

# Effective Listening

## Evaluation of a Course at Allen-Bradley Company

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An article called "A Note of Caution on Listening Training" appeared in the May 1967 issue of the *Training and Development Journal*. The author, Harold Crawford of Honeywell, discussed the evaluation results of a purchased audio-programmed course on "listening." Although the evaluation showed improvement for 8 out of 10 trainees, Crawford cautioned that the apparent improvement may have been influenced by "a post-test that automatically insures that the trainees will get a substantially higher score at the end of the program."<sup>1</sup> He also suggested the need for additional program content besides that offered in the purchased course.

In January, 1966, a course in "Effective Listening" was developed and piloted at Allen-Bradley Company in Milwaukee. Crawford's comments were

considered in the design and evaluation of the course.

### Program Design

The Allen-Bradley "Effective Listening" program consisted of a series of four 1½ hour sessions. A two-week period separated each session. Group size was limited to 25 supervisors. The objectives of the course were to improve knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for effective listening. Program content included the following:  
*Session 1*

1. Pretest of listening skills.
2. Analysis of barriers to effective listening.
3. The need for effective listening.

Conference Leader: Dr. D. L. Kirkpatrick

### *Session 2*

Practice in listening. The first part of the *Basic Systems* (Xerox) pro-

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grammed instruction course was used.  
Leader: Member of Allen-Bradley's  
training committee

#### Session 3

Practice in listening. The second  
part of the *Basic Systems* (Xerox)  
programmed instruction course was  
used.

Leader: Member of Allen-Bradley's  
training committee

#### Session 4

1. Discussion of principles of effective listening.
2. Re-emphasis of the need for effective listening.
3. Posttest of listening skills.

Conference Leader: Dr. D. L. Kirkpatrick

### Supplementary Materials

The following handouts were given  
to each participant:

1. "Developing Good Listening Habits" by Harold Zelko, Pennsylvania State University
2. "Ten Commandments for Good Listening," from *Human Relations in Business*, by Keith Davis, McGraw-Hill
3. "Listening Is a Ten-Part Skill," by R. G. Nichols, University of Minnesota
4. "Listening—The Missing Link in Communication," by C. J. Dover of Chrysler Corporation

Selected questions from the "Supervisory Inventory of Communication" were administered to the group to measure knowledge and understanding of listening principles. These items were discussed in the course.

### Program Evaluation

Several methods were used to determine the effectiveness of the training program. These methods are described in detail in Dr. Kirkpatrick's chapter on "Evaluation of Training" in the new ASTD *Training and Development*

*Handbook*.<sup>3</sup>

### Reaction

The immediate reaction of the 340 conferees was measured by means of the comment sheet shown in Table I. Some of the typical comments:

"well organized and interesting material"

"an effective, common every day type leader who put us at ease, yet kept our interest"

"humor and illustrations were a definite help to class"

"he covers subject thoroughly"

"have this course given to all people in the factory"

"more practice"

"add another session with more difficult listening situations"

### Learning

In order to measure learning, a pretest and posttest comparison of 170 conferees was made. The pretest given at the start of the program to measure listening skills, included:

1. Part "A" of the "Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension Test."<sup>4</sup>
2. Part "B" of the listening test provided by *Basic Systems* (Xerox). (This was the posttest of the Honeywell program.)

The posttest given at the conclusion of the six-hour course, included:

1. Part "A" of the "Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension Test." (This was identical to the pretest. The participants did not know the results of their pretest.)
2. Part "A" of the listening test provided by *Basic Systems* (Xerox). (This was the pretest in the Honeywell evaluation.)

Table II shows the results of the pretest and posttest.

### Behavior

After six months an evaluation was

Table I

**Evaluation of Reaction**

1. How would you rate the subject content?
 

91 Excellent	54 Good	1 Poor
185 Very Good	9 Fair	
2. How would you rate the conference leader?
 

135 Excellent	28 Good	0 Poor
174 Very Good	3 Fair	
3. How would you rate the "Basic Systems" programmed material?
 

46 Excellent	92 Good	2 Poor
180 Very Good	20 Fair	
4. To what extent do you feel you benefitted?

	<i>To a Large Extent</i>	<i>To Some Extent</i>	<i>Very Little</i>
A. Understanding the need for better listening .....	280	51	9
B. Understanding the barriers to effective listening .....	244	94	2
C. Improving my listening skills .....	154	183	3

Table II

**Evaluation of Learning**

*Ideas* (Basic Systems - Xerox)  
(N=170)

Pretest Average Score	—	50.30	
Posttest Average Score	—	64.13	(Maximum is 100)
Increase in Score	—	13.83	

Highly Significant — Above 99.9%

*Facts* (Brown-Carlson)  
(N=170)

Pretest Average Score	—	10.26	
Posttest Average Score	—	11.80	(Maximum is 17)
Increase in Score	—	1.54	

Highly Significant — Above 99.9%

made of change in listening behavior. A questionnaire was given to 119 individuals who completed the course. Responses were received from 107.

Their responses have been summarized below.

1. *Since taking the course, do you feel you listen better than you did before the course?*

51 definitely ...	5 I'm not sure
49 I think so ...	2 no ...

- a) *If yes . . .*  
*Do you listen better in meetings you attend?*  
 98 Yes            1 No
- b) *If yes . . .*  
*Do you listen better to subordinates?*  
 95 Yes            4 No

*Some of the comments on "listening at meetings" were:*

- "I concentrate"  
 "I have improved in ability to resist distractions . . ."  
 "Better at catching main points"  
 "I try to get the purpose of what is being presented and why"  
 "I've learned to 'work at listening'"  
 "I'm more aware of listening barriers and work more consciously to overcome them"  
 "I find myself better able to concentrate and think ahead of the speaker"  
 "I am listening for the key points which are discussed in different departmental and technical meetings."

*Some of the comments on "listening to subordinates" were:*

- "by letting other people talk freely, much more information is volunteered freely"  
 "Try to get and understand their viewpoint better"  
 "I've learned to listen more and interrupt only when necessary"  
 "I now give them more of a chance to talk, where as before I did most of the talking"  
 "I try to give them my full attention"

*Some of the comments on better "listening in other situations" were:*

- "to my wife"  
 "to the family"  
 "at home, with our families and friends"  
 "with salesmen and demonstrations"  
 "I think I have improved in all situations"

"socially"  
 "Church - lodge - wife - kids"  
 "Radio - TV - church"  
 "I used to talk more than I listened. Now I get so busy listening that people have remarked "you have been so quiet lately." For years I have not been reading the daily paper. Some months ago, for reasons that I can't explain, I started reading the daily paper rather completely—I would say that when I switched from talking to listening I created a desire to know and to understand. I used to take pride in my talking. Now, I have satisfaction and understanding from listening."

2. *What part of the course was the most helpful to you in improving your listening?*

"factors that cause poor listening"  
 "understanding how important listening really is"  
 "the test shock of learning how little I heard"  
 "The tape—where you had to listen for the point the speaker was trying to make and list them"  
 "your crazy tape recordings"  
 "how bad I did listen"

3. *What would have made the course more effective?*

"The course seemed satisfactory as is. The subject was covered and practice time was given"  
 "A film in the first session"  
 "another period to practice, discuss, and summarize would have helped"  
 "The course seemed quite sophisticated and really quite flexible. eg. where the group or individual had a weak spot, the instructor could dwell in these areas. At the moment I doubt if I could offer any real constructive criticism"  
 "No suggestions. It was short, but it did the trick for me."  
 "A little more practice might help"  
 "More live listening sessions"

## Summary and Conclusions

The Allen-Bradley course in "Effective Listening" was given to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To increase understanding of the barriers to effective listening.
2. To improve attitudes toward the importance of listening.
3. To improve listening skills.

A six-hour course was planned to discuss barriers and principles as well

as to provide listening practice. Four sessions of 1½ hours each were scheduled with two weeks between meetings. Sessions 1 and 4 were aimed at improving understanding and attitudes; sessions 2 and 3 were planned to improve skill.

The evaluation included measures of reaction, learning and behavior. All of the evaluation results indicated that the program was effective.

## References

1. Tests used in program described in the article are obsolete and Xerox has been supplying new testing material.
2. Dr. D. L. Kirkpatrick, 4380 Continental Drive, Brookfield, Wisconsin 53005..
3. Craig and Bittel. *Training and Development Handbook*, McGraw-Hill, 1967.
4. "Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension Test," Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.

## USOE Increases

### Nurse Refresher Training

Twenty-six additional nurse refresher courses have been added to the U.S. Office of Education's Manpower Development and Training program for FY 1968, it was announced by Wilbur J. Cohen, Acting Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. These new projects will allow some 3,500 inactive nurses to get the training they need to re-enter the labor market. Many of the nurses have been out of their field long enough to raise families, but now are free to work either part or full time.

"The acute shortage of qualified nurses has made it imperative that the Federal Government help provide training for those who wish to return

to the health professions," said Acting Secretary Cohen.

The added nurse refresher courses will retrain professionals at a cost of about \$300 per trainee, for a total of some \$1 million over the ongoing State grant programs in the same field. The new funds are being transferred to HEW from the Department of Labor's unallocated MDTA reserve.

Nearly 6,500 persons have been trained under the nurse refresher programs since fiscal year 1967. "By the end of the current fiscal year nurse refresher courses will have helped 10,000 registered nurses return to the health field," Acting Secretary Cohen said.

