

Receiving Messages

The second communication process that leaders are involved in is receiving messages, which includes listening²³ and responding to messages.²⁴ Responding effectively improves communications.²⁵ Let's begin by completing the Self-Assessment 6-1 to determine the level and quality of your listening skills, and be honest.

SELF-ASSESSMENT 6-1

Listening Skills

Select the response that best describes the frequency of your actual behavior. Write the letters A, U, F, O, or S on the line before each of the 15 statements.

A—almost always U—usually F—frequently O—occasionally S—seldom

- _____ 1. I like to listen to people talk. I encourage others to talk by showing interest, smiling, nodding, and so forth.
- _____ 2. I pay closer attention to people who are more similar to me than I do to people who are different from me.
- _____ 3. I evaluate people's words and their non-verbal communication ability as they talk.
- _____ 4. I avoid distractions; if it's noisy, I suggest moving to a quiet spot.
- _____ 5. When people come to me and interrupt me when I'm doing something, I put what I was doing out of my mind and give them my complete attention.
- _____ 6. When people are talking, I allow them time to finish. I do not interrupt, anticipate what they are going to say, or jump to conclusions.
- _____ 7. I tune people out who do not agree with my views.
- _____ 8. While the other person is talking, or professors are lecturing, my mind wanders to personal topics.
- _____ 9. While the other person is talking, I pay close attention to the nonverbal communication to help me fully understand what they are trying to communicate.
- _____ 10. I tune out and pretend I understand when the topic is difficult for me to understand.
- _____ 11. When the other person is talking, I think about and prepare what I am going to say in reply.
- _____ 12. When I think there is something missing or contradictory, I ask direct questions to get the person to explain the idea more fully.
- _____ 13. When I don't understand something, I let the other person know I don't understand.
- _____ 14. When listening to other people, I try to put myself in their position and to see things from their perspective.
- _____ 15. During conversations I repeat back to the other person what has been said in my own words to be sure I correctly understand what has been said.

If people you talk to regularly were to answer these questions about you, would they have the same responses that you selected? To find out, have friends fill out the questions with you in mind rather than themselves. Then compare answers.

To determine your score, give yourself 5 points for each A, 4 for each U, 3 for each F, 2 for each O, and 1 for each S for statements 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, and 15. Place the numbers on the line next to your response letter. For items 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, and 11, the score reverses: 5 points for each S, 4 for each O, 3 for each F, 2 for each U, and 1 for each A. Place these score numbers on the lines next to the response letters. Now add your total number of points. Your score should be between 15 and 75. Place your score on the continuum below. Generally, the higher your score, the better your listening skills.

15-20-25-30-35-40-45-50-55-60-65-70-75
 Poor listener Good listener

SELF-ASSESSMENT 6-2

Your Personality Traits and Communication, Feedback, Coaching, and Conflict Management Style

Let's tie personality traits from Chapter 2 together with what we've covered in this chapter. We are going to present some general statements about how your personality may affect your communication, feedback, coaching, and conflict management styles. For each area, determine how the information relates to you. This will help you better understand your behavior strengths and weaknesses, and identify areas you may want to improve.

Communication

If you have a high *surgency* personality, you most likely are an extrovert and have no difficulty initiating and communicating with others. However, you may be dominating during communication and may not listen well and be open to others' ideas. Be careful not to use communications simply as a means of getting what you want; be concerned about others and what they want. If you are low in surgency, you may be quiet and reserved in your communications. You may want to be more vocal.

If you are high in *agreeableness* personality trait, you are most likely a good listener and communicator. Your *adjustment* level affects the emotional tone of your communications. If you tend to get emotional during communications, you may want to work to keep your emotions under control. We cannot control our feelings, but we can control our behavior. If you are high in *conscientiousness*, you tend to have reliable communications. If you are not conscientious, you may want to work at returning messages quickly. People who are *open to new experience* often initiate communication, because communicating is often part of the new experience.

Feedback and Coaching

If you have a high *surgency* personality, you have a need to be in control. Watch the tendency to give feedback, but not listen to it. You may need to work at *not* criticizing. If you have low surgency, you may want to give more feedback and do more coaching. If you have a high *agreeableness* personality, you are a people person and probably enjoy coaching others. However, as a manager,

you must also discipline when needed, which may be difficult for you.

If you are high on the *adjustment* personality trait, you may tend to give positive coaching; people with low *adjustment* need to watch the negative criticism. If you have a high *conscientiousness* with a high need for achievement, you may tend to be more concerned about your own success. This is also true of people with a high *surgency* personality. Remember that an important part of leadership is coaching others. If you have a low *conscientiousness*, you may need to put forth effort to be a good coach. Your *openness to experience* personality affects whether you are willing to listen to others' feedback and make changes.

Conflict Styles

Generally, the best conflict style is collaboration. If you have a high *surgency* personality, you most likely have no problem confronting others when in conflict. However, be careful not to use the forcing style with others; remember to use social, not personal power. If you have a high *agreeableness* personality, you tend to get along well with others. However, be careful not to use the avoiding and accommodating styles to get out of confronting others; you need to satisfy your needs too.

Adjustment will affect how to handle a conflict situation. Try not to be low in adjustment and get too emotional. If you are *conscientious*, you may be good at conflict resolution; but again, be careful to meet others' needs too. *Openness to experience* affects conflicts, because their resolution often requires change; be open to new things.

Action Plan

Based on your personality, what specific things will you do to improve your communication, feedback, coaching, and conflict management style?

"Take It To The Net". Access student resources at www.cengagebrain.com. Search for Lussier, Leadership 6e to find student study tools.

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Questions 4 through 8 relate to the steps in the message-sending process.

4. The manager developed rapport. (Step 1)
 - a. true
 - b. false
5. The manager stated the communication objective. (Step 2)
 - a. true
 - b. false
6. The manager transmitted the message _____. (Step 3)
 - a. effectively
 - b. ineffectively
7. The manager checked understanding by using _____. (Step 4)
 - a. direct questions
 - b. paraphrasing
 - c. both
 - d. neither
8. The amount of checking was _____.
 - a. too frequent
 - b. too infrequent
 - c. about right
9. The manager got a commitment and followed up. (Step 5)
 - a. true
 - b. false
10. The employee did an _____ job of listening, an job of analyzing, and an _____ job of checking understanding through the receiving message process.
 - a. effective
 - b. ineffective
11. When going over this integration, the manager was _____ and the employee was _____ to criticism that can help improve communication skills.
 - a. open
 - b. closed
12. Were the objects drawn to approximate scale (same size)? If not, why not?
13. Did you follow the rules? If not, why not?
14. If you could do this exercise again, what would you do differently to improve communications?

Conclusion

The instructor leads a class discussion and/or makes concluding remarks.

Apply It (2-4 minutes) What did I learn from this experience? How will I use this knowledge in the future? When will I practice?

Behavior Model Skills Training

6-1

Session I

In this behavior model skills training session, you will perform four activities:

- 1 Complete Self-Assessment 6-3 (to determine your preferred communication style).
 - 2 Read "The Situational Communications Model."
 - 3 Watch Behavior Model Video 6.1, "Situational Communications."
 - 4 Complete Developing Your Leadership Skills Exercise 6-2 (to apply the model to various situations).
- For practice, use the situational communications model in your personal and professional communication.

SELF-ASSESSMENT 6-3

Determining Your Preferred Communication Style

To determine your preferred communication style, select the one alternative that most closely describes what you would do in each of the 12 situations described. Do not be concerned with trying to pick the correct answer; select the alternative that best describes what you would actually do. Circle the letter a, b, c, or d.

For now, ignore these three types of lines:

1. (before each number)
 - _____ time _____ information
 - _____ acceptance _____ capability
 - _____ communication style
- S _____ (following each letter)

They are explained later, and will be used during the n-class part of Developing Your Leadership Skills Exercise 6-2.

1. Wendy, a knowledgeable person from another department, comes to you, the engineering supervisor, and requests that you design a special product to her specifications. You would:
 - _____ time _____ information
 - _____ acceptance _____ capability
 - _____ communication style
 - a. Control the conversation and tell Wendy what you will do for her: S _____
 - b. Ask Wendy to describe the product. Once you understand it, you would present your ideas. Let _____

(continued)

- her realize that you are concerned and want to help by offering your ideas. S _____
- c. Respond to Wendy's request by conveying understanding and support. Help clarify what is to be done by you. Offer ideas, but do it her way. S _____
- d. Find out what you need to know. Let Wendy know you will do it her way. S _____
2. Your department has designed a product that is to be fabricated by Saul's department. Saul has been with the company longer than you have; he knows his department. Saul comes to you to change the product design. You decide to:
- _____ time _____ information
 _____ acceptance _____ capability
 _____ communication style
- a. Listen to the change and why it would be beneficial. If you believe Saul's way is better, change it; if not, explain why the original design is superior. If necessary, insist that it be done your way. S _____
- b. Tell Saul to fabricate it any way he wants to. S _____
- c. You are busy; tell Saul to do it your way. You don't have time to listen and argue with him. S _____
- d. Be supportive; make changes together as a team. S _____
3. Upper management has a decision to make. They call you to a meeting and tell you they need some information to solve a problem they describe to you. You:
- _____ time _____ information
 _____ acceptance _____ capability
 _____ communication style
- a. Respond in a manner that conveys personal support and offer alternative ways to solve the problem. S _____
- b. Just answer their questions. S _____
- c. Explain how to solve the problem. S _____
- d. Show your concern by explaining how to solve the problem and why it is an effective solution. S _____
4. You have a routine work order. The work order is to be placed verbally and completed in three days. Sue, the receiver, is very experienced and willing to be of service to you. You decide to:
- _____ time _____ information
 _____ acceptance _____ capability
 _____ communication style
- a. Explain your needs, but let Sue make the order decision. S _____
- b. Tell Sue what you want and why you need it. S _____
- c. Decide together what to order. S _____
- d. Simply give Sue the order. S _____
5. Work orders from the staff department normally take three days; however, you have an emergency and need the job today. Your colleague Jim, the department supervisor, is knowledgeable and somewhat cooperative. You decide to:
- _____ time _____ information
 _____ acceptance _____ capability
 _____ communication style
- a. Tell Jim that you need it by three o'clock and will return at that time to pick it up. S _____
- b. Explain the situation and how the organization will benefit by expediting the order. Volunteer to help in any way you can. S _____
- c. Explain the situation and ask Jim when the order will be ready. S _____
- d. Explain the situation and together come to a solution to your problem. S _____
6. Danielle, a peer with a record of high performance, has recently had a drop in productivity. Her problem is affecting your performance. You know Danielle has a family problem. You:
- _____ time _____ information
 _____ acceptance _____ capability
 _____ communication style
- a. Discuss the problem; help Danielle realize the problem is affecting her work and yours. Supportively discuss ways to improve the situation. S _____
- b. Tell the manager about it and let him decide what to do about it. S _____
- c. Tell Danielle to get back on the job. S _____
- d. Discuss the problem and tell Danielle how to solve the work situation; be supportive. S _____
7. You are a knowledgeable supervisor. You buy supplies from Peter regularly. He is an excellent salesperson and very knowledgeable about your situation. You are placing your weekly order. You decide to:
- _____ time _____ information
 _____ acceptance _____ capability
 _____ communication style
- a. Explain what you want and why. Develop a supportive relationship. S _____
- b. Explain what you want, and ask Peter to recommend products. S _____
- c. Give Peter the order. S _____
- d. Explain your situation and allow Peter to make the order. S _____

8. Jean, a knowledgeable person from another department, has asked you to perform a routine staff function to her specifications. You decide to:

_____ time _____ information
 _____ acceptance _____ capability
 _____ communication style

- a. Perform the task to her specifications without questioning her. S _____
- b. Tell her that you will do it the usual way. S _____
- c. Explain what you will do and why. S _____
- d. Show your willingness to help; offer alternative ways to do it. S _____

9. Tom, a salesperson, has requested an order for your department's services with a short delivery date. As usual, Tom claims it is a take-it-or-leave-it offer. He wants your decision now, or within a few minutes, because he is in the customer's office. Your action is to:

_____ time _____ information
 _____ acceptance _____ capability
 _____ communication style

- a. Convince Tom to work together to come up with a later date. S _____
- b. Give Tom a yes or no answer. S _____
- c. Explain your situation, and let Tom decide if you should take the order. S _____
- d. Offer an alternative delivery date. Work on your relationship; show your support. S _____

10. As a time-and-motion expert, you have been called regarding a complaint about the standard time it takes to perform a job. As you analyze the entire job, you realize that one element of the job should take longer, but other elements should take less time. The end result is a shorter total standard time for the job. You decide to:

_____ time _____ information
 _____ acceptance _____ capability
 _____ communication style

- a. Tell the operator and foreman that the total time must be decreased and why. S _____
- b. Agree with the operator and increase the standard time. S _____
- c. Explain your findings. Deal with the operator and/or foreman's concerns, but ensure compliance with your new standard. S _____
- d. Together with the operator, develop a standard time. S _____

11. You approve budget allocations for projects. Marie, who is very competent in developing budgets, has come to you. You:

_____ time _____ information
 _____ acceptance _____ capability
 _____ communication style

- a. Review the budget, make revisions, and explain them in a supportive way. Deal with concerns, but insist on your changes. S _____
- b. Review the proposal and suggest areas where changes may be needed. Make changes together, if needed. S _____
- c. Review the proposed budget, make revisions, and explain them. S _____
- d. Answer any questions or concerns Marie has and approve the budget as is. S _____

12. You are a sales manager. A customer has offered you a contract for your product, but the contract has a short delivery date—only two days. The contract would be profitable for you and the organization. The cooperation of the production department is essential to meet the deadline. Tim, the production manager, and you do not get along very well because of your repeated request for quick delivery. Your action is to:

_____ time _____ information
 _____ acceptance _____ capability
 _____ communication style

- a. Contact Tim and try to work together to complete the contract. S _____
- b. Accept the contract and convince Tim in a supportive way to meet the obligation. S _____
- c. Contact Tim and explain the situation. Ask him if he and you should accept the contract, but let him decide. S _____
- d. Accept the contract. Contact Tim and tell him to meet the obligation. If he resists, tell him you will go to his manager. S _____

To determine your preferred communication style, do the following. (1) Circle the letter you selected as the alternative you chose in situations 1 through 12. The column headings indicate the style you selected. (2) Add up the number of circled items per column. The total for all the columns should not be more than 12. The column with the highest number represents your preferred communication style. There is no one best style in all situations. The more evenly distributed the numbers are between the four styles, the more flexible are your communications. A total of 0 or 1 in any column may indicate a reluctance to use the style(s). You could have problems in situations calling for the use of this style.

Communication has the following five dimensions, which are each on a continuum:

	Autocratic (S1A)	Consultative (S2C)	Participative (S3P)	Empowerment (S4E)
1.	a	b	c	d
2.	c	a	d	b
3.	c	d	a	b
4.	d	b	c	a
5.	a	b	d	c
6.	c	d	a	b
7.	c	a	b	d
8.	b	c	d	a
9.	b	d	a	c
10.	a	c	d	b
11.	c	a	b	d
12.	d	b	a	c
Totals				

The Situational Communications Model

The Interactive Process System

Initiation _____ **Response**

- *Initiation.* The sender starts, or initiates, the communication. The sender may or may not expect a response to the initiated message.
- *Response.* The receiver's reply or action taken to the sender's message. In responding, the receiver can become an initiator. As two-way communication takes place, the role of initiator (sender) and responder (receiver) may change.

Presentation _____ **Elicitation**

- *Presentation.* The sender's message is structured, directive, or informative. A response may not be needed, although action may be called for. ("We are meeting to develop next year's budget." "Please open the door.")
- *Elicitation.* The sender invites a response to the message. Action may or may not be needed. ("How large a budget do we need?" "Do you think we should leave the door open?")

Closed _____ **Open**

- *Closed.* The sender expects the receiver to follow the message. ("This is a new form to fill out and return with each order.")
- *Open.* The sender is eliciting a response as a means of considering the receiver's input. ("Should we use this new form with each order?")

Rejection _____ **Acceptance**

- *Rejection.* The receiver does not accept the sender's message. ("I will not fill out this new form for each order!")
- *Acceptance.* The receiver agrees with the sender's message. ("I will fill out the new form for each order!")

Strong _____ **Mild**

- *Strong.* The sender will use force or power to have the message acted upon as directed. ("Fill in the form or you're fired!")
- *Mild.* The sender will not use force or power to have the message acted upon as directed. ("Please fill in the form when you can.")