

# Evaluating What Is Said

*A session from  
the Rx CD System*

**Rx**

# Evaluating What Is Said:

A person's openness to people and willingness to hear what other people are saying and not what they think they should say or are going to say.

## Why is this skill important?

People who are good at Evaluating What Is Said are able to objectively evaluate feedback and hear concerns, intentions, or opinions being stated by other people, as opposed to inserting their own feelings or opinions. Evaluating What Is Said can also be thought of as “balanced communication”—the fine line between talking too much and listening too little and listening too much and talking too little.

People who are not good at Evaluating What Is Said may subjectively perceive what they want based on pre-judged opinions or preset ideas as to what they think is happening. So why would someone not be good at Evaluating What Is Said?

1. He may be more focused on what he thinks is important than what others think is important.
2. He may lack confidence, which can cause him to talk too much.
3. He may want to show off his expertise, causing him to do a “data dump” on the other person/people.

Critical to the ability to Evaluate What Is Said is the positive appreciation of other people and their opinions and a positive approach to problem solving—being open to whatever solution may present itself as the most effective, depending on the situation.

How can you make sure you are a more balanced communicator, so that you can be more open to other people, and thus better at Evaluating What Is Said?

- First and foremost is to concentrate on the person or people you are interacting with. How does she talk? What is she interested in learning? What type of body language does she reveal?
- Make sure everyone has a chance to express himself. Don't be too forceful in asserting yourself at the expense of someone else's thoughts.
- Keep in mind that your opinions are just that—opinions. Be open to learning about new perspectives or methods, and be flexible enough to change your opinions.
- Make sure your communication with others is truly DIALOG—two-way communication. Listen as much as you talk!

## **What are skills associated with Evaluating What Is Said?**

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Evaluating What Is Said:

- Has exceptional listening skills.
- Has a positive appreciation of other people and their opinions.
- Is open to unbiased problem solving with a view to finding the most effective solutions.
- Does not project his or her own opinions or feelings onto other people's actions.
- Observes each new situation carefully, applying past experience to it, but seeking new information in it.
- Is a good communicator who seeks to establish true dialog with those with whom he communicates.

## **How do you develop your own Evaluating What Is Said skills?**

- Constantly allow other people to verbalize their feelings and reactions as you demonstrate a product, discuss a topic, or deliberate over a difficult problem.
- Never do more than 50 percent of the talking.
- Count to three or higher before you say anything after another person has spoken. It is far too easy to step on other people's words or interrupt them.
- Teach and allow yourself to ask the right questions, so that you will stay absolutely on target.
- Insert one question for every three declarative statements that you make.
- Focus on what the other person is telling you or showing you is important to him.
- Don't be a know-it-all. Give the impression that you know what you are doing and are a professional, but don't overdo it!
- Re-state what people have told you by paraphrasing it back to them to confirm that you understand their point.
- Work with other people to mutually solve problems or address issues.
- Seek balance in dialog. Try to listen as much as you talk, and make sure you are really listening to the other person's words and meanings.
- Don't try to anticipate what other people are going to say or how they are going to respond.
- Keep an open mind. People are not always as they seem, and they may not react as you suspect they will.
- Don't be defensive if someone offers you negative feedback. Instead, strive to understand their reasons for communicating the things they are communicating.
- Try not to prejudge people or situations. If you have a preset notion of what you think is going to happen, you may miss key parts of what really does happen.

- Work with others to brainstorm potential solutions to problem situations. Listen carefully to what others' expectations and requirements are, and try to be objective about determining what solution provides the best outcome.
- Recognize that the best solutions may not be the most obvious, and may not be your own ideas!
- Offer your respect and compassion to everyone you interact with.
- Don't take negative behavior from other people too personally. Try to truly hear what the person is telling you as well as "read between the lines" to determine what the core issues are.

## Evaluating What Is Said Activities

### Activity 1: Learning From Experience

Think of two situations recently in which you had a difficult or stressful discussion with someone else. This can be personal or professional. For each situation, answer the following questions:

1. What was the situation?
2. Was the situation difficult from the beginning, or did it grow difficult during the course of the discussion? Why or why not?
3. What was your own reaction to the tension?
4. What was the other person's/people's reaction?
5. What were you really trying to tell the other person/people? What were your main points?
6. What was the other person trying to tell you? What were his/her main points? Can you say? Why or why not?
7. What could you have done to understand the other person's opinions or feelings better?
8. What could he or she have done to understand your opinions or feelings better?
9. What can you do to avoid such situations in the future? How can you handle them better?

### Activity 2: Listening and Observing

Make a point of watching 3-5 formal presentations that you can see on television or in person. A few examples include: The next Presidential address, a briefing on C-SPAN, a local mayoral address, a lecture at the local university, etc.

Watch at least 15 minutes of each speech or lecture. Pay close attention to what the speaker is saying and how he/she is saying it.

- What are the main points?
- Why do you think he/she is expressing them?
- How is he/she expressing them?
- Does he/she seem happy? Angry? Enthusiastic? Why?
- How would you demonstrate the same points? Would you do it differently? Why?

### **Activity 3: Constructive Criticism**

Make an appointment to talk with two or three trusted peers, friends, or managers. It is best if each person has a different role in your professional life, and you should feel comfortable talking honestly with each person. Ask them for their honest feedback about how you approach discussions. What impressions do you give? Do you seem to understand what other people are saying? Do you seem respectful and open to others? How do people seem to react to you? What could you do better?

### **Activity 4: Improvement Plan**

Based on what you have learned in this lesson, and in the Activities 1-3, what are eight (8) things you personally can do to become better at Evaluating What Is Said? Make a list of those eight things, then keep it somewhere obvious on your desk or in your planner so you see it often. Make sure you choose a “start date” for each self-improvement goal.

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Date to Begin</b>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____