LEAD AS COACH

FREE GUIDE FOR LEADERS

Active Listening: A 10-Step Leader's Guide

Listen to understand, not to respond.

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Practical steps	Mindset shift	Phrases to use	Simple routine	Slides

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START HERE

Listening is a leadership skill

Active listening is more than hearing words. It is about understanding, empathising and responding in ways that build trust and connection. For leaders, it is one of the most practical ways to unlock what a team can do. Here are ten steps you can start using today.

BEFORE AND DURING THE CONVERSATION

1

Adopt the active listening mindset

Start by asking yourself: am I listening to respond, or listening to understand? Shift your focus from preparing your reply to fully taking in what is being said.

2

Be present

Your full attention is a gift. Commit to the conversation: silence internal and external distractions and engage fully with the speaker.

3

Create the right environment

Find a quiet, private space free from interruptions. The setting signals respect and shows that the conversation matters to you.

4

Centre yourself before the conversation

Take a moment to notice your own mindset. Are you bringing assumptions or emotions into the conversation that might cloud your judgement?

5

Reflect back what you hear

Mirror the speaker's key words. It reinforces understanding and shows that you are fully engaged in what they are saying.

6

Summarise the key points

After listening, summarise the speaker's main points briefly. It keeps both of you aligned and makes the conversation clearer.

RESPONDING AND CLOSING

7

Paraphrase to show understanding

Put the core message into your own words. It shows you have grasped it and strengthens mutual understanding.

8

Pre-frame your response

Signal what you are about to do, so the other person stays with you.

Try: "I heard you say..." or "To summarise what I think you meant..."

9

Post-frame to confirm

After responding, check that you understood correctly.

Try: "Can I check if that was accurate?" or "How close was that to what you meant?"

10

Ask powerful questions

End your listening with questions that serve the speaker, not your own curiosity.

Try: "What does that mean for you?" or "How do you see this playing out?"

A SIMPLE ROUTINE

Before your next one-to-one, pick two steps from this guide. Use them, then ask yourself afterwards what the other person said that you would normally have missed.

PRACTISE IT, DON'T JUST READ IT

Listening is at the heart of every Lead as Coach program

In our programs, leaders practise listening live, in pairs and small groups, with feedback from ICF PCC coaches. No slides.

Coach Edition · ICF Level 1 | **Manager Edition · 37 hours** | **Free live session**

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More free tools: The Manager's Coaching Toolkit and 100 Powerful Coaching Questions at leadascoach.com/resources

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