

MPS-52 Interpersonal skills

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The people side of problem solving

Usually we gather information from others, we interact with others and we may use teams to solve problems. Some skills that are useful include listening, building trust and using your uniqueness and that of others.

52.1 Pretest:

Awareness: how aware are you of your behaviour when you interact with others? Rate with an "x"

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Unaware				Aware of						Very aware
I just				Some						I can describe
do it										The details of
										how I do it

Skill: how skilled are you in interacting with others? Rate with an "x"

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor		Fair		Good		Very good				Excellent

Comments:

Some target behaviours for interpersonal skills are given in Table 52-1. Check these over and use this to keep track of your personal progress.

Now consider, in turn, listening, the fundamentals, building trust, personal uniqueness and checking out the environment.

52-1 Listening

Listening includes focusing attention on the talker, avoiding distracting behaviours, showing respect and frequently acknowledging through appropriate body language and "ahums" and reflecting statements. The process can be modeled as Sensing, Interpreting, Evaluating and Responding or SIER. That is, we sense the message; we internally interpret what is being communicated; we evaluate the message in the context of the situation, our feelings, needs and goals; and we select how to respond.

Here's what we know about listening:

- sensing the message is complex because about 55% of the message is communicated by body language, 38% by tone and 7% by the words;
- listening is about four times slower than thinking;
- about 80% of our waking hours are spent in verbal communication; with about 1/2 of that spent listening;
- untrained listeners understand and retain between 25 - 50% of a conversation;
- only about 5% self-assess themselves as being highly skilled listeners.

In TS, we usually need to gather key information from others. We ask them questions; we listen to their answers. Trouble shooters need to encourage the person to communicate clearly, to listen carefully and to interpret the answer correctly.

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Table 52-1 Evidence-based targets for problem solving

Evidence-based targets	Progress toward internalizing these targets				
	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
● Listening: most of verbal communication is through body language and tone					
● Listening is four times slower than thinking					
● Listening: untrained listeners retain only 25 - 50%.					
● Listening: attending, tracking and reflecting are skills to improve listening.					
● Fundamentals: we should claim and honour in others the seven fundamental RIGHTS.					
● Fundamentals: avoid the four destroyers of relationships : <i>"Did the contemptuous critter sit on defence or the stonewall"</i> .					
● Trust is the glue that holds relationships together; destroy trust and you destroy the relationship					
● Trust is based on integrity: keep commitment, clarify expectations, honest, loyal, apologize, see OPV					
● Trust is based on competency: you have the skill and abilities to do what you claim to be able to do					
● Trust is based on benevolence: not saying bad about a person when they are not present					
● You are unique; there is no one else like you; you have unique ways. That is valuable. Inventories (questionnaires) can help you identify your personal uniqueness					
● Others are unique, different from you. That is valuable.					
● By understanding the uniqueness of you and others you can work together more effectively					
● The most effective products are produced from team/groups of people who are different.					
● The more different the members of a team, the more opportunity there is for apparent conflict. By honouring and respecting each other's uniqueness we can better manage that apparent conflict. .					

Three listening skills to aid this process are: attending, following/tracking and comprehension checking/reflecting. Here are the details.

Attending: posture is inclined forward and open, facing squarely approximately 1 m apart; no distracting behaviour and eye contact is called “soft focus” (contrasted with looking away or staring).

Tracking /following: provides minimal encouragement (for example, “Tell me more”, “sure..” “Oh..”, “ Then ..”) and infrequent questions (for example, prefer “What?” questions to “Why?”) and attentive silence.

Reflecting is responding with a concise restatement of the content and feelings expressed in the listener’s own words. That is, include the content and feelings of what was said, express it in the listener’s own words, not add new ideas, not leave out ideas. Some example approaches include saying “As I understand it..” or “Are you saying that ..” Reflecting is usually used when someone is very emotional, or when you see differences developing between you and other person, when there is disagreement, when the talker seems to be confused or when the talker needs encouragement that his/her contribution is valuable.

Activity 52-1: Listening

Assess the quality of the listening by the engineer in the following situation. Note the five strengths and the two areas to work on.

Engineer Pierre goes out to the control room and says, “Hi Phil. I’m new here. I understand from Frank that you’re a great plant operator. I hear that we’ve got trouble on this VC. Let’s see, that gauge is vibrating all over the place, so is that one. Hey, this is a zoo. Don’t worry I’ll solve it soon.”

Activity 52-2: Reflecting

Operator Phil said “When the liquid level started to drop I went up and listened to the booster ejector and it sounded fine. The only thing I noticed was that the pressure gauge on the bay water line to the booster condenser was fluctuating wildly.”

Which of the following might you use to show Phil that you are listening to him?

- “Ahum”
- “Ok, please continue.”
- “As I understand it, the booster ejector sounded as you expected when the liquid level started to drop and the pressure gauge on the bay water line *really* fluctuated. Is that correct?”
- “Why is that noteworthy, Phil?”
- “I’m listening”

f. Other

52-2 Fundamentals of interaction

The fundamentals of interaction are summed up in the seven RIGHTS and the four destroyers. Consider each in turn.

● Claim and honor the seven fundamental rights of individuals, RIGHTS (Woods, 1994)

R the right to Respected

I the right to Inform or to have an opinion and express it

G the right to have Goals and needs and express these.

H the right to Have feelings and express them.

T the right to have had Trouble and make mistakes and be forgiven.

S the right to Select your response to other’s expectations.

and the right to Claim these rights and honor these in others.

● Avoid the four destroyers of relationships (Woods, 1994):

Contempt

Criticism

Withdrawal and stonewalling

Defensiveness.

I remember these by recalling the phrase “Did the contemptuous critter sit on *de fence* or the *stone wall*?”

Activity 52-3: Fundamental rights and destroyers

Analyze the conversation and identify claiming of rights, honoring rights in others and evidence of the four destroyers.

Two engineers Tonya and Marcos are trouble shooting a problem involving a distillation column that is malfunctioning. Let’s listen in on their conversation.

The parts of the conversation are coded to guide discussion.

Tonya: “OK, the six hypotheses are (i) 1. tray collapsed in the stripping section, 2. too much bottoms fed to the debutanizer, 3. too much overheads in the feed, 4. feed valve FV1 stuck, 5. pump F-26 not working, 6. not enough feed to the column (ii). What do you think? (iii)

Marcos: “It’s got to be a collapsed tray. (iv) I encountered something like that on the S256 plant last year. Same evidence. It’s got to be a tray. (v)”

Tonya: “Hey! (vi) You’ve done it. (vii) You’ve zeroed in on one hypothesis when we need to keep an open mind and do some simple checks first. (viii)”

Marcos: "Don't get huffy about it.(ix) I'm just trying to get this solved fast. (x) My experience tells me it's the tray! So what great insight are you bringing to this problem? (xi) Ms. Smarty. (xii) Besides your hypothesis #6 is a symptom, and not a root cause. (xiii)"

Tonya: "Now you resort to criticizing my hypotheses. (xiv) That's not fair (xv)"

52-3 Trust

- Build and maintain trust. Trust glues relationships together. Trust is based on integrity, competency and benevolence (not doing anything that will hurt the other purpose).

We build trust by such acts of integrity as:

- keeping commitments to yourself and others.
- clarifying expectations that you have of yourself and of others.
- showing personal integrity, honesty and loyalty to others.
- promptly and sincerely apologizing when you know you are wrong.
- honoring the fundamental RIGHTS listed above and avoiding the destroyers.
- taking time to see things from the perspectives of others.
- accepting others "warts and all."

and by such benevolent acts as:

- not saying ill of the person behind his/her back or when they are not present.

We destroy trust by

- the reverse of the Builders of trust listed above, and
- not meeting commitments.
- selectively listening, reading and using material out of context.
- not accepting the experience of others as being valid.
- asking others to give up their fundamental RIGHTS.

and such no-benevolent acts as:

- making changes that affect others without consultation.
- playing the broken record until you've eventually worn them out.
- subtly making changes in the context/issues/wording gradually so that they are unaware of what is happening until it is too late. They were sideswiped.

Activity 52-4: Trust

Someone requests "Would you please be chair of the upcoming conference. It won't take much work and you are the ideal person to do it" Your situation is that you have been chair of a similar conference before; this would take the equivalent of at least 2 months of concerted effort. You have promised your family to spend more time with them. You are just barely managing to meet your commitments now. The conference will draw many from abroad and being chair would bring you a lot of personal satisfaction as well as increase your visibility and reputation. How do you respond?

Activity 52-5: Self assess trust

Complete the inventory about trust given in Table 52-2

52-4 Building on another's personal uniqueness

- The Unique You and the Unique Them. Each of us has our biases, prejudices and preferences or style. A variety of questionnaires and inventories can be used to help understand preferred styles for managing conflict, making decisions, applying creativity, differing style of conversing, validating ideas, gathering and using data, accounting for facts versus feelings and considering details versus the big picture. Inventories of Johnson and Johnson (1986), Kirton (KAI: 1976), and Jung (MBTI: 1984) are examples of such inventories. Your style is unique; it will differ from others. Accept, respect and improve the quality of your interaction through these differences. Do not let these differences lead to conflict.

We should also recognize the personal tendency or bias to prefer to report interpretation and inferences, instead of "just the facts".

52-5 You and Your Environment

Table 52-3 gives you a chance to think about the environment in which you solve problems and trouble shoot.

Table 52-2 Trust

Trust is having confidence that you can mutually reveal aspects of yourself and your work without fear of reprisals, embarrassment or publicity.

Trust works both ways: you trust them and they trust you. Trust is not developed overnight, trust takes time to develop. Trust can be destroyed by one incorrect act.

Check your current status

Building your trustworthiness getting them to trust you

	already do this	needs some work	need lots of work	unsure if this is for me
1. Do what you say you will do.	0	0	0	0
2. Be willing to self disclose: don't hide your shortcomings; share yourself honestly.	0	0	0	0
3. Listen carefully to others and reflect to validate your interpretation.	0	0	0	0
4. Understand what really matters to others; do your best to look out for their best interests.	0	0	0	0
5. Ask for feedback.	0	0	0	0
6. Don't push others to trust you more than you trust them.	0	0	0	0
7. Don't confuse "Being a buddy" with trustworthiness.	0	0	0	0
8. Tell the truth.	0	0	0	0
9. Keep confidences.	0	0	0	0
10. Honor and claim the 7 RIGHTS.	0	0	0	0
11. Don't embarrass them.				

Checking your trustworthiness do they trust you?

	always	most times	sometimes	don't think applies
1. Do they disclose confidential information trusting that you will keep it confidential?	0	0	0	0
2. Do they assign you challenging tasks to do without frequently checking up on you?	0	0	0	0
3. Do they honor your RIGHTS?	0	0	0	0
4. Do they seem to look out for your best interests?	0	0	0	0
5. Honest and forthright.	0	0	0	0
6. Do not leave you feeling that they haven't told you everything about the situation; they seem to be holding back.	0	0	0	0

MPS 52-6

Activity 52-6: The unique you

You are on a trouble shooting team with the following people whose personal style are given in the following table. Write in your scores.

	Johnson style for conflict					Jungian				Kirton
	Withd	Accom	Force	Comp	Nego- tiate	IE	TF	PJ	SN	
You										
Marie	-1	2	-3.5	3.4	9	I	T	J	S	82
Phil	-6.1	1.3	-5.8	0.6	7.5	E	F	P	S	98
Jean	-1.1	3.7	-3.1	2.4	6.7	E	T	J	S	87
Terry	-4.1	3.5	-6.4	1.2	7.8	E	F	P	N	83

1. Where are your blind spots? Describe this in actions. For example, if you are a dominant S then your blind spot might be *seeing the big picture, focusing too much on the details.*
2. Does the team have any blind spots?
3. With whom might you have minimum differences? What are those differences?
4. With whom will you have maximum differences? What are those differences?
5. How can you build on this to trouble shoot efficiently and well.

Table 52-3 Feedback about your Environment

To what extent do you agree with the following descriptors of your environment where you usually "trouble shoot" or solve problems.

People are Willing to admit error: "The people that I work with are very unwilling to admit errors; they blame others, they pass the buck and, if necessary, would purposely mislead me rather than to admit error."

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

Encourage risk taking: "Risking is rewarded. We are expected to take risks about 10 times a day. Risks should be wisely, not indiscriminately selected. But, nevertheless, we are not only encouraged but we are rewarded for risk taking."

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

General Stress at work they are under: "Their environment is very stressful. People have many deadlines and interruptions. The consequences of making mistakes is very high. The issues are complex. The environment changes often and includes a lot of uncertainty."

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

General Stress at work you are under: "My environment is not stressful. I do not have many deadlines or interruptions. The consequences of making mistakes is low. The issues are straight-forward. The environment is safe, stable and secure."

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

People's Listening & Responding: "The people are open, communicate well, can clearly identify *facts*, will offer opinion when asked for, and are very competent but are not aggressive "know-it-alls".

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

Table 52-4 Risk Inventory

How easy or difficult do you find it to present yourself consistently over a long period as:

Rate each statement with a value between 1 to 5. Please do not use fractions. Use

- 1 = very hard (that is, I disagree with the statement as it describes me)
- 2 = hard
- 3 = mid
- 4 = easy
- 5 = very easy (that is, I agree with this statement)

	rate
1. A person who is patient.	
2. A person who can say no to people.	
3. A person who is willing to make a statement that will anger others.	
4. A person who is unwilling to be the center of attention, even for a short time.	
5. A person who rarely procrastinates.	
6. A person who never acts without proper authority.	
7. A person who can express and deal with conflict from another person at work.	
8. A person who is unwilling to express confusion and uncertainty openly in front of others.	
9. A person who circumvents orders that would stop a dream project.	
10. A person who accepts own weaknesses.	
11. A person who never seeks to bend (much less break) the rules	
12. A person who generally expects to succeed.	
13. A person who lives as you wish regardless of what others think.	
14. A person who has trouble coping with the ups and downs of life.	
15. A person who levels with others and speaks your mind even if you lose friends because of this.	
16. A person who is willing to exceed own authority and role to get the job done.	
17. A person who does not like to explore subject areas in which you have little knowledge.	
18. A person who is unwilling to stick your neck out in relations with others.	
19. A person who believes that the surest way to get disappointed is to want something too much.	
20. A person who will only work on a team project if the best people are on it.	
21. A person who feels you could have done as well or better, when you see the successful accomplishments of others.	
22. A person who feels right without having to please others.	
23. A person who enjoys privacy and detachment.	
24. A person who is assertive and positive.	
25. A person who enjoys variety and a lot of traveling.	
26. A person who feels comfortable with less than perfect performance.	
27. A person who believes that honesty is always the best policy.	
28. A person who can express anger and dissatisfaction with supervisor.	
29. A person who prefers to compete in competitive games.	
30. A person who accepts own mistakes.	
31. A person who finds that some people are stupid and uninteresting.	
32. A person who announces your dream project early to see how others react to it.	

Jungian Typology: Just as every person has different shaped feet and toes from every other person, so we all have different ways of doing things. Just as no person's foot shape is right or wrong, so no person's style of doing things is right or wrong. The purpose of this inventory is to give you a picture of your preferences. This has nothing to do with mental health or mental problems nor about your abilities.

The following 32 items are arranged in pairs (a and b) and each item in the pair represents a preference you may have. Rate your preference for each item by giving a score from 0 to 5 (0 means you really feel this does **not** describe your preference; 5 means this does describe you). The scores for a and b **MUST ADD UP TO FIVE**. Please do not use fractions.

I prefer:

1. making decisions.....
 1a ___ after finding out what others think,
 1b ___ without consulting others,
- 2 being called
- 2a ___ imaginative or intuitive
 2b ___ factual and accurate
- 3 making decisions about people in organizations based on
 3a ___ available data and systematic analysis of situations
 3b ___ empathy, feelings and understanding of their needs and values
- 4a, ___ allowing commitments to occur if others want to make them
 4b ___ pushing for definite commitments to ensure that they are made
- 5a, ___ quiet, thoughtful time alone,
 5b ___ active energetic time with people
- 6a, ___ using methods I know well that are effective to get the job done,
 6b ___ trying to think of new methods of doing tasks when confronted with them,
- 7 drawing conclusions based on....
 7a ___ unemotional logic & careful step-by-step analysis,
 7b ___ what I feel and believe about life and people from past experiences,
- 8a, ___ avoiding making deadlines,
 8b ___ setting a schedule and sticking to it,
- 9a ___ talking awhile & then thinking to myself about the subject
 9b ___ talking freely for an extended period & thinking to myself later,
- 10a ___ thinking about possibilities,
 10b ___ dealing with actualities
- 11 being thought of as a
 11a ___ thinking person,
 11b ___ feeling person
- 12a ___ considering every possible angle for a long time before & after making a decision,
 12b ___ getting the information I need, considering it for a while, & then making a fairly quick, firm decision
- 13a ___ inner thoughts and feelings others cannot see,
 13b ___ activities and occurrences in which others join,
- 14a ___ the abstract or theoretical,
 14b ___ the concrete or real
- 15a ___ helping others exploit their feelings,
 15 b ___ helping others make logical decisions
- 16a ___ change and keeping options open,
 16b ___ predictability and knowing in advance
- 17a, ___ communicating little of my inner thinking & feelings,
 17b ___ communicating freely my inner thinking & feelings,
- 18a ___ possible views of the whole
 18b ___ the factual details available
- 19a ___ using common sense & convictions to make decisions
 19b ___ using data, analysis & reason to make decisions
- 20a ___ planning ahead on projections,
 20b ___ planning as necessities arise, just before carrying out the plans,
- 21a ___ meeting new people
 21b ___ being alone or with one person I know well
- 22a ___ ideas
 22b ___ facts
- 23a ___ convictions
 23b ___ verifiable conclusions
- 24a ___ keeping appointments & notes about commitments in notebooks or Blackberry as much as possible
 24b ___ using appointment books, Blackberry as minimally as possible (although I may see them)
- 25a ___ discussing a new, unconsidered issue at length in a group
 25b ___ puzzling out issues in my mind, then sharing the results with others
- 26a ___ carrying out carefully-laid, detailed plans with precision
 26b ___ designing plans & structures without necessarily carrying them out
- 27a ___ logical people
 27b ___ feeling people
- 28a ___ being free to do things on the spur of the moment,
 28b ___ knowing well in advance what I am expected to do
- 29a ___ being the center of attention
 29b ___ being reserved
- 30a ___ imagining the nonexistent,
 30b ___ examining details of the actual
- 31a ___ experiencing emotional situations, discussions, movies
 31b ___ using my ability to analyze situations
- 32a ___ starting meetings at a pre-arranged time
 32b ___ starting meetings when all are comfortable or ready

Scoring: Transfer your score from each item to the correct blanks below. Please be careful to check the a and b letters to be sure you are recording the scores in the correct column. The total for each dimension must be 40.

The NS dimension		The TS dimension		The IE dimension		The PJ dimension	
2a _____	2b _____	3a _____	3b _____	1b _____	1a _____	4a _____	4b _____
6b _____	6a _____	7a _____	7b _____	5a _____	5b _____	8a _____	8b _____
10a _____	10b _____	11a _____	11b _____	9a _____	9b _____	12a _____	12b _____
14a _____	14b _____	15b _____	15a _____	13a _____	13b _____	16a _____	16b _____
18 a _____	18b _____	19b _____	19a _____	17a _____	17b _____	20b _____	20a _____
22a _____	22b _____	23b _____	23a _____	21b _____	21a _____	24b _____	24a _____
26b _____	26a _____	27a _____	27b _____	25b _____	25a _____	28a _____	28b _____
30a _____	30b _____	31b _____	31a _____	29b _____	29a _____	32b _____	32a _____
Total N _____	Total S _____	Total T _____	Total F _____	Total I _____	Total E _____	Total P _____	Total J _____

The highest score in each dimension suggests your preference. For example, if your score for the NS dimension is N = 18 and S = 22 then you might have a slight preference toward S.

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MPS 52-12

Table 52-6. Instruments to help you identify your uniqueness.

Instrument	Main themes	Completion time- Scoring time	Related MPS unit and why
1. Jungian typology; (Myers Briggs, MBTI)	Four styles: S-N T-F I-E P-J	10 min 5 min self score	SN for note-taking in MPS 12 and 35 and for conflict in MPS 45. SN and TF for studying for exams in MPS 5, 12 and 35. Use PJ for decision making MPS 24 and trouble shooting, MPS 35. Use IE for interpersonal skills MPS 52 and group skills MPS 29.
2. Basadur Ideation	Ideation and judgement	16 questions	To show attitudinal shifts pre and post creativity unit MPS 7; helps develop confidence in skill acquisition.
3. Risk (similar to Kirton KAI)	apply creativity within the existing constraints or to modify the constraints	32 questions 15 min	how you use creativity MPS 7 on creativity and MPS56, networking and MPS 32, implementation
4. Johnson's conflict resolution	preferred style in coping with conflict	10 min 3 self minute	gives indication of the ease in using each of five different styles as needed. MPS 45 conflict resolution. MPS 52 interpersonal skills; MPS 28, group skills
5. Shutz' s FIRO-B	want and expect during the three stages of group evolution	10 min 10 min	indicates style related to forming, storming and performing stages of group behavior MPS 28 and 29 on groups and chairperson skills
6. Holmes-Rhae; or Holmes-Gmelch	annual stress related to change	10 min	total indicates amount of stress MPS 5
7. Kellner and Sheffield	self image, long term and short term stress	10 min 5 min self	MPS 5, stress, & MPS 12 learning