

SKILL - DECISION MAKING

TOOL - I'M ALL EARS!



1) DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOL

Name of the tool: I'm all ears!

This module focuses on Active Listening, a key skill for effective communication and informed decision-making. HR professionals, trainers, and low-skilled workers can all benefit from active listening to gather valuable information, build trust, and make better choices for training and career development.

Active Listening goes beyond simply hearing someone speak. It involves paying close attention, understanding the speaker's message (both verbal and nonverbal), and providing feedback to ensure comprehension.

Time: 60 minutes

2) OBJECTIVES OF THE TOOL

- Enhance communication and collaboration skills.
- Improve information gathering and analysis.
- Foster trust and psychological safety within teams.
- Support better decision-making based on complete information.

3) CONNECTION OF THE TOOL WITH THE SKILL

Decision-making is rarely done in a vacuum. We gather information, consider options, and weigh potential outcomes. But effective decision-making relies heavily on our ability to communicate well, and that goes beyond simply being able to hear and speak.

Active listening takes communication a step further. It's about truly understanding the speaker's message, both the spoken words and the underlying emotions or intentions conveyed through nonverbal cues. Just like nonverbal communication adds depth to spoken words, active listening adds depth to our understanding of a situation.

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Why active listening matters for decision-making?

Active listening is the process of paying attention, understanding, and responding to what someone is saying, without interrupting, judging, or imposing your own agenda. It shows respect, empathy, and curiosity, and builds trust and rapport. Active listening also helps you to gather relevant information, identify assumptions, clarify expectations, and explore alternatives. These are essential steps for making informed, rational, and ethical decisions that benefit your team, organization, and stakeholders.

4) RESOURCE MATERIALS

- Role playing scenarios (provided or created by participants)

5) HOW TO APPLY THE TOOL

Active Listening means being deeply engaged in and attentive to what the speaker is saying. It requires far more listening than talking. Your goal as an active listener is to truly understand the speaker's perspective (regardless of whether you agree) and to communicate that understanding back to the speaker so that he or she can confirm the accuracy of your understanding.

1. Give your full attention:

Through active listening, you can gain valuable knowledge and insights from your team that will help you to make informed decisions. When you take the time to truly listen, it not only strengthens your professional relationships, but it also leads to better outcomes for your organization.

- Minimize distractions like phones or laptops while someone is speaking.
- Make eye contact and maintain open body language to show you're engaged. This helps you stay focused and shows the other person you are listening.

2. Listen to understand, not just to respond:

Active listening is more than just hearing what someone is saying, it involves taking the time to understand the message being communicated and the intent behind it. This requires asking open-ended questions to build rapport and probe for more information. Follow-up questions are also essential for aligning understanding and gaining additional insights.

- Focus on the speaker's message, including their words, tone of voice, and body language.
- Try to see things from their perspective.

3. Use verbal and nonverbal cues to show you're listening:

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Given that the listener's input in active listening is limited, it's important to show support through positive, nonverbal communication and avoid distracted behaviours such as crossing your arms.

Nodding, facial expressions, and brief interjections like "uh-huh" or "okay" can encourage the speaker to continue.

4. Ask clarifying questions:

Don't just assume you have all the answers. If something is unclear, pause to ask about it before the other person gets too far into their explanation.

- Seek clarification on specific points or to ensure you understand the speaker's meaning. Give the speaker the opportunity to elaborate and clarify what was said.
- Phrase your questions in a way that invites further discussion, not just a yes/no answer: "Can you say more about . . .?" or "I am not sure I quite understand; or do you mean that...?"

5. Summarize and paraphrase:

Restate the same information, using different words to reflect more concisely what the speaker said. Ensure you've gotten the complete picture by summarizing the other person's point and repeating it to them: "So if I understand correctly, you're saying..."

This will test your understanding of what is heard by communicating your understanding of what the speaker said. It also allows the speaker to 'hear' and focus on his or her own thoughts and to see that you are trying to understand his/her message and perceptions.

6. Avoid interrupting or offering unsolicited advice:

Engage in active listening instead of advice-giving. If you want to say something, try asking a question or supporting your friend's feelings.

- Let the speaker finish their thought before responding.
- Focus on understanding their perspective before offering solutions.

7. Have an open mind:

Hearing someone is not the same as hearing them out. It's not listening if you've already decided your mind can't be changed. Don't just pretend to consider the other person's opinion, remain open to the possibility that they may have new information you haven't fully understood.

6) WHAT TO LEARN

Why is active listening important?

By practicing active listening, you can:

- Gather more comprehensive information for informed decision-making.

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- Identify underlying needs and concerns of team members or trainees.
- Build stronger relationships based on trust and mutual understanding.
- Encourage open communication and collaboration within teams.

Active listening is a continuous learning process. By incorporating these techniques into your daily interactions, you can significantly improve the quality of your communication and decision-making within the Boost Train and Retain project.



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