

ACTIVITY: Folding Paper and Communicating Effectively

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to:

- Demonstrate that people interpret the same information differently
- Demonstrate the importance of asking clarifying questions to ensure understanding

ESTIMATED TIME

20 minutes

MATERIALS

8.5x11" paper
Flip chart paper
Markers

Background

Effective communication strategies can help you build strong working relationships. When we talk about communication skills, we are not just referring to what we SAY but also how we listen. Effective communication combines two major elements: active listening and creating a clear message. We have to listen if we are going to craft a coherent and professional message.

How do we know if the messages we are sending are being received and interpreted in the way we intended? People can interpret the same message in different ways, so asking clarifying questions to ensure that everyone is on the same page is essential to good working relationships.

Activity

Explain the following activity to the group.

- 1) Give everyone a piece of 8.5x11" paper and ask everyone to close their eyes. Explain to everyone that this activity is simple – they just need to listen and follow the instructions you give them.
- 2) Read off the following instructions allowing enough time for people to complete each step:
 - 1) Fold your sheet of paper in half
 - 2) Tear off the upper right corner
 - 3) Fold your paper in half again
 - 4) Tear off the lower right corner
 - 5) Fold your paper in half
 - 6) Tear off the upper left corner
 - 7) Fold in half a final time
 - 8) Tear off the lower left corner
 - 9) Unfold your paper and hold it up
 - 10) Open your eyes, look at your product and compare it with the other team members

Discussion Questions/ Key Points

- What happened? Does everyone's piece of paper look the same?
- When you send a message, it may not be interpreted in the way you intended because individual perceptions vary.
- Discuss what this fact means for your team. How can the team ensure that messages you send are being interpreted in the manner in which they were intended?
- Develop best practices for communication to ensure understanding and confirm that everyone is on the same page.

Follow-up

Assess your new practices after 30 days and make any necessary adjustments to ensure the team continues to communicate effectively.

Communication and Listening Exercises

<http://blog.trainerswarehouse.com/communication-exercises/>