

HAND OUT FOR PARTICIPANTS | WORKING ON ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS AND GIVING FEEDBACK

ASKING QUESTIONS

Proper question asking can help you to get the information you need from the person you're having the conversation with. Open questions and follow-up questions help you to follow the other person's line of thought instead of pursuing your own ideas.

⇒ Ask open questions.

- Ask for clarification or for more detail.

For instance: 'What do you mean by...?' 'What do you think of...?'

⇒ Ask follow-up questions in a questioning way

- Do not interpret too quickly, but ask specific questions.

For instance: 'What other ways are there according to you?'

⇒ Repeat words

- Repeat words which are not explained.

For instance: 'what situation?', 'she?' or 'not good?'

⇒ Avoid questions starting with 'Why'

- People tend to get defensive if you ask them a 'Why' question. Find different words.

For instance: 'what made you do this?' or 'which considerations did you have for taking this action?'

SUMMARISING

In using summaries you let the person you're having a conversation with know you have heard and understood what he or she is saying. If people keep repeating themselves, summaries often help you to move on with the conversation.

⇒ Summarise what the other person is saying.

- Show to the speaker that you have understood him/her by summarising the essence of what has been said.

For instance: 'I hear you say that...'. 'If I understand you correctly you think that...'

- When your discussion partner tells you the same thing a few times over, it is certainly important to start summarising; apparently, he feels that his message does not come across.

For instance: 'Let me make sure I understand you correctly. You said that...'

⇒ Try to stay close to the words and phrases the other person uses. This will enhance acceptance of your summaries.

GIVING COMPLIMENTS AND FEEDBACK

Why give compliments and feedback?

As a manager, you depend on your staff to reach the results you are aiming for. Your influence on those results is therefore always indirect, through your people. The better you can support them in achieving what you expect, the more effective you are.

Compliments and feedback are two crucial managerial skills. By giving a compliment you let someone know what is going well, according to what you expect. Compliments are among the most impactful ways of managing people, as you give attention to what is going well. People tend to do more of those things that they get compliments for.

By giving feedback you give the other person an opportunity to learn and change his actions to become more effective. Realize that if people don't get the results you would like to see, most of the times they would like to be more successful, but they need to learn how to do it better. Your managerial impact is highest if you can motivate people to learn to be more effective. Therefore, feedback is aimed at supporting someone else in learning, not at punishing. For the same reason, feedback is aimed at someone's behaviour, not at his personal characteristics.

When give compliments and feedback?

As long as you mean it, you can hardly give too many compliments. You could start trying out the effect of compliments by consciously making compliments for a certain kind of new behaviour you would like to enhance, every time to see it. You will be amazed how quickly people will pick up on it and make that new way of acting their own.

Concerning feedback, the best moments are usually when you have an individual conversation with someone, without others around. Be aware that before you give feedback, you should make sure that you are 'in contact' with the other person, that you have established a good relationship and understanding. Otherwise, the other person will probably take the feedback as a personal evaluation, not as an opportunity to learn. Tell the other person that you are going to give feedback, and what your intention is with doing it. And after you have given feedback, if you see that person working on improving what you have said, make sure you give compliments for it!

Giving a compliment

To give a compliment, you can:

⇒ Describe what you noticed the other person do or say.

- Focus on concrete behaviour, be as specific as you can.

For instance: 'In the sales meeting last week you shared some real nice ideas for the Panorama campaign' rather than 'I like your ideas'

⇒ Describe the effect of the other person's actions.

- You can focus on what happened as a result, which may be a feeling you got or a reaction other people gave.
For instance: 'The team elaborated on your ideas and eventually came up with a quite spectacular plan.'
- Adding what made it worthwhile for you personally can make the compliment even more powerful.
For instance: 'I was very relieved that we had the plan ready on time, I had been worried about that.'

Giving feedback

To give feedback, you take the steps described for a compliment, plus a third step in which you offer suggestions.

⇒ Describe what you noticed the other person do or say.

- Focus on concrete behaviour, be as specific as you can.
For instance: 'Last week, you forgot to put the complaint of customer X into the system.'

⇒ Describe the effect of the other person's actions.

- You can focus on what happened as a result, which may be a feeling you got or a reaction other people gave.
For instance: 'When X rang back the next day, I didn't know what he was talking about.'
- Adding what made it unpleasant for you personally can make the feedback even more powerful.
For instance: 'It made me feel pretty unprofessional.'

⇒ Give him suggestions as to what he can do or say that might make his behaviour more effective.

- Be specific and try to be realistic about possibilities in his situation.
For instance: 'I suggest you take some time after every phonecall to record it in the system, instead of leaving it all for the end of the day.'