

## **Be an Active Listener**

There are five key elements of active listening. They all help you ensure that you hear the other person, and that the other person knows you are hearing what they are saying.

### **1. Pay attention.**

Give the speaker your undivided attention and acknowledge the message. Recognize that what is not said also speaks loudly.

- \* Look at the speaker directly.
- \* Put aside distracting thoughts. Don't mentally prepare a rebuttal!
- \* Avoid being distracted by environmental factors.
- \* "Listen" to the speaker's body language.
- \* Refrain from side conversations when listening in a group setting.

### **2. Show that you are listening.**

Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.

- \* Nod occasionally.
- \* Smile and use other facial expressions.
- \* Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.
- \* Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like yes, and uh huh.

### **3. Provide feedback.**

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask questions.

- \* Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. "What I'm hearing is..." and "Sounds like you are saying..." are great ways to reflect back.
- \* Ask questions to clarify certain points. "What do you mean when you say..." "Is this what you mean?"
- \* Summarize the speaker's comments periodically.

### **4. Defer judgment.**

Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.

- \* Allow the speaker to finish.
- \* Don't interrupt with counterarguments.

### **5. Respond Appropriately.**

Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down.

## Effective Meetings

Meetings require planning in order to be successful. Consideration should be given to each of the points below before the meeting is called.

- Don't have a meeting unless it is necessary
- Provide a specific agenda (with input from invitees) that includes:
  - Location
  - Topics, speakers and time to be spent on each topic
  - List of invitees, with Required and Optional noted
  - The following roles assigned: Meeting leader/facilitator, scribe and timekeeper
  - Type of meeting / type of participation (e.g. status meeting, brainstorming, etc.)
- State Meeting Objectives clearly
- Get feedback about the agenda before the meeting; then re-plan if necessary
- Establish ground rules for all meetings, including:
  - Attendees must be on time
  - Cell phones must be silent
  - Attendees are expected to listen to others
  - All present will be courteous
  - No sidebar conversations; one person speaks at a time
- Provide review materials sufficiently in advance of the meeting so that invitees can give them proper consideration
- Bring copies of necessary materials to the meeting for those who may forget
- Pick a date, time and place that is convenient to all invitees
- Know invitees' issues up front and take them into account when constructing the agenda
- Invite the right people, e.g. people who are empowered as representatives, who are decision makers
- Limit the invitees to those who need to be there
- Make invitees responsible for agenda items assigned to them
- Set the expectation that invitees will arrive prepared
- Reserve all resources needed for the meeting in advance (e.g. room, projector, flip chart, etc.)
- Ask invitees to assign a replacement if they cannot attend
- Plan to serve refreshments
- Set expectations for the outcome (e.g. that a decision will be made, not necessarily what the decision will be)
- Provide adequate advanced notice about the meeting (e.g. 5 days)
- Check invitees schedules for conflicts
- Distribute minutes and action items from the prior meeting
- Make certain that action items that were due before the meeting are completed
- Know who needs to be informed of meeting outcomes (e.g. who will receive minutes)

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Participants**

### *Facilitator:*

- Start the meeting on time
- State the meeting objective
- Set or review the ground rules
- Have everyone sign a sign-in sheet so that there is a record of attendance
- Follow the agenda as closely as possible; stay focused on the objectives of the meeting
- Create a safe environment
- Foster participation (Rule: if you aren't going to participate, do not attend)
- Liven it up; make it fun, motivated
- Table discussions when necessary (i.e. use a Parking Lot)
- Surface and resolve conflict
- Facilitate the making of decisions; use consensus whenever possible
- Allow time for Q&A
- Create Action Items that detail action to be taken, person assigned and their level of empowerment to make decisions, due date
- Review prior Action Items and ascertain status; reassign work not yet completed
- Schedule the next meeting
- End the meeting on time

### *Scribe:*

- Take notes; document decisions
- At end of meeting, recap and validate decisions made
- Read Action Items to attendees to confirm correctness
- Publish final notes to pre-approved distribution list

### *Attendees:*

- Come prepared
- Arrive on time
- Leave hidden agendas at the door
- Follow the ground rules
- Actively participate (e.g. ask questions, make constructive suggestions)
- Listen
- Provide valuable information, not filler
- Take notes

## **Meeting Follow-up**

- Include Action Items in minutes
- Send minutes to participants soon after the meeting (e.g. within 24 hours)
- Tell participants who to contact if they have questions
- Thank attendees for input
- Confirm next meeting date
- Follow up with people to ensure that Action Items are being done.
- Execute next steps

## Getting People to the Table

Use the marketing perspective: What's in it for the Steering Committee Member? What turns the member "ON"?

Interpret and associate the committee's mission, purpose and accomplishments with the Member's needs, dreams, desires, hopes.

Also, have food at the meetings. 😊

## Keeping People at the Table

Good governance is probably the best way to keep people engaged and at the table. Good governance is about both achieving desired results and achieving them in the right way. The United Nations published a list of characteristics of good governance. They include:

- \* **Participation:** providing all men and women with a voice in decision-making
- \* **Transparency:** built on the free flow of information
- \* **Responsiveness:** of institutions and processes to stakeholders
- \* **Consensus orientation:** differing interests are mediated to reach a broad consensus on what is in the general interest
- \* **Equity:** all men and women have opportunities to become involved
- \* **Effectiveness and efficiency:** processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources
- \* **Accountability:** of decision-makers to stakeholders
- \* **Strategic vision:** leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development.

This UN list has applicability to the effectiveness of Coordination Steering Committees. An important element to success is to have a **staff person or volunteer** who has the time and responsibility to carry out this governance. Hiring a Mobility Manager to assume these tasks is one way ensure the entire process will evolve appropriately.

## **Guide for Setting Ground Rules**

Facilitating meetings or workshops is made easier with the development of guidelines for participation. These guidelines, often referred to as "ground rules," should provide the workshop or group with a frame to ensure open, respectful dialogue, and maximum participation.

### **Generating a List of Ground Rules**

The best way to create ground rules is to allow the participants to generate the entire list. Ask them to think about what they, as individuals, need to ensure a safe environment to discuss difficult and controversial issues. If the participants are having difficulty coming up with ground rules, or if they do not come up with a particular ground rule you feel is important to the success of your facilitation, try to prompt them toward it. If they still do not mention it, you can add it to the list.

### **Examples of Widely Used Ground Rules**

Ground rules should be developed and adapted for every unique context. Appropriate ground rules may depend partially on age, region, social class, and other contextual factors. The following list of common ground rules should serve only as a starting point for your process of creating a similar list suitable to your own situation:

1. Listen actively -- respect others when they are talking.
2. Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," and "you").
3. Practice timely attendance.
4. Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas.
5. Participate to the fullest of your ability -- community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
6. Instead of invalidating somebody else's story with your own spin on their experience, share your own story and experience.
7. The goal is not to agree -- it is about hearing and exploring divergent perspectives.
8. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words.

It is also important to set a ground rule for how participation will be managed. Do you prefer for participants to raise their hands and be called on, or for people to speak freely? Remember that some people -- especially those who tend to be introverted -- need more time to process thoughts and speak; so the latter option may exclude them from the discussion. Still, the formal process of raising hands to be recognized may detract from the collective atmosphere needed to discuss issues.

## **Strategies and Notes**

1. It is very helpful to post the ground rules somewhere visible during every meeting. Participants and facilitators can then refer back to the list when they sense that participants are failing to sufficiently follow one or more of the items.
2. Challenge the participants on the ground rules early and often. If you do not set a tone of strict adherence to the items early in the process, it may become impossible to enforce them later.
3. If you are using more than two or three ground rules, try focusing on particular items during appropriate activities or discussions. For example, if you are facilitating a discussion in a large group, state before the discussion starts that you would like to focus on active listening. Challenge participants to refrain from any side discussions.
4. You must MODEL these ground rules in your own participation. This is especially true for an item such as #2 (speak from your own experience). Be sure that your own language reflects ownership and responsibility by using as many "I" and "me" statements as possible.
5. If a particular ground rule is routinely broken, bounce it back to the participants. A fruitful discussion can often arise from a close examination of why the participants are not adhering to particular items.
6. Revisit the ground rules occasionally, and if time allows, ask whether the participants would like to add any new items.

**Hands on exercises – go to the web sites below for simple ideas to use at meetings for icebreakers, team building, and building trust.**

### **Icebreaker, Warmup, Energizer, Deinhbitizer Descriptions**

Why use icebreakers?

- \* create a positive group atmosphere
- \* help people to relax
- \* break down social barriers
- \* energize & motivate
- \* help people to think outside the box
- \* help people to get to know one another

<http://wilderdom.com/games/Icebreakers.html>

### **Team Building Exercises**

Team Building Activities are designed to help groups develop effective communication & problem-solving skills.

<http://wilderdom.com/games/InitiativeGames.html>

### **Trust Building Activities**

Trust building activities help people to develop mutual respect, openness, understanding, and empathy, as well as helping to develop communication and teamwork skills.

<http://wilderdom.com/games/TrustActivities.html>

## Situational Leadership

This is a term that can be applied generically to a style of leadership, but that also refers to a recognized, and useful, leadership model. In simple terms, a situational leader is one who can adopt different leadership styles depending on the situation. Most of us do this anyway in our dealings with other people: we try not to get angry with a nervous colleague on their first day, we chase up tasks with some people more than others because we know they'll forget otherwise.

Ken Blanchard, the management guru best known for the "One Minute Manager" series, and Paul Hersey created a model for Situational Leadership in the late 1960's that allows you to analyze the needs of the situation you're dealing with, and then adopt the most appropriate leadership style. It's proved popular with managers over the years because it passes the two basic tests of such models: it's simple to understand, and it works in most environments for most people. The model doesn't just apply to people in leadership or management positions: we all lead others at work and at home.

### LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR

Blanchard and Hersey characterized leadership style in terms of the amount of direction and of support that the leader gives to his or her followers, and so created a simple grid:

+ Supportive Behavior	SUPPORTING (S3)	COACHING (S2)
	DELEGATING (S4)	DIRECTING (S1)
-		

Directive Behavior +

\* **Directing** Leaders define the roles and tasks of the 'follower', and supervise them closely. Decisions are made by the leader and announced, so communication is largely one-way.

\* **Coaching** Leaders still define roles and tasks, but seeks ideas and suggestions from the follower. Decisions remain the leader's prerogative, but communication is much more two-way.

\* **Supporting** Leaders pass day-to-day decisions, such as task allocation and processes, to the follower. The leader facilitates and takes part in decisions, but control is with the follower.

\* **Delegating** Leaders are still involved in decisions and problem-solving, but control is with the follower. The follower decides when and how the leader will be involved.

Effective leaders are versatile in being able to move around the grid according to the situation, so there is no one right style. However, we tend to have a preferred style, and in applying Situational Leadership you need to know which one that is for you.

## DEVELOPMENT LEVEL

Clearly the right leadership style will depend very much on the person being led - the follower - and Blanchard and Hersey extended their model to include the Development Level of the follower. They said that the leader's style should be driven by the Competence and Commitment of the follower, and came up with four levels:

D4	High Competence High Commitment	Experienced at the job, and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. May even be more skilled than the leader.
D3	High Competence Variable Commitment	Experienced and capable, but may lack the confidence to go it alone, or the motivation to do it well / quickly
D2	Some Competence Low Commitment	May have some relevant skills, but won't be able to do the job without help. The task or the situation may be new to them.
D1	Low Competence Low Commitment	Generally lacking the specific skills required for the job in hand, and lacks any confidence and / or motivation to tackle it.

Development Levels are also situational. I might be generally skilled, confident and motivated in my job, but would still drop into Level D1 when faced, say, with a task requiring skills I don't possess. For example, lots of managers are D4 when dealing with the day-to-day running of their department, but move to D1 or D2 when dealing with a sensitive employee issue.

## SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Blanchard and Hersey said that the Leadership Style (S1 - S4) of the leader must correspond to the Development level (D1 - D4) of the follower - and it's the leader who adapts.

For example, a new person joins your team and is not familiar with transportation jargon and acronyms. As a leader, you want to get them involved so you ask them to prepare a report for the next meeting. They're at level D1, and you've adopted S4. Everyone loses because the new person feels helpless and demotivated and may even quit the team, and you don't get the report done or a potentially good new member.

On the other hand, you're handing over chairing the meeting to an experienced colleague before you leave for a holiday. You've listed all the tasks that need to be done, and a set of instructions on how to carry out each one. They're at level D4, and you've adopted S1. The work will probably get done, but not the way you expected, and your colleague despises you for treating him like an idiot.

But swap the situations and things get better. Leave detailed instructions and a checklist for the new person, and they'll thank you for it. Give your colleague a quick chat and a few notes before you go on holiday, and everything will be fine.

By adopting the right style to suit the follower's development level, work gets done, relationships are built up, and most importantly, the follower's development level will rise to D4, to everyone's benefit.

You can also get the basics of Situational Management from Ken Blanchard's "Leadership and the One Minute Manager."

## Six Thinking Hats

Edward de Bono wrote "The Six Thinking Hats," published in the early 1980's, and popular across a range of environments. It's helpful for individuals to understand how the Six Hats can be applied, but they work best when they can be used as a common language in a team or group.

### THE SIX THINKING HATS

<b>WHITE</b>	is neutral and objective, concerned with objective facts and figures
<b>RED</b>	relates to anger and rage, so is concerned with emotions
<b>BLACK</b>	is gloomy, and covers the negative - why things <b>can't be done</b>
<b>YELLOW</b>	is sunny and positive, indicating hope and positive thinking
<b>GREEN</b>	is abundant, fertile growth, indicating creativity and new ideas
<b>BLUE</b>	is the sky above us, so is concerned with the control and organization of the thinking process

You can refer to the Hats in two ways: to describe the thinking process that's required in a given situation, and to define how someone IS thinking without appearing critical. So you might be struggling with an apparently insurmountable problem, and call on the team to put on their Yellow Hats to generate some positive approaches. Or you can ask someone who's getting negative to take their Black Hat off for a moment - this is far more neutral than telling them to stop being so negative! Be prepared to persist in the early days: once you've learned the techniques, they'll need to be nurtured until they become part of the everyday language of the team.

Six Hats will improve problem-solving and the very fact that you all become conscious of how you're thinking will make you do it better. The process of learning the Six Hats is fun in itself, so you can use it as a team-building event. The book "Six Thinking Hats" is a useful guidebook once you can speak "hat".

## **Strengthening Your Steering Committee**

Here are some things to remember:

### **1. One Size Does Not Fit All**

There is no one-size-fits-all framework that can be imported from elsewhere and applied successfully to your committee. A more useful approach is to build your framework around your mission, and to make sure it is well-suited to your size, culture, people, traditions and history.

### **2. Have a Clear, Up-to-date Mission Statement**

Build a framework that is driven by your mission. Steering committees must put together a brief, inspiring, distinctive statement that is neither too broad nor too specific, one that explains the mission of the committee. This is difficult but vital in putting together a strong framework of action. If you already have a mission statement, make sure that it is up-to-date.

### **3. Have a Clear, Long Term Vision**

While a mission statement explains why the committee exists, a vision statement outlines where the committee wants the community to be.

### **4. Get the Right People Around the Table**

The Steering Committees will only be relevant if the right people are on them. Identifying and attracting members interested in collaboration is an ongoing process. People uninterested in collaborating should not be coerced into participating, and people should know the time expectations and be able to commit to them.

### **5. Don't Leave New Members Out in the Cold!**

An important task for the committee is to educate new members and equip them to become productive, knowledgeable contributors within a short time of joining the committee. Help from existing members will make a new member feel welcome and appreciated.

A thoughtful, deliberate orientation process creates a good impression, and signals the professionalism and seriousness with which the steering committee approaches its work. The creation of such a process ultimately saves time and avoids frustration for all concerned. It is important that any printed materials used in the process are regularly updated.

### **6. Build Teamwork**

One of the keys to making steering committees work better rests in committee process and the nature of the interactions among members. Group processes related to conflict and teamwork are critical determinants of committee effectiveness. It is important, for example, for committees to make the most of the time they have together in order to develop team norms and to avoid having a small number of dominant people take over discussions.

Constructive conflict tends to improve decision-making, because such exchanges can help members understand related issues, and synthesize multiple points of view into a decision that goes beyond the individual perspective. Constructive conflict can be fostered by preparing members for meetings and scheduling meetings to provide an opportunity for debate. Building good committee process also means avoiding destructive conflict – personal friction and tension – which can degrade group decision-making and interfere with the committee’s ability to perform its key roles.

### **7. A Good Chair is Important**

The Chair of the committee occupies a pivotal role and it is important that this role be performed effectively. The Chair plays a key role in: setting the tone and direction; setting the agenda; and seeing that the decisions and tasks are carried out. A Chair should be a good leader who understands the issues, helps the committee use its strengths to the fullest, and assists others in leadership roles. Often, a Chair plays a representative role in the community and can serve as a spokesperson for the committee. It is important for the Chair to have good judgment, and to know how to run a meeting well, in terms of making room for all to be heard, fostering constructive conflict, avoiding destructive conflict, and building teamwork.

### **8. Have Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities...**

It’s important to have clarity around what everyone’s job is and what expectations are.

### **9. Get Committee Members Information on Timely Basis**

When members are well prepared for meetings, this sets the stage for stronger interactions and, often, better decisions. Members’ busy schedules can get in the way of finding the time to prepare, but it is particularly frustrating for them to receive discussion materials just prior to a meeting. The information (minutes, action items, reports) members receive should include enough detail to make them useful. Having a one-page summary sheet for major (and often, lengthy) reports can help members grasp the key issues quickly.

### **10. Don’t Try to Do Everything At Once**

Remember that collaboration and coordination is a journey, not a destination. Decide on what you want to accomplish this year, and set priorities for the next few years. There is no need to try to tackle everything at once. Coordination is not easy and it requires time, persistence, patience and strong leadership.

## **Welcoming and Orienting Committee Members**

A good orientation session is essential to making a new member feel welcome and for ensuring continuing participation.

An orientation ensures that all members come to the table with the same knowledge and expectations. This will prevent problems later on, such as poor attendance at meetings, preoccupation with details outside the focus of the committee, a feeling of being left out (e.g. when transit jargon is used that is unfamiliar).

Every orientation session should include:

- \* Committee goals and mission
- \* Member role and responsibilities
- \* Relevant past and current work
- \* Commonly used acronymns
- \* Names, contact information, and affiliations of other members

Orientations are ideally done in person (individually or in a group), but may be done by sending the information out to all new members. Orientation packets should be written in a clear and concise manner and placed on a relevant web site, if available.

Having good communication creates a greater sense of purpose and a more creative approach to collaboration. When all parts of a committee feel their ideas and contributions are taken seriously, conflicts can be dealt with quickly and directly, everyone remains fully engaged on the mission and members' contributions are maximized.