the 500 most-used words in the English language. For example, consider the word *fast* that can have the following meanings:

- A person is **fast** when he or she can run quickly.
- He or she is also **fast** if restrained and can't run at all.
- Colors are **fast** when they do not run.
- One is **fast** if he or she moves in suspect company.
- This is not quite the same thing as playing **fast** and loose.
- A racetrack is **fast** when it is in good running condition.
- A friend is **fast** when he or she is loyal.
- A watch is **fast** when it is ahead of time.
- To be **fast** asleep is to be deep in slumber.
- To be **fast** by is to be near.
- To **fast** is also to refrain from eating.
- A **fast** may be a ship's mooring line.
- Photographic film is **fast** when it is sensitive to light.
- Bacteria are **fast** when they are insensitive to antiseptics

17. Communications Circles

Description: This activity introduces a model showing three levels of communicating and sharing information.

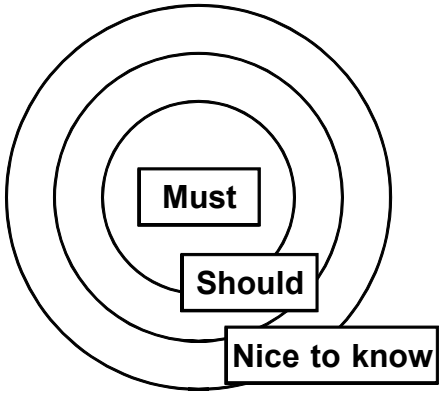
Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To highlight that there are different levels of sharing information and that you need to decide what level is most appropriate for any given situation.

Resources: Handout 17-A

Presentation:

1. Introduce and explain these communications circles as levels at which someone shares information. This model is particularly important for anyone in a leadership position who has access to information that his or her employees would be interested in receiving.



2. Begin explaining this model with the inner-most circle labeled **must.**
3. **Must** communications is information that employees must have in order to perform their job. This level of communication is typically achieved. If not, people wouldn't be able to do their jobs. If a problem exists at this level, it typically gets corrected quickly.

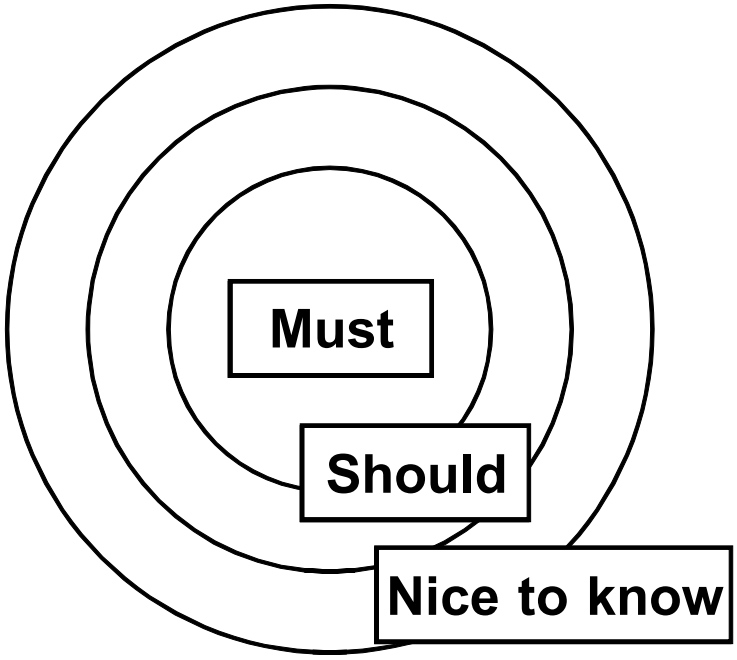
4. The next level is information that an employee **should** know but doesn't have to in order to perform the job. However, receiving this information can help an employee perform better, and they also appreciate being in the "know" about this type of information. There is no guarantee that this level of communications is always achieved since employees don't have to have this information to do their jobs. This level of information may just help them perform their jobs.
5. The next circle is information that is simply **nice to know.** This communication could be on any subject and not necessarily directly or indirectly related to the job. This is simply telling people about things that may be of general interest to them but that they don't really need to know. This information could be about organizational changes, personnel announcement, business updates, or anything that may be appropriate but not necessary to share with them.
6. There is another type of information not shown on this communications model. This is information that you **can't** share. One of the most difficult communications challenges for a supervisor or manager is when employees ask about information that must remain confidential and that you consequently cannot share. Employees will be more accepting that there is certain information that they shouldn't know if the other communications levels from the model have been achieved. Simply telling employees that the information is confidential will be much better accepted if you have built communication trust by sharing whatever information you can with them.
7. In these circumstances, instruct participants that if an employee asks a question about a confidential topic, it is best to simply explain that you have been told not to discuss that topic. Employees will accept this and respect the need for confidentiality.

Debrief: As discussed during this activity, by sharing information at all three levels of the model, you build greater communications trust with employees who report to you. Employees have a strong desire to receive communications on all three levels of this model. Emphasize in closing just how important these levels of communications can be to everyone in the organization.

Difficulty Rating: Medium to high

Variations: Ask participants to evaluate themselves concerning what level on this communications model they share information with others, particularly employees who report to them. Challenge participants to think about how they can move to a higher level (toward **nice to know**) of communications on this model.

Handout
17-A



18. Attention Spans

Description: The average attention span of high school students and adults is presented.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To help participants better understand just how limited attention spans can be and the challenge this presents in communications.

Resources: Handout 18-A

Presentation:

1. Begin the activity by asking participants what they think is meant by "attention span" as it relates to communications. You should expect to hear replies that relate to how long someone can concentrate on one thing before becoming distracted in some way.
2. Distribute or present Handout 18-A.
3. Read what the attention span is of a high school student and ask participants if they agree or disagree with this assessment.
4. Next read what the attention span is of the average adult. Again ask participants if they agree or disagree.
5. To prove this point, read the following brief passage to participants and ask them to raise their hand (and leave it up) when they begin to lose their attention to what you are reading.

Building a Simple Crystal Radio

A crystal radio is the distilled essence of a radio. It has very few parts, it needs no batteries or other power source, and it can be built in a short time out of things you can find around the house.

The reason a crystal radio does not need any batteries is the amazing capabilities of the human ear. The ear is extremely sensitive to very faint sounds. The crystal radio uses only the

energy of the radio waves sent by radio transmitters. These radio transmitters send out enormous amounts of energy (tens of thousands of watts). However, because they are usually far away, and we have at most a few hundred feet of wire for an antenna, the amount of energy we receive with the crystal radio is measured in billionths of a watt. The human ear can detect sounds that are less than a millionth of even that.

6. After reading this passage, see how many participants have raised their hands and tell them they can now put their hands down.
7. Ask those who acknowledged losing their attention what happened. Expect to hear answers that relate to the participant beginning to think about other things while listening to the passage, daydreaming, being bored with the content of the passage, etc. Also expect to hear responses from some participants that they were very interested in the information being shared and were paying close, undistracted attention. This shows that if you are interested in something, your attention span will be longer.

Debrief: Conclude the activity by emphasizing the point that if you want to keep the attention of others, you need to communicate about subjects that they are interested in hearing and discussing.

Difficulty Rating: Low

Variations: Read a passage of your own or one that relates to the participants' workplace instead of the one provided.



Attention Spans

- The average attention span of a high school student is about 10 seconds.
- For an adult it is longer—about 17 seconds!

19. Meaning of Listening

Description: The Chinese word for listening is presented, and its meaning is discussed.

Time Guideline: 15 minutes

Purpose: To share how the components of the Chinese word for listening are broken down and how they help us better understand what listening really means.

Resources: Handout 19-A.

Presentation:

1. Distribute or present Handout 19-A.
2. Explain that this is the Chinese word for listening.
3. Review each of the components of this word in Chinese as presented in the handout.
4. Explain how each one is critically important for listening to occur.
5. First listening requires the ear. If one doesn't or isn't able to hear, then listening can't take place. Your ears are primary to listening. In other words, you must give the other person communicating your full attention so that you actually hear the message.
6. We also must listen with our eyes. Much of listening is observing and trying to understand not only *what* is being said but *how* it is being said. This is often called nonverbal communications.
7. Explain that listening also involves the heart. We need to understand the emotion that is being communicated in the words we hear (and see).
8. Review the summary on the handout: **Listening requires ears as primary, plus eye contact, and one heart…a full attention.**

Debrief: Reflect that studying the Chinese word for listening serves as an excellent model for understanding what is needed to be a good listener. If we listen with not only our ears but also our eyes and hearts with our full attention, we can learn to become better listeners. Ask participants how they can use these lessons from the Chinese word for listening to help them become better listeners.

Difficulty Rating: Medium

Variations: Ask participants if they have thoughts of any other interpretations they may see for the Chinese word for listening.

Handout
19-A

Listening =

聽

EDITOR: THIS IS THE ONLY SYMBOL I COULD FIND AFTER SEARCHING THE WEB.

耳 … ear



…king …primary

…add …plus

目 …eye …eye contact

…one

心 …heart

Listening requires ears as primary, plus eye contact, and one heart…a full attention.



Part II: Communications Icebreakers

20. Vanity Name Tent Cards

Description: This activity is designed to be an icebreaker exercise to help introduce participants to one another. Participants are asked to draw on their name tent card pictures, symbols, words, etc. that describe themselves.

Time Guideline: 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the number of participants

Purpose: To help introduce participants to one another and make everyone feel more comfortable before the meeting, seminar, training program, etc., begins

Resources: A name tent card printed on heavy card stock for each participant

Colored markers

Presentation:

1. Make sure that each participant is provided a name tent card with his or her name pre-printed on it. If not, ask participants to write their names on their tent cards.
2. Distribute colored markers to participants.
3. Instruct participants to draw or write information about themselves on their name tent cards to personalize them and share some information about themselves with the group.
4. To help explain what participants are being asked to do, compare their name tent cards to vanity license plates, but with more options for pictures and colors.
5. As an example, you might draw your own vanity name tent card to help participants think about how they can design their own. An example might be:

PETER
Married w/ 2kids&1dog-vacationsinNC

6. Once everyone has completed their name tent card, ask each participant to briefly explain what he or she drew or wrote on his or her card. In the example above, Peter would explain that he is married and his wife's name is Nancy, they have two children Lauren and Erin, they have a pet dog (a West Highland White Terrier) named Christy, and they enjoy going together on summer vacations to the beach in North Carolina.

Debrief: After participants have finished introducing their vanity name tent cards, thank them for sharing this information with the group and explain that this information will be helpful for everyone to get to know one another a little better before you begin the meeting, seminar, training program, etc.

Difficulty Rating: Low

Variations: Ask participants to vote on the most creative vanity name tent card.

21. Repeating Introductions

Description: In this activity, each participant shares three things about himself or herself, then repeats three things the other participants have shared previously about themselves.

Time Guideline: Depends on the number of participants; be aware that this activity can take over 30 minutes from beginning to end for a typical group of 20 to 30 participants

Purpose: To serve as an icebreaker before the beginning of a seminar, training program, meeting, etc.

Resources: None required

Presentation:

1. Introduce the activity as an icebreaker to help participants get to know one another.
2. Explain that each participant is going to be asked to share the following information about himself or herself with the group:
   - Their name
   - Their hobby or favorite pastime
   - Where they would really like to be at the moment
3. Ask for a volunteer to begin this activity, sharing these three things about himself or herself.
4. Next ask another participant to share these same three things about himself or herself and the three things that were shared by the previous participant.
5. Continue this activity with the current participant sharing these three things about himself or herself, then those things shared by each previous participant, until everyone has had a turn. Keep in mind that the list of things that every successive participant must remember will continue to keep growing.

6. Allow the group to help participants if they need assistance remembering everything shared about previous participants. If a participant appears embarrassed or overly anxious about being able to remember all of this information in front of the group, allow these individuals the option of not participating.

Debrief:

After everyone has had a chance to repeat the introductions of everyone else, ask participants to share their thoughts about this exercise. Expect to hear comments about how difficult it was to remember everyone's information. Ask participants how carefully they listened, especially before their turn. You will undoubtedly hear participants say that they listened very intently because they knew they were going to be called on to repeat this information. Suggest that this activity is a good example of how you help others be better listeners by giving them a listening assignment that they know they will have to complete. Before you end this activity explain that participants will likely remember this information about each other for a long time.

Difficulty Rating:

High

Variations:

If the group is large, break participants into smaller, more manageable groups to help this activity go faster.

22. Circle, Square, Triangle, or Z

Description: This activity is an icebreaker to help get participants talking about themselves from the start of a seminar, training program, or meeting.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes, depending on the number of participants

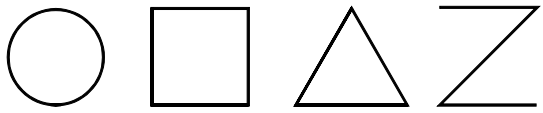
Purpose: To allow participants to share a little about themselves with the group as part of the introductions to one another.

Resources: Flipchart or white board and markers for participants

Tent cards with participants' names

Presentation:

1. Explain that this activity is designed to help participants learn more about one another.
2. On a writing surface, draw the following:



3. Ask each participant to draw one of these shapes on their name tent card. Tell them to pick whatever shape appeals to them the most and that they think best represents them. Provide markers so that these shapes can clearly be seen.
4. After everyone has completed marking their name tent cards, ask each participant to explain why he or she chose the shape he or she did.
5. After everyone has had a chance to discuss their name tent cards, explain the following:

Research has shown that

a) those who marked their cards with a Z are the most intelligent in the group;

b) those who marked their cards with a triangle are the most intelligent in the group;

c) those who marked their cards with a square are the most ambitious in the group and will make it to the top;

d) and those who marked their cards with a circle are the "party animals" in the group!

Debrief: Have some fun with this activity, especially the explanation for those with circles. Remember that these symbols will remain visible on participants' cards throughout the program, and humorous comments can be made about these designations to help make the program fun.

Difficulty Rating: Medium

Variations: To save time, only have participants mark their name tent cards with a symbol without explaining why they chose the shape they did, but still share what each symbol represents.

23. Introducing Each Other

Description: Participants are asked to break up into pairs to learn about each other in order to briefly introduce the other person to the group

Time Guideline: 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the number of participants

Purpose: To serve as both an icebreaker and a way for participants to learn more about one another

Resources: None required

Presentation:

1. After welcoming participants to the seminar, training program, meeting, etc., tell them that they are going to introduce one another to the group.
2. Break participants into pairs by asking each person to work with the person sitting next to him or her. To alleviate confusion, you could assign these pairs and, if there is an odd number, break the last group into a triad.
3. Instruct participants to spend a few moments learning about the other individual in order to introduce that person to the rest of the group. Suggest that each person learn something about the other person that the group (if familiar with one another) might not already know, such as the person's hobbies, vacation destinations, age of children, schooling, special skills or training, etc.
4. After each pair has had enough time to learn about each other (monitor each pair's discussions by walking around to check if they are still interviewing each other), ask each person to introduce the other to the entire group. Explain that these introductions should be brief—only a minute or two.

Debrief: Thank participants for their introductions of one another and begin the seminar, training program, or meeting.

Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Variations: Give specific questions that each person should ask of the other, such as favorite part of his or her job, a funny experience he or she may have had in his or her career, most embarrassing moment at work, etc.

24. Fantasy Career

Description: Participants are asked what their fantasy career would be if they could have any job they wanted.

Time Guideline: 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the number of participants

Purpose: To serve as an icebreaker activity and provide an opportunity for participants to share information about themselves with one another

Resources: None required

Presentation:

1. As an introduction to one another, ask each participant to share with the group what his or her fantasy career would be if he or she could do anything for a living.
2. Allow each participant to briefly explain what this occupation, trade, or job might be.
3. As participants share this information, occasionally ask clarifying questions about these fantasy careers, such as if the participant has ever done anything like this in the past or why he or she is interested.

Debrief: After everyone has explained their fantasy career, thank them for sharing this with the group and emphasize how learning a little more about one another will be helpful during the seminar, training program, or meeting that you are about to begin.

Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Variations: Also ask participants what would be the opposite of their fantasy career—in other words, their nightmare career.

25. Name that Participant

Description: Each participant is asked to complete a questionnaire about himself or herself and then hand it in to the facilitator. The group is then asked to guess who the respondent is of each questionnaire that is read aloud by the facilitator.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes or longer, depending on the number of participants; this activity works best when participants already know or are familiar with one another

Purpose: To provide a different and participative way for participants to get to know one another better

Resources: Handout 25-A

Presentation:

1. Distribute Handout 25-A to participants.
2. Explain that each participant should complete the questionnaire without sharing his or her answers with others.
3. After collecting the completed questionnaires, select one at random without revealing the participant's name.
4. Read the questions and answers, and ask the group to identify the participant.
5. Allow some brief discussion and speculation as to who the respondent is of each questionnaire.
6. Ask the respondent of each questionnaire to finally identify himself or herself.

Debrief: Thank participants for sharing this information about themselves and begin the seminar, training program, or meeting.

Difficulty Rating: Medium to high

Variations: Instead of revealing all of the questionnaires at one time, read one at a time throughout the program or seminar to serve as a refresher moment throughout the day or save them until a group dinner at the end of the day.



Participant Questionnaire

Participant's name: _____

Instructions: Please answer the following questions and return the completed questionnaire to the facilitator. Do not share any of your answers with the other participants before the facilitator reads your answers to the group as part of this activity.

Favorite color _____

Favorite food _____

Best movie ever seen _____

Fantasy vacation destination _____

Favorite actor _____

Fantasy car _____

What famous person (living or deceased) do you admire most? _____

_____

Who would you most like to meet (living or deceased)? _____

_____

Favorite quote: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

26. Story of Your Name

Description: Participants are asked to share stories about their names.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes or longer, depending on the number of participants

Purpose: To serve as an introduction and icebreaker activity

Resources: None required

Presentation:

1. Introduce the activity by explaining that its objective is to give participants a chance to get to know one another better.
2. Ask each participant to share with the group any stories, facts, history, background, etc., about his or her names, either first or last.
3. As facilitator, be sure to share the story of your name as well with the group.

Debrief: Comment how everyone has a "story" about their name and its importance in their lives. Comment on how our names identify us in many ways.

Difficulty Rating: Medium to high

Variations: Ask for volunteers to share their stories about their names rather than asking each person to comment, especially if someone appears uncomfortable sharing this information with the group.

27. Nickname Game

Description: Participants are asked to share their nicknames when growing up or presently.

Time Guideline: 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the number of participants

Purpose: To serve as an icebreaker or introductory exercise

Resources: None required

Presentation:

1. As an icebreaker or introductory exercise, ask each participant to share with the group what his or her nickname was when growing up or even today, and how he or she was given this nickname.
2. Have fun with this exercise and encourage good-natured humor to be enjoyed as participants share their nicknames.
3. If some participants are uncomfortable sharing this information with the group, allow them to not participate.
4. As facilitator, be sure to share your nickname with the group as well.

Debrief: Ask participants if any of their nicknames are still used today.

Difficulty Rating: Medium to high

Variations: Use participants' nicknames throughout the program and then swear everyone in the group to secrecy about these nicknames afterward!

28. Introduction Bingo

Description: Participants are each given a special Introduction Bingo card and instructed to find other participants who meet the criteria of each block on the card.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To be used as an icebreaker and introductory exercise

Resources: Handout 28-A

Presentation:

1. Welcome everyone to the program and introduce the activity as a way for everyone to get to know one another better.
2. Distribute a copy of Handout 28-A to each participant.
3. Explain that each participant is to walk around and find other participants who meet the criteria of each block on their Introduction Bingo card.
4. Instruct participants that they should write the name of the person who meets the criteria of each block. The winner will be asked later whose name is in each block.
5. Tell participants that when the first person has BINGO (a completed row either vertically, horizontally, or diagonally), he or she should shout out "BINGO."
6. Once someone has BINGO, have participants return to their seats.
7. Ask the Bingo winner to share the names of the participants in each block of their completed Bingo card.
8. Ask those individuals whose names are on the card to briefly elaborate on their experiences that qualified him or her for their respective block.

Debrief: After each person on the winner's Bingo card has explained his or her experiences or interests, thank everyone for their participation and tell them that this activity will help the program go better because everyone knows each other a little better.

Difficulty Rating: Medium to high

Variations: Continue the Bingo activity until everyone has completed his or her card.



Introduction Bingo

Drives an SUV or a truck	Likes poetry	Asks for directions when driving	Plays a musical instrument	Does own ironing
Owns an Apple computer	Has visited Canada	Collects something as a hobby	Reads more than one daily newspaper	Has ridden on a passenger train
Speaks a foreign language	Watches TV game shows	FREE SPACE	Eats out at least twice a week	Beatles fan
Loves hockey	Visited Washington, D.C. as a child	Has met a famous person	Recently bought a new car	Goes to the movies at least once a month
Has been to the opera	Likes country music	Rides a bicycle to work	Owns a big screen TV	Plays golf

29. Card Match

Description: Participants are each given a card with information printed on it. Some of these cards contain questions and some contain answers. Each participant is to find the other participant who has either a question or answer that corresponds to his or hers.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To serve as an icebreaker or introductory exercise

Resources: Question and answer cards found in Handout 29-A

Presentation:

1. Before the seminar, training program, or meeting, print out Handout 29-A and cut out the cards.
2. Note that there are question cards and answer cards.
3. Note that the question cards have a capital letter in the bottom right-hand corner of each card. Answer cards have a corresponding lowercase letter in the bottom right-hand corner of each card. The question and answer cards that relate to one another reference the same letter—the question card has a capital letter and the answer card has a lower case letter. For example, the first question card has an **A** in the right-hand corner and the answer card has an **a.** This way, as facilitator, you can easily identify if a card is a question card or an answer card and if they are paired together or not.
4. Distribute at random the question and answer cards to participants. Make sure that you are distributing both a question card and an answer card for the same problem to participants.

5. Instruct participants to mingle with one another and find the person who has either the question or answer card that corresponds with his or hers.
6. The only rule is that participants can't show their cards to each other. They must verbally tell each other what's printed on their card.
7. Once participants with corresponding cards have identified each other, instruct them to sit down so that you know they have completed their part of the activity.
8. Continue the activity until everyone has found the participant holding either the answer or question to their card.

Debrief: Ask participants to share their experiences in finding the person with their corresponding card. What helped them find the other person and what hindered them in achieving this objective?

Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Variations: Ask those with questions to share their question with the group. Before you ask the person with the answer card to share the correct answer, give other participants a chance to answer each question.

Questions and Answers

A. What is the name of the mythical monster said to live in a lake in Scotland?

   a. Loch Ness Monster

B. What is the name of the planet closest to the sun?

   b. Mercury

C. What year was the movie *The Wizard of Oz* produced?

   c. 1939

D. What was the price of gasoline in 1962?

d. $0.31/gallon

E. What was the name of the Beatles' first song released in the United States?

e. *I Want to Hold Your Hand*

F. What was the name of the Flintstone's family pet?

f. Dino

G. What was the name of Ronald Reagan's vice-president?

g. George Bush

H. What are the vowels in the English language?

h. A, E, I, O, U, and sometimes Y

I. What was the name of the sixteenth president of the United States?

i. Abraham Lincoln

J. What is the name of a Triple Crown winner?

j. Secretariat

K. Who was the first person to reach the North Pole?

k. Robert Perry

L. When did the *Titanic* sink?

l. April 15, 1912 at 2:20 a.m.

M. Whose picture is on the front of a 20-dollar bill?

m. Andrew Jackson

N. What is the number of home runs that Babe Ruth hit during his baseball career?

n. 714

O. What NFL team's defense has been known as the "Steel Curtain?"

o. Pittsburgh Steelers

P. What shape is a stop sign?

p. Octagon

Q. What state in the United States is located the farthest south?

q. Hawaii

R. Which weighs more: a ton of bricks or a ton of feathers?

r. Both weigh the same

S. What is the capital of North Dakota?

s. Bismarck

T. How many 1,000s are in a million?

t. 1,000

U. What was the first capital of the United States?

u. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

V. What was the name of the first man on the moon and when did this event occur?

v. Neil Armstrong on July 20, 1969

W. What was the most famous line from the movie *Dirty Harry*, starring Clint Eastwood?

w. "Go ahead, make my day!"

X. Who invented bifocal glasses?

x. Benjamin Franklin

Y. What day and year did Thomas Jefferson die?

y. July 4, 1826



Question-and-Answer Cards

(cut out for use in Activity 29)

What is the name of the mythical monster said to live in a lake in Scotland? **A**	Loch Ness Monster **a**
What is the name of the planet closest to the sun? **B**	Mercury **b**
What year was the movie *The Wizard of Oz* produced? **C**	1939 **c**

Handout 29-A (continued)

What was the price of gasoline in 1962? **D**	$0.31/gallon **d**
What was the name of the Beatles' first song released in the United States? **E**	*I Want to Hold Your Hand* **e**
What was the name of the Flintstone's family pet? **F**	Dino **f**
What was the name of Ronald Reagan's vice president? **G**	George Bush **g**

Handout 29-A (continued)

What are the vowels in the English language? **H**	A, E, I, O, U, and sometimes Y **h**
What is the name of the sixteenth president of the United States? **I**	Abraham Lincoln **i**
What is the name of a Triple Crown winner? **J**	Secretariat **j**
Who was the first person to reach the North Pole **K**	Robert Perry **k**

Handout 29-A (continued)

When did the *Titanic* sink? **L**	April 15, 1912, at 2:20 a.m. **l**
Whose picture is on the front of a 20-dollar bill? **M**	Andrew Jackson **m**
What is the number of home runs Babe Ruth hit during his baseball career? **N**	714 **n**
What NFL team's defense has been known as the "Steel Curtain?" **O**	Pittsburgh Steelers **o**

Handout 29-A (continued)

What shape is a stop sign? **P**	Octagon **p**
What state in the United States is located the farthest south? **Q**	Hawaii **q**
Which weighs more: a tone of bricks or a ton of feathers? **R**	Both weigh the same **r**
What is the capital of North Dakota? **S**	Bismarck **s**

Handout 29-A (continued)

How many 1,000 are in a million? **T**	1,000 **t**
What was the first capital of the United States? **U**	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania **u**
What was the name of the first man on the moon and when did this event occur? **V**	Neil Armstrong on July 20, 1969 **v**
What was the most famous line from the movie *Dirty Harry* starring Clint Eastwood? **W**	"Go ahead, make my day!" **w**

Handout 29-A (concluded)

Who invented bifocal glasses? **X**	Benjamin Franklin **x**
What day and year did Thomas Jefferson die? **Y**	July 4, 1826 **y**



Part III: Communications Exercises

30. Reading Test

Description: Participants are asked to read a statement presented inside a triangle. The result is typically that the person reading the statement doesn't notice a repeated written word.

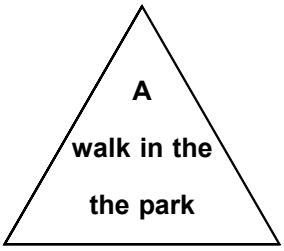
Time Guideline: 10 minutes

Purpose: To demonstrate and highlight how easily we often ignore information that is clearly right in front of us.

Resources: Handout 30-A

Presentation:

1. Introduce the activity as a reading test.
2. Quickly distribute or present Handout 30-A and ask a participant to read the words inside the triangle (the same as shown below):



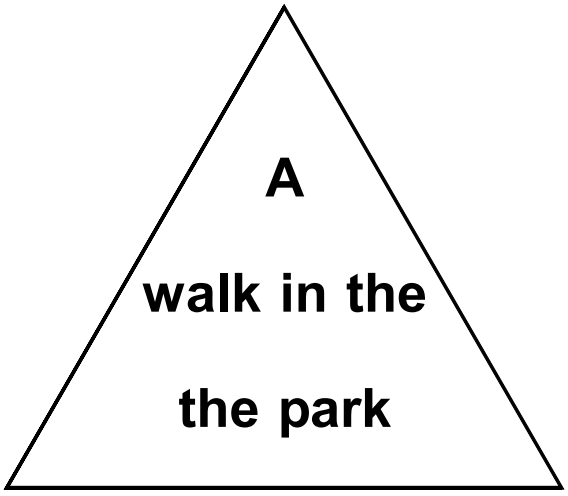
3. It is likely that the person will read this statement as "A walk in the park," ignoring the repeated word *the*.
4. Tell the participant that he/she has read the statement incorrectly and ask him/her to read it again.
5. Ask the group why they think this happened.
6. Explain that the most likely reason is that we often ignore unnecessary information that we don't really need.
7. This is all part of the way we learn to communicate. We often don't pay attention to what we believe is not important or necessary information.

Debrief: Ask the group what problems this phenomenon causes in our communications. Ask if participants believe that we sometimes ignore information that really is important and critical. Explain that being more aware of how we ignore or filter out certain bits of information as demonstrated in this activity can help us avoid doing this during critical communications in the future.

Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Variations: Display Handout 30-A briefly and then take it away and have each participant write down what they think they saw. Ask different participants what they wrote down until someone has it written down properly. Reshow the handout to verify that they did indeed miss the repeated word.


Handout
30-A


A
walk in the
the park

31. The Longest Line

Description: Participants are presented an optical illusion, showing two lines that appear to be different in length, and are asked to identify the longer line.

Time Guideline: 10 minutes

Purpose: To illustrate that what we see may not always be as it first appears.

Resources: Handout 31-A

Presentation:

1. Present Handout 31-A to participants.
2. Ask the group which line is longer.
3. Expect to hear responses that the line on the right is longer.
4. Point out that the actual lines (excluding the arrows at the end of each) are the same length.
5. Use some measuring device to prove this is indeed the case if necessary.

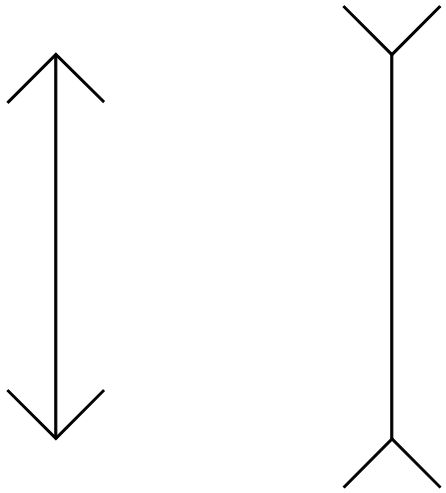
Debrief: Ask participants why they may have believed at first that the line on the right was the longest. Point out that often it is the context in which we see things that make them appear to be different. However, this context doesn't change the facts. Ask how this same concept may be true concerning their communications with others. Point out that sometimes the very same thing may be seen or heard differently due to the context in which it is presented. Ask the group if they can think of examples when this is true. One example may be how people appear to others when seen in a group of other people. Their characteristics, traits, personality, etc., may all appear different because of the influence of the presence of the others. However, these things in actuality remain constant throughout.

Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Variations: On a flipchart, draw two lines of identical length and then add the arrows at the ends as depicted in Handout 31-A to illustrate how the way we see things changes as the context in which we see them does.

Handout
31-A

Which line is the longest?



32. Color Block

Description: The facilitator prints the names of colors on a flipchart or white board in colors other than the name of the color.

Time Guideline: 10 minutes

Purpose: To emphasize what happens when we are presented with too many contradictory messages at the same time.

Resources: Flipchart or white board and a variety of colored markers

Presentation:

1. Before beginning the activity, print the names of various colors on a writing surface large enough for participants to be able to easily see. Do not let participants see this until you are ready to begin the activity.
2. Print the name of each color using a colored marker of a different color than the name of the color you are printing. For instance, you might print "RED" using a blue marker. Repeat this for as many colors as you would like (at least six or more).
3. Present these colors to participants and ask someone to quickly read the *colors,* not the *words*. In other words, using the example given above, the participant should read the color *blue*, not the word *red,* printed on the board.
4. You should expect that participants will have some difficulty performing this assignment as they will have a tendency to read the words, not the colors.

Debrief: Ask those who tried this exercise to share why it was so difficult. Explain that the reason why it is difficult is that there are too many messages being presented to our brains between the meaning of the words and the actual colors that

the words are printed in. This is similar to what happens when we are faced with communications overloads in our busy lives between phone calls, e-mails, faxes, voice mail messages, regular mail, meetings, conferences, etc. Make the point that simplifying messages often improves communications. Just think how much easier this exercise would have been if both the printed word and the color that these words were printed in were the same.

Difficulty Rating: Medium

Variations: Use a PowerPoint program to display color names in different colors.

33. Following Directions

Description: Participants are provided with a worksheet and told to follow very specific instructions to complete the assigned tasks from the facilitator.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To highlight just how easily it is to misunderstand instructions if you don't listen carefully.

Resources: Handouts 33-A and 33-B; pencils or pens

Presentation:

1. Distribute Handout 33-A to each participant. Tell them to do exactly as you instruct them to do to test their listening skills and ability to follow directions.
2. Tell participants that in quadrant one they should place a dot on the litter "I."
3. In quadrant two, tell participants to print the word *XEROX* in the spaces provided.
4. In quadrant three, explain that PB stands for Papa Bull, MB stands for Mamma Bull, and BB stands for Baby Bull. Ask participants which one doesn't belong.
5. In quadrant four, ask participants to spell *two words* using the letters shown.
6. After participants have completed the worksheet, distribute or present Handout 33-B, which shows the way the worksheet should have been completed if one followed the directions exactly.
7. Remind participants that the instructions told them to place a dot ***on*** the letter "I" and to write *XEROX* in the **spaces provided** in quadrant two. Explain that in quadrant three there is no such thing as a Mamma Bull—she would be a cow! Finally, in quadrant four, tell participants that all they had to do was spell ***two words*** using the letters that were simply jumbled up.

Debrief: Ask participants how they did following directions in this exercise. Likely, many of the participants weren't able to follow all or any of the instructions. Concede the fact that this was a very tricky test with particularly difficult instructions to follow precisely. However, this exercise does highlight the fact that we do need to listen very carefully to what we are being asked to do and to not make too many assumptions concerning what someone wants. The best thing to do is to make sure you understand exactly what is being asked of you. If you are not sure, it is best to ask for clarification of instructions to ensure that you are doing exactly what is being asked of you.

Difficulty Rating: Medium to high

Variations: Distribute or present Handout 33-A and complete it as a group, asking participants to suggest what they believe is the correct way to follow each instruction.



Following Directions Worksheet

1. I	**2.** ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
3. MB BB PB	**4.** OODRWWTS

Handout 33-A (concluded)

Following Directions Worksheet: Answers

1. 	**2.** X E R O X
3. (MB) BB PB	**4.** TWO WORDS

34. Train Story

Description: A brief story is read to participants and they are asked to answer a question concerning the content of the story. The question is likely not what participants were expecting to be asked.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To emphasize that what we are asked to do isn't always what is expected

Resources: Train story presented below

Presentation:

1. Tell participants that you are going to read them a brief story about a train and that they need to pay close attention as you are going to ask them a question about the situation being described. Advise participants that they might want to make notes as you read the story.
2. Read the following story to participants:

   A train leaves the station with 3 passengers and stops at London and 5 more get on. It next stops and Albany and 2 passengers get off. Next stop is Pleasantville and 23 new passengers get on board. The train makes its next stop in Dallas where 21 get off and no one gets on. The train chugs along until it reaches Hollywood where 3 more passengers get on. The next stops are Buffalo where 6 get on and 4 get off, Moosehead where no one gets on or off, and Clarksburg where 24 passengers get on board. The train reaches the end of the route in Los Angeles where everyone gets off.
3. After you have completed reading the story, ask this question:

   How many stops did the train make?

4. It is likely that participants were more focused on how many passengers were left on the train when it reached its final destination. Ask participants how many were more focused on this than the number of stops.
5. Ask if anyone can answer the question of how many stops the train made. Also ask if anyone can answer how many passengers were on the train when it reached Los Angeles.
6. The answer to the question concerning how many stops the train made is 9, including its final destination.
7. There were 37 passengers on the train when it arrived in Los Angeles. You may want to acknowledge that this train went a long way around in its destination to Los Angeles.

Debrief: Discuss why participants may have focused on the wrong criteria while listening to this story. Likely responses might be that they just assumed that the question would be how many passengers were left at the end of the train ride. Emphasize that often our assumptions cause us to focus on the wrong things when we communicate with others and that we need to keep an open mind about what may be most important and critical communications.

Difficulty Rating: Medium

Variations: Instead of reading the story aloud, distribute a copy of the story and let participants read for themselves. Then ask them how many stops the train made.

35. Count the *S*s

Description: Participants are presented a sentence and asked to identify how many times the letter **S** appears.

Time Guideline: 20 minutes

Purpose: To demonstrate how easy it is to overlook information.

Resources: Handouts 35-A and 35-B

Presentation:

1. Present Handout 35-A to participants.
2. Ask them to count the number of times the letter **S** appears in the sentence.
3. Ask by show of hands how many think there are less than 5.
4. Ask by show of hands how many think there are less than 10.
5. Ask by show of hands how many think there are less than 15.
6. Ask by show of hands how many think there are less than 20.
7. Ask by show of hands how many think there are more than 20.
8. Once everyone has had a chance to vote on the number of **S**s they believe are in the sentence, reveal that the correct answer is 17.
9. Present Handout 35-B that shows where the **S**s appear in the sentence.

Debrief: Explain that one of the reasons that it may be so difficult to identify all of the letter **S**s in the sentence is that **S** has a number of different sounds to it depending on its context. Often the softer sounds can easily become camouflaged or hidden within words.

Difficulty Rating: Medium

Variations: In addition to finding how many times the letter **S** appears, ask participants how many times the letter **F** appears. The answer is 6 times.



Super Sunday

Super Sunday often results in many surprises as fans watch with great anticipation to see if their favorite team wins the ultimate prize in professional football each season.



Super Sunday

Super Sunday often results in many surprises as fans watch with great anticipation to see if their favorite team wins the ultimate prize in professional football each season.

36. Communications Shutdowns

Description: A list of 25 statements that can have the potential of ending further discussion on any given topic are presented.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To emphasize how certain statements can have a negative effect on any discussion or further meaningful communications that may have otherwise followed

Resources: Handout 36-A

Presentation:

1. Introduce the activity as an exercise in communications shutdowns. Explain that a communications shutdown is when someone says something that has the potential for ending any further discussion on the subject.
2. Present Handout 36-A to participants.
3. Review these statements with participants by either reading them or having participants take turns reading these statements.
4. Encourage discussion on these communications shutdowns, asking participants to share their experiences and perceptions of these or similar statements.
5. Highlight particular statements that you as the facilitator may have experienced. Share your experience concerning the negative impact these statements can have on further discussion or consideration of an idea or suggestion.

Debrief: Explain that the purpose of reviewing these communications shutdowns is to emphasize just how detrimental they can be in any situation and particularly in the workplace. Most of these statements represent resistance to change in

one way or another. Learning to accept or even embrace change is the opposite of most of these statements. Advise participants that if they ever hear themselves saying these types of statements they may need to reexamine their own attitudes and feelings about change. But don't be too tough on yourself for saying these things as most people do have some aversion or resistance to change to some degree. It is only natural. The best thing to do is to be honest with yourself when these communications shutdowns appear in your communications and work through these feelings and resistance to change.

Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Variations: Ask participants for other communications shutdowns they have heard (or said) in addition to the 25 presented.



Communications Shutdowns

1. Don't be ridiculous.
2. It'll cost too much.
3. That's not my responsibility.
4. We don't have time.
5. We've never done that before.
6. That's not the way we do things around here.
7. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.
8. We're not ready for that.
9. You can't teach an old dog new tricks.
10. It will never sell.
11. We will become the laughing stock of the entire company.
12. We tried that before and it didn't work.
13. It simply can't be done.
14. It's too radical of a change.
15. That will make our current equipment obsolete.
16. It's not really our problem.
17. Let's get back to reality.
18. Let's form a committee to decide.
19. I need to go over the numbers again.
20. It's not in our budget.
21. We have done alright without it all this time.
22. It won't work here.
23. Okay, but if it doesn't work, you're the one who's going to get the blame.
24. I don't personally agree, but if you insist.
25. Are you crazy?

37. Repeat the Question

Description: The facilitator reads a series of questions to participants and asks that they repeat their answers three times in union. This causes participants to typically answer the last question incorrectly due to the pattern and cadence of the answers that have been established.

Time Guideline: 10 minutes

Purpose: To illustrate how our expectations concerning communications can sometimes cause us to say the wrong things

Resources: None

Presentation:

1. Ask participants to repeat each answer to the questions you are about to ask them together in unison three times. The questions are:
   - You carry your lunch in a ___ ___ ___
   - You tie things down with a ___ ___ ___
   - When you're thirsty, you drink a ___ ___ ___
   - The white of the egg is called the ___ ___ ___
2. Give them the answer to the first question. Explain that it is a "poke." A poke is a term sometimes used to describe a sack or bag.
3. For instance, the group should answer the first question like this:

   poke, poke, poke
4. After participants have answered this question in unison three times and have the cadence down, ask the second question: You tie things down with a _____.
5. Participants should answer:

   rope, rope, rope

6. Ask the next question: When you're thirsty, you drink a _____.
7. Participants should answer:

   Coke, Coke, Coke

8. Finally, ask the last question: The white of the egg is called the _____.
9. Expect to hear the group answer:

   yoke, yoke, yoke

10. Point out to the group that they actually answered this last question incorrectly. Explain to the group that the white of the egg is not called the yoke—that is the yellow part of the egg. The white of the egg is actually called the albumen.

Debrief: After completing the Repeating Questions exercise explain that people answer "yoke" to the last question because it rhymes with the other answers and seems to fit in the pattern. The point is that we need to be careful that we don't always fall into this trap when communicating with others. Sometimes we think something is correct because it seems to fit a pattern.

Difficulty Rating: Low to medium

Variations: Tell participants before you begin the exercise that you are going to try to trick them into saying something that is incorrect and to be careful not to be fooled by you!

38. Quick Answers

Description: Questions are presented to participants to answer quickly. The questions are tricky because they are presented in context of something else that makes the correct answer less obvious.

Time Guideline: 10 minutes

Purpose: To illustrate how we sometimes jump to incorrect conclusions because of the way that information is presented to us

Resources: A penny and a nickel

Presentation:

1. Instruct participants to quickly answer the following questions:

   What color are the clouds? (They will answer *"white"*)

   What do cows drink? (If participants answer that cows drink milk, explain that they *give* mile and drink *water*.)

2. Next ask participants to:

   *Spell the word **top**.*

   What do you do at a green light? (If they say that they *stop* at a green light, explain that you *go through* a green light.)

3. Before asking this last question, show a penny and a nickel if available. If you don't have these coins, ask participants to loan you these coins, promising that you will give them back. Ask the first part of the question:

   Johnny's mother had three children…

   Now hold up the penny and then the nickel and say:

   Penny, Nicholas, and _____.

Expect participants to try to come up with another name that has something to do with a coin. After letting them struggle for a few moments, explain that the correct answer is *"Johnny."*

Debrief: Explain that the reason why they answered these questions incorrectly was the context in which each question was asked. Sometimes we perceive things differently because of the setting or context in which we are presented communications. If these questions were asked without the other information paired purposely to get participants to think a certain way, these questions would have been easier to answer. Explain that context often is the most important part of communications.

Difficulty Rating: Low

Variations: Ask individual participants to answer each question rather than posing them to the entire group.

39. Rephrasing Exercise

Description: Participants listen to the same statement read six different times, each time with different voice inflections that change the intended meaning with each reading.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To emphasize how important voice inflections are concerning the perceived meaning of verbal communication.

Resources: Handouts 39-A and 39-B

Presentation:

1. Distribute Handout 39-A to each participant.
2. Explain that this is going to be a listening test. Participants are to carefully listen to how one sentence will be read six different ways, each time with a different intent based on voice inflections.
3. Ask participants to identify what they believe the meaning is each time you read this statement by writing the number next to each meaning on Handout 39-A.
4. Look at Handout 39-B to see how to read the statement each time. The first time you read it, you should read it to mean: We are not going to have ***a*** test today. This will correspond to the sixth statement meaning that there will be more than one test today. Participants should place a number 1 in the space provided. You may give this as an example to ensure that participants understand instructions.
5. Continue reading the statement, emphasizing the highlighted words, according to the boldface numbers provided in Handout 39-B.
6. After participants have completed Handout 39-A, distribute Handout 39-B, or read the answers to them.

7. Ask participants how many they got right by comparing the numbers they wrote down in Handout 39-A with the correct answers.

Debrief: Discuss how the very same statement can take on so many different meanings. The point is that we do need to pay close attention to not only what is being said but how it is being said for this is often where the true meaning of the communication exists.

Difficulty Rating: High

Variations: Ask participants what meaning they think each statement is as you read each one rather than reading all six at once. This would make the activity more of a group activity.



We are not going to take a test today

_____ 1. Statement indicating surprise

_____ 2. Statement of fact

_____ 3. Statement indicating that we will be doing something other than taking a test today

_____ 4. Statement indicating some other group will be taking a test today

_____ 5. Statement indicating we absolutely will not be taking a test today

_____ 6. Statement indicating that we will have more than one test today



Rephrasing Answers

4 1. Statement indicating surprise

We are not going to take a test today?

5 2. Statement of fact

We are not going to take a test today.

6 3. Statement indicating that we will be doing something other than taking a test today

We are not going to take a ***test*** today.

2 4. Statement indicating some other group will be taking a test today

We are not going to take a test today.

3 5. Statement indicating we absolutely will not be taking a test today

We are ***not*** going to take a test today.

1 6. Statement indicating that we will have more than one test today

We are not going to take ***a*** test today.

40. The Wedding Story

Description: Participants are presented clues as to who is the best man, usher, bridesmaid, bride, and groom in a wedding.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To demonstrate just how important every bit of information is to solving problems and the importance of communicating this information.

Resources: Handouts 40-A and 40-B

Presentation:

1. Distribute a copy of Handout 40-A to each participant.
2. Tell participants that they are to determine who is the best man, usher, bridesmaid, bride, and groom at this wedding based on the clues provided in the handout.
3. Allow participants enough time to complete the exercise by filling in the names of these individuals next to their respective roles.
4. After everyone has completed this exercise, share the correct answers as found in Handout 40-B.

Debrief: Discuss what needed to be done to complete this exercise. Ask participants what information was most useful to them in solving this puzzle. What information was least useful? What was the most challenging clue to solve?

Emphasize how important it is to pay attention to all the details that you have available to you when trying to solve a problem or complete a task. Discuss how important it is to have this information clearly communicated to you. Just think what would have happened if one of these clues was left out. Would you still have been able to answer these questions?

Difficulty Rating: Medium

Variations: Instead of working independently, participants can work in small groups of two to three people to answer these questions.



Wedding Story

- The best man is the brother of the usher.
- The best man and the bridesmaid went to college with the groom.
- The usher went into the army after high school.
- Ann's college roommate took Sally to a family reunion in May.
- Steve and Jerry had to give up their Rose Bowl tickets to attend the wedding.
- Dan and Steve's mother attended the wedding, but didn't sit with her sons.

Who is the

Bride: _____

Bridesmaid: _____

Groom: _____

Best Man: _____

Usher: _____



Wedding Story Answers

Bride:	**Sally**
Bridesmaid:	**Ann**
Groom:	**Jerry**
Best Man:	**Steve**
Usher:	**Dan**

Wedding Story Rationale

You know that the best man and the usher are brothers from the first clue, and they are named Dan and Steve based on the last clue, but you don't know who's who yet.

In the second clue, you learn that the best man and the bridesmaid went to college with the groom. This means that either Dan or Steve went to college with the groom.

The fourth clue tells you that Ann went to college, so you can assume that she is the bridesmaid.

In the fifth clue, Jerry is introduced, so knowing that he is neither the usher nor the best man, you can assume that he is the groom.

Going back to the fourth clue, you can now assume that Sally is the bride because she is not the bridesmaid. So if Ann's roommate took Sally to the family reunion in May, the roommate must have been Jerry.

You can assume that the wedding was in January based on the fact that Jerry and Steve had to give up their Rose Bowl tickets to go to the wedding. So by May, Jerry and Sally were married and thus went to the family reunion together as husband and wife.

You also know from the fifth clue that Steve was going to the Rose Bowl with Jerry, so he was the one who went to college and was thus the best man, leaving Dan as the usher who went into the army after high school.

41. Who done it?

Description: A scenario involving a crime that was committed is presented with clues provided concerning who done it?

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To provide an experience where participants have to use reasoning and logic to answer the question about how police would find the culprit.

Resources: Handouts 41-A and 41-B

Presentation:

1. Distribute a copy of Handout 41-A to each participant.
2. Explain that their assignment is to answer the question, "What one question can the police ask each suspect to identify the real culprit?"
3. Give participants enough time to solve this problem. Be aware that this exercise requires a high degree of logic and reasoning to come up with the correct answer.
4. After everyone has finished trying (successfully or unsuccessfully) to answer this question, ask participants to share their thoughts on the answer to this problem.
5. After everyone has finished discussing the problem and possible solutions, distribute or present Handout 41-B to participants.
6. Review the correct answer and the rationale for the answer.

Debrief: Explain that this is a very difficult problem to solve. Ask participants what types of things they did think about in trying to come up with a solution to this problem. How could they have used a different approach that might have been more successful?

Difficulty Rating: Very high

Variations: Have participants work in teams rather than individually on this problem.



Who done it?

- A crime was committed in the city.
- The police have interrogated two suspects.
- The guilty suspect always lies.
- The innocent suspect always tells the truth.
- Each suspect knows who committed the crime and if the other is truthful or a liar.
- Only one of the suspects committed the crime, but the police don't know which one.
- What one question can the police ask each suspect to identify the real culprit?



Answer:

"If I asked the other suspect if he committed the crime, would he admit that he did?"

Reasoning:

- If you asked both suspects if he committed the crime, they both would say "no," so just asking them this question directly would not do any good. The innocent suspect would truthfully deny committing the crime. The guilty suspect would lie and say that he didn't commit the crime.

- Asking the question in this manner would result in the following:

  - The innocent suspect who always tells the truth would say that the guilty suspect, who always lies, would say "no" that he didn't commit the crime even though he did.

  - The guilty suspect who always lies would say that the innocent suspect would say "yes" that he committed the crime.

  - Thus the suspect who would say that the other would admit to committing the crime would be the guilty party.

42. Picture This

Description: Twelve picture puzzles are presented for participants to solve.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To highlight the fact that some communications can be tricky and have hidden meanings; also to allow participants to have some fun trying to solve these picture puzzles

Resources: Handout 42-A

Presentation:

1. Distribute a copy of Handout 42-A to each participant.
2. Instruct participants that they are to solve as many of the 12 picture puzzles as they can.
3. After 10 to 20 minutes, ask participants to share the answers they came up with for each picture puzzle.
4. The correct answers are:
    1. Falling temperatures
    2. Mixed wedding
    3. Burning the candle at both ends
    4. Last chance
    5. Capital punishment
    6. Giant steps
    7. Fat cat
    8. Repeat
    9. In box *or* boxed in
    10. Dancing with the stars
    11. Lost in space
    12. Gunpoint

Debrief: Ask participants which puzzles gave them the most difficulty and why. Explain that as in most of our communications, you need to keep an open and creative frame of mind to really understand the messages we receive.

Difficulty Rating: Medium

Variations: Have participants solve the puzzles as a group or in small teams.



1. 65 degrees 48 degrees 24 degrees 15 degrees 9 degrees 3 degrees 0 degrees	**2.** Wednignd	**3.** BurningCandleBurning
4. chance, chance chance, chance chance	**5.** PUNISHMENT	**6.** Steps
7. Cat	**8.** Pete Pete Pete Pete	**9.** In
10. Stars Stars Stars Stars Stars Stars Dancing Stars Stars Stars Stars	**11.** Spalostce	**12.** Gun •

43. Creative Fairy Tale

Description: A creative fairy tale type story is presented in which a merchant's daughter is faced with the prospect of marrying a money lender to which her father owes a great debt. The lender proposes a solution to the dilemma involving the daughter picking a pebble of a certain color from a bag. Participants are asked what this young girl could do to prevent having to marry this despicable money lender.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To challenge the creativity of participants to come up with a solution that would be acceptable to each party involved in this issue

Resources: Handout 43-A and 43-B

Presentation:

1. Read or distribute a copy of Handout 43-A to participants.
2. At the end of the tale is a question asking how this young girl could solve this dilemma while preventing the money lender from questioning her actions.
3. Ask participants to think of ways in which this goal could be accomplished.
4. Ask participants what their possible solutions might be to this dilemma.
5. After everyone has had time to find the solution to this problem, distribute or present Handout 43-B.

Debrief: Discuss the simplicity of this answer and how effectively it would solve this dilemma. Explain that often the simplest solutions are the best. Based on the situation that the money lender created, he would have no choice but to agree with the young girl's proposed solution.

Difficulty Rating: High

Variations: Have participants work in groups to solve this problem.



Creative Fairy Tale

Back in the old days when debtors were thrown into jail, a merchant had the misfortune of getting overextended on his loans from an unscrupulous money lender. The merchant had a young daughter whose beauty was matched only by her innocence and purity. The money lender proposed that this young girl become his bride in exchange for the debt. Both the merchant and the young girl were repulsed at the mere thought of such a proposal. But alas, the debtor had no choice.

The merchant, the daughter, and the money lender were standing on a pebble-strewn path with pebbles that were either pure black or pure white in color. There were about as many black pebbles as there were white ones, and they were all mixed together. The pebbles were all of equal size, shape, and texture.

The lender's proposition was that he would place one white pebble and one black pebble in a leather bag, and the girl would reach in without looking and select a pebble from the bag. The merchant's debts would be forgiven in either case, but if the girl selected the white pebble, she would also be free of any obligation to marry the money lender. But if she selected the black pebble, she would have to become his wife.

As the money lender put the pebbles in the bag, the girl noticed with horror that both the pebbles he placed in the bag were black. She was afraid to question the money lender's integrity, believing it would only make matters worse than they already were. Her fate seemed to be determined no matter what pebble she picked from the bag.

How did she solve this dilemma while preventing the money lender from questioning her actions?



Creative Fairy Tale

Solution

The girl reached into the bag and “accidently” dropped a pebble on the ground without anyone seeing its color. She apologized and told the lender to simply look in the bag and see which color pebble remained. If it was black, then she had obviously selected the white pebble that she had clumsily dropped.

44. Rumors

Description: A rumor is spread among the participants in the session.

Time Guideline: 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the number of participants

Purpose: To demonstrate the accuracy of rumors as they spread throughout an organization

Resources: Handout 44-A

Presentation:

1. Ask participants if they have ever wondered how rumors get started and how accurate they really are.
2. Begin the activity by stating that you are going to start a rumor among participants and measure its accuracy after it travels throughout the room.
3. Allow one participant to read Handout 44-A, entitled Did you hear about the big shake-up coming? Allow this participant a few moments to read the rumor, and then take the handout back.
4. After reading this rumor, the participant should tell the person sitting next to him/her what he/she heard. The participant should either whisper the rumor to the next person or leave the room to share this information.
5. This procedure should continue until everyone in the session has heard the message.
6. Ask the last participant to hear the rumor to repeat to the group the information that he/she just heard.
7. Distribute or present Handout 44-A to compare how accurate this final version of the rumor is to the original information presented to the first participant who saw the rumor in its written form.

Debrief:

Discuss the reliability of the information that is contained in rumors. How did the accuracy of the information in this activity change during the exercise? Ask the group why they believe that this information changes so much during this exercise. The most likely answer is that there were constant breakdowns in this information as it passed from person to person in this manner. Comment that in this exercise this information was immediately passed from one person to another. Imagine what happens when days pass between rumors being spread to others.

Ask participants how accurate they believe rumors are. Explain that studies have shown that forms of informal communication such as the "grapevine" or "rumor mill" have been shown to be about 75% accurate at times. Although this may sound like a fairly high degree of accuracy, it isn't when you consider that there still is a 25% inaccuracy in this information. Ask participants how they would feel if all of the information they receive and need to do their jobs was only 75% accurate. (Expect to hear some participants say that this would be more accurate than they receive presently!)

Rumors are spread in a variety of patterns. For example, not everyone who hears a rumor passes it on, and others pass on rumors they hear to many people. Sometime or another, just about everyone participates in the rumor mill. Rumors usually begin in the absence of any factual information and are often born out of the necessity for people to have information. This is why it is important to share information before the rumor mill takes over and fills in this void of information.

Before concluding the activity, assure participants that there is no truth to this rumor and that it is made up as part of this exercise. If something like this actually happens in their organization in the near future, it is merely a coincidence.

Difficulty Rating: Medium to high

Variations: Introduce the activity at the beginning of another presentation or program that will last through all or most of the day. Instruct participants to spread the rumor whenever they want to during the day, even during breaks, as this will more accurately simulate the way rumors typically spread. Tell participants to spread the rumor in order of the person sitting next to them as you give these instructions. Tell the last participant who hears the rumor to let you know so that you can stop what you are doing and listen to the last version of the rumor.



Did you hear about the big shake-up coming?

It is rumored that an announcement is going to be made later this week that a big shake-up is about to take place in the organization. Supposedly there is going to be a major realignment of the entire organization potentially affecting just about every employee's responsibilities. It has also been rumored that a number (maybe as many as five) of the top managers from the competition are coming aboard in key roles. There may even be a new top executive in charge before this is over. The board of directors met last Tuesday and approved these changes, so it's already a done deal. They are also worried that this has already been leaked to the press and that there may be a big article in tonight's newspaper or on the evening news on Channel 4.

45. The Shoe Store

Description: A problem story is presented and participants are asked to solve a problem based on the situation.

Time Guideline: 30 minutes

Purpose: To test participants' problem-solving abilities.

Resources: Handouts 45-A and 45-B
Flipchart or paper and markers

Presentation:

1. Read or distribute a copy of Handout 45-A to participants.
2. At the end of the story, there is a question: how much actual cash (not including the value of the shoes) is the shoe store sales associate out of pocket now?
3. Ask participants to think about this question and come up with the answer.
4. After giving participants a few minutes to think about this question, ask them for their answers.
5. Record their answers on a flipchart or piece of paper.
6. After everyone has given their suggested answer, present Handout 45-B, which contains the correct answer of $8. Share the rationale for this answer.

Debrief: Discuss why participants may have come up with an incorrect answer. Most likely they were not discounting the fact that the counterfeit $20 was worthless.

Difficulty Rating: Medium to high

Variations: Have participants work in teams to solve this problem.



The Shoe Store

A customer goes into a shoe store and buys a pair of shoes that have been marked down in a sale to $12. He pays for the shoes with a $20 bill. The sales associate does not have change at that early hour of the morning, so she asks him to wait and runs next door to the bookstore. The bookstore owner exchanges the $20 bill with a $10 bill, a $5 bill, and five $1 bills. The salesperson then returns to her customer and gives him $8 in change, and he leaves the store with the shoes.

Later in the day, the bookstore owner discovers that the $20 bill is a counterfeit and calls the police who are on their way. The shoe store sales associate is very upset and gives the bookstore owner another $20 bill out of her cash register.

The question is: how much actual cash (not including the value of the shoes) is the shoe store sales associate out of pocket now?



The Shoe Store

Answer

The correct answer is **$8.** The counterfeit bill was only a worthless piece of paper and does not count. All that matters is that the shoe store sales associate received $20 from the bookstore owner, which she returned to him, so the transaction cancels itself out. Therefore, all she has lost is the $8 change she gave to the customer. This, however, does not include the value of the shoes that the customer left the store with after purchasing them with phony money.

46. Two Moose Were Sitting on a Log

Description: A brief story is presented in this activity that asks a question about the subjects of the story and their relationship to one another.

Time Guideline: 10 minutes

Purpose: To illustrate the point that you need to listen carefully to the information you receive to really understand what is being said

Resources: None

Presentation:

1. Tell participants that you are going to read them a brief story and then ask them a question about the story, so they should listen carefully.
2. Read the following to participants:

   Two moose are sitting on a log talking about baseball.

   The little moose is the big moose's son.

   But the big moose is not the little moose's father.

   How is this possible?
3. Give participants a chance to answer this question.
4. If no one has the right answer, share with the group that:

   The big moose is the little moose's mother!

Debrief: Ask participants why the answer to this question isn't always obvious. Explain that sometimes our preconceptions get in the way of us seeing the obvious answers to many things.

Difficulty Rating: Low

Variations: Distribute a copy of this story to each participant and ask participants to read and answer this question individually.

47. Communications Style

Description: Participants are asked to form into groups according to their communications style: Outspoken/Direct, Quiet/Reserved, Thoughtful/ Analytical, and Friendly/Unassuming.

Time Guideline: 45 minutes

Purpose: To highlight the fact that different people have different communications styles and each has his or her own unique characteristics of communicating with others

Resources: Handout 47-A

A room large enough for each group of communications styles to be able to meet and discuss their particular communications needs

Flipchart paper on which to write the name of each of the communications styles

Colored markers

Presentation:

1. Before the activity begins, on four separate pieces of flipchart paper, write in large letters the name of each of the communications styles: Outspoken/Direct, Quiet/Reserved, Thoughtful/ Analytical, and Friendly/Unassuming. Place these four signs on the walls of the room with one in each corner or, if not possible, at least far enough away from each other to allow groups of participants to gather and talk among themselves.
2. Begin the activity by explaining that we all have different communications styles. There is no one communications style that is right or wrong nor better or worse than the others. Communications styles have a great deal to do with one's personality and typically are complementary to each person's personality style.

3. Explain, at least for purposes of this activity, that there are four basic communications styles: Outspoken/Direct, Quiet/Reserved, Thoughtful/Analytical, and Friendly/Unassuming. Each is basically self-explanatory and describes a particular way that people communicate and are perceived. Ask participants to think about what their own particular communications style would be.
4. Ask participants to go to the part of the room where their communications style is posted. For example, each of the participants who identified themselves as being Thoughtful/Analytical should meet where this sign is posted. The other three styles should do the same.
5. After the members of each group have found each other and are assembled together, give each group a copy of Handout 47-A, asking them to answer the questions together. Each team should assign a scribe to record the group's thoughts on the form.
6. After each group has completed answering the questions, ask each group to report their answers to the entire group. Each group should assign a spokesperson to do this.

Debrief: Emphasize how important it is to appreciate the fact that we all have our own communications styles that often are different and unique in some way. Just because someone has a different communications style doesn't mean that their style or yours for that matter is wrong. It just means that it is different. Better understanding and appreciation of these differences can make you a better communicator as well as help improve your relationships with others.

Difficulty Rating: Editor: None stated

Variations:

While communications style groups are still together, ask them the following question: if your communications style had a T-shirt, what would it say and what picture/graphic might it have on it? Provide each group with a piece of flipchart paper and color markers and ask them to draw a picture of this T-shirt.



Communications Style Questionnaire

What is your group's communications style? _____

What are some of the characteristics of your group's communications style?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In what ways is your communications style sometimes misunderstood by others?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How could others who have different communications styles deal more effectively with you?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What would you like to tell the other communications styles about your style?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

48. "Oh"

Description: The same word is to be pronounced using different voice inflections each time, changing its meaning.

Time Guideline: 15 minutes

Purpose: To emphasize just how important voice inflections are to the meaning of words

Resources: Handout 48-A

Presentation:

1. Introduce the activity by emphasizing just how important the way we say things is to the meaning that is communicated to others.
2. It has been shown that this dimension of voice inflections comprises approximately 38% of the message received.
3. It becomes obvious that *what* we say isn't nearly as important as *how* we say it. However, we don't typically focus on this dimension of communications as much as we should.
4. Too often we are much more concerned about *what* we are going to say rather than *how* we are going to deliver the message. However, paying closer attention to *how* people communicate can provide extremely valuable information about how they really feel.
5. Distribute or present Handout 48-A to the participants.
6. Ask for volunteers to take turns saying the word *oh* with each of the meanings described in the handout.
7. For example, the first person should say the word *oh* as if he or she was greatly shocked.
8. Continue until all of the suggested meanings have been communicated by participants.

Debrief: Reflect on how differently this same tiny word could be interpreted by the way participants said it each time. Acknowledge that these differences may be very subtle at times, but in these subtleties lies the difference between understanding what someone really means and missing what their message is entirely.

Difficulty Rating: Medium

Variations: You, as the facilitator, could demonstrate how this word could be said in these different ways instead of participants.



"Oh"

Directions:

Say the word *oh* differently, giving it the following interpretation or meaning each time:

1. Shock
2. Pleasure
3. Questioning
4. Doubt
5. Displeasure
6. Detachment
7. Resentment
8. Anticipation
9. Surprise
10. Meaning the letter in the alphabet between *n* and *p*

49. Word Games

Description: This activity is designed to help identify words that are not effective in most business and personal communications.

Time Guideline: 60 minutes

Purpose: To illustrate just how important words are in our communications and how they can be used both ineffectively and effectively to improve our communications

Resources: Handouts 49-A through 49-H

Presentation:

1. Begin the activity by explaining that words are an important part of our lives, particularly at work. Unfortunately, words can mean many different things to different people. To communicate more effectively, it is a good idea to choose words that will not be easily misunderstood or that can be interpreted in many different ways.
2. Tell participants there are four exercises included in this activity. The first exercise is called the Weasel Word Exercise. In this activity, participants are presented with a memo from the home office of an organization.
3. Distribute Handout 49-A to participants and have them identify the weasel words—the words that could potentially be misinterpreted. Participants should replace these words with more precise words that would be less subject to interpretation or delete them from the memo.
4. After participants complete the Weasel Word Exercise, present or distribute Handout 49-B. The weasel words in the memo are in boldface. Review why these words could be considered weasel words and why they do not add to the clarity or effectiveness of this communication.

5. The next exercise is the Useful Words Test. Distribute Handout 40-C to participants and instruct them to mark or highlight those words that are most useful in communicating clearly to others.
6. After participants complete the Useful Words Test, present or distribute Handout 49-D. Review the correct answers in boldface and discuss why these words would be more clearly understood and leave less opportunity for misunderstandings.
7. The next exercise is the Tactful Candor Exercise. Candor is the ability to communicate potentially sensitive information to a person without upsetting or offending him or her. Distribute Handout 49-E to participants and have them identify which of the statements they think display tactful candor.
8. After participants complete the Tactful Candor Exercise, present or distribute Handout 49-F. Review the correct answers and discuss which statements display tactful candor.
9. Finally, conduct the last exercise, What does this message mean? Distribute Handout 49-G to participants and have them identify the words in this message that create a vague or unclear impression to someone receiving this information.
10. After participants complete the exercise, distribute Handout 49-H, which sows the vague or unclear words in boldface. Review why each of these words or phrases makes the message less clear and understandable.

Debrief:

Summarize this activity by advising participants that they shouldn't play games with words:

- Make sure that your messages are clear and easily understood.
- Using "weasel words" or other vague or misleading terms only diminishes your effectiveness as a communicator.

- Words are powerful. Use them carefully and purposefully.
- Don't use words that can be destructive to your business or personal relationships or distract from your purpose.
- Use words to say exactly what you mean, not what others may think you intended to say. Games are fun to play, but not when communications are critical.

Difficulty Rating: Medium

Variations: Present each of the exercises in this activity separately.



Weasel Word Exercise

You need to avoid using *weasel words* in your communications. A weasel word is a word that avoids taking any kind of position or could be misinterpreted. Identify the weasel words in the memo below:

Memo from Home Office

We are probably going to change our procedure on this policy depending on what we might implement to improve this situation. If time permits, we will send out what the boss wants us to do to find a new procedure on the changes that will be made. There will be several alternatives that we possibly can take. We will try to send out some kind of a communication on the new procedures hopefully in the next week or so. This probably will be part of our new procedures that we could possibly give to many of our bigger customers. If someone doesn't receive a copy they should contact us. Everyone needs to be aware that we need to first get approval from the main office before we can finalize any of these changes. We don't know at this time how long this process will take because of the number of signatures that are required to make these changes official. We will let you know as soon as we get any indication of the direction that the top of the house wants to do or when these changes are approved.



Weasel Word Exercise Answers

(Answers in boldface)

We are **probably** going to change our procedure on this policy **depending on what we might implement to i**mprove this situation. **If time permits**, we will send out **what the boss wants us to do to find** a new procedure on the changes that will be made. There will be several alternatives that we **possibly** can take. We will **try to** send out **some kind of** a communication on the new procedures **hopefully in the** next week **or so.** This **probably** will be part of our new procedures that we **could possibly** give to many of our bigger customers. **If someone doesn't receive a copy they should contact us. Everyone needs to be aware that** we need to first get approval from the main office before we can finalize any of these changes. We don't know at this time how long this process will take **because of the number of signatures that are required** to make these changes official. We will let you know as soon as **we get any indication of the direction that the top of the house wants to do or when** these changes are approved.



Useful Words Test

Some words are more useful than others in explaining something to another person, either in writing or spoken. Which of the following words would you consider useful in explaining something to another person?

about

something like

that “thing-a-majig”

whatch-ya-ma-call-it

precisely

exactly

unequal

angry

desperate

contingency

critical inventory level

late delivery

pretty near

partially full

empty

full

requirements

certain

unsure

deadline

facts

sequence



Useful Words Test Answers

(Answers in boldface)

about
something like
that “thing-a-majig”
whatch-ya-ma-call-it
precisely
exactly
unequal
angry
desperate
contingency
critical inventory level
late delivery
pretty near
partially full
empty
full
requirements
certain
unsure
deadline
facts
sequence



Tactful Candor Exercise

Candor is the ability to communicate potentially sensitive information to a person without upsetting or offending him or her. Which of the following statements do you think displays tactful candor?

"The idiots on their loading dock goofed up again."

"If the customer had read the shipping instructions we wouldn't be having this problem."

"I think that we might be having a problem communicating this information to them."

"If you screw up again, you're fired!"

"I'm going to go to your boss about this if I don't see some improvements soon."

"Don't tell anybody, but I just happen to know something big is about to happen that is going to change the way we presently do business together."

"My boss is the one to blame for the mess we are in."

"Maybe if we tried to put more things in writing, we wouldn't be having so many misunderstandings on instructions."

"It must be hard to keep track of all this information. How can I help you?"

"My seven-year-old could do a better job on this paper work than you."



Tactful Candor Exercise Answers

"The idiots on their loading dock goofed up again." **No**

"If the customer had read the shipping instructions we wouldn't be having this problem." **No**

"I think that we might be having a problem communicating this information to them." **Yes**

"If you screw up again, you're fired!" **No**

"I'm going to go to your boss about this if I don't see some improvements soon." **No (if information is confidential)**

"Don't tell anybody, but I just happen to know something big is about to happen that is going to change the way we presently do business together." **No**

"My boss is the one to blame for the mess we are in."

"Maybe if we tried to put more things in writing, we wouldn't be having so many misunderstandings on instructions." **Yes**

"It must be hard to keep track of all this information. How can I help you?" **Yes**

"My seven-year-old could do a better job on this paper work than you." **No**



What does this message mean?

Identify the words in the following message that create a vague or unclear impression to someone receiving this information.

> Someone called from the customer that we sent the big shipment to, saying that they were having a problem with some of our product. The caller thought that there was probably going to be some more information heading our way pretty soon. They indicated that they were really concerned because this is not the first time this has happened. It might be fairly costly to them if something isn't done soon to take care of this problem. This might be a "no brainer" if the problem is the same as it was the last time we got on the "bad side" of this customer. We all know what a pain they can be when they don't get what they want. We have heard this song and dance before about them taking their business elsewhere. But we all know that the customer is always right, and we will need to jump through any hoops they want us to in order to keep their business. If we don't hear something by the p.m., we will know the "ax" is going to fall on someone either here or in HQ.



What does this message mean?

(Unclear words in boldface)

Someone called from the customer that we sent the **big shipment** to, saying that they were having a **problem** with **some** of our product. The caller thought that there was probably going to be **some more** information **heading our way pretty soon.** They **indicated** that they were really concerned because this is not the first time **this** has happened. It might be **fairly** costly to them if something isn't done **soon** to **take care** of this problem. This might be a **"no brainer"** if the problem is the **same as it was the last time we got on the "bad side" of this customer.** We all know what a **pain they can be when they don't get what they want.** We have heard this **song and dance** before about them taking their business elsewhere. But we all know that the customer is always right, and we will need to **jump through any hoops** they want us to in order to keep their business. If we don't hear something by the **p.m.,** we will know **the "ax" is going to fall on someone** either here or in HQ.

50 Trading Cards

Description: Participants are placed into four teams, with each team negotiating with the other three to trade cards needed to solve a riddle.

Time Guideline: 45 minutes

Purpose: To demonstrate how collaboration and cooperation between teams can be a more productive strategy than competition

Resources:

Trading cards (provided)

Four rooms or four areas of a larger room for four teams to meet in privacy

Four envelopes

A copy of Handout 50-A for each team

Presentation:

1. To prepare the materials for this activity, copy the trading cards onto card stock (if available) and cut them into individual cards. There is a number at the top of each card next to the words *Trading Card* that indicates which team initially receives which cards. For instance, there is a "(1)," this card is to be distributed to Team 1. This allows the cards to be distributed equally across the four teams. You should have four envelopes labeled "1," "2," "3," and "4." All cards labeled "(1)" are to be placed in the envelope labeled "1," and so on for the remaining three sets of cards. If you have two teams playing, distribute envelopes 1 and 2 to the first team and envelopes 3 and 4 to the second team.
2. As you begin this activity, explain that teams will be negotiating with one another to solve a problem.
3. Assign each participant to a team. Ask participants to count off by 4s to determine the teams.

4. Before sending each team to their respective rooms, distribute a copy of Handout 50-A to each team and review:

   Instructions:

   Your team's goal is to solve one riddle. To accomplish this task, your team must do two things:

   1) Obtain all clue cards for a riddle.

   2) Determine the correct solution.

   The solution may not be submitted until all of the correct trading cards for that riddle are in your team's possession. The facilitator will tell you if you have all the clues and your answer is correct.

   Rules:

   To obtain all the clues, you must negotiate with the other teams for trading cards. The rules for negotiation are as follows:

   1) Only one member of a team may leave the team at any one time.

   2) Only one member may negotiate with any team at any one time.

   3) Each member of the team must have at least one opportunity to negotiate with another team.

   4) No more than two cards may be exchanged during any transaction with another team.

5. Assign each team to a separate room or area of a larger room in which they can discuss their team strategy in private. Give each team one of four envelopes containing the trading cards.

6. Once in their rooms, visit each team to ensure that they understand what they are supposed to do. If necessary, advise the teams that they should start by looking at the cards their team has been provided. In these cards are parts of four different riddles. They

need to negotiate with the other three teams for the cards they need to complete a riddle according to the rules that they were provided. Remind them that even if they think they know the answer to a riddle before obtaining all five cards for that riddle, they must have all five to successfully complete the exercise.

7. Allow teams to proceed with this exercise until one team has obtained all five cards for a riddle and has given you the correct answer to that riddle. You may need to monitor the progress of the teams as they work on this task, reminding them that they need to be negotiating with the other teams in order to get the cards they need to solve one of the riddles.

   *Note that the sequence of the numbers of the cards will be an indication to you that the team has all five cards of a riddle. The cards have sequential (but not consecutive) numbers to help you as the facilitator determine if the team has all the clues for the riddle. The sequence will be in consecutive counts of 5. For instance, Riddle #1 Cards are numbered #15, #20, #25, #30, and #35.

8. Make sure that the team that tells you that they are ready to solve a riddle has all five cards for that riddle and gives you the correct answer. The correct answers are provided below:

   Answers:

   Riddle #1: The championship series is underway. The Yankees and the Tigers play five baseball games. They each win three games. No ties or disputed games are involved. How could this happen without any ties or disputed games?

   The teams didn't play each other.

Riddle #2: An airplane gets caught in a terrible snowstorm. There are no parachutes on board. The passengers are from two different countries, some going home and some traveling away from home. The airplane crashes on the exact border between their two countries. According to international law, should unidentified survivors be buried in the country they were traveling to or the country they were traveling from?

You don't bury survivors.

Riddle #3: A man builds a house with four sides. Each side has a southern exposure. There is only one place on earth where this could occur. A bear comes to the door and rings the doorbell. What color is the bear?

White (you would be on the North Pole)

Riddle #4: You enter a cold dark room. You have a match. You have a candle. And a kerosene heater. Which do you light first to get maximum heat.

The match

Debrief:

After a team has answered a riddle, announce that the exercise is completed. Reconvene the entire group once again in the original meeting place. Share the correct answers to each of the riddles. Before giving the correct answer, ask each group if they know the answers to each riddle. Ask the following questions of the group concerning their experiences participating in this exercise:

- How could you have completed this exercise more efficiently by using the concepts of teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration?
- How could each team have reached their goal and everyone still win?
- How can we use the concepts of teamwork versus competition to make our work group or organization operate more efficiently?

Ask participants that if they had this exercise to do over how they might do things differently. How could they have worked together as an entire team to allow each team to reach the goal of solving a riddle? Was there anything in the rules that said that they couldn't do something like this? The answer is no.

The point is that so often we create competitive work environments when teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration would be much better strategies.

Difficulty Rating: High

Variations: If you don't have enough participants to form teams of at least four people, divide the group into two or three groups and divide the extra set of cards between the teams.



Trading Cards Game

Instructions:

Your teams goal is to solve one riddle. To accomplish this task, your team must do two things:

1. Obtain all clue cards for a riddle.
2. Determine the correct solution.

The solution may not be submitted until all of the correct trading cards for that riddle are in your team's possession. The facilitator will tell you if you have all the clues and your answer is correct.

Rules:

To obtain all the clues, you negotiate with the other teams for trading cards. The rules for negotiation are as follows:

1. Only one member of a team may leave the team at any one time.
2. Only one member may negotiate with any team at any one time.
3. Each member of the team must have at least one opportunity to negotiate with another team.
4. No more than two cards may be exchanged during any transaction with another team.

Riddle #1

Trading Card (1)

#15

The Championship series is underway.

Trading Card (2)

#20

The Yankees and the Tigers play five baseball games.

Trading Card (3)

#25

They each win three games.

Riddle #1 (concluded)

Trading Card (4)

#30

No ties or disputed games are involved.

EDITOR: WHY IS THIS CARD TRADING CARD 1?

Trading Card (1)

#35

How could this happen without any ties or disputed games?

Riddle #2

Trading Card (2)

#70

An airplane gets caught in a terrible snow storm.

Trading Card (3)

#75

There are no parachutes on board.

Trading Card (4)

#80

The passengers are from two different countries, some going home and some traveling away from home.

Riddle #2 (concluded)

Trading Card (1)

#85

The airplane crashes on the exact border between their two countries.

Trading Card (2)

#90

According to international law, should unidentified survivors be buried in the country they were traveling to or the country they were traveling from?

Riddle #3

Trading Card (3)

#110

A man builds a house with four sides.

Trading Card (4)

#115

Each side has a southern exposure.

Trading Card (1)

#120

There is only one place on earth where this could occur.

Riddle #3 (concluded)

Trading Card (2)

#125

A bear comes to the door and rings the doorbell.

Trading Card (3)

#130

What color is the bear?

Riddle #4

Trading Card (4)

#150

You enter a cold dark room.

Trading Card (1)

#155

You have a match.

Trading Card (2)

#160

You have a candle.

Riddle #4 (concluded)

Trading Card (3)

#125

A bear comes to the door and rings the doorbell.

Trading Card (3)

#165

And a kerosene heater.

Trading Card (4)

#170

Which do you light first to get maximum heat?