

Facilitator's Guide

Communication Essentials for Good Impressions

Communication is the real work of leadership. —Nitin Nohria

Rationale:

Communication is the key to effective leadership and fulfilling organizational vision and mission.

Program Goal:

To demonstrate the role of effective communication in leadership development.

Program Objectives:

- To recognize the importance of what you are “saying” through non-verbal communication
- To distinguish the importance of effective speech for influencing others
- To critique the elements of active listening in an effective communication process

Pre-Program Preparation:

- Copy the “Communication Essentials for Good Impressions” fact sheet for each participant.
- Secure highlighter, markers, flipchart/wall poster, role play description cards, one piece of paper and pen/pencils per participant.

Introduction:

Communication plays an important role in the leadership process. Communication helps a leader in building relationships, effectively delegating tasks, and even sharing the organization’s vision with its members. But effective communication isn’t necessarily natural—it takes some work to be good at communicating. Let’s learn more about non-verbal communication (body language) and active listening.

Introductory Activity:

Read the following two quotes out loud to the group.

“We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.” —Epictetus

“What you do speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson

What are Epictetus and Emerson saying to us?

What additional quotes have you heard that express the relationship of effective communication to good impressions?

Objective 1: Recognize the importance of what you are “saying” through non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication can be as powerful as the spoken word. Just as what you say creates an impression on people, so does your appearance, how you hold yourself, and how you act toward people. Understanding what you are “saying” with your body and appearance is important, particularly when you are trying to make a good impression.

Having an active awareness of non-verbal communication can help you:

- Project an image of confidence
- Demonstrate power or influence
- Express sincerity, interest or cooperativeness
- Create trust
- Recognize personal tension

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Learning Activity 1: Acting it Out

Engage participants in the role play to understand what you “say” with your body language.

Situation: Your County Homemaker Council is holding a Taste of the Holidays event. Several members have volunteered to work a Homemaker membership booth. A prospective homemaker comes up to the booth to find out more information about joining.

Have three homemaker members in your club play the roles of the following women working the booth.

- **Henrietta Hillthorn**, who has a tendency to frown, stare people down, and cross her arms
- **Lisa Happyday**, who has a tendency to smile, make good eye contact, hold her shoulders back, and communicate in a confident manner
- **Lucy McNervous**, who has a tendency to make sporadic eye contact, chew on her lower lip, and fidget often

Discussion Question:

What impression do you think the prospective homemaker will have after encountering Henrietta, Lisa and Lucy?

Objective 2: Distinguish the importance of effective speech for influencing others

The way in which you speak has a powerful effect on your first impression. Grammar, profanity, derogatory comments, gossip, and even rambling needlessly when trying to make a point can create a negative reaction.

Learning Activity 2:

Facilitator will role play the following situation in two ways using exaggerated speech and body language:

Speaker 1: Hey y’all. So glad you’re here. Hope you are having a good day. My day has been really rotten. I tried gettin’ here today on time, but I had a million things to do, and somebody was calling me as I was leavin’ the house and wanted to tell me everything that had happened in the last couple of months. I haven’t had much time to prepare for today’s lesson. I ain’t sure if we are going to get anything done today, but here we go.

Speaker 2: Welcome everyone. I am so excited to be with you today as we explore the power of communication toward making a good impression. Each of us has the ability to influence others through the way we speak, listen, and express ourselves through appearance and body language. We are going to have

so much fun sharing and learning from each other. Let’s get started.

What were your impressions of speaker 1? What aspects of her speech made a negative impression?

What were your impressions of speaker 2? What aspects of her speech made a positive impression?

Objective 3: Critique the elements of active listening in an effective communication process

Reflect back throughout your experiences in Extension Homemakers. Do you remember a member who was a great listener? Think of the qualities that made her a great listener. What qualities are found in a good listener?

A good listener:

- Works at listening
- Helps the speaker to convey thoughts
- Listens to understand, not to disprove

Active listening is defined as actively trying to understand what the other person is trying to communicate to you. There are four parts to active listening:

- **Hearing**—the physical process of taking in sound
 - » How do I decrease distractions interfering with my concentrating on the person?
- **Interpreting**—the process of finding meaning in what is being communicated.
 - » What point is the person trying to make?
- **Evaluating**—the process of judging or determining the significance of what’s being said.
 - » Is the speaker expressing an opinion or are they discussing unbiased facts? What can I learn from what the speaker is saying?
- **Responding**—the act of replying or answering back.
 - » Do I understand the ideas necessary to make a supportive response?

Learning Activity 3: Be Careful Little Ears What You Hear

This next activity demonstrates the importance of active listening. Have the active listening process visually displayed for reference during the activity. Ask participants to pick a partner and decide who will be the speaker (the person doing the talking) and who will be the listener (the person receiving the message).

First, the speakers will tell their partners about a positive or negative Extension Homemaker workshop experience. When the speakers finish telling their story, the listeners must repeat the story back to the

speakers. The speakers will then tell the listeners if the story was accurate or not and tell the listeners the correct information in the story.

Discussion questions:

To the speakers:

- Did your partner repeat your story back accurately?
- Did you get the impression that your partner was actively listening? Why or why not?

To the listeners:

- How did you use the active listening process during the storytelling?
- What role did verbal and non-verbal communication skills play in effectively telling and listening to the story?

Summary:

Communication has many important aspects. Today we have focused on non-verbal communication, speaking and active listening. To be sure you put your best foot forward, review each of these aspects. These tips will help you to be the best communicator you can be by creating the right impression.

References:

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