

Group Communication

Effective group communication starts with sending clear messages and active listening. The steps below provide some strategies for active listening. Celeste Headlee offers a different strategy in her TED talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/celeste_headlee_10_ways_to_have_a_better_conversation

Four Steps to Active Listening

1. Active listening: listening through questions and feedback
 - › Paraphrasing: restating in your own words using statements like:
 - “What I hear you saying...”
 - “In other words...”
 - “Do you mean?...”
 - “Do I understand that you thought....”
 - › Clarifying: Asking questions until you get the complete picture
 - Do you mean this or this?
 - I’m not sure what you mean by...
 - › Feedback: non-judgmental reaction—honest and supports dialogue
 - I wonder if [your description] is what is really happening.
 - Do you think xxx would feel differently?
2. Listening with empathy: recognize their views may come from personal experience
 - › They may be angry for a reason
 - › They may be hurt by their experience
3. Listening with openness: try putting yourself in their shoes to understand what they are saying
 - › If you can understand their views, you can understand them
 - › Test: try arguing the opposite perspective with someone
4. Listening with awareness: compare message with knowledge and their body language
 - › Their body language
 - › Your experience
 - › Your knowledge of people, history, etc.

Sending Messages Effectively

- Clearly own your messages: Use first person pronouns (“I” and “me”)
- Make your messages complete and specific
 - › Include clear statements with all the information
 - › Make sure you are explaining all leaps of thinking
- Make your verbal and non-verbal messages congruent
- Be redundant
- Ask for feedback on how your messages are being received
- Make the message appropriate for the receiver
- Describe your feelings by name, action, or figure of speech
- Describe others’ behavior without interpreting:
 - › YES: You keep interrupting me
 - › NO: You are an ego-driven person who won’t listen to anyone

Communication and Group Process

Teams involve people with different styles and personalities. The following sections describe different types of decision making (based on Myers-Briggs type of personality categories) and how to incorporate these differences in dialogue. <https://www.psychometrics.com/mbtiblog/team-building/team-decision-making-inclusive-intentional/>

Extroverts: tend quickly throw out ideas without taking much time to think, preferring to analyze the ideas and build a solution with the group. Their spoken ideas are just beginning to be formed and should not be taken as their final way to solve the problem. **Question for teams:** Before a decision is made, are we allowing enough time for discussion and digestion? Has everyone come prepared to engage?

Introverts: need to take the ideas of others and reflect on them. Their spoken ideas tend to be formed to a much greater extent than extraverts. As a result, they are open to minor adjustments but struggle with wholesale changes that they have already thought out and committed to. **Question for teams:** In addition to discussion, have we allowed enough time before and after for refinement, consideration and reflection?

Sensors: like to gather facts and adopt a practical, hands-on approach. Sensors want to deal with the problem in front of them with what they know to be true from either experience or facts. **Question for teams:** When making decisions or solving problems, are we always keeping resources, realities and parameters in mind? Do we honor what has been done in the past before moving forward?

Intuitors: like global schemes and want to consider all future possibilities and challenges. As a result, they often want to consider the alternatives and implications over and above what exists in front of them. **Question for teams:** Are we putting the present realities into a larger context before making a decision? Are we open minded to changes, and reminding ourselves of the strategic implications?

Thinkers: stay personally removed from the problem-solving process, adopting an intellectually objective and impersonal reasoning style. They like to examine the pros and cons and select what appears to be the best route. **Question for teams:** Are we remaining objective as we gather alternatives in our decision making? Are we preserving the deliverable, focusing on efficiency and maximizing benefit versus loss?

Feelers: take into account how the process affects people. They can give very accurate accounts of how the people involved will react. As a result, they tend to act as a good barometer of how people will respond to proposed solutions. **Question for teams:** Are we also seeking consensus when appropriate, and prioritizing peoples' needs when the decision heavily impacts those involved?

Judgers: are solution-oriented. They desire to bring things to a conclusion and their search for closure can limit the number of alternatives explored. Judgers can visualize the end, plan towards it and quickly move towards it. **Question for teams:** When making a decision how do we plan implementation contingencies? Are we making a plan and working the plan while keeping ourselves accountable for the solutions?

Perceivers: tend to deal with problem solving by continually reworking solutions until the best approach is identified. Their strength is using new information and adjusting their solutions appropriately. **Question for teams:** Are we remaining flexible enough in our final decision to adjust for new data? When and how will we check in and follow up to ensure success and champion a new plan if necessary?