



ProfileU...

Know Yourself & Others

Personalized Report For:
Sandra Davis
2/2/2014



INTRODUCTION

This Communication Effectiveness Feedback Report consists of six components, which are described below.

1. Overall Summary

The summary results chart provides a quick visual representation of your scores in the seven competencies that make up the Communication Effectiveness profile. The areas to concentrate on are those scores above 3.5 (strong) and below 2.75 (need further development). Please note that these competency scores are averages; individual question scores can be viewed by clicking on the individual competency link.

2. Category Descriptions

There are three sections for each of the seven competencies. The first of these three sections explains the competency, lists average scores, and then provides high and low score interpretation notes. The second section provides a graphical representation of individual question scores. The third section provides broadly-based improvement actions for those individuals wanting to develop their competencies.

3. 10/10 Report

The "10/10" Report page provides the raw scores for the 10 highest scoring questions and the 10 lowest scoring questions out of the 84. It also identifies which competency each question is from.

4. Course and Reading Suggestions

Development suggestions for the two lowest scoring competencies, including specific recommendations regarding training courses and books that will provide useful information on the topic are included.

5. Development Plan

The development plan lists questions with the five lowest scores from the assessment and puts them into a one-page template. Individuals can use this template to record the specific actions they plan to take over the next twelve months based on the general guidance offered in their feedback report and the coaching tips.

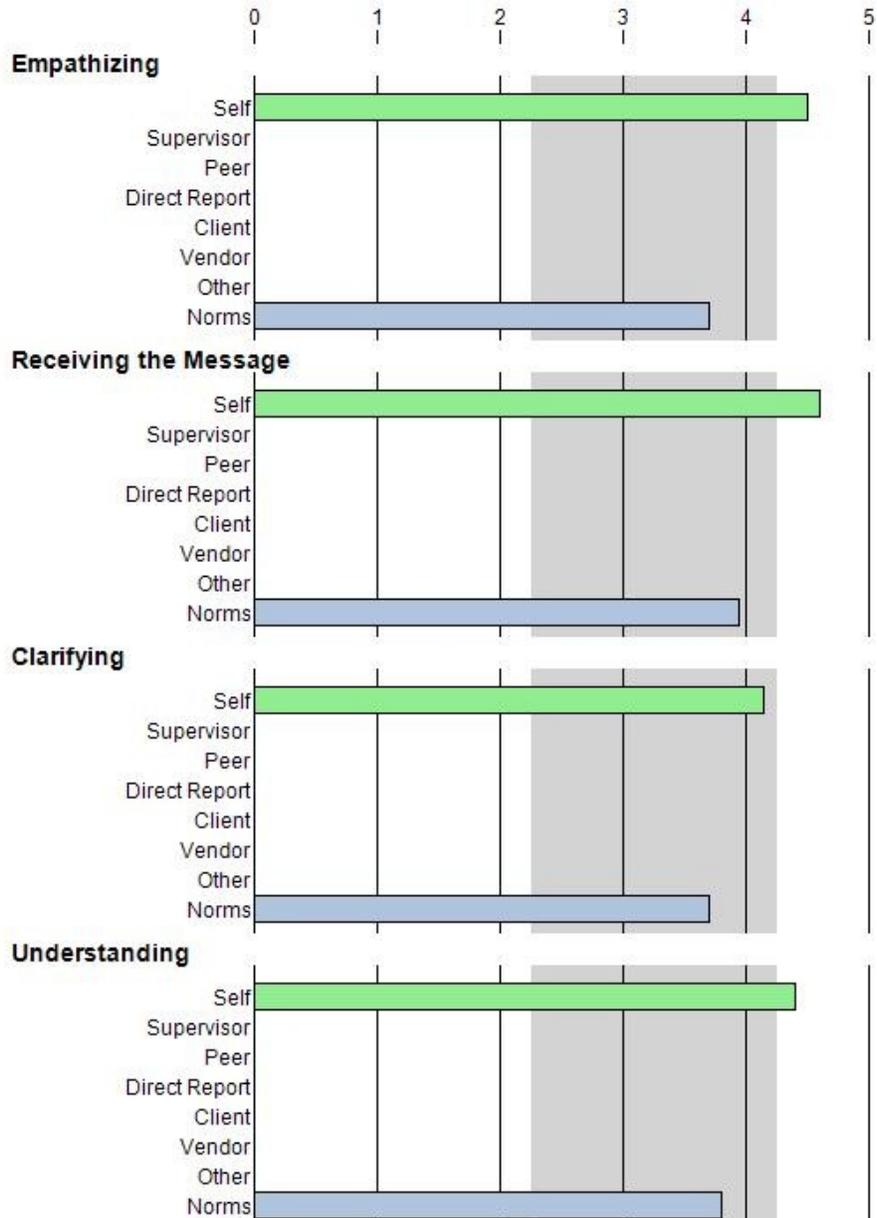
6. Coaching Tips

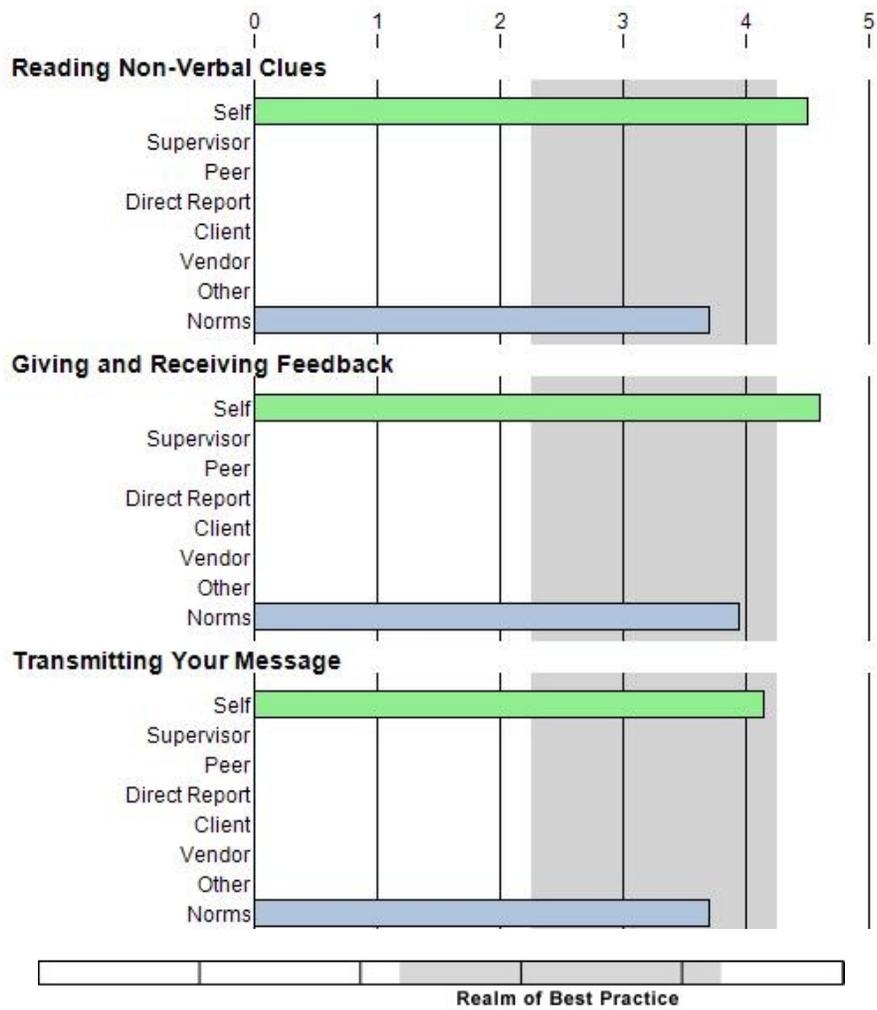
Detailed coaching tips for the five lowest scoring questions are provided in this section. They offer specific advice on what individuals might do to improve their skills in this competency and learn new behaviors.

Note on 360 Degree Feedback

If you received feedback from your supervisor, direct reports or peers using this assessment, please note the following: Ratings responses from all persons who completed the assessment are averaged to produce the results in the 10/10 Report, Course and Reading Suggestions, Development Plan, and Coaching Tips.

OVERALL SUMMARY





Norm bars shown on all graphs in this report are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

EMPATHIZING

This section on Empathizing examines the extent to which you think about the perspectives and feelings of others when they are communicating with you, and the degree to which you adjust your style to accommodate them. This category asks the question: "How well do you create a climate of warmth and sincerity, where people feel comfortable sharing their thoughts because they know you will listen?"



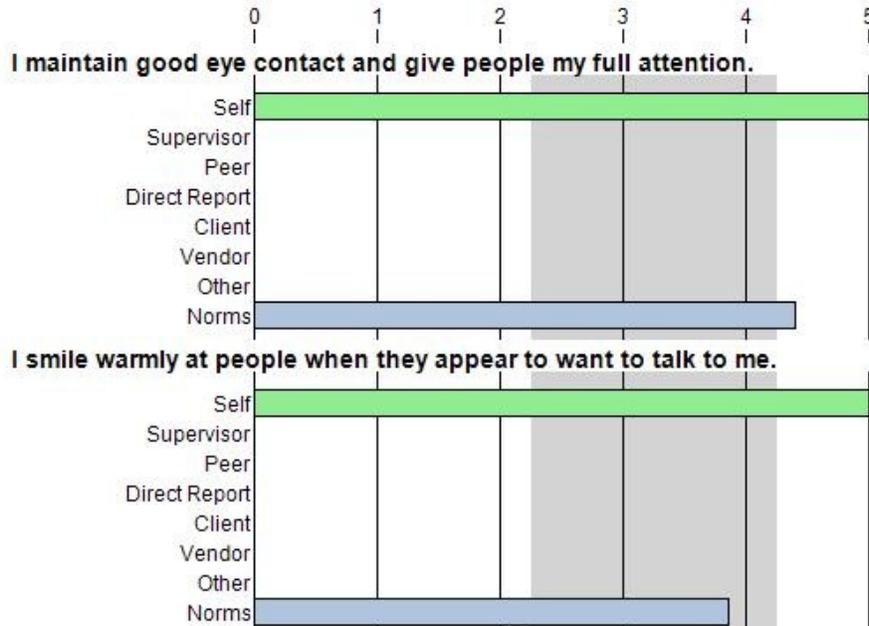
Interpretation

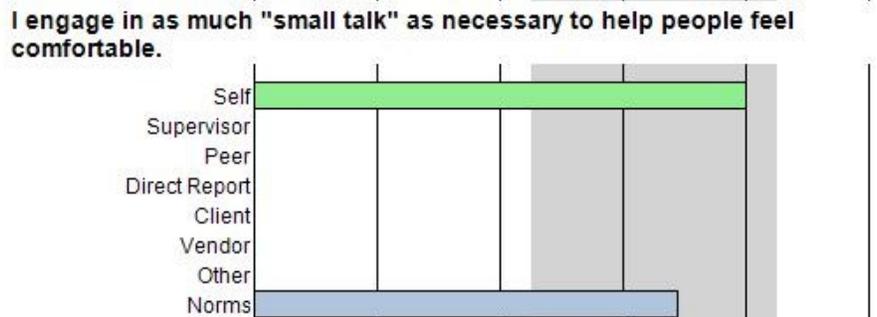
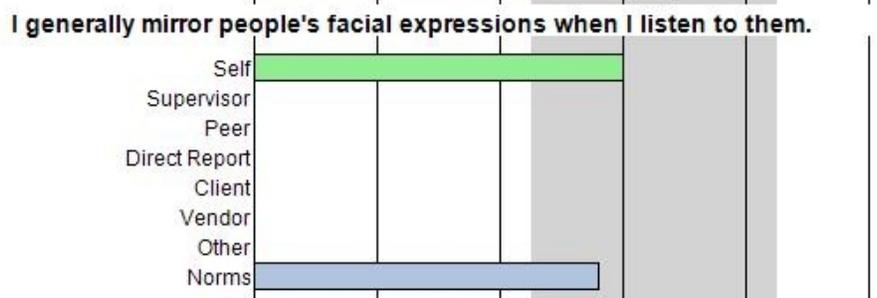
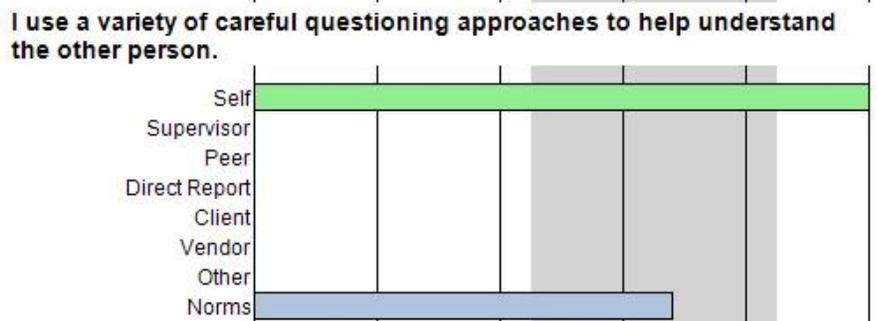
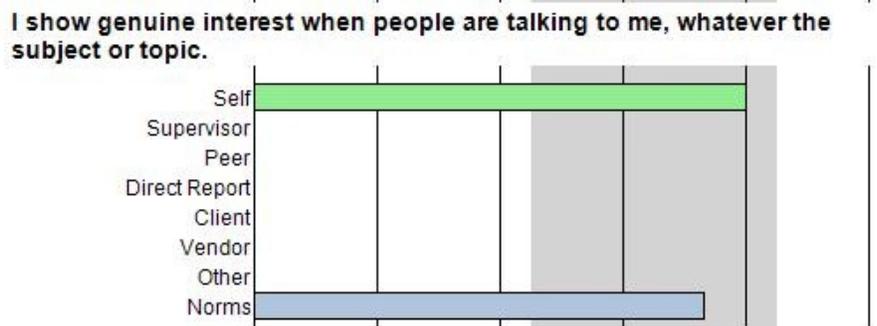
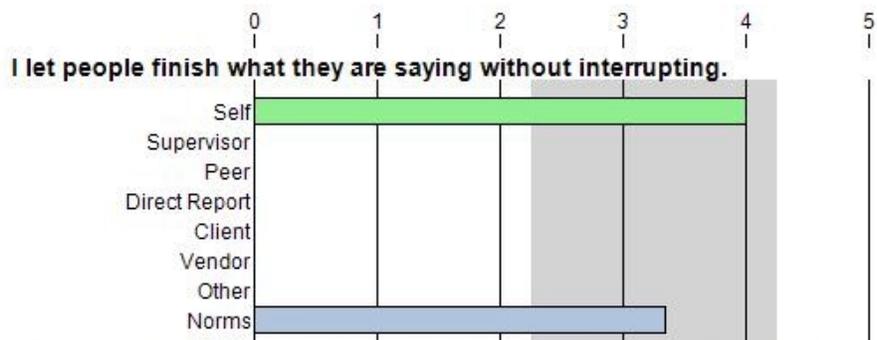
LOW (less than 2.75)

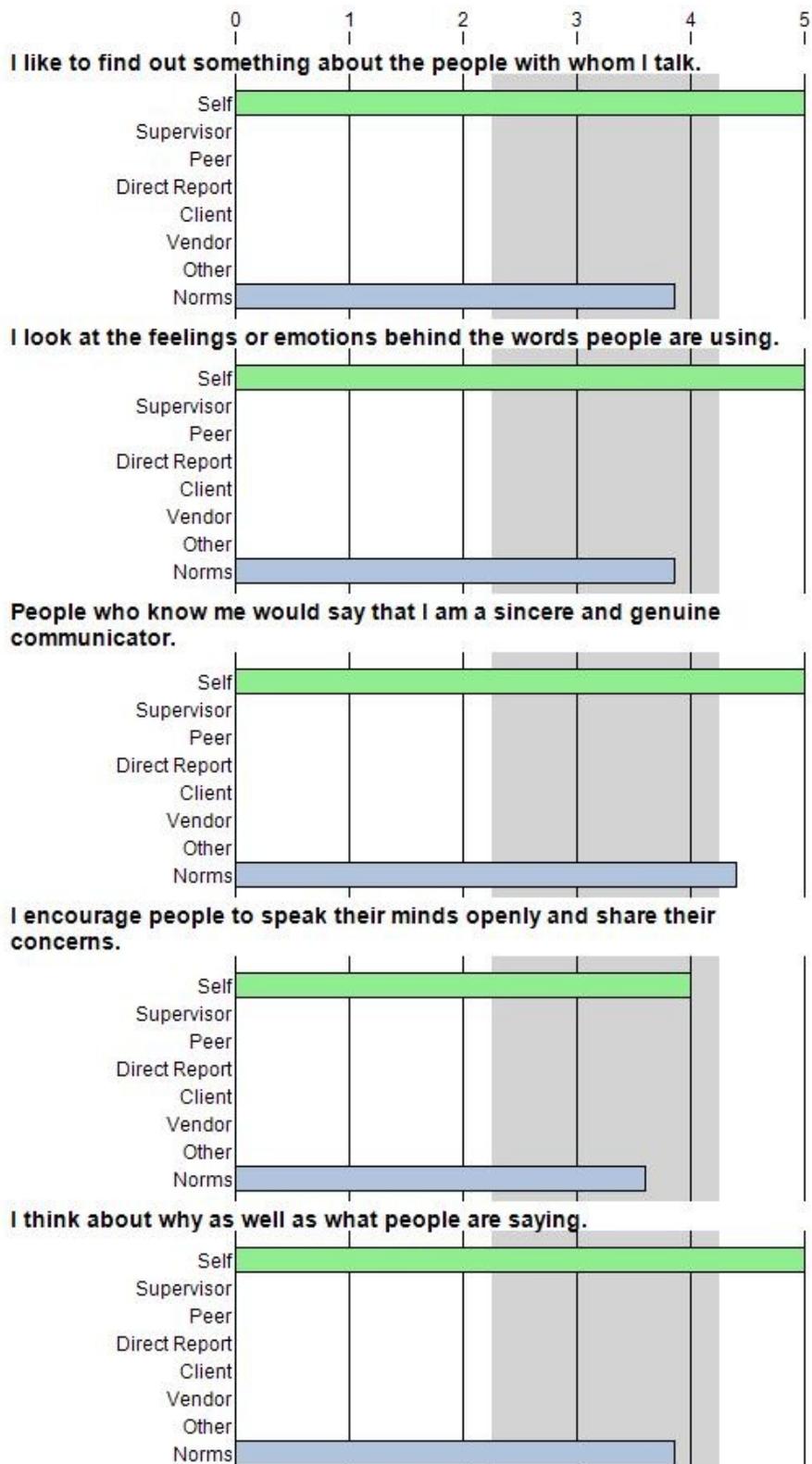
Response ratings predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you have a more "transactional" communication style, where a discussion or conversation is only a functional exchange of words. You are not likely to consider any circumstantial context or feelings, and you show a tendency to push your own agenda or communication priorities at the expense of the other party. An individual who scores low in this area will usually keep their communication very direct, putting personal outcomes or needs at the forefront. Such people tend to interrupt frequently and guess what the other person is going to say before he or she says it. Because of this, they often miss important parts of the overall message and create the impression that they have only a limited attention span for deeper or more complex issues.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Response ratings predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you naturally generate a spirit of warmth toward others, and offer lots of help and support in facilitating an easy "flow" of two-way conversation. You usually listen attentively and adapt or adjust your personal style to suit the situation as much as necessary to create the best possible climate. A high score indicates that you're likely to spend as much time as necessary engaging in "small talk" or conversation that helps you understand where the other party is coming from so you can offer supportive and insightful comments that can help to open up the discussion. You try to establish the most appropriate communication climate for the circumstances, and offer an empathetic ear.







This section on Empathizing examines the extent to which you think about the perspectives and feelings of others when they are communicating with you, and the degree to which you adjust your style to accommodate them. This category asks the question: "How well do you create a climate of warmth and sincerity, where people feel comfortable sharing their thoughts because they know you will listen?"

Recommendations for Overall Improvement

Low scorers need to develop an ability to generate more warmth and sincerity in all their conversations, and show genuine care and interest in what other people have to say on a consistent basis. This will involve being more patient, taking more time to engage in "small talk," and trying to appreciate the other person's feelings and emotions just as much as the words that they hear.

Ways to Strengthen or Improve Empathizing

- Try to smile at people more often, and be as friendly and sincere as you can when they are talking to you.
- Make a strong effort to put yourself in the other person's position and to imagine what they might be feeling or where they might be coming from in sending their message.
- Let people express their thoughts and feelings fully without interrupting, as much as you can.
- Discover areas of common interest with each person you communicate with regularly, and use this to help build your relationship with them.
- Openly share your interests with other people, and encourage them to share their interests with you.

RECEIVING THE MESSAGE

This section on Receiving the Message looks at how well you listen to and successfully "process" what others are saying (verbal and non-verbal messages) before you respond. This category asks the question: "How attentive or empathetic are you in a listening situation so that you can fully appreciate what the speaker is trying to convey?"



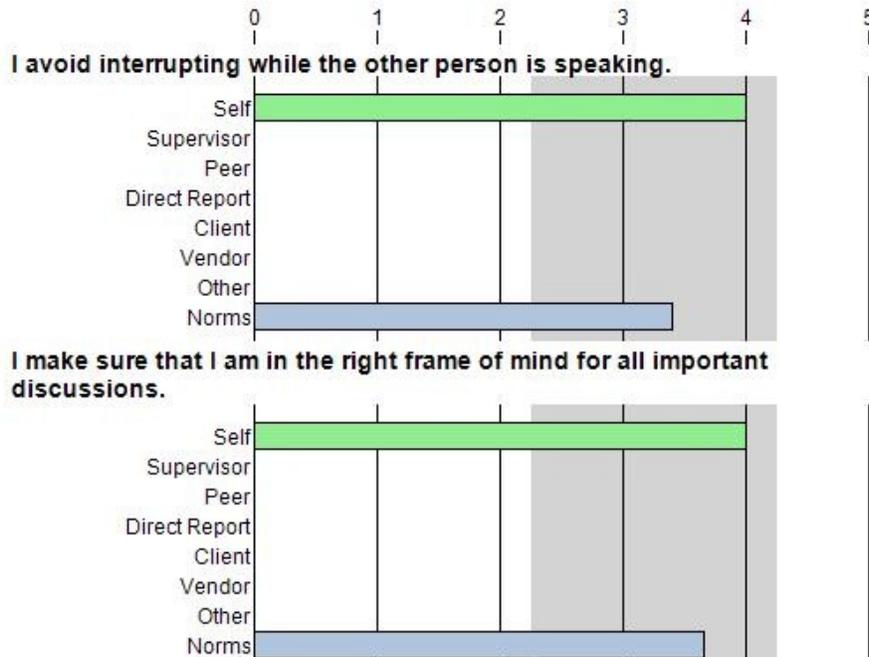
Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

Response ratings predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you do not always fully appreciate what people communicate, and thus you miss important components of the overall message. You are also prone to being easily distracted, and tend to jump into conversations before the other person has finished speaking. An individual who scores low in this area is likely to find communication frustrating or even confusing. This is sometimes the speaker's fault, but more likely it is one result of poor listening habits the listener hasn't focused or taken enough time to "hear" the complete message, and the mind has been allowed to wander to other things and other priorities or tasks.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

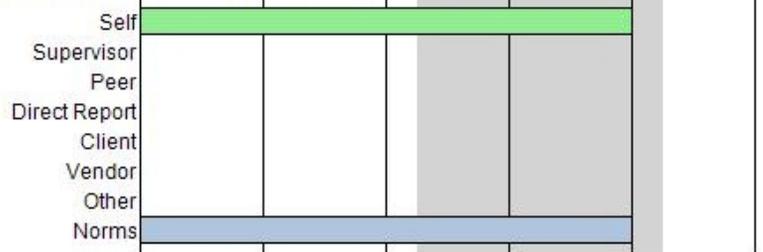
Response ratings predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you are an attentive listener and appreciate the "tenor" of most communications, in whatever form they are conveyed. You are genuinely interested and you try to concentrate on what people are saying, maintaining a calm and patient demeanor so people can get their message across without interruption. High scorers are appreciative and attentive listeners who freely give all their attention to the speaker in order to hear and appreciate the complete message. A person who scores high in this area makes an especially valuable contribution when important or complex information needs to be communicated for insight or comment.



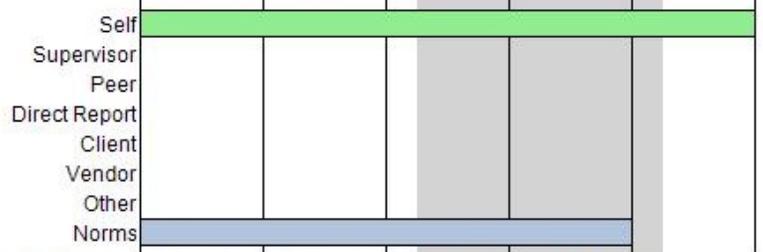
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I try to find quiet environments in which to talk and listen to people.



My body language is conducive to attentive listening.



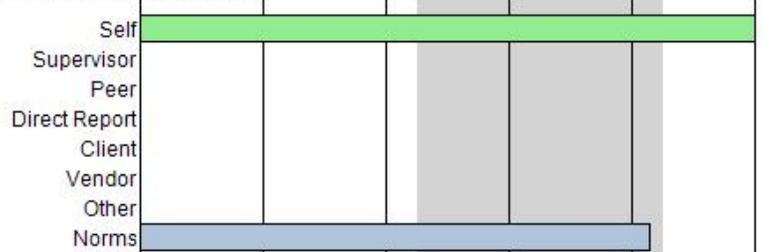
I listen enthusiastically and positively.

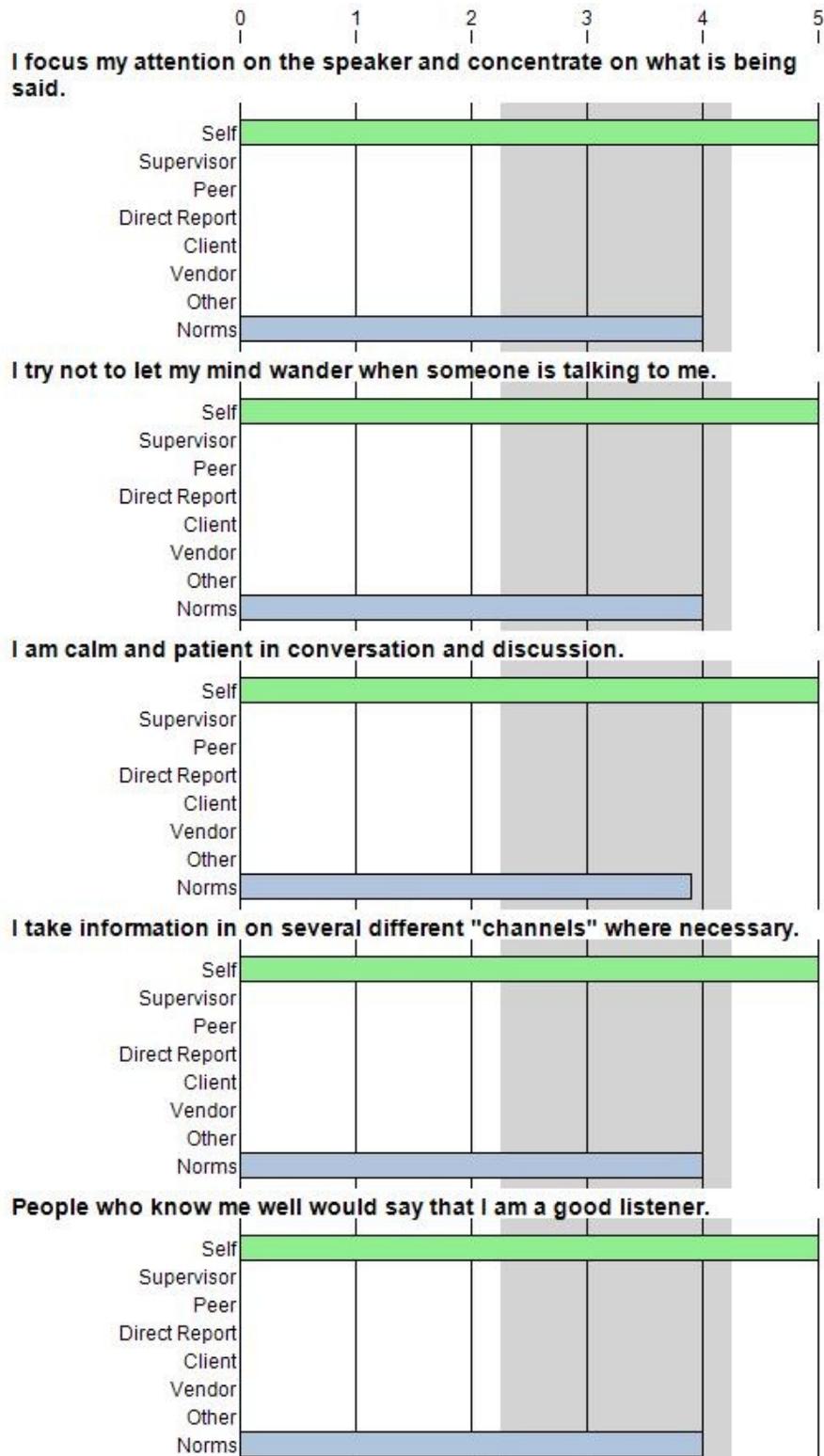


I avoid trivializing the ideas or views expressed by people I am talking with.



I look people in the eye and regularly nod in order to demonstrate that I have understood them.





This section on Receiving the Message looks at how well you listen to and successfully "process" what others are saying (verbal and non-verbal messages) before you respond. This category asks the question: "How attentive or empathetic are you in a listening situation so that you can fully appreciate what the speaker is trying to convey?"

Recommendations for Overall Improvement

Low scorers need to speak less and listen more. To do this, they need to find more-conducive listening environments, avoid interrupting, and keep their minds from wandering. Most of all, they need to try to quietly hear the whole message being communicated, without jumping in too soon.

Ways to Strengthen or Improve Receiving the Message

- Nod or show that you have understood in other ways at regular points in any conversation.
- Maintain as much direct eye contact as you can, and show genuine and focused interest in the communication.
- Avoid showing any distraction, physical or mental.
- Try to be as calm, quiet, and patient as you can in general conversations (especially with quieter people).
- Focus on and between the words that you hear in order to appreciate the sender's full communication.

CLARIFYING

This section on Clarifying looks at the extent to which you use careful and incisive questioning techniques to successfully "translate" the words and actions of the other party in order to understand their meaning. This category asks the question: "How well do you gently question and probe the other person in a conversation or discussion, in order to ensure that you accurately interpret their message?"



Interpretation

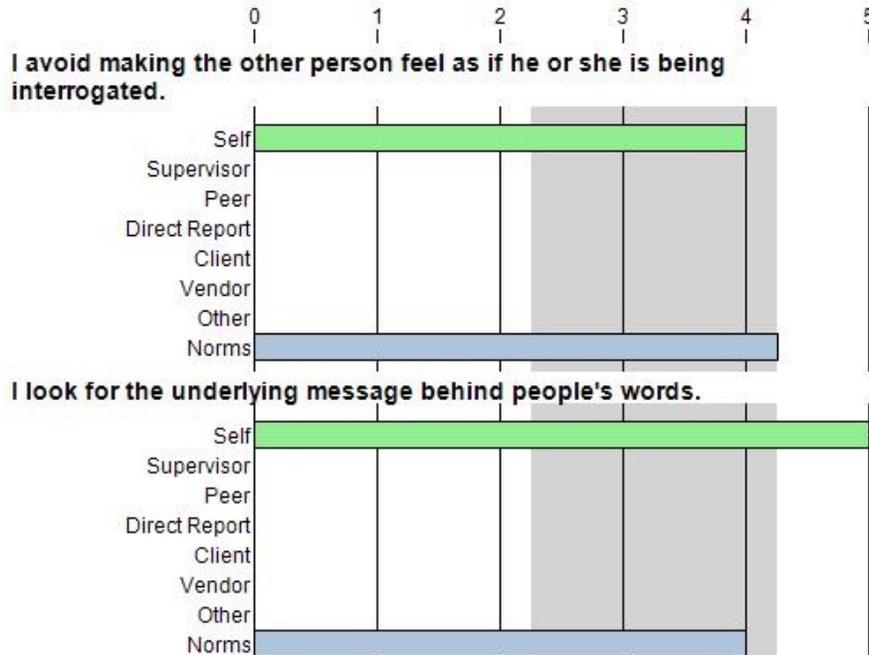
LOW (less than 2.75)

Response ratings predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you rarely use questions to increase your understanding, or your questions are somewhat vague or give the impression that you have not been listening or are not interested in all the other person has to say. An individual with a low score generally engages in highly "transactional" discussions and conversations; questions of clarification are asked only rarely. These individuals are unlikely to summarize or paraphrase the sender's message, thus creating the impression that their mind is elsewhere. They will usually ask questions only when they want more information on subjects that are of interest to them.

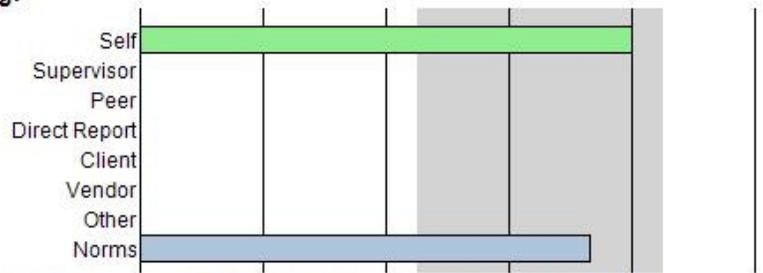
HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Response ratings predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you are skilled at using a variety of conversational techniques in order to check information without making the other party uncomfortable, or feel that they are being interrogated. You generally adopt a gentle and careful questioning approach whenever you feel unsure or are not clear about the message being transmitted.

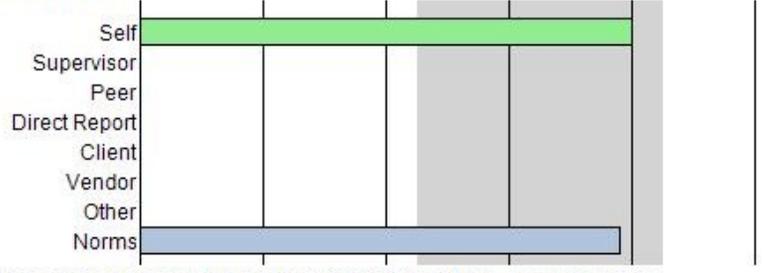
A high score suggests that the individual is likely to create a climate in which the speaker sees that the listener is concentrating and trying to completely understand the communication. This is achieved by using questions to demonstrate openness and demonstrating a genuine desire to understand, rather than showing off superior knowledge or asking a question for the sake of saying something.



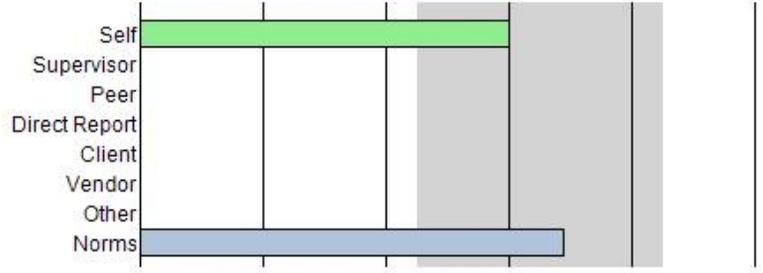
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I try to use "word pictures" when clarifying what the speaker seems to be saying.



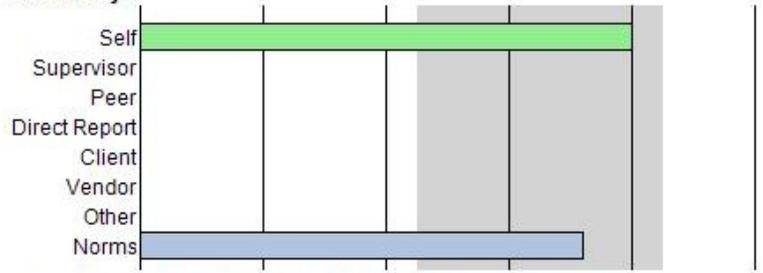
I gently get the speaker to provide "missing" information as the conversation flows.



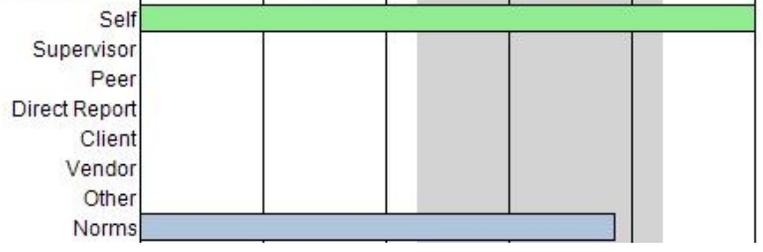
People who know me would say that I ask incisive questions in conversations.

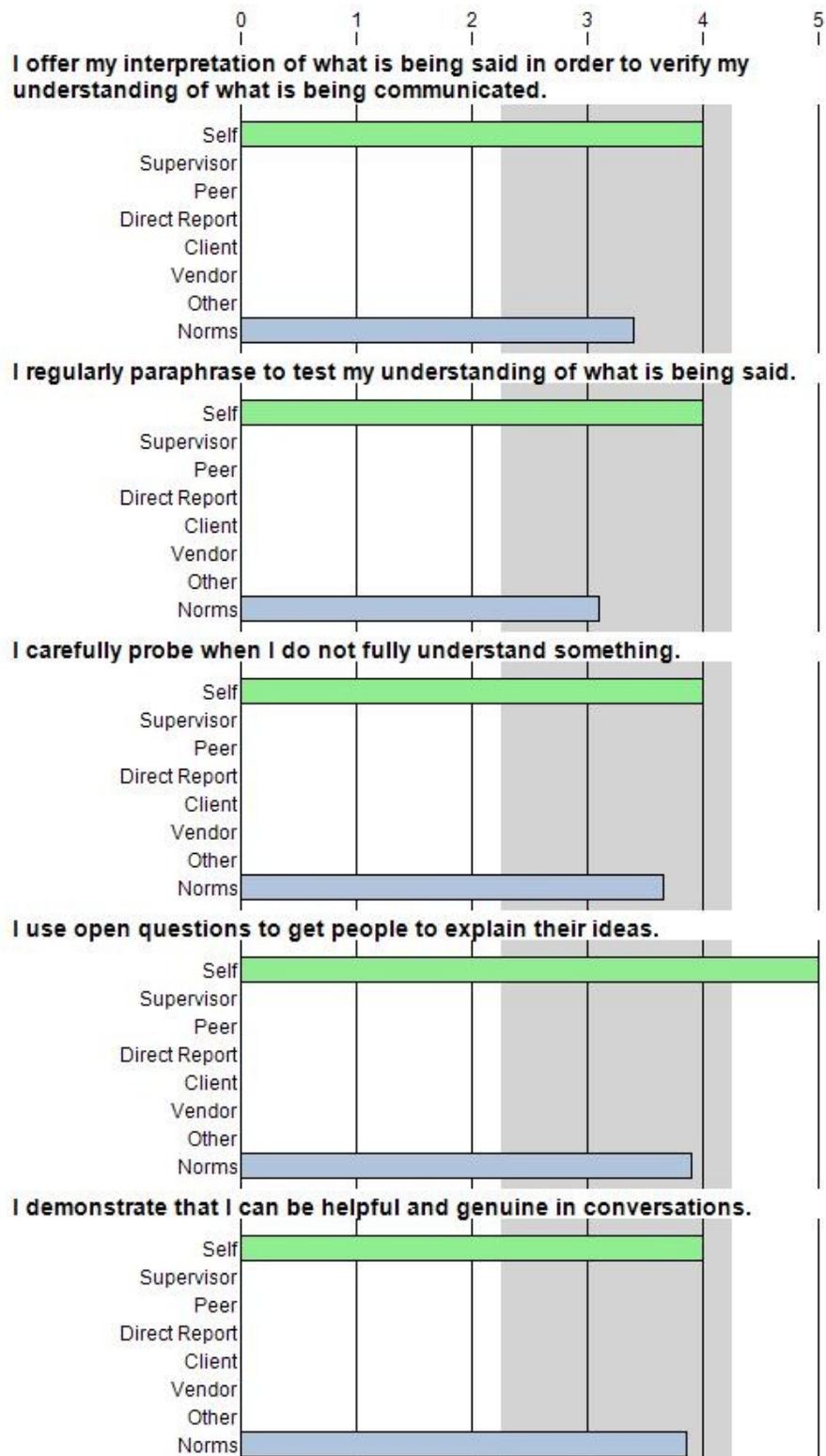


I summarize what I think I've heard to make sure that I have understood clearly.



I am comfortable speaking up when I am confused or unsure.





This section on Clarifying looks at the extent to which you use careful and incisive questioning techniques to successfully "translate" the words and actions of the other party in order to understand their meaning. This category asks the question: "How well do you gently question and probe the other person in a conversation or discussion, in order to ensure that you accurately interpret their message?"

Recommendations for Overall Improvement

Low scorers need to practice asking genuine and sincere questions when their understanding in a discussion is less than it should be. They should also practice asking different kinds of questions, and offer simple summaries of key points at appropriate conversational intervals.

Ways to Strengthen or Improve Clarifying

- Practice asking questions in a variety of different ways so you will be able to get people to say more or to elaborate fully on what they mean.
- Use more paraphrasing, examples, and analogies when you are clarifying what you hear, or ask the other person directly to explain what they are saying in a different way.
- Summarize points frequently and make sure that you have understood each statement that has been made as a discussion unfolds.
- Try to elicit more information whenever necessary to ensure that your knowledge and understanding about what is being said is balanced and complete at all times.

UNDERSTANDING

This section on Understanding looks at the extent to which you make sense of what you see and hear in order to engage fully in a conversation and respond intelligently, according to the circumstances. This category asks the question: "How well do you reflect and process information while someone is speaking, in order to understand the key aspects of what is being communicated and how you might respond?"



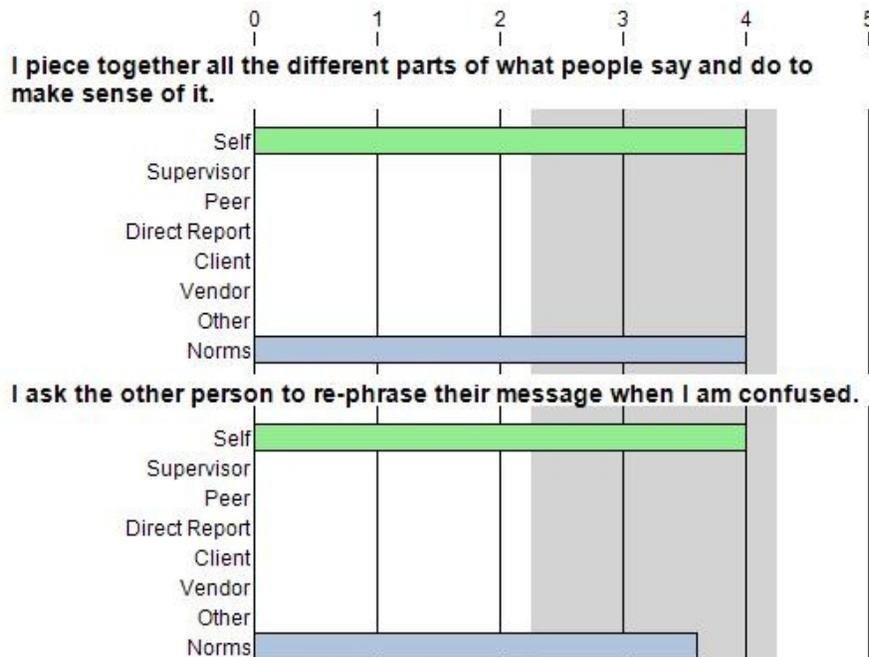
Interpretation

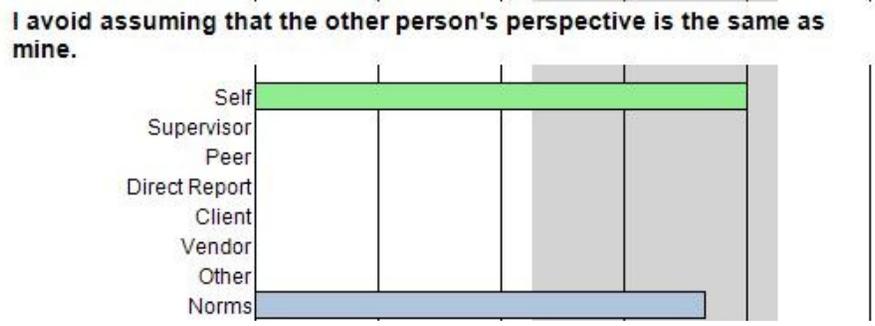
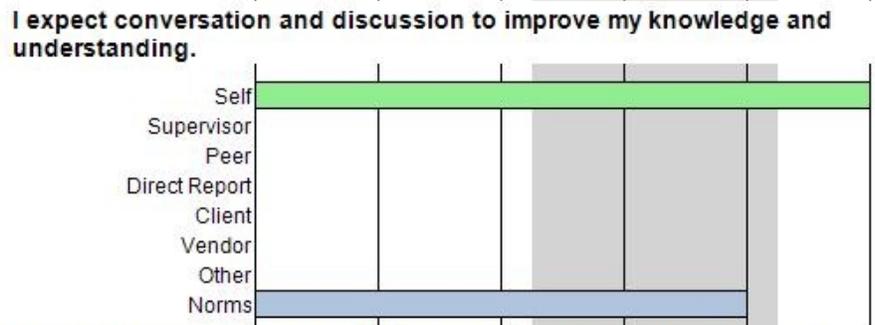
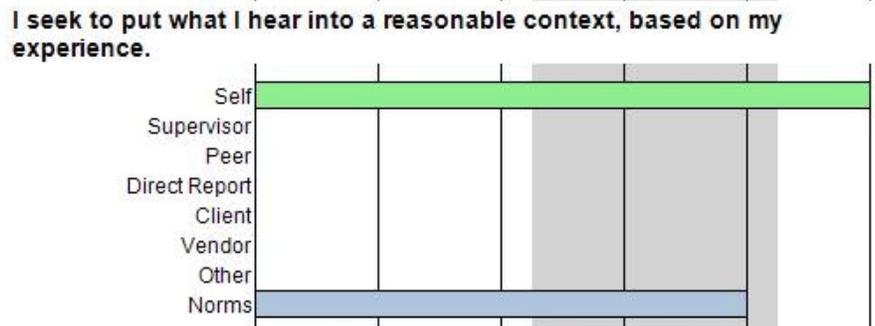
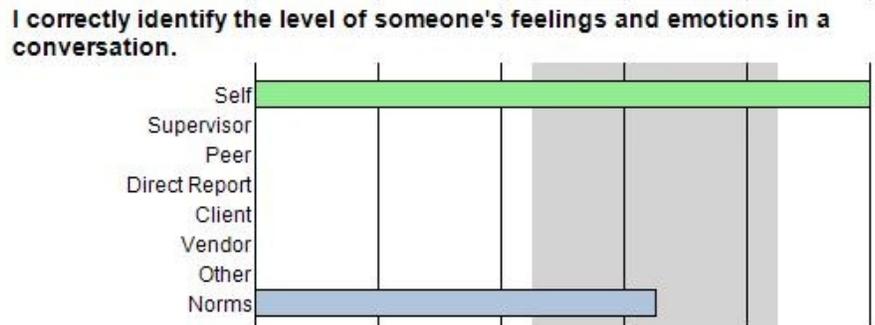
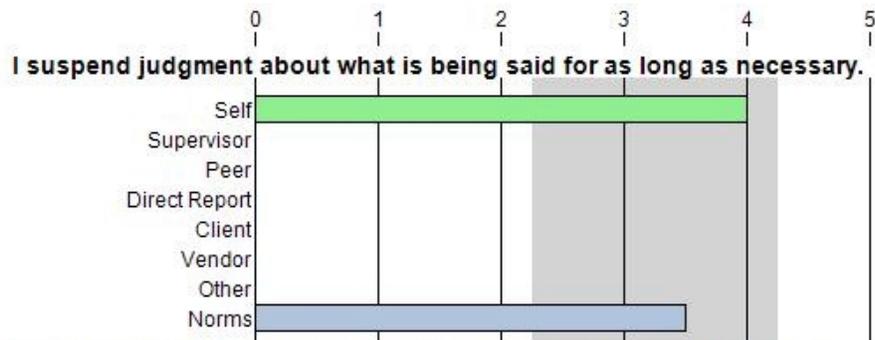
LOW (less than 2.75)

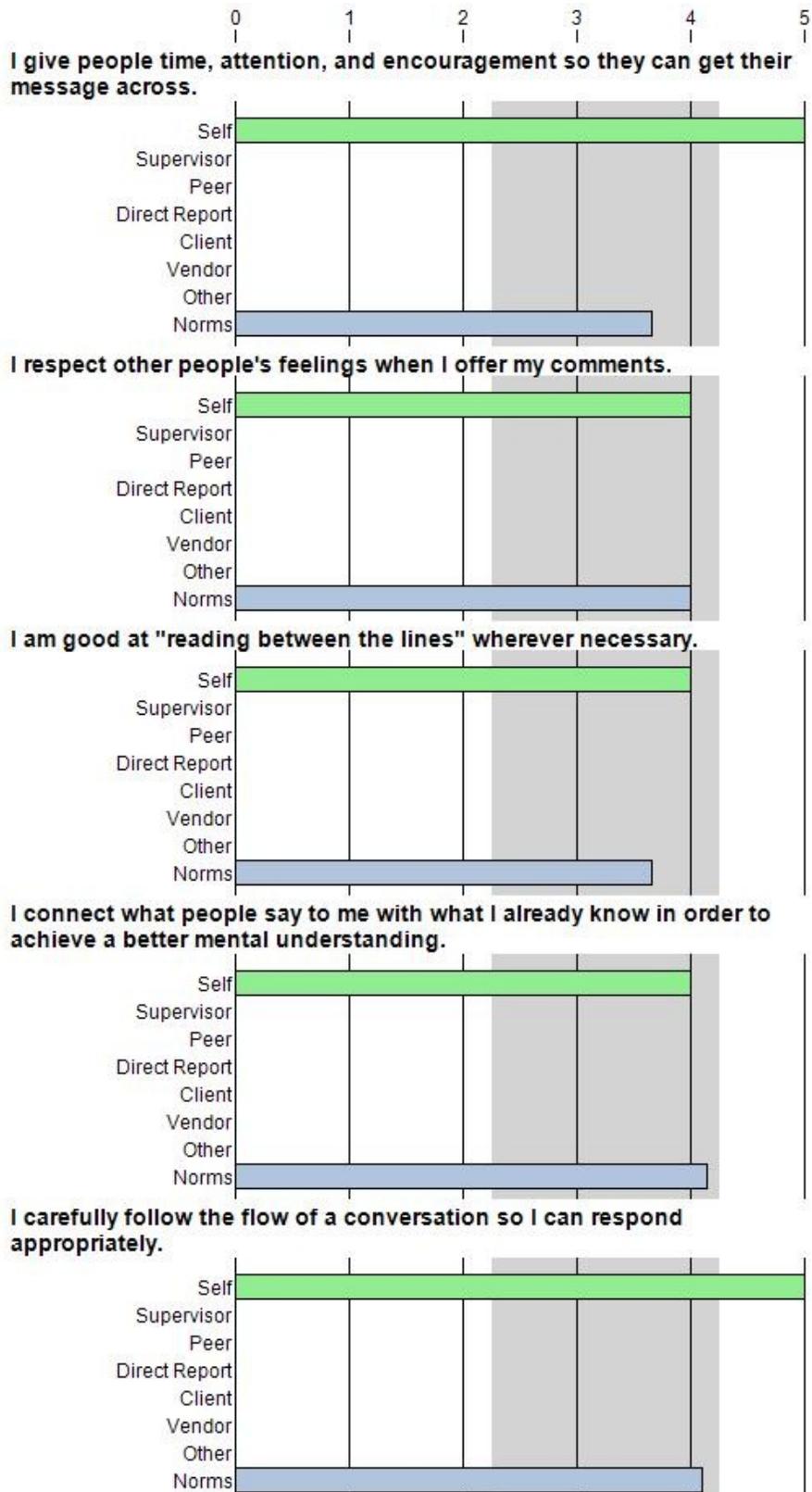
Response ratings predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you tend to be lost in longer or more-complex conversations, and fail to spot the more subtle or underlying messages that are communicated. You do not usually take the opportunity to reduce or eliminate your confusion by asking questions, paraphrasing, or summarizing. A low scorer does not always follow another person's line of discussion or argument and doesn't find it easy to predict where the conversation is headed. As a result, such people don't participate as actively in a conversation as they might, and their responses are not as helpful and intelligent as they could be.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Response ratings predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you carefully sift and sort what you see and hear when individuals are talking. You work hard to understand the entire message, and respond in a way that amply demonstrates your understanding. A high scorer uses empathetic listening techniques and avoids making judgments regarding how other people think or send their messages. They will progressively assemble the information that is communicated, and look beyond the words to feelings, emotions, and other contextual factors.







This section on Understanding looks at the extent to which you make sense of what you see and hear in order to engage fully in a conversation and respond intelligently, according to the circumstances. This category asks the question: "How well do you reflect and process information while someone is speaking, in order to understand the key aspects of what is being communicated and how you might respond?"

Recommendations for Overall Improvement

Low scorers should take note of all the verbal and non-verbal clues and figure out what is really being said, and why. They also should concentrate more on the overall "flow" or logical development of each conversation, and ask questions and paraphrase to be sure they are not misunderstanding the message.

Ways to Strengthen or Improve Understanding

- Avoid pre-judging people's messages or intentions. Concentrate on the entire communication over as long a time as is necessary.
- Look for key themes or core points in conversations.
- Use questions to confirm your understanding before responding.
- Carefully assess the context in which people give you information and the entire way in which they communicate with you.

READING NON-VERBAL CLUES

This section on "Reading Non-Verbal Clues" looks at the extent to which you pick up on body language and tone of voice in order to understand the complete communication message. It asks the question: "How well do you assess the other person's feelings and meaning by looking beyond the spoken words that you hear?"



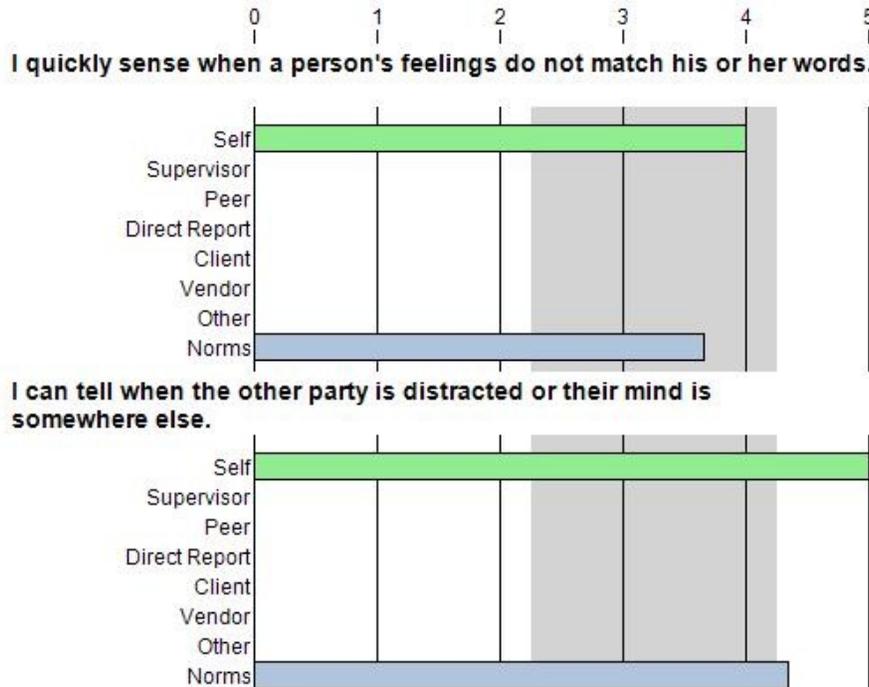
Interpretation

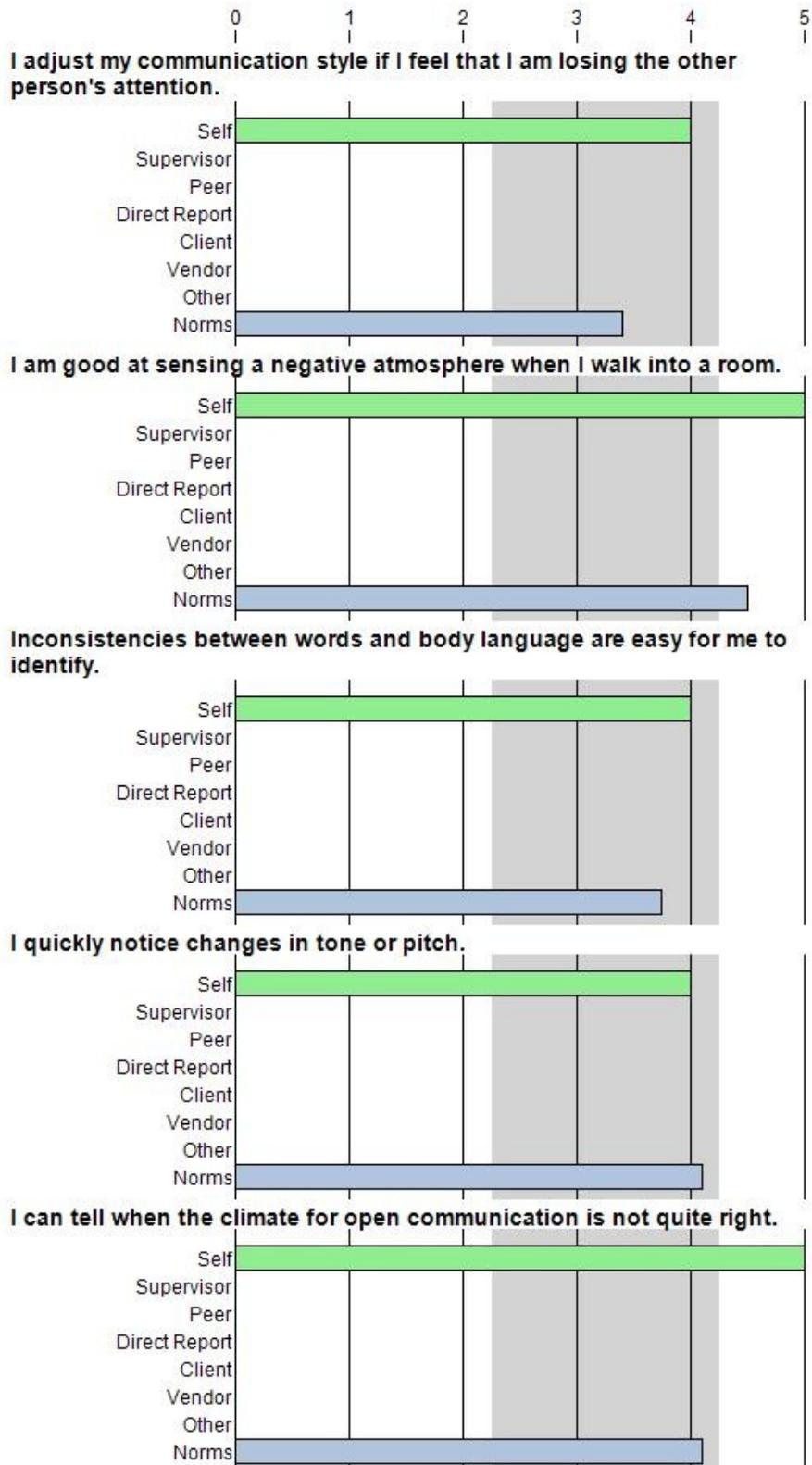
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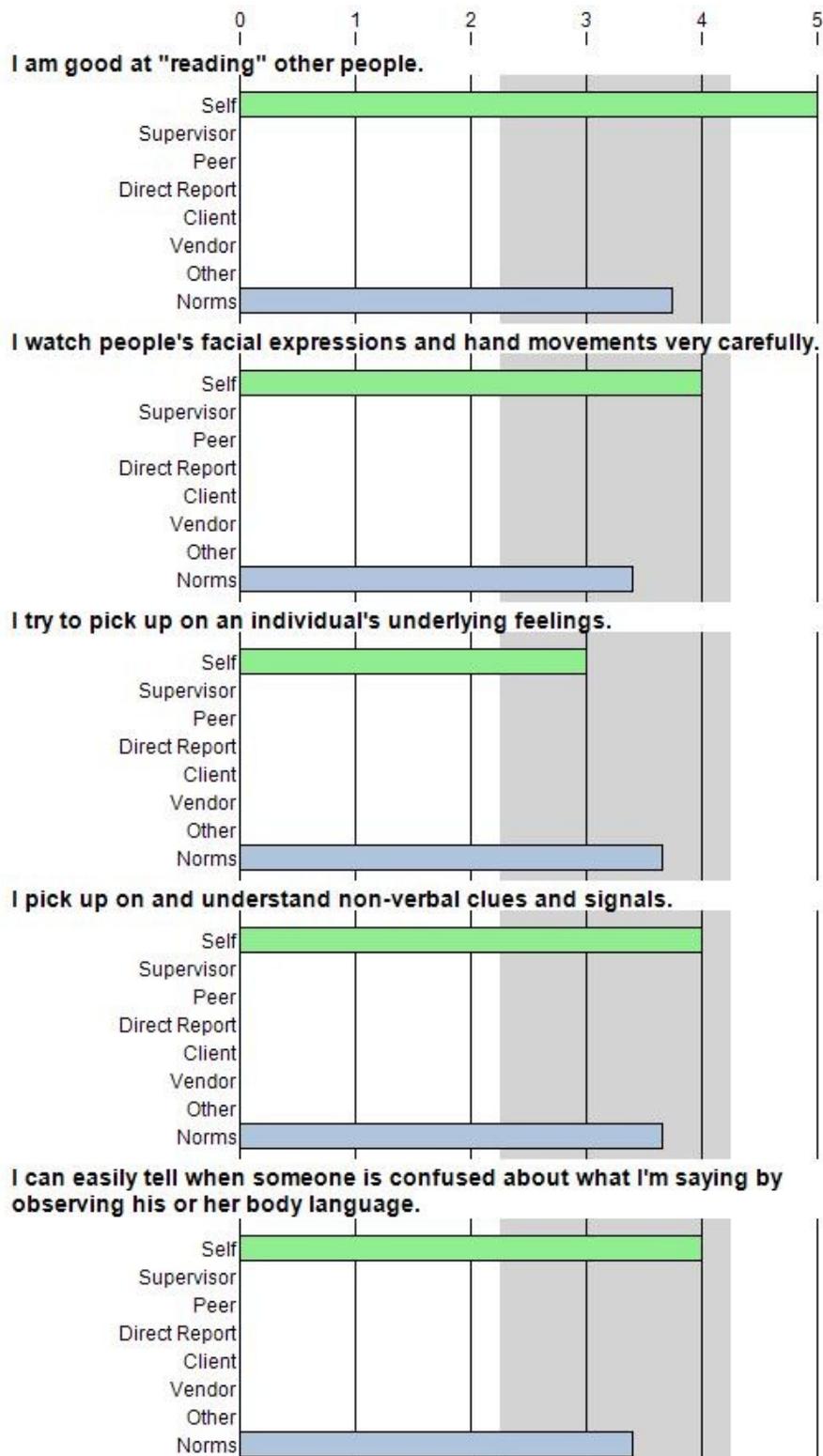
Response ratings predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you generally miss or misinterpret non-verbal clues given by others because you don't see their significance or understand what they mean. Because of this, you are not likely to be good at reading other people, sensing the climate for communication, or spotting general discrepancies between verbal and non-verbal messages. A low scorer tends to be almost completely reliant on the words that people use in communication, though words are only about 10% of the entire meaning. Low scorers are also somewhat oblivious to clues from facial expressions, movements of the hands or feet, changes in inflection and tone, and other behaviors that help paint a complete picture of what people are saying and feeling.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Response ratings predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you are tuned in to the non-verbal clues or signals that are deliberately or accidentally offered by other people in different kinds of communication. You are usually alert to the signals and are able to interpret them successfully. A high scorer focuses as much on non-verbal communication as on the words being spoken, and constantly looks for reinforcement of underlying feelings or inconsistency. Such people tend to almost intuitively "read" people and situations, even where words are few or non-existent.







This section on "Reading Non-Verbal Clues" looks at the extent to which you pick up on body language and tone of voice in order to understand the complete communication message. It asks the question: "How well do you assess the other person's feelings and meaning by looking beyond the spoken words that you hear?"

Recommendations for Overall Improvement

Low scorers need to concentrate much more on observing the other person and listening carefully for changes in voice tone or emotional emphasis. This takes considerable practice, as well as commitment and patience, to learn how to do it and then to correctly interpret what is observed or heard.

Ways to Strengthen or Improve Reading Non-verbal Clues

- Quietly watch for the more subtle signals given by the communicator in terms of their physical actions or the tone of their voice.
- Be silent for much longer than you are used to.
- Progressively learn what the different non-verbal signals mean, above and beyond the words.
- On every occasion, assess whether or not the entire communication climate or atmosphere offers any extra clues above and beyond the words alone.

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

This section on Feedback looks at the extent to which you are able to successfully offer constructive feedback to others and accept direct feedback from others. It asks the question: "How open are you to offering candid feedback to others in a constructive or helpful way, and how capable are you in accepting coaching or guiding communication from others?"



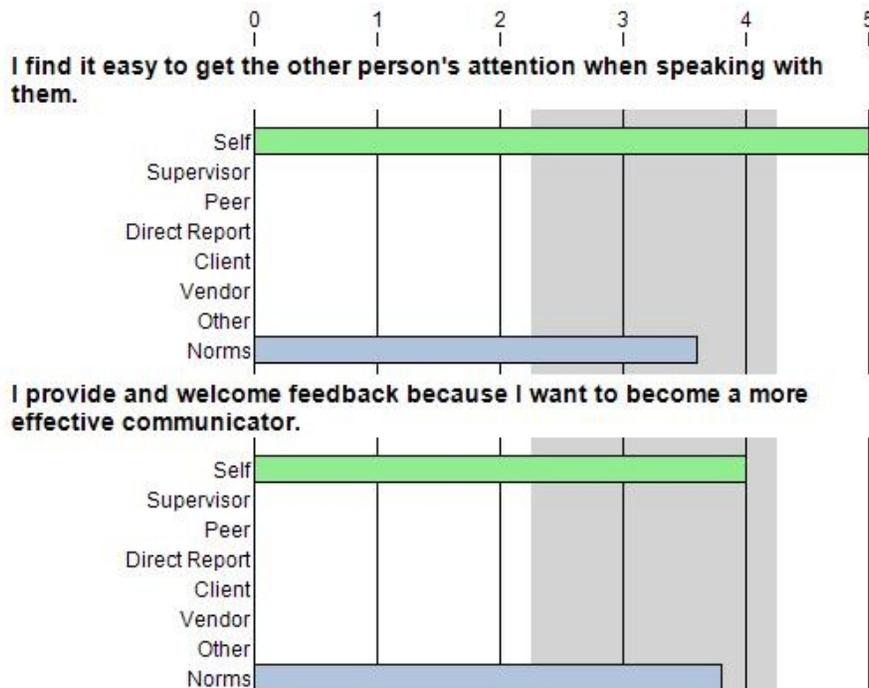
Interpretation

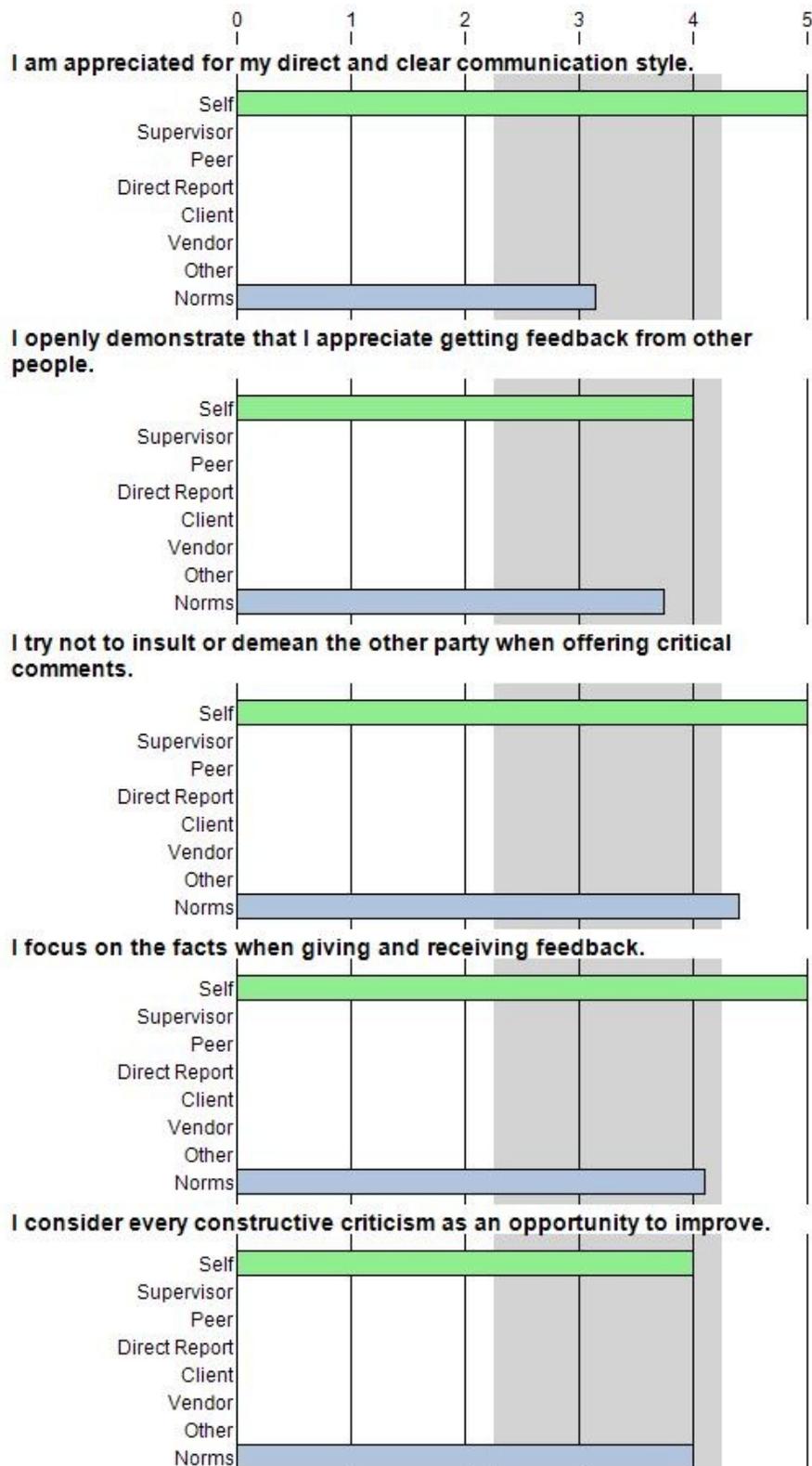
LOW (less than 2.75)

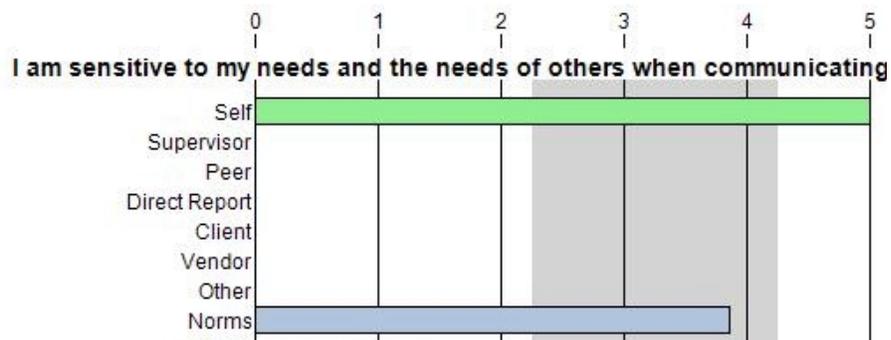
Response ratings predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you are not a frequent giver and receiver of feedback of any sort, and might even go out of your way to avoid making constructive comment to others or letting them offer comment (positive or negative) to you. You are likely at times to adopt a silent approach or become evasive when asked to provide or take feedback. A low scorer is likely to adopt a "closed" communication style in which he or she offers little or no constructive feedback to others, and generally does expect others to provide feedback. Conversations will tend to be somewhat "mechanical" and exchange-orientated, with neither party gaining the benefit of useful guiding or coaching communication.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Response ratings predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you are a frequent giver and receiver of feedback, and you see it as a positive way to improve communication and knowledge (for yourself and others). You are more adept at giving feedback to others and in inviting others to give feedback to you (and acting on the valuable advice you receive). An individual whose scores here are high is likely to quickly establish as much conversational rapport as possible with the other person. This is usually done by suggesting that he or she is open to receiving and giving constructive feedback as a means of building strong relationships, as well as engaging in deeper or more genuinely worthwhile discussions with people.



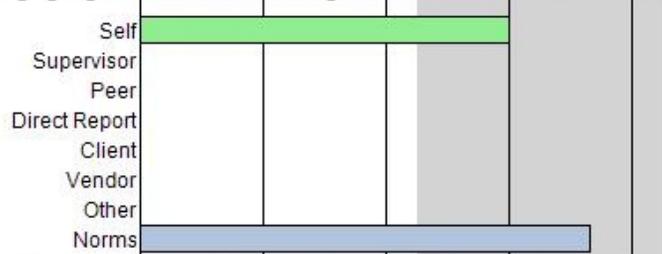




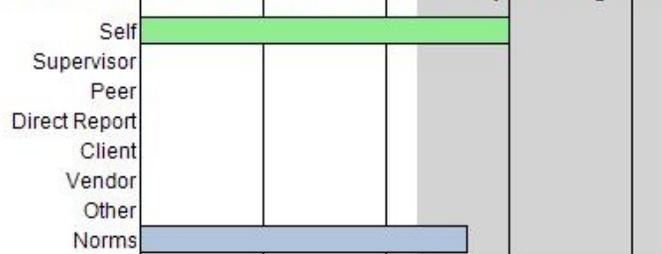
I try to make sure that the "air time" in a conversation is equally shared.



I avoid engaging in emotional or negative feedback discussions.



I am not concerned about someone's motives for providing feedback.



I focus my attention on the key lesson to be given or taken from the feedback.



This section on Feedback looks at the extent to which you are able to successfully offer constructive feedback to others and accept direct feedback from others. It asks the question: "How open are you to offering candid feedback to others in a constructive or helpful way, and how capable are you in accepting coaching or guiding communication from others?"

Recommendations for Overall Improvement

Low scorers need to accept two-way feedback as a primary means of improving the quality of communication. This means becoming less "thin-skinned" about feedback and more open to giving people honest but helpful feedback when it is appropriate.

Ways to Strengthen or Improve Giving and Receiving Feedback

- Learn to see the giving and receiving of regular constructive feedback as a primary means by which learning and improvement can occur.
- Make notes on what you hear, and offer structured and specific feedback to others. Encourage other people to offer open feedback on the same basis.
- Always offer constructive feedback comments not negative or destructive remarks.
- Be sensitive to people's feelings when accepting feedback or giving it to others. Avoid destructive comments, personal attacks, and gratuitous insults.

TRANSMITTING YOUR MESSAGE

This section on **Transmitting Your Message** looks at the extent to which you use a range of communication methods and means to get your message across to others successfully. It asks the question: "How well do you ensure that the transmission of information that is important to you is communicated in language that is clear, concise, and consistent?"



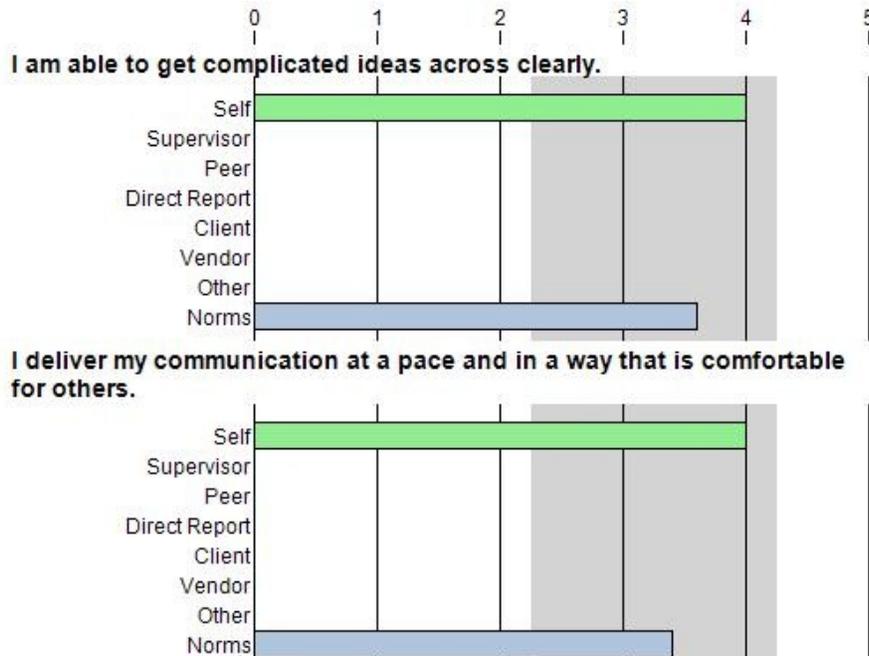
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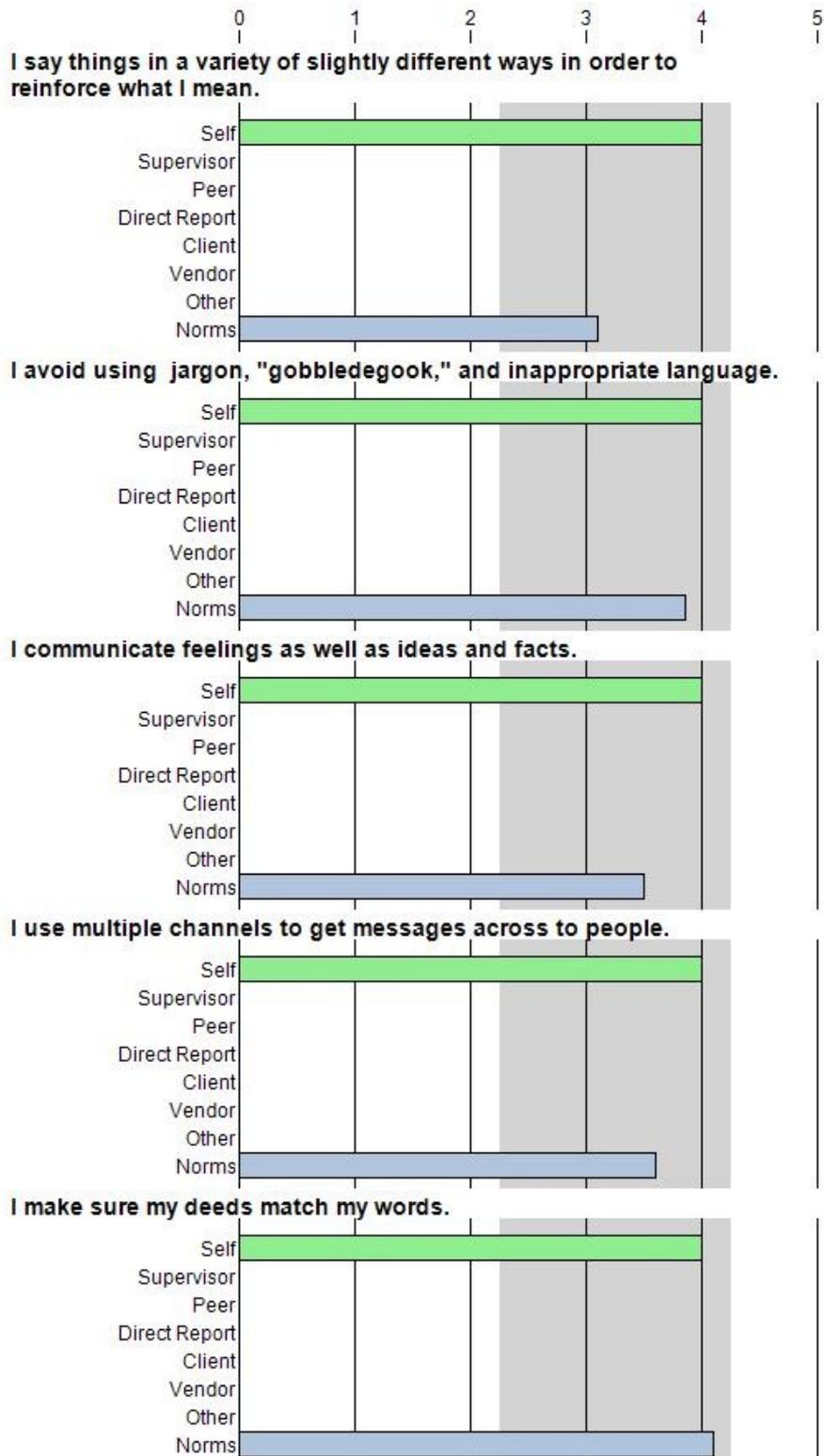
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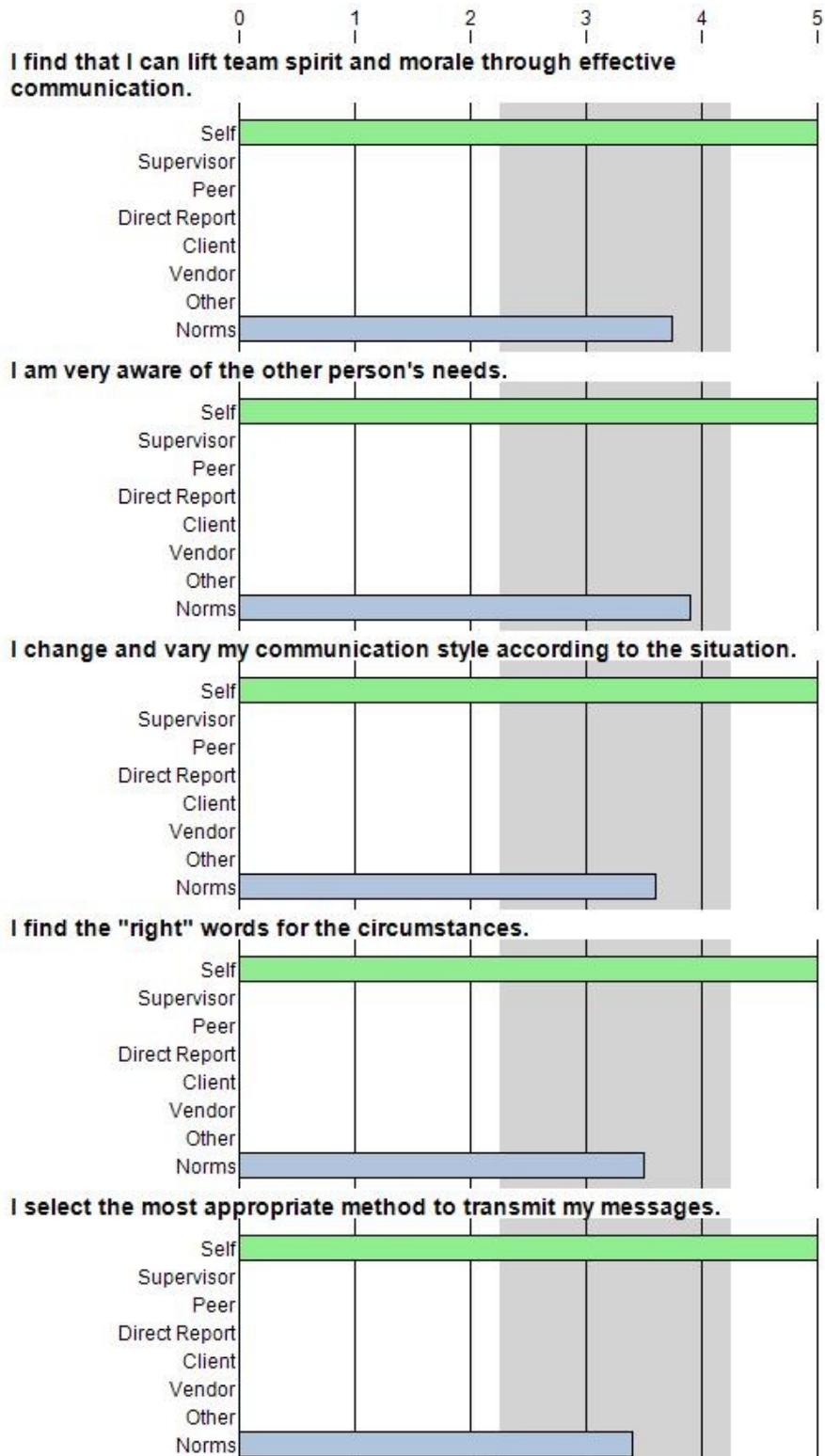
Response ratings predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you are prone to forget the needs of different audiences to which you communicate. You also do not always select the most appropriate communication channels but instead use mainly one single communication or delivery style, regardless of the situation. For a low scorer, communication is a challenge and something to get over and done with as quickly as possible. Transmitting your message is regarded as a chore that often yields mixed results in terms of other people listening or understanding and acting appropriately on what they have heard.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Response ratings predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you think carefully about the way you transmit your message and the communication style that you adopt in order to communicate effectively. To do this, you try hard to always be clear, concise, and consistent in what you say and do. A high scorer is usually acutely aware of the power to communicate and influence people successfully through good preparation, understanding of the audience's needs, and use of a variety of ways to communicate to ensure that every individual is given the best opportunity to understand the message.







This section on Transmitting Your Message looks at the extent to which you use a range of communication methods and means to get your message across to others successfully. It asks the question: "How well do you ensure that the transmission of information that is important to you is communicated in language that is clear, concise, and consistent?"

Recommendations for Overall Improvement

Low scorers need to think more about different individual and group preferences in terms of receiving information, and should think about the impact that different channels and styles can make on the ultimate understanding of a message (and, therefore, the success of the entire communication effort).

Ways to Strengthen or Improve Transmitting Your Message

- Recognize that your actions are likely to "speak" most loudly when you are speaking with others.
- Do things to support your verbal messages to help people understand where you are coming from.
- Practice varying your personal communication approach to suit the different situations that you encounter.
- Avoid complex, jargonized, or overly technical words or phrasing to audiences that are not likely to understand or act upon your message.
- Deliver all of your messages in a slow and measured way, taking account of the particular needs of the subject and the audience.

Top 10 Strengths

Transmitting Your Message

- 84 .I select the most appropriate method to transmit my messages. 5.00
- 83 .I find the "right" words for the circumstances. 5.00
- 82 .I change and vary my communication style according to the situation. 5.00
- 81 .I am very aware of the other person's needs. 5.00
- 80 .I find that I can lift team spirit and morale through effective communication. 5.00

Giving and Receiving Feedback

- 68 .I am sensitive to my needs and the needs of others when communicating. 5.00
- 66 .I focus on the facts when giving and receiving feedback. 5.00
- 65 .I try not to insult or demean the other party when offering critical comments. 5.00
- 63 .I am appreciated for my direct and clear communication style. 5.00
- 61 .I find it easy to get the other person's attention when speaking with them. 5.00

Top 10 Development Needs

Empathizing

- 6 .I generally mirror people's facial expressions when I listen to them. 3.00

Clarifying

- 29 .People who know me would say that I ask incisive questions in conversations. 3.00

Reading Non-Verbal Clues

- 58 .I try to pick up on an individual's underlying feelings. 3.00

Giving and Receiving Feedback

- 69 .I try to make sure that the "air time" in a conversation is equally shared. 3.00
- 70 .I avoid engaging in emotional or negative feedback discussions. 3.00
- 71 .I am not concerned about someone's motives for providing feedback. 3.00

Empathizing

- 3 .I let people finish what they are saying without interrupting. 4.00
- 4 .I show genuine interest when people are talking to me, whatever the subject or topic. 4.00
- 7 .I engage in as much "small talk" as necessary to help people feel comfortable. 4.00
- 11 .I encourage people to speak their minds openly and share their concerns. 4.00

COURSE AND READING SUGGESTIONS

Here is a link to a 12 page workbook that can help you further

<http://assessments23x7.com/rsb/RSBtc.pdf>

The following are general reading and course suggestions that may help you to better understand the two categories in which your scores were the lowest and to assist you in writing your development plan.

Clarifying

Clarifying looks at the extent to which you use careful and incisive questioning techniques to successfully "translate" the words and actions of the other party in order to understand their meaning. It asks the question: "How well do you gently question and probe the other person in a conversation or discussion, in order to ensure that you accurately interpret their message?"

Course Suggestion

- Asking Effective Questions/Successful Questioning Techniques
- Paraphrasing/Summarizing Skills
- Listening Skills
- Communication Skills
- Influencing Others

Other Suggestion

- If you feel comfortable doing so, talk to your direct supervisor/manager or a training and development specialist about personal training, coaching, and specific projects, and other possible support they may be able to offer to improve your skills.

Reading Suggestion

- Fire Up Your Communication Skills : Get People to Listen, Understand, and Give You What You Want! Bob Smith
- Making Things Clear : A Guide to Effective Written and Oral Communication, W. Stanton
- The Map to Clear Messages : Conversations With a Wizard and a Warrior, Nadine Udall Fischer, et al
- Consider the Issues: Advanced Listening and Critical Thinking Skills: Carol Numrich
- Consider the Issues: Intermediate Listening and Critical Thinking Skills: Carol Numrich

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Giving and Receiving Feedback looks at the extent to which you are able to successfully offer constructive feedback to others and accept direct feedback from others. It asks the question: "How open are you to offering candid feedback to others in a constructive or helpful way, and how capable are you in accepting coaching or guiding communications from others?"

Course Suggestion

- Giving Feedback
- Receiving Feedback
- Coaching Effectiveness
- Communication Skills
- Influencing Others

Other Suggestion

- If you feel comfortable doing so, talk to your direct supervisor/manager or a training and development specialist about personal training, coaching, and specific projects, and other possible support they may be able to offer to improve your skills.

Reading Suggestion

- Be Your Own Executive Coach : Master High-Impact Communications Skills for Dealing With Difficult People, Improving Your Personal Image, Learning How. Peter Delisser
- Messages : The Communication Skills Book. Patrick Fanning et al.
- Get a Grip on Speaking and Listening : Vital Communication Skills for Today's Business World.

- Leading With NLP : Essential Leadership Skills for Influencing and Managing People. Joseph O'Connor
- Training With NLP : Skills for Managers, Trainers and Communicators. Joseph O'Connor, and John Seymour
- Toward Communication Competency : Developing Interpersonal Skills. Susan R. Glaser, and Anna Eblen



DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Use the space below to write out your personal development plan for the next 12 months based on your results. Draw upon the general improvement actions in relevant areas of the report, and ideas that are suggested in the attached coaching tips.

I generally mirror people's facial expressions when I listen to them. Score: 3.00
Action to Take:

People who know me would say that I ask incisive questions in conversations. Score: 3.00
Action to Take:

I try to pick up on an individual's underlying feelings. Score: 3.00
Action to Take:

I try to make sure that the "air time" in a conversation is equally shared. Score: 3.00
Action to Take:

I avoid engaging in emotional or negative feedback discussions. Score: 3.00
Action to Take:

Empathizing

Use a variety of careful questioning approaches so that you can understand the other person.

Questions asked well result in knowledge and understanding on the part of both parties. However, when many of us ask a question, we sound as if we are conducting an interrogation rather than trying to connect with another person. There is more than one type of question to ask and more than one way of asking it. Here are some things to consider:

- 1. Build empathy with open questions rather than “closed” questions.** A “closed” question is one to which a “yes” or “no” answer can be given, while an “open” question is a question that cannot simply be answered with a “yes” or a “no.” “Did you like that film?” is closed. “What did you think of the film?” is open. Ask open questions that give the other person a chance to open up and express their views.
- 2. Use reflective questions.** A reflective question simply reflects the emotions of the other person, and lets them know that you are listening and are sympathetic to their point of view. If a person speaks with strong emotions about a bad situation they have found themselves in, a reflective response might be, “*So you feel as though they’ve let you down then?*” Reflective questions are also cues for the other person to continue exploring their feelings.
- 3. You can build empathy through your choice of words.** Use *inclusive* language, rather than *separating* language. “Inclusive” language shows that you are on the side of the other person; pronouns such as “we” are inclusive. “Separating” language emphasizes the differences between people; pronouns such as “you” separate people. A “separating” language question would sound like “*Why don’t you simply solve this problem and then move on to the next task?*” An inclusive language question would sound like “*Why don’t we simply solve this problem and then move on to the next task?*” Hear the difference? Which one would you rather hear?
- 4. Don’t subject the other person to an unrelenting barrage of questions,** even if they are open or reflective or use inclusive language. Strive for a healthy mix of questions and statements. Be aware of the rhythm of questions and statements, and alternate them.
- 5. Monitor your “voice body language.”** This simply means being aware of the inflections, emphases, pacing, and pitch in your voice when you want to show empathy. There is not much point to using open and reflective questions and inclusive language if your delivery is harsh and machine-gun-rapid, and your approach is patronizing or sarcastic. Most of us are completely unaware of how we sound, and that is not surprising; after all, very few of us get audio or video feedback on our day-to-day behavior. Check yourself out by using a tape recorder or video recorder so that you can see and hear yourself as others see and hear you. You might be surprised.

Clarifying

Paraphrase what you think the speaker is saying every so often so that they can correct any misinterpretation.

One of the best ways of being sure that you have fully understood the speaker is to paraphrase what has been said. This helps your understanding, but it can also help the speaker figure out whether they have properly conveyed the meaning that they intended.

Consider doing the following things to improve your general effectiveness in the future:

1. Begin a paraphrase with one of these statements:

- “Now, let me see if I’ve got this. Your main worry at the moment is ...”
- “Can I just check with you to see if I’ve got the gist of this? The major factor ...”
- “Before you go on to that aspect—and I realize that it’s vital—can we just pause while I see if I’ve gotten all of this correct? I think that you’re saying ...”

2. If it’s difficult to stop the other person, try a non-verbal approach to getting their attention:

- Hold up your hand, palm open.
- Gesture into the “middle” of the space between you, using one or two hands.
- Gently touch the person on the arm.
- Break eye contact momentarily.
- Hand them a drink.

3. Try to condense what you have been told. Summarize, generalize, and try to link related concepts together. The other person will often quickly tell you if you’ve got it wrong.

4. Pay particular attention to facts and figures, dates, and the pronunciation of people’s names. In fact, check with the other person as to whether you have correctly understood these details.

5. Don’t wait until the speaker tires and doesn’t want to speak any more. That could be five minutes or five hours down the track. Gently and tactfully interrupt the flow of their narrative every now and then (for example, every 1 to 3 minutes) and paraphrase the particular “block” of talk that has just taken place.

“Reading” Non-Verbal Clues

Try to pick up on an individual’s underlying feelings when you are communicating with them.

Feelings are a critical part of communication, but they are often downplayed in professional or business situations. The best communicators know enough about non-verbal communication to pick up on the other person’s underlying feelings or overall emotional state. Here are some ideas on what to look for if you can use some help in this area:

1. There are many situations in which, despite our words to the contrary, we are uncertain of what to do or say. Uncertainty can be shown by:

- Hand-to-mouth gestures
- Looking around at others
- Continually shuffling documents
- Holding documents in both hands
- Picking up a pen and putting it down again
- Continually looking at watch or clock

2. A person might be feeling confident, yet use words that suggest that they are feeling insecure. Confidence (and over-confidence) can be shown by:

- Strong hand gestures
- Relaxed posture
- Hands behind head
- Feet on desk or table
- Using “ownership” gestures
- A disregard of time

3. A person might be extremely competitive, yet look like they want to cooperate. Competitiveness can be shown by:

- Interrupting
- Invading personal space
- Talking rapidly
- Showing impatience while others talk
- Acting cold and disdainful

4. A person might claim that they are telling the truth, but in fact might truly be deceitful.

Deceit can be shown by:

- Avoidance of eye contact
- “Three monkeys” gestures (hands over ears, although they are saying that things sound okay; hands over eyes, although they are saying that things look okay; hands over mouth, although they are saying that they are in favor of the idea)
- Finger under collar
- Rapid crossing and uncrossing of legs
- Muscular twitching
- Rapidly blinking eyes

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Avoid insulting or demeaning the other party when offering remarks that are critical.

When we have to make critical comments, we are usually tempted to get personal—to put in the sly dig in order to score a few points. Effective communicators avoid making subtle insults or demeaning the other party when offering critical comments.

Try these suggestions to avoid insulting or demeaning:

1. Stick to the facts. If you make it personal, you will only trigger a mud-slinging match, and that means wandering away from the facts and the chance to really solve the problem.
2. Avoid sarcasm or irony of any kind when giving critical feedback. The other person will find it somewhat confusing, and it will substantially cheapen what you are trying to do. Stick to only one level of meaning in your discussions.
3. Don't try to build a case by linking this particular situation to other situations. In high-intensity conflict situations, we often find that we try to build a case against the other person by linking situations that are only weakly linked (“Now you're sounding just like your mother!” or “You've screwed it up again, just like you did with those other cases last week and the week before.”). When we do this, we selectively edit the truth in order to demonstrate our own purity and highlight the blackness of the guilt and culpability of the other person. Stick to the specifics of this situation, even if there is a connection. It might not be the time and the place to make such connections ...

- Perhaps the other person is too close to the situation.
- Perhaps they will be too defensive to logically process it anyway.

Wait a while, broach the subject again, ask fewer statements, ask more questions, and let them do it themselves.

4. Examine your own motives. Are you really trying to solve a problem, or do you just want a few cheap thrills? Ask yourself:

- Are you trying to power-trip someone?
- Do you want to prove that they are wrong and you are right?
- Are you hoping to demonstrate your own indispensability?
- Are you venting your spleen on a victim because *you* weren't assertive enough when a superior recently humiliated you?

All of these are corrupt motives, and you will demean yourself more than you will ever demean others if you give in to them and hand out the punishment.

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Focus on the facts when giving or receiving feedback.

Feedback needs to be real. Don't confuse it with other things that aren't quite so real. It will be tempting to offer your opinion (you will inevitably have one, even at the outset), but you have to start with hard facts, tangible events, and evidence. Effective communicators make sure that they focus on the facts in giving and receiving feedback. Here are some ways to do that:

1. Give individuals the story as objectively as you can, without any embroidering. Resist delivering an editorial or a sermon (leave these to the professionals).
2. Don't confuse opinion with fact. Don't confuse speculation with fact. Don't confuse hearsay with fact. Don't confuse ambiguous or contradictory data with facts. Good feedback, given or received, is built on a foundation of fact—incontrovertible information.
3. Focus on the five *W*'s: the *what*, the *where*, the *why*, the *who*, and the *when*, as well as the *how*. This will help you collect the facts and present them in a systematic way.
4. Feedback is a kind of diagnosis of past and present situations. Goals, benchmarks, and milestones are the standards upon which future feedback will be built, so keep in mind the SMART formula when you give and receive feedback and set goals, benchmarks, and milestones. Make sure that all these things are:
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Achievable
 - Relevant
 - Time-framed
5. When you are on the receiving end of feedback, don't be passive.
 - Ask questions to clarify just what the other person means.
 - Ask questions to determine what the other person wants you to do now, in response to their feedback.
 - Ask questions to establish how you can improve your performance in related areas.

Asking questions helps establish a balance and puts you in as much control as the person giving the feedback. It helps trigger broader and deeper feedback, also. If the other person were perfect, there would be no need for you to ask any questions at all. (But then, who's perfect?)