Interactive Behavior Skills: Effective Communications

The 13 Interactive Behavior Skills can be grouped into four categories:

Initiating Skills:

The presentation of ideas, suggestions

- Proposing
- Expanding

Active Listening Skills:

The exchange of information and clarification of ideas

- Informing
- Inquiring
- Reflecting
- Testing Understanding
- Summarizing

Responding Skills:

The reaction to other people's ideas

- Agreeing
- Disagreeing
- Attacking
- Defending

Process Skills:

- Brining in
- Shutting out

All behaviors in the four categories are important to an effective meeting and/or discussion. In the event that you have too much of one category and not enough of another, the effectiveness of that discussion is in jeopardy. As we learn and practice each category and the behaviors within the category, you will realize the importance of the balance between skills. We will now begin to study each of the 13 behaviors.

Tips on Listening and Asking Questions

- Listen first, then talk.
- Give the person a chance to say what is on his or her mind before you ask questions. Be patient.
- Don't assume. (We know what that can lead to.) Do not second-guess or jump to conclusions.
- Provide your comments and advice if they are invited and when the other person is finished.
- Try to separate emotional accusations and statements from the real facts. You do not need to react to an "attack" with another "attack."
- Be attentive and maintain eye contact with the speaker to keep the interest level up on both sides.
- Use verbal reactions to show that you are listening such as: "Oh, I see. Hmmm…(etc.)."
- Be relaxed and ready to invest the time to hear the whole "story." The speaker will not feel rushed and a better listening environment will be created.

SUMMARY

Initiating Skills

Category	Definition	Examples
Proposing	Proposing is a behavior that introduces a new idea, suggestion or proposal. All ideas are actionable.	*"I suggest we change the filing system."* *"Let's shelve that until tomorrow."*
Expanding	Expanding is a behavior that may take the form of a proposal but which actually enlarges, extends or develops an existing idea of proposal. It can only occur after the introduction of another proposal.	*"And, in addition to your plan, we could add info sheets to the packet."* *"And to highlight your suggestion about collecting stats before noon, I could remind people at 11:30 to have their data ready."*

SUMMARY

Active Listening Skills

Category	Definition	Examples
Informing	Informing is a behavior that gives information to another person in the form of facts, opinions, or thoughts.	*"I'm sure that the book is in the library."* *"There are 300 managers of which 60 are women."*
Inquiring	Inquiring is a behavior that asks questions to clarify or collect more information on facts or opinions from another person.	*"Do you know where the extra clips are stored?"* *"In which book did you find that information?"* *"Has that research been done before?"*
Reflecting	Reflecting is a behavior that identifies the emotion of the sender through the interpretation of his/her behaviors and actions, i.e., tone of voice, body language, facial expression.	*"It sounds as though you are angry."* *"You Seem worried."*
Testing Understanding	Testing understanding is a behavior that is designed to establish if an earlier communication has been perceived correctly. It serves to validate meanings and clears up misunderstandings, and refers to another stated issue.	"*Are you saying that the information in this packet is for general distribution?"* *"Let me see if I have this right. You mean that the reports are due by 10a.m. every Friday? Is that true?"*
Summarizing	Summarizing is a behavior that recounts, in a compact from, the content of previous discussions, decisions, or communications.	"So, first we'll collect data from our survey, then we'll plot the results on graphs and distribute them to the committee and finally we'll decide whether or not to change our strategy."

SUMMARY

Responding Skills

Category	Definition	Examples
Agreeing	Agreeing is a behavior that actively supports or agrees with another person's ideas or suggestions.	*"I feel the same way."* *"O.K."* *"Yeah."* *"Sounds fine to me."*
Disagreeing	Disagreeing is a behavior that actively disagrees or is not supportive of another person's ideas or suggestions. Disagreeing is about issues.	*I don't like that suggestion."* *"I disagree with that way of handling the situation."* *"I can't support that view."*
Attacking	Attacking is a behavior that attacks another person directly. This communication is aimed at a person. It is not issue oriented. Name calling and generalizations belong to this category.	*"Hey, that's a dumb comment."* *"What else could we expect from those lazy people in accounting?"* *"No women can clearly evaluate data. What else could we expect but mistakes?"* *"You never could follow through on anything."*
Defending	Defending is a behavior that attempts to ward off a real or perceived attack (Focus is on person, not issue. The recipient of the attack often feels blamed.)	"It's not my fault." (whiny tone) "Why is my department's budget always cut?"

SUMMARY

Process Skills

Category	Definition	Examples
Bringing In	Bringing in is a behavior that solicits participation from a group member not verbally participating in a discussion. It seeks to include that person's contribution.	*"John, we haven't heard from you in a while. What's your opinion of this?"* *"Matt, do you have any ideas about the plans we've been discussing?"*
Shutting Out	Shutting out is a behavior that excludes that participation of a group member by stopping his or her interaction. Interruption is the most common form of shutting out.	Scott: *"I'd like to give you my…"* Dave: *"No way I can deal with that, Scott."* *"You've contributed many valuable ideas this afternoon Gary, but I'd like to hear from some others, so I'm going to ask you to sit back for a while."*