

# Team Engagement Activity

Infusing key skills throughout the enterprise

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## Active Listening

Listening is an essential skill for effectively directing, developing, and connecting with our team members. The first of two activities covers how we listen with “our eyes” by observing body language. In the second activity, participants will use the ABCDs of Active Listening to better listen with “our ears”. Wrapping up with a leader-led discussion on what to *listen for* from their team to improve leadership effectiveness.

### Activity Info

Facilitated by:  
Managers and above

Estimated time:  
In about 25 minutes

Target group size:  
For 4 to 12

Target Audience:  
Supervisors and above

### Before the Session

Prerequisite topic(s):  
(None)

Prepare visual aid:  
(None)

Prepare participant materials:  
Expression Slips (print, cut, and fold)  
ABCD of Active Listening Card (print and cut)

# 1. Introduction

3 minutes

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1. Welcome participants to the session
  - Leader introductions
  - Share basic information, like name, department, and years of service (even if well-known by the group)
2. Communicating effectively is important:
  - Communication with customers to understand and meet their service expectations
  - Communication with vendors to make sure our business needs are met
  - Communication internally to coordinate with each other
  - And leaders communicate to direct, develop, and connect with team members
  - All the benefits can also apply to our personal lives
3. Listening is an essential part of communication—it's required to fully understand the messages from those we're communicating with

## Ask participants:

- Who can share a story of when communication broke down because you or the other person wasn't *really* listening?
  - What was the situation?
  - Why did listening break down? By which side?
  - What happened because of that?
  - Did things get back on track? How?

4. There are two activities that focus on Active Listening in this session
  - The first activity teaches how to “listen” with “our eyes”

## Ask participants:

- What do you think I mean by “listen with our eyes”?
  - To use our eyes to decipher others' body language
  - Observe *non-verbal* cues like facial expressions
- Why is it important that we “listen” with our eyes?
  - It's important because non-verbal communication makes up 70% or more of a person's message!

- The second activity will cover how to listen with “our ears” using the A, B, C, and D of Effective Listening

**Continue to the next section “Listening with our Eyes”**

## 2.1 Listening with Our Eyes

7 minutes

1. Hand each participant a folded Expression Slip
2. On each slip is an emotion that will need to be acted out with a facial expression
  - Participants shouldn't get too silly; encourage them to make their "regular" face for that expression
  - Avoid using body language other than facial expressions
3. Have participants read the emotion on their slip, but tell them to **not** share what it says
4. Give participants about 30 seconds to prepare
5. Ask for volunteers to take turns making their expression in front of the group
  - **Time Saver:** for large groups, bring up volunteers by slip number (for example: "everyone with slip #2 come up and share your expression")
6. After a moment of making their expression, have everyone else try to guess what the expression could be
7. Once most participants have guessed, have the volunteer(s) share the expression on their slip
8. Comment on how successful (or not successful) the group was on interpreting the volunteer's expression
9. Repeat until all participants have made a face in front of the group for everyone else to guess
10. **Share key points:** we generally know what it means to be "Angry" or "Happy", but people show their emotions in different ways
  - People have their own unique details in their expression
  - We can't assume someone's emotion based only on their facial expression

### Expression with slip #:

1. Confused
2. Happy
3. Indifferent
4. Excited
5. Upset
6. Alarmed
7. Questionable
8. Surprised
9. Uncomfortable
10. Sad

### Ask Key Question to participants:

- Besides their facial expression, what are ways we can find out what someone else is thinking or feeling?
  - Other body language
  - Their long-term performance and behaviors
  - Ask them—have a conversation!

**Facilitator decision:** Either to continue to the next activity "Listening with our Ears" (go to Transition Statement) *or* to the optional additional part to the activity (below).

### Optional instruction:

11. Ask all participants to make one of the more ambiguous expressions together (like upset) and look around at all the faces in the room (you should make the face too)
12. Comment on how many of the faces being made could be mixed up with another expression (upset can look like anxious, uncomfortable, or even anger)

## Closing

2 minutes

- As a leader (or leadership team), share specific expectations for participants to use these active listening skills
- Share an important part of the ABCD tool the facilitator(s) use to actively listen
- Provide specific examples of how active listening is beneficial
  - Work better with other teams and leaders
  - Build better relationships with coworkers
  - Better understand and service customers' needs
- Thank everyone for their time and encourage them to use the skills from the session today

## Reinforcement

*"Success occurs when opportunity meets preparation."* - Zig Ziglar

- After the session, plan to use one (or both) of the below options to reinforce the points and the ABCD tool from the session
  - Use the discussion questions during huddles, 1-on-1s, or team building events to lead a discussion on what participants learned and how they're using the tools
  - Send reflection questions via email to give participants some guidance on what you expected them to learn without an active discussion

### Ask Discussion Questions to participants:

- Who can tell me what the A in the ABCD of Active Listening stands for? B? ...
- Tell us a story of when you used one of the ABCDs to actively listen to a team member. What was the situation? How did you use the ABCDs?
- Who has some tips they can share with others on how to be better at Active Listening (with or without the ABCD tool)?
- How have you listened with "your eyes" since the session?

### Email Reflection Questions to participants:

- What do the letters in the abbreviation ABCD stand for?
- Who was the last team member you Actively Listened to? Which part of ABCD did you use in that conversation?
- What is one part of ABCD you still need to practice?
- How have you been listening with "your eyes" to better understand and connect with your team members?

