



ACTIVE LISTENING

Keys to Building & Maintaining
First Choice Communication

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ACTIVATOR | POSITIVITY | RESTORATIVE | IDEATION | CONNECTEDNESS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this training is to provide communication best practices through active listening so you can build and maintain First Choice Service for external and internal partnerships.

COMMUNICATION – THE ESI WAY

#2: Ensure Your Customer Feels Heard

INFORMATION IS NOT TRANSFORMATION

Transformation happens when we turn
“knowing what to do” into “doing what we know.”

COMMUNICATION - THE ESI WAY 10 Behaviors of Successful Leaders			
BEHAVIOR	DEFINITION	OPPOSITE	EXAMPLES
1 Communicate with Customers in Real-Time	Respond to an email / voice mail with the same sense of urgency as if the customer was in person; aim for an immediate response to acknowledge receipt, with a maximum 2-hour response time.	Delay acknowledging an email / voicemail until you have all the answers, avoid the customer; emailing your customer when calling is more appropriate, give a partial response or not answer the customer's question.	"Thank you for your email. I am gathering the information you requested and will connect with you by the end of the day. (Responding immediately communicates the customer is important to you)" "Thank you for your email. I am confident we can work through these most effectively over a call or in-person meeting. Which would you prefer? (Providing the customer options is important)"
2 Ensure Your Customer Feels Heard	First, seek to understand, before being understood, listen, pause before you speak; ask open-ended questions. Restate to check for understanding, ask clarifying questions.	Make assumptions, interrupt the client, demonstrate impatience while the customer is talking, monopolize the conversation, talk over the customer.	When you say [ABC], do you mean (this) or (that)? "Can you give me some background about the issue?" "What is your ideal outcome?" "Have we covered everything?"
3 Speak Your Customer's Language	Find a preferred method of communication, adapt your communication style to fit your customer's style; understand your client's technical competency and speak in layman's terms.	Expect your customer to adapt to your communication style, refusing to adapt despite poor results; using wrong method of communication style to fit the situation (i.e., email when they need a phone call, text when they need an email).	Customer is social. Being short, impersonal, or too serious is off-putting. Warm up with a friendly conversation, then get to business. Customer is all-business. Being too casual, too wordy, or silly is off-putting. Get to the point quickly, honor their time, and leave room for a more casual connection at the end of the call.
4 Be Present and Engaged in the Conversation	Be present in meetings, read microexpressions (what is not being said), invite differing points of view to mitigate risk of silent resistance; make eye contact.	Oblivious to social cues; on your phone or computer when someone is talking, distracted; camera off during virtual meetings; expect someone else to run the meeting when you are the leader.	(Reading customer's expressions) "You seem frustrated, is this a viable solution or do you have a different route in mind?" "Is there any reason why this solution will not work?" "On a scale from 1-5, how confident are you that..." "I'm going to take notes while we walk the jobsite to make sure I capture action items." "Is this a good time?"
5 Clarify Expectations	Expectations are valid if they are conscious, spoken, agreed upon and realistic; restate what you think you heard to get clarity, explain the "why it matters" to provide context, check for buy-in.	Leave a meeting / call without clarifying expectations, action items, and who is responsible; an attitude of "they should know;" Fail to ask for commitment or buy-in.	"To ensure we are all on the same page, I will send you the contract documents by 5pm. You will sign the contracts and send them back by Wednesday. Did I get that right?" "Before we leave our meeting, this is what I captured for action items (include responsible person, deadline and set the next meeting date), did I miss anything?"
6 Be Human	Build rapport, trust, and partnership by getting to know your customer; show respect, arrive early to meetings, call customer to "check-in," acknowledge concerns, use your customer's name.	Transactional interactions, treating your customer like an object, overly formal communication (e.g., please be advised); disrespecting your customer's time by being late to meetings.	"I heard you were out sick last week. Sorry to hear that, Jill. Do you need additional time to get those deliverables to me?" "I understand your concern. It's important to me too. Let's work together to find a solution that benefits us both."
7 Plan Your	Plan your conversation (meeting, call, in-person), have an agenda, an established purpose statement, be	Wing it or fake it, make up content as you go; show up unprepared, waste	"As part of our pre-con meeting today, we are going to firm up communication protocols to ensure we are on the same page regarding method, frequency and preferred methods of

#2: ENSURE YOUR CUSTOMER FEELS HEARD

“Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.”

- David W Augsburger

DEFINITION

- **First, Seek To Understand, Before Being Understood**
- **Listen, Pause Before You Speak**
- **Ask Open-ended Questions.**
- **Restate To Check For Understanding- Ask Clarifying Questions**

OPPOSITE OF ACTIVE LISTENING

- **Make Assumptions**
- **Interrupt The Client**
- **Demonstrate Impatience While The Customer Is Talking**
- **Monopolize The Conversation**
- **Talk Over The Customer**

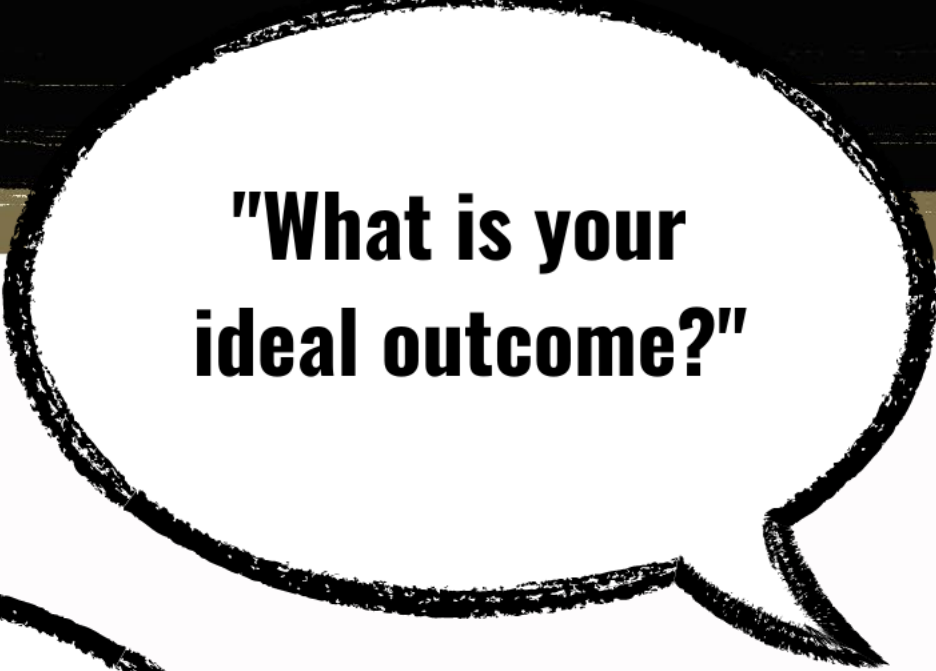
GOOD EXAMPLES



**"Can you give
me some
background
about the issue?"**



**"Have we covered
everything?"**



**"What is your
ideal outcome?"**

WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM LISTENING?

What keeps you from being a better listener?

- I am uncomfortable with silence and tend to jump in and talk.
- I am uncomfortable with the topic being discussed.
- I have passion for this topic & want to share my views. It's hard for me to listen to others.
- I am not really interested in the topic, so it makes it hard to pay attention.
- I don't like or respect this person.
- I feel like this person is confrontational.
- I feel like this person wastes time, when they could be more concise when making their point.

What keeps you from listening to the person that you are thinking about?

DEFINE ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is a form of listening that focuses on the following:

- What the other person is saying and not saying
- Observing non-verbal communication
- Asking clarifying questions with the goal of mutual understanding

ROLE PLAY SCENARIO

A repeat customer has to use ESI as we are their only option for a project. This customer had a bad experience with us related to how we processed change orders and our lack of communication. This customer is nervous to work with us again but isn't willing to air grievances directly with ESI employees.

As a new employee at ESI, you've heard from ESI employees about the experience this customer had. **Your goal during an initial pre-construction call with the customer is to establish a communication plan to ensure they have a First Choice experience with us this time.**

OBSERVATIONS

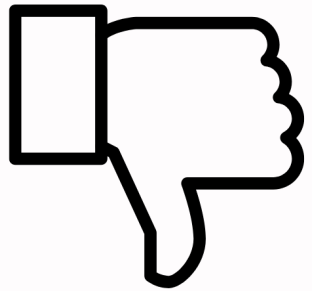
What did you observe while utilizing Active Listening Skills?

- How did the customer respond?
- How might this skill help you achieve First Choice Service?

FIRST CHOICE TESTER CALLS



- “I always knew from the superintendent when something went wrong before anyone else called me. It was never a shock.”
- “I appreciate knowing ahead, rather than getting caught by a market manager asking me what’s happening, and I am like, “I have no clue what you’re talking about.”
- “Great with communication. They call me.”



- “People can communicate and overcommunicate, but when you don’t know if you can trust the message, it doesn’t really help at all.”
- “I do expect that if you say you’re going to get a schedule to me by the end of the week, that I will get the schedule at the end of the week.”
- “[I would have appreciated], “How do you like to be communicated with? Is it a phone call, a text, or an email?”

NEXT STEPS

- **Display communication posters in your work areas to keep this topic, top-of-mind.**
- **Keep communication as a topic in your weekly staff meeting agenda**
- **Intentionally Practice the 10 Communication Behaviors and Finish Strong**