

## Interpersonal Skills Competency Development Activities

### Competency Definition

Considers and responds appropriately to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of different people in different situations; is tactful, compassionate and sensitive, and treats others with respect.

### Developmental Activity Levels

#### All (A)

*Applies to all competency levels*

#### Beginner-Basic Knowledge (B)

*A person at the Beginner-Basic Knowledge level has limited experience applying the competency. He/she applies general knowledge in common situations but has limited practical experience in applying the competency in a work environment presenting more complex situations.*

#### Mid-level (M)

*A person with mid-level proficiency has applied the competency repeatedly and successfully in the performance of his/her job but still has much to learn about the advanced aspects or behaviors associated with the competency. A person at this level can usually apply the competency on his/her own.*

#### High (H)

A person at the High level has extensive knowledge of and experience with this competency and can apply the competency exceptionally well on the job without assistance. At this level one is an expert and has enough experience to teach the competency to others.

### Articles, Books, and Websites

A Dugger, Jim; Listen Up: Hear What's Really Being Said, National Press Publications, 1991.

This book outlines five instant ways to improve listening skills and helps readers pinpoint their strengths and weaknesses when listening. They'll also learn how to interpret nonverbal communication and respond with non-judgmental phrases, "I" messages, and open-ended questions.

A Richard Blundel, Effective Business Communication: Principles and Practice for the Information Age, Prentice Hall Press, January, 1998.

Coverage includes: how to overcome "noise" to get your message across; effective ways to use language and images; the power of persuasion; and special issues surrounding communication in an organization. The book focuses on communication in practice, covering forms and

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questionnaires, business letters and direct mail, reports, memos, briefings, presentations, meetings, negotiation, advertising, new releases, interviewing, listening skills, and much more.

**A** Kenton, Sherron B., Valentine, Deborah (Contributor), Crosstalk: Communicating in a Multicultural Workplace, Prentice Hall Press, September, 1996.

This book helps define the different aspects of communication as viewed from the perspective of different ethnic groups such as the European, African, Asian and Latin employees.

**A** Griffin, Jack Griffin, Power, Tom (Editor), How to Say It at Work: Putting Yourself Across With Power Words, Phrases, Convincing Body Language and Communication Secrets, Prentice Hall Press, May, 1998.

This book offers practical advice for communicating with supervisors, colleagues, subordinates, clients, vendors, and everyone else you may come in contact with while on the job. Part 1 has a self-test for evaluating your current skills and includes a toolkit for improving your overall communication at work. Part 2 lists specifics for dealing with key individuals and includes helpful (and harmful) words, phrases, body-language strategies and other techniques that can help you be a better communicator at work.

**B** Gilbert, Matthew, Gallagher, B.J., Communication Miracles at Work: Effective Tools and Tips for Getting the Most from Your Work Relationships, Conari PR, July, 2002.

The author teaches communication skills that can help anyone improve relationships with coworkers, managers, and customers. Readers learn to recognize obstacles to communicating well, break bad communication habits, and communicate effectively to achieve workplace harmony.

**H** De Janasz, Suzanne C., Dowd, Karen O., and Schneider, Beth Z., Interpersonal Skills in Organizations, McGraw-Hill/Irwin, July, 2001.

This workbook-style text focuses on key skill sets necessary for personal and managerial success in organizations today. These skill sets are: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, and team skills. The interpersonal skills section focuses on conveying verbal messages, listening, and non-verbal communication. The author talks about overcoming barriers in communication.

**H** Lefton, Robert E. Lefton and Buzzotta, Victor, Leadership Through People Skills, McGraw-Hill Trade, August, 2003.

The most successful leaders are experts at sizing people up, establishing two-way communications, creating environments that motivate greater productivity, and adapting their own behavior to different people and circumstances. The good news is that these "people skills" can be learned, practiced, and perfected. You'll assess the level of your existing people skills and improve them, and develop different leadership styles that you can use with direct reports, peers, and bosses.

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**H** Autry, James A, The Servant Leader: How to Build a Creative Team, Develop Great Morale, and Improve Bottom-Line Performance, Prima Publishing, September, 2001.

This book shows you how to remain true to the servant leadership model when handling day-to-day and long-term management situations. You'll learn how to manage with respect and honesty and how to empower employees to achieve new levels of satisfaction. Servant leadership will produce fulfilling emotional, psychological, and spiritual rewards for everyone involved. It will enhance productivity, encourage creativity, and benefit the bottom line.

**H** Silberman, Melvin L., Peoplesmart: Developing Your Interpersonal Intelligence, Berrett-Koehler Publishing, June, 2000.

The authors show how to develop the eight key skills and abilities of interpersonal intelligence: understanding people, explaining oneself clearly and honestly, asserting needs, seeking and giving feedback, influencing others, resolving conflict, being a team player, and shifting gears when relationships are stuck. They present a realistic and doable five-step plan for self-improvement.

### Activities

**B** In conversations, focus on the speaker. Do not do other tasks while you are listening. Focus on the speaker and what they are saying.

**B** Practice listening skills by listening to a news broadcast and testing yourself on how much you can remember.

**B** Seek opportunities to interact and communicate with diverse audiences (e.g., executive, technical, internal, external)

**B** Take part in a role playing scenario where good listening skills are critical. Verbalize what you heard your colleague say and compare what you heard with what they were trying to say. Did you get their message? If not, what did you miss out on? Discuss what you might do better in the future to improve your listening skills.

**B** Make it a point to spend a lunch or break period with people you don't regularly spend informal time with on the job. If you're uncomfortable talking on a personal level with them, focus on learning more about what they do within TSA, what they enjoy about their job and what they see as their areas of expertise.

**H** Build time into your daily or weekly schedule to walk around the baggage and passenger checkpoints to informally talk with screening employees, get to know who they are and understand their key issues and concerns.

**H** Identify someone who is effective in relating well with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Observe the person. Listen closely to what he/she says, watch the person's actions and behaviors, and observe others' reactions to the individual. If you have the opportunity, also talk

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with the person to try and understand why he/she chose to approach interactions with different people in certain ways.

**H** Practice asking questions when meeting with employees and stakeholders. Ask questions about their experiences and interests and concerns. Acknowledge what you hear and identify issues that are important to address to maintain morale and productivity.

**H** After a team meeting, ask a colleague for feedback on how your comments and behavior affected other people. Ask for specific feedback and suggestions for ways in which you could accomplish task goals while building relationships. Ask your manager and others at the meeting for similar feedback.

**H** Avoid interrupting others. Work on improving your listening skills. One way to do this is to cut down the number of times you interrupt someone who is mid-sentence or mid-thought. This is something to pay attention to, whether in formal hallway or telephone conversations or meetings. Ask others to support your improvement efforts by pointing out whenever you interrupt them or cut them off. If your concern is that you will lose your train of thought or comment, jot it down, and share it when the other person has completed his/her thought/comment. Ask others to show you the same consideration.

#### **Coaching Suggestions for Managers**

**M** Ask the person to discuss with their team the situations in which communication gaps occur and the potential problems which they create. Have them focus on identifying what would help prevent or close these communication gaps. Encourage them to develop a set of communication principles or ground rules with their team to maximize the effectiveness of their communications with each other.

**M** Ask the person to think about one of their communication strengths and to reflect on how they developed it. Did a class, practice, feedback or a good role model help them to learn? Ask them to share their lessons learned with others that are seeking development in that particular area.

**H** Challenge managerial and supervisory staff to get to know the experience and background of all their employees, including their skills and expertise beyond their TSA job, and any issues or concerns employees have that impact the health of productiveness of the work environment.

**H** Have your managerial and supervisory staff brief you about their employees' background and interests. This will help you get to know TSA employees better and it will ensure that you know what your managers and supervisors are getting to know. Together you can identify and discuss employee issues that need to be addressed.

**H** Observe you managers' and supervisors' interactions with their employees to assess their interpersonal skills. Provide diplomatic feedback and coaching suggestions as needed to help them enhance their interpersonal skills and their employees.

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