
15.281 Advanced Leadership Communication
Listening and the Power of Inquiry
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Agenda

- Characteristics and Uses of Active Listening and Reflection
- Advocacy and Inquiry
- Practice Skills
- Preview of Wednesday's Class

The Importance of Active and Reflective Listening

What Research Shows

Time spent on each aspect of communication process:

- 40% Listening
- 35% Talking
- 16% Reading
- 9% Writing

Communication is Meaning+Relationship



Relating

Inquiry

- Take perspective of others
- Encourage the expression of diverse opinions
- Withhold judgment while listening to others

Advocacy

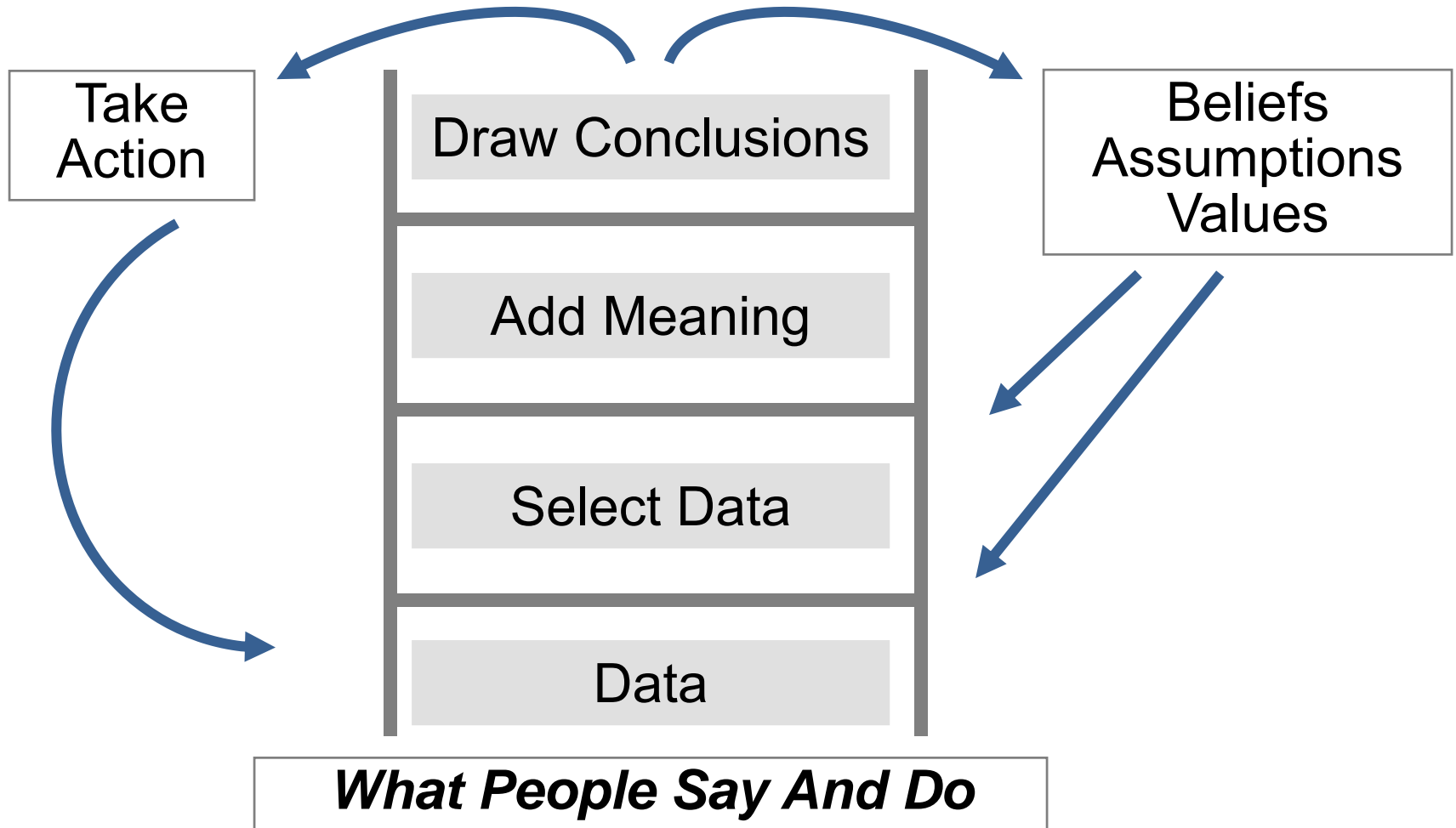
- Champion new ideas
- Influence decisions made at higher levels
- Persuade others to consider ideas and proposals
- Make your thinking clear to others

Valuing Others

- Support others
- Treat others with dignity
- Help others succeed
- Make others feel supported

Communication is Meaning+Relationship

Ladder of Inference



Communication is Meaning+Relationship

**We jump
up the
ladder**

- Our beliefs, assumptions and values influence the data we select, the meanings we add, and the conclusions we draw.
- We select what we will treat as important.
- We add meanings and draw conclusions.
- Our thinking is effortless, fast, and works routinely.
- Our conclusions appear obvious – to us – and we rarely think about the steps.

Communication is Meaning+Relationship

This habit is essential



- If we could not jump up the ladder without stopping to think, life would pass us by.
- With likeminded colleagues we get things done quickly and efficiently, because we don't have to “reinvent the wheel”—we share a “common language” and assumptions.

Communication is Meaning+Relationship

And it gets us into trouble...



- People have different perspectives
- People in the same situation reach different conclusions.
- All believe their conclusions are obvious, with no need to illustrate the steps.
- The result: confusion, conflict and misunderstanding – with all sides “hurling conclusions” at one another from the top of their ladders or simply withdrawing.

How to listen actively

- Allow others time to finish sentences and pause
- Remain in the present
- Know you will have time to think about your response
- Remain neutral, non-judgmental
- Hold advice and opinion

Advocacy

- Stresses critical thinking – critiquing
- Creates adversarial thinking – confrontation
- Tests one viewpoint against the other to find the strongest
- Many leaders focus on advocacy
- Presenting our views and arguing strongly for them
- Debating forcefully to influence others

Inquiry

- A complementary skill to advocacy that:
 - Seeks to discover information about why a particular view is held
 - Asks questions about underlying assumptions, beliefs, and reasoning
 - Explores:
 - Why do you believe this?
 - What logic leads to this conclusion?
 - What facts and data do you have?
 - What examples or past experience exists?

Inquiry continued

- Inquiry is supported by an attitude of wanting to understand, explore, learn, expand
- It is not a technique to cross examine individuals or find fault

Exercise: Listening and Humble Inquiry

- To raise awareness of your listening skills
- To practice verbal and non-verbal dimensions of active listening
- To practice humble inquiry

Inquiry Exercise

- In groups of three, Person A (Inquirer) will ask Person B (Explainer) a question of interest. Person B responds at length-you have up to five minutes-and Person A **humbly** inquires about what he/she is learning. Person C observes.

Possible Questions of Interest

- What can you teach me about
 - ... the management task you do best?
 - ... how to manage others?
 - ... adapting to a new environment?
 - ... ethical decision making in business?
 - ... asking for a raise/promotion?
 - ... leadership?

Preview for Wednesday

- Leadership Communication: Maximizing Feedback Conversations
- *READ*: The Double Meaning of Feedback; How to Give Feedback That Works; and The Secret to Giving Transformational Feedback

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