

Positive Workplace

Exercises

Importance of Listening Skills/Ice Breaker Exercise

This activity is designed to help participants be more aware of their listening habits. It also provides an opportunity to explore what can happen when work assignments are delegated to employees. It is best used as an opener to a general discussion about the importance of listening.

Objectives

By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:

- describe their listening strengths and weaknesses;
- describe what can happen when making work assignments;
- develop a plan for helping their employees listen.

	Method	Notes
Step 1:	Introduce the activity.	Tell participants that they will experience what it is like to be a new employee being given a very specific work assignment.
Step 2:	Read the Assignment from the Trainer's Notes to the class.	Read the information at a normal rate of speed. Try to be conversational as if you were giving a real work assignment.
Step 3:	Administer the test.	Explain that you want to make sure the new person understands the job assignment.
Step 4:	Discuss the results.	<i>Questions you might ask:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How accurately does your score reflect your listening ability?• Why did you score high/low?• How do you think a new employee would react to such an assignment?• What questions do you think a new employee would ask?• Do different people listen in different ways? How?• What is your motivation for listening to someone?

	Method	Notes
Step 5:	Repeat the exercise (optional).	Compare score the second time with those on the first try. Discuss why scores were better or worse. Discuss the importance of asking questions when you don't understand.
Step 6:	Review the activity.	Discuss the role of listening as it applies to being a successful coach/mentor. Ask participants to think of situations where their inability to listen has caused problems. Ask them how they can improve these situations in the future. If using as an icebreaker, discuss the importance of listening during the course.

Assignment

Read the following information to participants at a normal rate of speed. Be as conversational as possible, but don't permit any questions. (New employees generally are reluctant to ask questions even if they don't understand.)

Explain the situation

This is your first day on the job. I'm a co-worker the supervisor assigned to you to help with orientation.

The orientation

It's good to have you with us. The boss had to go to a very important meeting so she asked me to help get you started. She probably already told you that filing and distributing the mail will be your most important duties. They may be, but I can tell you from my own experience that answering the phone will take most of your time.

As far as the filing goes, you'll get the most from Goodwin. Unfortunately, a lot of it will be personal stuff. If you spend too much time on his stuff, you'll never get your work done. Then there's Mason. She won't give you much, but you'd better get it right, she's a real stickler. Comes in early and checks the files to see if they're right. I'm not sure she trusts anyone to do a job right. By the way, it's a good idea to ask for project status reports the day before they are due so you can start typing. Poulson is especially bad about expecting to get his handwritten notes typed up 30 minutes before the report is due. It takes that long to figure out his hieroglyphics.

The mail situation sounds tricky, but it's not so bad. It comes in twice a day, once at 10 a.m. and again around 2 p.m. You've got to take the mail that has been left on the desk to Charles Hall for pickup. If you really have some rush stuff, take it to the mail room on the third floor, northeast corner. It's next to Hunter's office. On Fridays you have to go to the mail room yourself to pick up the mail. They have so much they just can't get it delivered. They'll give it to you in bundles. You'll probably get a lot of mail that belongs to Preston in the marketing department. He just transferred up there a month ago and we still get his mail. Sometimes you can sort the mail while you're walking back here. If you get it done, go ahead and stop by Preston's office and drop his off. He's on the northeast corner of the lower level next to the computer lab.

I hope the boss filled you in on your breaks. You'll need them—10 minutes in the morning, 45 minutes at noon and another 10 in the afternoon. If you're smart you'll go around 9:55 to beat the rush. In the afternoon, you can go anytime. Lunch time depends on whose day it is to answer the phones. We usually try to go between 11:30 and 1:00 in 15 minute intervals. Since you're

We'll try to get you out of here by 12:15 so you can be back by 1:00 when the afternoon action gets started.

One more thing. You are supposed to call Gina at 8:15 every morning and make sure she's up and getting ready for work. If you forget, she gets very testy. If you have any questions just ask. Right now I've got to get over to the legal department and pick up some stuff for Mason. See you later.

Listening Test

Answer true or false.

1. You have to pick up the mail yourself on Thursday. (F)
2. The mail room is located on the lower level. (F)
3. Charles Hall recently transferred to marketing. (F)
4. Breaks are 10 minutes, morning and afternoon. (T)
5. Lunch is 45 minutes. (T)
6. You should be back from lunch by 12:30. (F)
7. Goodwin gives personal stuff to file. (T)
8. Your main jobs according to the boss are filing and answering the phone. (F)
9. You are to call Jenno every morning at 8:45. (F)
10. Preston likes to give you handwritten copies to type. (F)
11. Most of your time will be spent answering the phone. (T)
12. Mason is likely to check the accuracy of your filing. (T)