THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT SKILL EVERY AGILIST NEEDS

Agile 2015

Susan K DiFabio
skdifabio@gmail.com
@skdifabio
Have you ever been...

- a change agent?
- asked to coach a team?
- new to a group?
- recipient of feedback?
- in conflict?
- asked to create a solution?
Congratulations! You’ve had an opportunity to use active listening
An opportunity that is often missed!
WHAT IS ACTIVE LISTENING?
Behavior that fosters...

Accurate, thorough message receipt
Confirmed, shared understanding
Continued communication
Behavior that conveys your...

Authenticity
Acceptance
Appreciation
Same words
Same meaning
Inference
This infrastructure scares me to death

So… the infrastructure scares you to death…

Hmm… the infrastructure frightens you…

So… you feel like this infrastructure is a house of cards
Tentative, Clarifying, Confirming

What I think I heard was ...

Would this be an example?...

Let me recap... Did I get that right?

It sounds like your thinking was...

Thank-you for...
“You should/shouldn’t…”
“I know exactly how you feel…”
“Ain’t it awful…”
Your similar story
Get comfortable with silence...
One tool of many
Practicing

- Form Triads
- Identify worksheet responses as
  - Same words
  - Same meaning
  - Inference
  - other
- Add your own responses
Mark doesn’t have a clue about technology; he is totally unqualified for the PO role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hmm... Mark is clueless about technology...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I see... you think Mark is unqualified as the PO...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahh... Mark’s lack of skill makes it impossible for him to be effective in the PO role...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So.. You’re stuck working with an ineffective PO; You must be really frustrated....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what you mean; my PO doesn’t have a clue either.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe you could find him a different job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So... being technical is a pre-requisite for the PO role?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXPLORATORY LISTENING
Context
History
Motivation
Intent
Aspirations
Emergent ideas
Questions

- Clarifying
- Open/Closed
- Curious/Leading
- Inquiry/Inquisition
- Powerful
Curious, Clarifying, Non-Judgemental

I’m curious... <non judgmental question>

Can you give me an example?

And then what happened?

What else?

Tell me more about...

Thank you

© 2015 Susan DiFabio  skdifabio@gmail.com
“Why?”
Sarcasm
Blame
Beyond words

Draw – whiteboard, paper, flip charts

Build – Lego bricks, product box
You don’t need to agree, you do need to understand
Let’s Practice

• Triads – talker, listener, observer
• Talker, start the conversation
  – Issue, frustration, dilemma,…
• Observe listener’s
  – Reflective responses
  – Exploratory responses
• Debrief
FORMING NEW HABITS
It’s Difficult

• Reptile brain
• Corporate Culture
  – Efficiency
  – Prove-your-worth
  – Hierarchy
Recognize Your Cues

“To make a long story short…”
No one is hearing to you.
You are frustrated.

Actively listen now!
Intentional Practice

Coaching dojo
Coding katas
Improv “yes-and” games
Team mantra

KEYS: FEEDBACK & FUN
Game-ify

Infer correctly (2 points)
Same meaning (1 point)
Same words (0 points)

Infer incorrectly (-1 point)
Say what “I” want to say (-5 points)
I love this conference.

Yes, you love this conference. And it seems a lot of people do because it keeps growing every year.

Yes, it keeps growing every year. And now there are so many simultaneous sessions I don’t know which one to pick.

Yes, you don’t know which one to pick. And when that happens to me I just walk in the closest door.

Yes, you walk in the closest door, And I will follow you in.
Re-Frame

Judgment → Curiosity
Advocacy → Common ground
Win-Lose → Yes, And
Solutions now → Solve the right problem
Tips

“Why” questions → “What” questions
Listen with your ears → Listen with your hands
Fill the silence → Count to 10
Shape Your Path

Clean your whiteboards

Carry supplies with you

Write down your curious questions
Let’s Practice

• Triads – talker, listener, observer
• Talker, start the conversation
  – Issue, frustration, dilemma,…
• Observe listener’s
  – Reflective responses
  – Exploratory responses
• Debrief
BENEFITS
Active Listening
Trust
New insights
Collaboration
“Yes, and” results
It’s good for business!

© 2015 Susan DiFabio
skdifabio@gmail.com
Thank You

Susan DiFabio

http://skdifabio.com
SKDiFabio@gmail.com
@SKDiFabio
www.linkedin.com/in/SusanDiFabio