

# 3 Spires Learning

## 3 Spires “Light” Learning Team Leader Toolkit - Employee Engagement



### Communicating With Our People – Listening Actively

“Developing Tomorrows Leaders”

# Communicating With Our People

## *“Listening Actively”*

### How To Use This Toolkit

Different team leaders are at different stages and this toolkit provides a basic guide from which team leaders can pick and choose topics they need support on.

Working successfully in teams does not necessarily come naturally to many of us; it is an acquired skill in need of guidance and support.

This toolkit provides practical hints and tips on areas such as team leadership, performance and communication.

It aims to aid managers when they are looking for practical ideas on how to address issues raised in everyday situations.

Each section covers the following areas:

1. Using this section
2. Practical hints and tips
3. Comments from top scoring managers
4. Questions for you

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### Using This Section

Giving people the opportunity to contribute is key to making them feel valued, engaged and hence willing to give their best.

The best managers do this by asking their team members for their views and ideas and then listening and if possible acting on their suggestions. Seeking out the views on both senior and junior members of the team and those who are quieter and perhaps less comfortable speaking up separates the best managers from the rest.

***No matter where people sit in the organisation their views and ideas can make a difference to customers, colleagues and profitability.***

### Practical Hints And Tips

Good managers listen to ideas even if their initial thought is that they are impractical or tried before. If an idea cannot be taken forward they explain to the individual why this is.

Listening actively means listening beyond just the words, to obtain their real meaning.

Active listening is about suspending your own agenda and focusing on the other person to understand their position and to demonstrate that you are doing so.

### ***Quieten Your Own Mind***

- Put aside other matters and concerns.
- Do not interrupt.
- Do not finish other people's sentences.
- Breathe calmly and deeply.

### ***Control The Environment***

- Shut out background noise as much as possible.
- Stop interruptions.
- Remove physical barriers.
- Get fairly close to the speaker.
- Don't invade their personal space.

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### ***Listen Carefully To What Is Being Said***

- Focus on the speaker.
- Shut out your thoughts and reactions.
- Give the speaker full, unbiased attention.

### ***Use Positive Non-verbal Signals***

- Nodding.
- Smiling.
- Attentive Posture.
- Interested Facial Expression.
- Eye Contact.

### ***Use Positive Verbal Signals***

- "Ah ha"
- "Good idea"
- "I like that"
- "I hadn't thought of that before"
- "Interesting"
- Prompting (repeating the speaker's most significant words or phrases)

### ***Use Pauses***

- Spaces are natural.
- Don't try to fill the silence.
- Allow time for absorption and reflection.
- Don't rush or hurry the speaker unnecessarily.
- Relax.

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### **Summarise**

- Restate your understanding of the content and/or reflect feelings.
- *"Let me check to make sure I understood..."*
- *"You're saying that..."*
- *"As I understand you..."*
- *"Let me see if I've got that. The goal for this session is..."*

### **Avoid Unhelpful Behaviours**

- Don't doodle.
- Don't stare or look aggressive
- Don't hide behind a barrier
- Don't keep looking at your watch

***"Listen to what they tell you, take heed, take on board and deliver."***

***"The managers here make the team feel that they enjoy spending time with you, hearing your thoughts."***

***"They build a level of trust with the team and as such are much more likely to receive open and honest opinions."***

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**Questions For You**

1. Do you actively follow up suggestions and report back to the person that made the suggestions?
2. Do you respond positively to suggestions even if at first impression they seem irrelevant?
3. Do you actively ask for your teams' views on their performance, the customer satisfaction, and the business direction?

***Hint***

***You have two ears and one mouth - use them in those proportions!***

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