

# WAGGGS Leadership Development Programme

## Communication

### 4. ACTIVE LISTENING

*"We have two ears and only one mouth  
to remind us that we should listen twice as much as speak"*  
(Anon.)

Listening plays a vital part in the communication process. However, all too often, we don't understand or practice effective listening skills. We hear the words, but we don't really listen.

- **Hearing** is a physical function
- **Listening** is an intellectual and emotional function

*Listening is the emotional and intellectual act of hearing what is communicated and responding to both the verbal and nonverbal message being sent.*

The Chinese word for listening incorporates five distinct components to convey what is meant by listening:

- Eyes
- Ears
- Heart
- You
- My undivided attention

#### LISTEN!

When something is **SAID**  
it does not automatically mean that it is **HEARD**

When something is **HEARD**  
it does not automatically mean that it is **UNDERSTOOD**

When something is **UNDERSTOOD**  
it does not automatically mean that it is **ACCEPTED**

When something is **ACCEPTED**  
it does not automatically mean that it is **REALISED**

When something is **REALISED** once  
it does not automatically mean that it is **FOREVER TRUE**

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### 4. ACTIVE LISTENING (Contd)

#### Discussion

#### WHY DO LEADERS NEED TO LISTEN?

Consider your role as a leader.

Identify a variety of situations in which you may need to be an effective listener.

You may have included some or all of the following reasons why you will find it essential to practice good listening skills to ensure effective leadership.

Leadership situations involve:

- Ensuring communications among people with different perspectives or opinions on an issue
- Understanding and responding to the fears and concerns which people may not put into words
- Picking up non-verbal signals and interpreting them
- Demonstrating empathy and understanding
- Mediation and conflict resolution
- Clarifying uncertainties
- Gaining and sustaining attention
- Building constructive and collaborative relationships with others

There are also many other situations in which your effectiveness to cope will depend largely on your listening skills.

People use four types of listening:

- Inactive listening:** The kind of listening which we should avoid. It is inefficient and unproductive and hears only the words which go in one ear and out the other.
- Selective listening:** Probably the most common kind of listening. This is when we hear only what we want to hear and filter everything else out.
- Active listening:** This is when we make a conscious effort not only to hear the words but also to listen for the complete message the speaker is sending. It takes into consideration the intent and the non-verbal communication of the speaker. Active listening is non-judgmental and empathetic.
- Reflective listening:** Like active listening, reflective listening takes in the whole message. It is particularly important when dealing with a complicated issue or resolving a conflict or dispute. Reflective listening is used to clarify what is being said and to convey mutual understanding. The listener often asks questions to clarify the message.

*You cannot listen with a mouth full of words!*

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### 4. ACTIVE LISTENING (Contd)

#### 4.1 Active and reflective Listening are the marks of an effective listener

Active listening involves the following:

- Demonstrating empathy
- Being non-judgmental
- Understanding and responding to non-verbal communication
- Understanding your own emotional filters which cause mental blocks
- Being prepared to listen
- Being motivated to listen
- Striving for accuracy

There are five steps we can take to develop active listening:

##### 1. Listen to the content

- Listen to what the speaker is saying in terms of facts and ideas'
- Listen to the words, not just the non-verbal communication
- Be as accurate as possible
- Use your intellect to hear what is being said
- Be aware of what the speaker is saying

##### 2. Listen to the intent

- Listen to the emotional meaning of what is being said
- Use your intuition to 'hear' the underlying messages
- The speaker may use various methods of delivery, such as persuasion, to gain your agreement

##### 3. Assess the speaker's non-verbal communication

- Read and interpret what the speaker is 'saying' with body language and other non-verbal signals
- Be aware of gestures, posture, eye contact, tone of voice and facial expression

##### 4. Monitor your non-verbal communication and emotional 'filters'

- Be aware of the messages you are sending with your non-verbal communication
- Be aware of emotional filters that might affect your understanding of the receiver (Emotional filters are the 'hot buttons' which cause people to stop listen/think)
- By being aware of people's emotional filters, you can control them

##### 5. Listen to the speaker with empathy and without judgment.

- Try to put yourself in the speaker's shoes and understand what is shaping the feelings behind the message
- Don't prejudge the speaker; listening with empathy and without judgment validates the speaker
- You may not agree with what is being said, but you should show that you understand why it is being said, and that you will take the time to listen to the message

*"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said."*

**J W Roper**

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### 4.2 Filters in listening

By now, you may also have identified whether your listening skills are affected by your emotional or mental filters.

Filters are the mental attitudes or beliefs we hold, through which we tend to filter everything we hear. Filters cause us to hear selectively and prevent us from listening actively and objectively. The key areas which influence our emotional and mental filters include:

- Our expectations
- Our relationships
- Our past experiences
- Our values and beliefs

To become an effective listener you have to be able control your own personal filters by:

- Identifying them
- Separating yourself from them mentally (or physically) to minimise their influence
- Concentrating on keeping an open mind as you listen

#### Discussion

### IDENTIFYING AND CONTROLLING YOUR FILTERS

Share your thoughts about your personal kinds of filters which might prevent you from being an effective communicator.

- Which kinds of mental filters do you have?
- What is the effect of these filters in your leadership roles?
- What can you do to control these filters?

Remember that when people feel strongly about an issue, their emotions will influence their ability to communicate and to listen.

### Ten rules for effective listening

- Be motivated to listen
- Care about the speaker, and show it
- Use body language to show the speaker that you are an active listener
- Use all your senses to determine another's meaning
- Strive for accuracy
- Do not judge
- Control your listening filters
- Increase your power of retention through observation
- Practice effective listening and be a role model for others
- Listen to yourself

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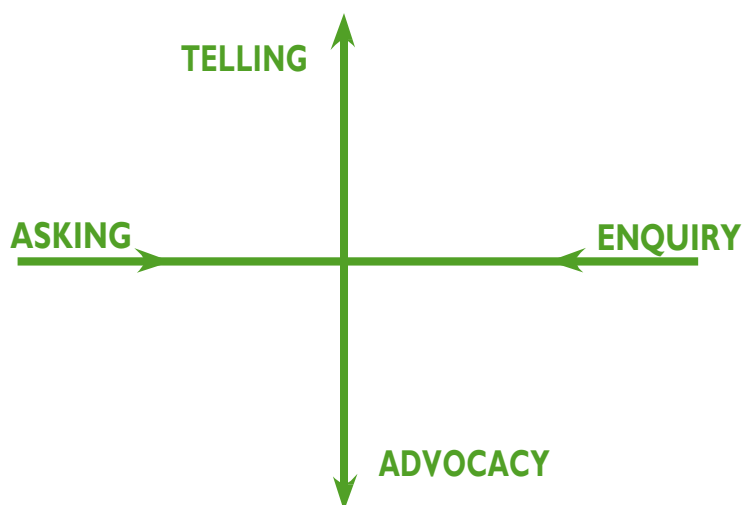
## Communication

### 5. EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

*"The wise man doesn't give the right answers; he poses the right questions"*

**Claude Levi-Strauss**

In striving to engage those whom she leads, today's leader must work to create dialogue. In democratic societies, leaders no longer achieve their goals through the 'command and control' approach; they use methods that seek to involve others in the decision making process. One of these methods is known as dialogue. The dialogue process looks like this:



We can all think of occasions (large and small meetings, or encounters between just two people) in which the discussion has used only the vertical (telling/advocacy axis). At one end, there will be an individual who wants to propose a course of action; this will be counter-balanced by another person who will oppose the action, and push for a different approach. Others involved in such 'discussions' are nothing more than spectators.

Consider how much more productive discussions become when those involved use the asking/enquiry axis to explore the issue in greater depth.

You can always gauge the extent to which a discussion uses both axes of dialogue by monitoring the number of questions used!

#### 5.1 QUESTIONS – OPEN OR CLOSED

Skilful use of questions will enable the leader to:

1. Explore what others want/think/believe/fear
2. Increase levels of participation
3. Encourage others to share their experience or express their opinion
4. Develop creative problem solving and foster new ideas
5. Encourage people to reflect before deciding on some action
6. Support consensus decision making
7. Promote greater commitment to decisions



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### 5. EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING (Contd)

The best kind of questions to encourage dialogue are known as OPEN questions; these are questions which open up exploration of the issue and enable those involved to identify new approaches.

As the term implies, open questions are used to enable us to:

- Establish the bigger picture
- Get out of stalemates
- Identify other options
- Gain commitment
- Promote action
- Obtain feedback
- Discover new possibilities

Open questions usually begin with words like:

What? Who? Why? How? Where? When? Which? In which way? To what extent?

Closed questions will help us to close down a topic. They are useful in drawing discussion to a close before a decision needs to be taken.

Closed questions usually begin with words like:

Was? Did? Are? Were? Is? Could? Would? Do?

Closed questions could be answered very quickly with either “Yes”, “No” or “Maybe”, if the answerer do not want to explain more.

We need to be careful about how we use the ‘Why?’ word; see the tips on effective questioning below.

1. Rephrase questions to avoid beginning with “Why?”, as this may cause others to defend and justify their ideas or behaviour.
2. Ask one question at a time, be clear and concise.
3. Wait for people to reply, and don’t be afraid of silence.
4. Ask questions that prompt people to think deeply.
5. Seek to promote insight, not just gather information.
6. Ask about, and listen, for feelings as well as facts.
7. Respond to non-verbal communication with feedback.
8. Use your non-verbal communication to keep questions from sounding too intrusive.
9. Move from general to specific questions.
10. Challenge assumptions and generalisations.

Questions, and the way they are used, provide the vital spark for genuine dialogue. You will find the following framework of great value in helping you to pose the right question at the right time. It is known as ‘CREW’ developed by David Clutterbuck in his work on mentoring. This approach uses questions to enable listeners to think about their issues at a deeper level and promote new understanding and discovery. Insightful questioning lies at the heart of good dialogue.

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### 5. EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING (Contd)

#### ***Six Honest Serving-Men***

*I keep six honest serving-men  
(They taught me all I knew)  
Their names are What and Why and When  
And How and Where and Who.  
I send them over land and sea  
I send them east and west:  
But after they have worked for me,  
I give them all a rest.*

*I let them rest from nine till five,  
For I am busy then,  
As well as breakfast, lunch, and tea,  
For they are hungry men:  
But different folk have different views:  
I know a person small –  
She keeps ten million serving-men,  
Who get no rest at all!  
She sends 'em abroad on her own affairs,  
From the second she open her eyes –  
One million Hows, two million Wheres,  
And seven million Whys!*

**Rudyard Kipling; The Elephant's Child (1902)**

### 5.2 Types of questions in relation to time and reaction

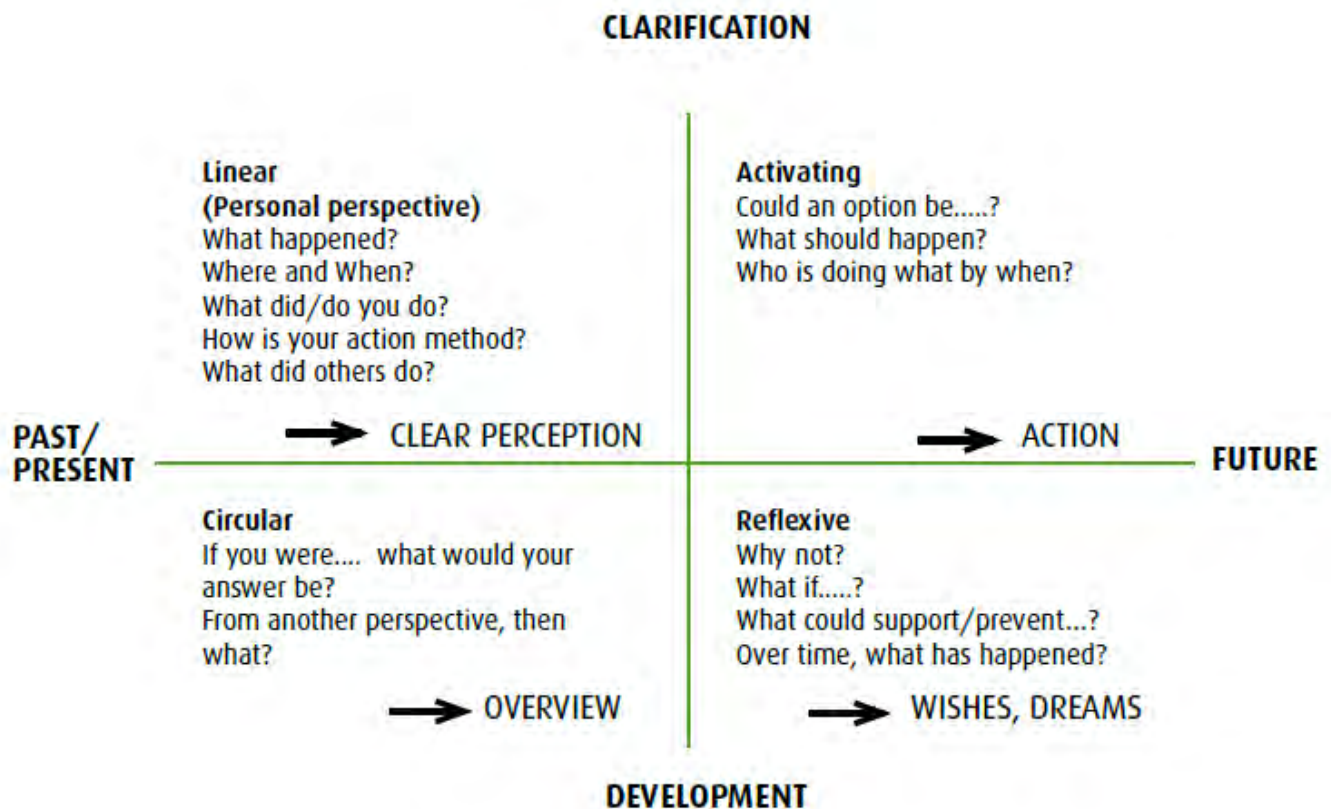
Questions not only satisfy the curiosity, they help us express and understand the issue that is being discussed. 'Linear' and 'activating' questions ask for the facts, the chronological overview and the perception of the situation.

'Circular' and 'reflexive' questions ask for the emotional and imaginative answers, of possible and not proved answers, including the imagination of other stakeholder's answers.

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### 5. EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING (Contd)



#### 5.2.1 The “CREW” model

The CREW model is a questioning model, using the four above mentioned types of questions

- |          |                |  |
|----------|----------------|--|
| <b>C</b> | <b>Clarify</b> | Clarify what the discussion is all about and agree what the desired outcome should be<br><br><i>“What do we want to discuss and what do we want to achieve?”</i> |
| <b>R</b> | <b>Reality</b> | Raise awareness of what’s happening now<br><br><i>“What is happening now?”</i>   |
| <b>E</b> | <b>Explore</b> | Stimulate ideas and choices of doing things differently<br><br><i>“What options do we have?”</i>   |
| <b>W</b> | <b>Will</b>    | How determined are we to agree to a specific course of action?<br><br><i>“On a scale of 1 – 10, how sure are we that we will do this?”</i>                       |



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### 7. COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES BASED ON EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING AND ACTIVE ANSWERS

*"Coaching is to unlock a person's potential to maximise her results.  
It is to help people to learn rather than teaching them."*

John Whitmore

Coaching is helping another person to work actively towards reaching her own personally defined goals and dreams.

Appreciative Inquiry is one of the tools to use for coaching.

A coach is

- Neutral to the task and the goal
- Asking questions
- Responsible for the process of coaching

A coach is NOT

- Judging
- Giving advice nor solutions
- Answering the questions
- A therapist
- Seeking causes to the subject

A coachee (the person being coached) is

- Personally involved in the task and the goal
- Answering questions
- Seeking and prioritising actions towards the goal
- Responsible for reaching the goal

Basic principles for Appreciative Inquiry and coaching:

- Thesis: Any action is done with the optimal intention – from the acting individual's immediate logic and assumptions.
- Most of what we do, is working
- Contradictions are the causes of development and life

