

A communication coaching business model created to address concerns surrounding lack of
human skills in organizations

by

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Abstract

Human skills, especially communication, are highly sought-after traits in employees. They are also some of the most elusive traits that organizations struggle to find. While communication skills are in use every day, practice must continue to occur to see improvement. This report looks at the need for communication training within organizations through continued professional development. While many models exist for communication training, many do not incorporate the appropriate methods for helping adults learn. Using assumptions and principles from the theory of andragogy, coupled with the GROW model for coaching, a business model emerges that focuses on the adult learner. Participants will use their desire to drive the process with the facilitator about specific knowledge, skills, or training. Learners will then use that knowledge to apply to experiences within their life and set goals to begin using their new skills. Through one-on-one coaching sessions, adult learners will guide their journey to learning how to practice and become better communicators.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	v
List of Tables	vi
Acknowledgments.....	vii
Chapter 1 Why Can't You Communicate?	1
Chapter 2 The Tools Needed for Change	6
Organizational Communication.....	6
Theory of Andragogy.....	8
Coaching.....	15
The Audit.....	19
Moving Forward.....	22
Chapter 3 Pathway to Change.....	23
Chapter 4 Successful Communication Moving Forward.....	30
References.....	33
Appendix A - Active Listening Lesson Plan	38

List of Figures

Figure 1 <i>Virtual and Face-to-Face Training Compared</i>	21
Figure 2 <i>Coach versus Teaching Comparison</i>	21
Figure 3 <i>SLK Communication Coaching-Outline of Tiers</i>	26

List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Timeline of SLK Communication Coaching - Goals and Objectives Timeline</i>	24
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Chapter 1 Why Can't You Communicate?

In 2018, the Society for Human Resource Management reported that over 75% of hiring employers believed communication skills essential. Additionally, Eich (2020) argued that the top three skills necessary to succeed in the workplace were communication, creativity, and innovation. However, over 55% of employers found it challenging to find a candidate proficient with all three skills (Wilkie, 2020). While students took courses around technical skills needed for their profession, employers reported that a disconnect had developed in communication and leadership skills required for the workplace (Jackson, Lower & Rudman, 2016). People assume that communication is something that everyone does naturally, but it is a skill that requires continuous development and intentional practice (Jelphs, 2006).

The phrase "communication" has become a term that includes various topics such as effective marketing, managing and creating social media content, writing persuasively, creating PowerPoint presentations, and more. Even the loose coupling of the terms "communication" and "communications" suggests further convolution. To the untrained eye, it appears that the only difference is the plurality of the word. However, these terms reflect different understandings of communication. "Communication" studies messages sent, received, and interpreted through symbolism (Steinberg, 1995). "Communications" is the study of more technical and physical mediums, looking at the technical efficiency and performance of those mediums during the act of communicating (Steinberg, 1995). In short, developing proficiency in "communication" and "communications" can help employees to be efficient and effective by increasing critical thinking, enhancing problem-solving abilities, and managing relationships in their professional and personal lives.

To provide new and experienced employees the communication tools necessary to be successful both personally and professionally, we look at current training. Many new employees report that training and onboarding when they began their job was "trial by fire" (White, 2005). Orientation for these employees often included showing a new hire their office, signing a few pieces of paperwork (White, 2005). After the human resource officer left, there was no instruction of what to do next (White, 2005). This type of training is called "on the job training" (White, 2005). This training is the most inexpensive but is also the most inefficient and ineffective form of employee development. A look at the reason for poor training shows that Aten, Salem, Caniac, & Williamson (2019) found a lack of support from those in supervisory positions, inadequate resources, and a lack of training opportunities. Successful training programs enhance the retention and effectiveness of employees. Long-term training programs (12 months) keep employees with companies for an extended time compared to short-term training programs (Bauer, 2010). Employees that go through a practical and structured training program are over 50% more likely to remain in their position for three or more years and experience greater productivity (Hirsch, 2017). A third of new employees will quit their job within the first six months because they do not feel engaged in their company due to a lack of training (Hirsch, 2017). The cost of replacing an employee who leaves is two to three times their salary, meaning that the price for not engaging and adequately training employees adds up to over \$1 trillion annually (TELUS International, 2020; Wigert & McFeely, 2021). Communication is an institutional element of organizations. Communication creates programs for employees that are essential for organizations to decrease turnover and encourage happier and more productive employees, increasing revenue and profit margins.

The COVID pandemic in 2020 demonstrated to the world how vital human skills are, especially during personal and professional hard times (Lepeley et al., 2021). In the context of this report, human skills refer to interpersonal interactions amongst employees. Companies, organizations, schools, businesses, and universities had to rethink their processes and procedures (Lepeley et al., 2021). Organizations saw the importance, value, and ultimately lack of human skills in the United States (Lepeley et al., 2021). Many of us have changed the way that we think and operate. As we adjust to the new normal in the post-pandemic world, it is time to address the lack of human skills training for employees by providing the knowledge and information to help these individuals develop and continue to finesse these elusive but basic skills. Human skills offer both employees and organizations increased performance, abilities, efficiency, and profit (Elnaga & Imran, 2013; Mahmood, Hee, Yin & Hamli, 2018).

Current research and theory on adult education will guide the creation of an effective training program. Adults are independent and self-guided in their learning style, which requires a different method for teaching (Taylor & Kroth, 2009; Maddalena, 2015). This teaching method uses the theory of andragogy to create a learning environment for adults (Knowles, 1972). One of the founders of andragogy, Malcolm Knowles, argues that adults learn differently from youth in six ways: self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learn, motivation to learn, and the need to know (Knowles, 1972; Taylor & Kroth, 2009). Adults have very independent and unique experiences throughout their lifetime, shaping how they interact and engage with new information (Knowles, 1972; Taylor & Kroth, 2009). These experiences and interactions impact how adults learn, which is at the heart of andragogy (Maddalena, 2015).

The theory of andragogy changes the teaching and educational approach when adults are the learners (Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2014). This change can be enhanced and amplified by also implementing "coaching." The definition of coaching is:

"a human development process that involves a structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools, and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders. (Cox et al., 2014, p. 1)."

The act of coaching correlates with andragogy principles as the attention is now on the learner. Integrating the principles of andragogy with an individual, interactive experience on the adult learner will help them be more successful in a world surrounded with communication (Cox, 2015).

Organizations' objectives for professional development training often differ from employees' goals (Aten et al., 2019). Training provided by organizations is inadequate because it is not thought out, taught correctly, nor implemented appropriately (Aten et al., 2019). The training received through formal education and current organizational professional development is not enough for a professional environment (Aten et al., 2019). Presently, employees' professional development is conducted in an unsuitable modality and often strictly subject-based. As communication scholars, now is the time to seize this opportunity and begin to rectify problems to allow employees to be more successful. This report was born out of a desire to help others gain practical and meaningful communication skills by utilizing the theory of andragogy and coaching strategies. This report creates a business model geared towards workplace professionals who desire to change, learn, and improve their communication positively.

This report includes four chapters. Chapter 1 explains the importance of communication training and introduces the theory of andragogy. Chapter 2 is an in-depth analysis of the literature and theoretical framework. It will also explore current training and coaching programs that exist. Chapter 3 explains the proposed training model and a detailed example of one session. Finally, Chapter 4 is a discussion of any implications associated with the training. From beginning to end, the report will serve as a proposed business model for a communication coaching company that I will continue to explore after completing my master's degree. This section contains the aims and objectives of the report.

Chapter 2 The Tools Needed for Change

There are four sections within chapter two. First, it will look at the history of organizational communication theory and how it mirrors company structures throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Next, we will take an in-depth look into the theory of andragogy by exploring the assumptions, principles, and practices. Then, we will examine coaching, what it is, and the effectiveness of different models. Finally, we will discuss current communication coaching and training trends, what currently exists, and how this report is different from the status quo.

Organizational Communication

Communication within an organization is vital. Poor communication can cost companies billions of dollars in lost time, low employee morale, and inefficiencies (Harris & Nelson, 2019; Organizations Pay a High Price for Poor Communication Skills, 2018). Good communication in an organization creates efficiencies, stronger employee socialization, and better department coordination (Harrison & Nelson, 2019). The concept of organizational communication was born out of recognizing the importance of communication within organizations.

Traditional organizational theory was born in the early 1900s when machines and mass production became popular (Talbot & Hales, 2001). Companies were very centralized with top-down leadership, their communication was linear, and they assumed that once communication had occurred, the transaction of information had concluded (Papa, Daniels & Spiker, 2007; Talbot & Hales, 2001). Organizational communication in companies was a sender-message-channel-receiver process. Supervisors would tell their subordinates what, when, and how to accomplish a task, and the employees would do as told (Harrison & Nelson, 2019; Papa et al.,

2007). Successful organizational communication was evaluated on task completion by the subordinates (Papa et al., 2007). This approach assumed that employees within organizations were nothing more than gears within machines that were inherently lazy (Talbot & Hales, 2001). Over time theorists changed their perspective on organizations. Instead of a mechanical approach, organizations now had an organic and life-like element (Papa et al., 2007). This more realistic approach considered the internal push and pull within organizations for resources, attention, and capital while working towards a common goal (Papa et al., 2007). These tensions are naturally occurring within organizations and create organizations to be what they are today. These tensions between socialization and individualization refer to the influences of organizations on individuals and individuals on organizations (Jablin, 2001; Ziller, 1964).

The next perspective of organizational communication is interpretive, emphasizing people working within organizations and cultures by looking at how they process meanings within messages (Papa et al., 2007; Talbot & Hales, 2001). An individual looking at an organization with this perspective is interested in the different communication styles and how messages are received and perceived (Papa et al., 2007). Scholars and researchers who are interpretive theorists are more qualitative in their research, while traditional organizational theorists look for numbers, data, and facts (Talbot & Hales, 2001). This perspective allows researchers to look at the individual and relationships, not the influence between individuals and structures (Papa et al., 2007; Talbot & Hales, 2001). As noted above, individuals and organizations influence each other and shape how the other adapts and changes over time (Jablin, 2001; Ziller, 1964).

Organizational theory has entered a period that has rethought, re-imagined and re-aligned organizations with their visions and missions (Talbot & Hales, 2001). Changes and advancements in technology, societies, and expectations have forced organizations to explore new structures, expectations, and missions. As the understanding of organizational communication has changed and evolved over the last century, it is evident that communication is "complex and dynamic" (Harrison & Nelson, 2019). As organizations have expanded and evolved, and as our views of human nature and employees grow, a top-down leadership structure is no longer effective. Communication is ubiquitous, from the water cooler to emails outside the 8 AM-5 PM work schedule.

Theory of Andragogy

Communication happens every day, but that does not mean that it is well done. Good communication takes time, training, and practice. For successful training to occur, an appropriate training framework is necessary. The theory of andragogy is the training framework used in this report. This section looks at the application and criticisms of the six assumptions Knowles makes in the theory of andragogy.

The term andragogy comes from the word "andragogik," developed by a German elementary teacher in the 1800s (Graham, 2017; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005). It comes from the Greek words "andra" and "gogy," which translates to "man-leading," and differs from pedagogy, which comes from the Greek words "peda" and "gogy," which translates to child-leading (Graham, 2017; Knowles et al., 2005). The difference between these two words is who is receiving the leading: adults or children. Malcolm Knowles described this theory as "the art and science of helping adults learn" and is a tool to educate adults. (Knowles et al., 2005).

The difference between pedagogy and andragogy is the subject of who is leading the educating. Pedagogy is when a teacher decides: what to teach, how to teach, when to teach, and if it has been taught well enough (Holmes & Abington-Cooper, 2000; Knowles et al., 2005). Scholars recognize that this approach is advantageous for children. However, as children become adults, their need for independence, especially independent learning, increases (Knowles et al., 2005). Andragogy, a learner-centered approach to education, provides the learner the autonomy and freedom that they need to explore the topic at hand (Knowles et al., 2005). Knowles explains that there are six principles or assumptions to use in adult learning: The need to know, the learner's self-concept, the role of the learner's experiences, the learner's readiness to learn, the learner's orientation to learning, and finally, the learner's motivation to learn (Knowles et al., 2005).

The first assumption, the need to know, was added after the other five had become established. Due to its importance and influence on the other five, it became assumption number one (Knowles et al., 2005). This assumption presumes that the learner desires to understand the why, what, and how about a topic (Holton, Swanson, & Naquin, 2001). Awareness motivates the learner to explore the benefits and value and has created an engaged participant (Flores et al., 2016; Holton et al., 2001; Knowles et al., 2005; Swanson & Naquin, 2001). Ultimately, awareness drives the learner's level of engagement and curiosity throughout the learning process (Hagan & Park, 2016).

The second assumption, the learner's self-concept, captures how they look at who they are in life and what role(s) they serve (Forest & Peterson, 2016; Knowles et al., 2005). Adult learners hold a myriad of roles in life and at any given time. It is necessary to understand that

some positions will take precedence over others (Forest & Peterson, 2016). Each role a learner has in life constructs and shapes their experiences, creating individuality and independence (Holton et al., 2001). Knowles et al. (2005) caution that as adults garner independence in life, they tend to resist ideas forced upon them, especially in an educational setting. It is essential to allow adult learners to use their freedom and self-direction to guide their learning experience (Knowles et al., 2005).

As individuals transition from youth to adulthood, they have experiences that shape and create who they become as an adult. The third assumption, the role of the learner's experience, uses the unique and personal experiences of adult learners to enhance the educational process (Knowles et al., 2005). Forest and Peterson (2006) contend that these experiences shape the individual by allowing adult learners to form an impression and self-image of themselves. Using these experiences gives the adult learner a more tailored and personalized educational experience (Holton et al., 2001). These experiences also create unique and dynamic feedback for the facilitator and the adult learner (Holton et al., 2001). The adult learner can quickly disengage with the process if the facilitator does not use these experiences (Knowles et al., 2005).

The fourth assumption, readiness to learn, is premised on the philosophy that adults want to learn more about topics that will benefit themselves (Hagan & Park, 2016). Adult learners want to expand their knowledge on issues that make a difference and apply to their lives (Hagan & Park, 2016). A willingness and desire to learn justify the need (first assumption) to set goals by the adult learner (Knowles et al., 2005). These set goals will shape and dictate the experience that adult learners have throughout the process and can be any combination of

personal, professional, institutional, or even societal (Holton et al., 2001). Researchers caution that the facilitator should be aware of the adult learner's timing and maturity/development so that the information taught applies to the adult learner's current stage of life (Knowles et al., 2005).

The fifth assumption, orientation to learning, is described as adults being self-guided learners (Hagen & Park, 2016). Knowles et al. (2005) claim that adults are life-centered learners, finding application motivating to continue learning and using new skills in the future instead of children, who are subject-focused learners. Psychology tells us that adult learners want to take the knowledge learned and apply it to their lives, both personally and professionally. Adults continue to know what they need to learn and how that knowledge can impact their lives, personally and professionally (Hagen & Park, 2016; Knowles et al., 2005). The theory of andragogy works with both personal and organizational improvement as individuals have a desire to improve their personal lives, a psychological drive to do good work, and a want to improve the world around them (Holton et al., 2001).

The final assumption, motivation, states that adult learners are intrinsically motivated (Knowles et al., 2005). The personal gain and benefit that an adult learner can gain by participating in education are considered more valuable than a formal recognition or payoff, which is sometimes the inability of the employer to reward employees extrinsically (Hagan & Park, 2016).

These six assumptions are the basis for the eight steps of programming with the adult learner called the andragogical process design (Holton et al., 2001). They are: "preparing learners for the program, establishing a climate conducive to learning, involving learners in

mutual planning, involving participants in diagnosing their learning needs, involving learners in forming their learning objectives, involving learners in designing learning plans, helping learners carry out their learning plans, and involving learners in evaluating their learning outcomes" (Holton et al., 2001 p. 120-123). These learner-focused guidelines give the learner autonomy over the direction of their program experience (Pratt, 1993). They also establish trust and respect between the facilitator and the learner, which is at the heart of andragogy and human nature (Pratt, 1993).

The first step, preparing learners, was added following the creation of the other seven steps. It is essential because learners have operated in a subject matter educational setting, and many are unfamiliar with self-guided, independent learning (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). While research indicates adults are independent learners because of their past experiences and maturity in life, they may not realize that they need to embrace a self-guided, independent, learner-focused facilitation (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). Hosting sessions in advance of the training to explain the process and outline of the material will prepare learners for a new experience (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). These sessions should be a basic overview of the learner-focused andragogical techniques (Albert & Howell, 2013). This introductory session allows adult learners to reflect and identify some of their old learning habits and to think about some of the opportunities they can use in the future (Albert & Hallowel, 2013).

The second element in the adult learning process design establishes a climate conducive to learning (Rossman, 2000). This element is twofold: physical and psychological (Rossman, 2000). First, it is necessary to have a physical space that is safe and free from as many distractions as possible. An area with good acoustics, a decrease in outside noise, and an

inviting layout of the room are a few of the qualities to look for in a learning space (Albert & Hallowel, 2013; Rossman, 2000). The second part of the element, a psychological climate that is conducive to learning, emphasizes that participants should feel safe to share their thoughts, ask questions, and be in a space free of judgment (Albert & Hallowel, 2013; Rossman, 2000). As Knowles stated, "people learn better when they feel supported rather than judged or threatened" (Knowles, 1980, p. 16).

The next element, involving learners in mutual planning, provides an opportunity for learners to be engaged and involved with the learning process (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). This collaborative approach allows the facilitator and learner to share information to enhance the learning experience (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). This element works closely with the fourth element, involving participants in diagnosing their needs, as the learner can assess their deficiencies (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). That diagnosis becomes part of the mutual planning from the third element and guides the fifth element, involving learners in forming their learning objectives (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). Once the learner has identified what they want to improve and enhance, they can set their own goals and objectives for themselves (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). This process empowers the learner to commit and actively participate throughout the learning experience (Albert & Hallowel, 2013).

The last three elements in this process are all centered around the actual learning experience. The sixth element allows learners to guide their learning experience, involving learners in designing learning plans (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). It also allows the learner to bring their personal experiences in life and incorporate them into the planning process's different parts (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). The seventh element, helping learners carry out their learning

plans, puts the sixth element into action (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). The adult learner can now participate in the learning experience they helped create (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). The final element, involving learners in evaluating their learning outcomes, gives the adult learner the responsibility and opportunity to see if they met the objectives and how well they performed the learning plan (Albert & Hallowel, 2013).

While the above principles and elements appear to be a logical, calculated formula to create a program focusing on the learner, it is also one of the criticisms of Knowles' approach to adult learning (Cafarella & Ratcliff, 2013; Wilson & Cervero, 1997). Knowles lays out the principles as if program planning were a clean linear process (Cafarella & Ratcliff, 2013; Knowles et al., 2005; Wilson & Cervero, 1997). In practice, teaching adults is fluid and adaptable as expectations and needs vary among participants (Cafarella & Ratcliff, 2013; Wilson & Cervero, 1997). Knowles acknowledges that there are deficiencies in his theory and that he often provides generalizations for principles and practices (Wilson & Cervero, 1997). Wilson and Cervero (1997) address these deficits by creating actualizations of the theory with a critical approach.

Cervero and Wilson (1997) admit that Knowles has provided a solid foundational piece for adult learning, but specific processes and procedures are necessary to reach the end goal. The planning theory emerges out of the necessity for those specifics, allowing Cervero and Wilson (1997) to transition adult learning to the next level. The planning theory or planning process theory recognizes multiple moving parts associated with adult learning as the planner is working with various parties, numerous details, and competing interests (Cervero & Wilson, 2006; Wilson & Cervero, 1997). These competing interests ultimately leave the planner (of

adult learning) balancing many unbalanced power struggles of social and organizational stakeholders (Cervero & Wilson, 2006).

The concept of adult education is not new, but it has undoubtedly grown in popularity over the last several decades (Cervero & Wilson, 2001). Principles of adult learning are currently used in medical, legal, and educational professional development (Ferreira, MacLean & Center, 2018; Lewis & Bryan, 2021; Shostak, 2021). Topics have shifted from political and social issues to improving individual professional and personal human skills (Cervero & Wilson, 2001). Improvement within these human skills is an advantage for the employee, rewarded with praise, recognition, financial gain, or promotion (Cervero & Wilson, 2001). The advantage is not just one-sided; successful employees increase company morale, increase sales, and increase profit margins for organizations.

Coaching

We now look at how to put adult learning principles into practice. Coaching is a term commonly used in sports and, more recently, has been added to the organizational lexicon. Organizations have used coaching to correct an employee's behavior or performance (Leimon, McMahon & Mascovici, 2005). More recently, organizations have begun to use coaching to help employees find excellence and improvement, especially working with their human skills (Leimon, McMahon & Mascovici, 2005). While there is not a universal definition that all researchers agree upon in terms of coaching, there are several definitions, including: "a process in which a manager, through direct discussion and guided activity, helps a colleague learn and solve a problem, or do a task better than otherwise would be the case" (Megginson & Boydell, 1979, p. 5)

"Business coaching is a very focused one-to-one or group process, the purpose of which is to create learning and achieve change for the professional benefit of the individual and the business benefit of the company. While self-actualization and a greater sense of satisfaction are important to the individual, they must not be achieved at the expense of achieving clearly defined business results.

The business coach, unlike other coaches, enters into a relationship not only with the individual but also with the client company. Thus, HR professionals and the individual's boss may all be involved in the process. In fact, it is instrumental to success for the business coach to be competent at forming and managing constructive relationships with all parties while guarding confidentiality appropriately and zealously. This can take considerable rigor." (Leimon et al., 2005, p. 22)

Ultimately, researchers agree that there is not one single definition of coaching. These definitions have in common: small groups, close relationships, and learning, both personal and professional.

In the book *Essential Business Coaching*, the authors identify five different frameworks and models of coaching: the COACH model, the GROW model, the helping model, the three-function model, and the ITEA model of change (Leimon et al., 2005). The first model, COACH, is the most popular framework (Leimon et al., 2005). This approach is a one-on-one relationship that consists of a coach and a coachee that work together to improve performance (Leimon et al., 2005). Just as a coach would help an athlete improve their performance, the coach will observe changes to increase performance (Champathes, 2006). The coach and the coachee establish goals, objectives, and action plans (Champathes, 2006). The success of these action plans is then considered a win or a loss, much like the outcome of a sports game (Leimon et al., 2005). This model is successful in almost all situations, from complex tasks to human skills training (Champathes, 2006). This model comes under criticism for the heavy emphasis placed

on the leadership abilities of the coach, giving the coachee's performance less attention (Leimon et al., 2005).

The second model that Leimon et al. (2005) identify is the GROW model. Established by John Whitmore in the early 1990s, this model is widely used (Whitmore, 2009). This model consists of a one-on-one conversation between the coach and coachee to discuss the goals, current reality, options to achieve goals, and the will of the coachee (Whitmore, 2009). This model is popular because it does not require a background in psychology and is easy for those coaching employees to use regularly to get commitment from their employees (Bresser & Wilson, 2010). One of the benefits of this model is the coach takes on a facilitator role, guiding the coachee to ultimately make their own decision (Bresser & Wilson, 2010). One of the challenges for coaches in this model is ensuring that the conversations go deep enough to identify the barriers and options in each coachee's circumstances (Leimon et al., 2005).

The Helping Model stems from psychological research on how humans can achieve their full potential (Leimon et al., 2005). This approach is much more like a counselor and client than a coach and coachee relationship. This model helps those with complex problems tell their story and discuss multiple solution steps in various settings (Leimon et al., 2005). One of the drawbacks of this model is that it is very time-consuming and assumes that the coach has a strong background in psychology (Leimon et al., 2005). This model can be instrumental in solving complex and confusing problems that other models could not (Leimon et al., 2005).

The Three-Function model comes from psychology and is common amongst doctors talking with their patients (Leimon et al., 2005). This model consists of three steps: relationship, assessment, and management (Leimon et al., 2005). The relationship function builds rapport

with the coachee (often the patient) by expressing empathy and acknowledging their feelings (Cassatly, 2010). Next, the coach assesses the situation by collecting data and information (Cassatly, 2010). Finally, the coach explains the plan moving forward based on their assessment (Cassatly, 2010; Leimon et al., 2005). This linear communication model is successful in particular circumstances but does not allow for back-and-forth dialogue and problem-solving.

The ITEA model of change, developed by Leimon et al. (2005), is the final coaching model discussed in this report (2005). This model is a cognitive-behavioral approach and works for top executives in addition to new employees (Leimon et al., 2005). By examining the impact, thought, and emotion, a coachee, can change their actions after looking at all degrees in the first three areas (Leimon et al., 2005). Employees and managers within an organization can use this model in almost all situations that arise (Leimon et al., 2005). One of the most significant drawbacks of this model is the lack of research surrounding the ITEA change model. By design, this model creates long-term changes in attitudes and actions of those who participate in the process (Leimon et al., 2005).

Principles of organizational communication, adult learning, and coaching intersect with one another. For example, learner-centered principles, encouraging discussion, and conversion centered around the learner are the foundation of andragogy and the GROW coaching model. Caffarella and Daffron (2013) bring coaching and adult learning together with their interactive model for program planning. They argue that there are five purposes for adult learning: to encourage growth and development of individuals, to help people find solutions to issues they may have in adult life, to help individuals gain skills for either current or future endeavors, to help organizations address change successfully, and to help foster positive change in society

(Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). These purposes of adult learning intertwine with andragogy principles as the outcomes of both principles and purposes are led by the adult. Additionally, these principles along with coaching put the responsibility of identifying deficits back onto the learner/coachee to want to learn. This responsibility provides buy-in from the learner/coachee and puts them in control of their success. While andragogy offers the theory behind adult learning, coaching provides the method for adults to achieve.

As this report lays out a business plan to address the issues identified in the introduction, it is essential to remember that educational programming for adults is not easy, succinct, or simple. It is a complex web of twists and turns, ins and outs, and ups and downs (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013).

The Audit

This section will look at different existing training options to help organizations and employees improve their communication skills. The purpose of conducting this audit was to ascertain the extent to which coaching, and andragogy principles were evident in existing training offerings. The process of selecting these different programs can become overwhelming as an incognito Google search resulted in 1.35 billion hits in 0.78 seconds. Five phrases were used in Google searches to find companies or organizations that exist in this field:

"communication coaching programs," "communication training for employees,"

"communication coaching for employees," "communication training in Kansas," and "training for employees in communication." After taking the first six advertisements and the first ten

companies/organizations that appeared within each search, a frequency comparison was

completed. Based on frequency within Google searches, nine companies returned two or more

times in a search, and 11 companies returned two or more times in an advertisement. The companies that had two or more times showing up in the frequency comparison are The Ariel Group, edapp.com, lessonly.com, bizlibrary.com, simplifytraining.com, trainsmartinc.com, shrm.org, pollackpeacebuilding.com, cpe.rutgers.edu, Fred Pryor Workshops, Useworkshop.com, learning.linkedin.com, lumainstitute.com, go.paycor.com, betterup.com, eloomi.com, emtrain.com, smallbusiness.chron.com, dalecarnegie.com, and mastery.com. I then explored these websites and organizations through website research and questions to representatives within the companies.

Of the 20 websites identified, five were not applicable as they were software development companies, and two were entities that housed written articles about organizational communication. Companies taught information in either 100% virtual or a hybrid version of virtual and in-person setup. In several cases, companies had indicated on their website that due to COVID, they were only presenting information in a virtual format for the time being. These companies were recorded as offering only a virtual option. A virtual option was more prevalent, as demonstrated in Figure 1. An increase in virtual offerings available can be explained due to the convenience, 21st-century expectations, and the need for programs to be held virtually because of the pandemic.

Figure 1

Virtual vs. Both Face-to-Face and Virtual Hybrid

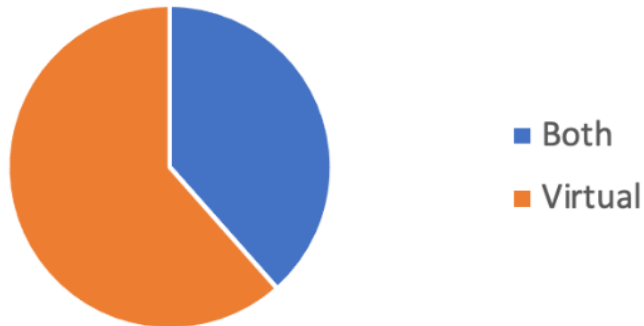
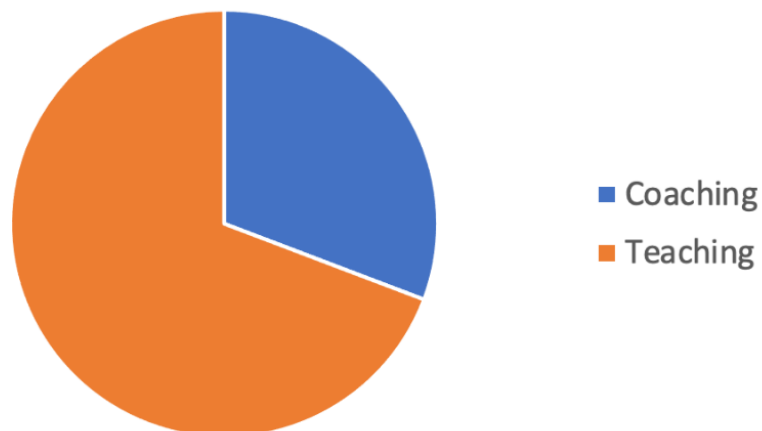


Figure 2 demonstrates the breakdown of coaching vs. teaching. Here the research begins to show a more significant divide in the differences between teaching and coaching. Many of the entities evaluated were clear in their mission of coaching or teaching. Several entities claimed they were coaching, but upon looking at the content, program, description, and reviews, it was evident that they were geared towards teaching as the content was subject-based and not learner-focused.

Figure 2

Coach versus Teaching Comparison



Teaching styles and the principles of the theory of andragogy were applied to each organization selected. Of the 13 companies examined, six had zero principles reflected in their teaching. Typically, these organizations had content that was available online to watch on-demand. These courses are mass-produced and designed as a one-size-fits-all solution. There is no interaction between the learner and the teacher in these organizations. As the number of andragogical principles increased within organizations, the language and description of the organizational deliverables also changed from learning and teaching to coaching and helping. This shift comes with increased cost, time commitment, and a change from subject-driven to learner-focused instruction.

Moving Forward

In the different organizations that I examined; adult learning principles were not necessarily evident in ways described by Knowles et al. (2005). The lack of all tenets of andragogy being present within these programs does not mean that they fail or are unsuccessful. Many of these companies demonstrate vast success through case studies and testimonials on their websites. This research indicates a need for a communication coaching program that draws on principles of andragogy and coaching. Companies, employees, and individuals are still searching for those skills, they are still searching for that knowledge, and they are still searching for a solution.

Chapter 3 Pathway to Change

The first step in creating a successful business is to create a plan (Barrow, Barrow & Brown, 2018). Creating that plan involves developing a strategy (Chapter 3), conducting market research (Chapters 1 and 2), and outlining an operations plan (Chapter 3) (Barrow et al., 2018). This chapter will take the theories and models discussed in Chapter two and articulate how those ideas work together. This chapter will look at the need for SLK Communication Coaching, demonstrate a plan of action, and show how it ties back to adult learning theories and coaching.

SLK Communication Coaching is a business born out of the want and desire to help adults become better communicators. We have all witnessed and probably participated in poor communication and communication practices working in the professional world. Through ongoing conversations with others about what communication is, it is evident that there are multiple definitions, descriptions, and understandings of what it takes to be a good communicator. The Mission Statement and Vision for SLK Communication Coaching are:

Mission Statement: To help adults become better communicators through learner-focused educational sessions while building relationships to establish one-on-one coaching sessions with participants for individuals and organizations to succeed in their professional and personal worlds.

Vision Statement: To help adults be mindful of and skilled in practicing effective communication in their personal and professional lives.

Figure 3 is a timeline for the completion of goals and objectives. This chart is not a finite list and will forever be a working document.

Table 1*Timeline of SLK Communication Coaching – Timeline of Goals and Objectives*

		Short Term (6 Months)	Medium Term (6 -18 Months)	Long Term (2 Years +)
Goal: Develop a Solid Financial Foundation	Create an annual operating budget	X		
	Create a pricing structure for coaching sessions	X		
	Create a contract for clients	X		
Goal: Develop a Successful Marketing Plan	Create a website	X		
	Share website on a variety of social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)	X	X	
	Purchase marketing items (SWAG and promotional items)	X	X	
	Create promotional materials	X		
Goal: Secure and create Start-Up Materials	Create evaluation tools	X	X	
	Create a listing of different pieces of training available			X
	Establish a training timeline	X	X	
	Hire a second trainer to assist with training		X	
	Establish lesson plans for each of the pieces of training offered	X	X	

To have a clientele, I have identified several critical areas within the Manhattan community. As an alum of the Flint Hills Regional Leadership Program, I teach and present each year's first session. This session is already one of the proposed sessions for tier 1 (see below), and my presence in front of more than 20 people who will go through my program annually is a sample of what they can take back to their organizations. Additionally, I have shared my vision

with several individuals who work in the medical community. They see a real need for many of their employees to take communication training. Each time I visit with individuals about my plan, I begin by saying, "communication is hard for some people," and they agree that statement is accurate. My goal is to help adults learn how to be better communicators.

In planning for an organization training, a one-on-one conversation occurs between the trainer and the representative requesting the training. This conversation will allow the trainer to understand where some of the organizational communication deficits are, understand the organization's climate, understand the organization's structure, and tailor the training content to the organization's needs. This tailoring will create a hybrid model that engages the needs of the organization and the individuals and engages the principles of adult learning and individualized coaching. During this time, the trainer will ensure that the organization's representative understands that for this process to be successful, learners should be willing and active participants, motivated, engaged, and excited about the content they might learn. These expectations allow the representative of the organization to prepare their staff for their upcoming training. It is also an opportunity for the representative to put a different spin on the training from other professional development experiences they might have had previously.

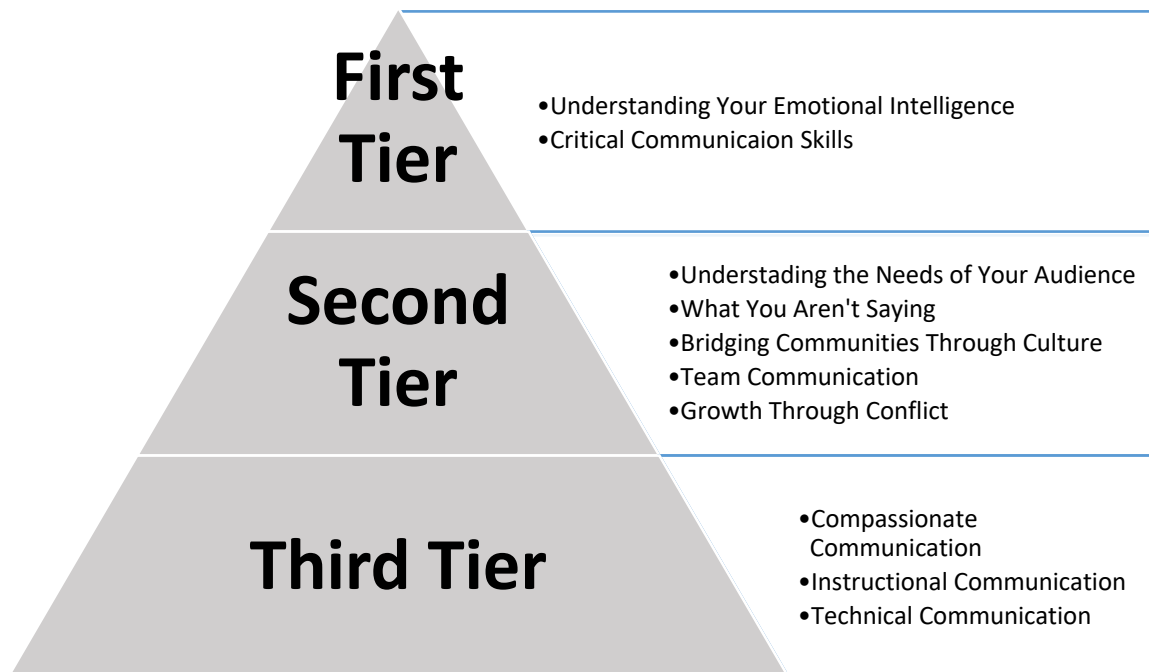
Another feature of SLK Communication that sets it apart from other communication companies is the opportunity for participants to opt into additional coaching sessions throughout their participation in the courses. These coaching sessions are one-on-one sessions with the participant based upon the GROW model as discussed in Chapter 2 (Leimon et al., 2005). They serve as an opportunity for the coachee to set their own goals, discuss the reality of the world they live in concerning those goals, and ultimately the options to achieve their

determined goals (Leimon et al., 2005). At the end of the coaching session, the adult learner provides a thoughtful and honest response to their will and desire to achieve these goals. All answers will be kept confidential and not shared with administrators or supervisors within the organization. Each session that an adult learner takes will receive one hour of coaching following the course. Adult learners will have the opportunity to purchase additional coaching sessions while working with SLK Communication Coaching.

Figure 4 outlines the initial courses that SLK Communication Coaching will offer. Each lesson or class is one credit. Tier one is the first level; participants will complete both classes before advancing to the second tier. Once participants have completed four credits, they can explore the mastery tier while completing the second tier. Master tier courses are customized for each client based upon the needs of the organization and adult learners. The ones included in the third tier are for a hypothetical proposal for an organization in the medical field.

Figure 3

SLK Communication Coaching-Outline of Tiers



Successful human skills training begins with the learner understanding their self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991). The first tier gives the adult learner a foundation to understand more about themselves and those around them through the Understanding Your Emotional Intelligence and Critical Communication Skills. The course Understanding Your Emotional Intelligence gives adult learners an in-depth view of their emotional intelligence, a look at the levels of emotional intelligence around them, and how the world they work in interprets and processes emotional intelligence. I currently teach this course using True Colors and Big 5 personality materials to help learners better understand their strengths, other people's perceptions, and ultimately, how that creates a positive or negative environment within organizations. The second course, Critical Communication Skills, is a broad overview of basic communication skills, the importance of practicing these skills, and strategies to incorporate these practices into your life.

The first step in the andragogical process for planning is to prepare the learner. Preparing the adult learner can be done in many ways, but it is essential to consider 21st-century schedules while planning programs (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). It is not reasonable to ask adult learners to come and listen to you tell them what you will be presenting and not begin their initial training. It is feasible to incorporate that introduction into the Understanding Your Emotional Intelligence course. As outlined below, this course is a high-energy, team-building, self-discovery course that will engage adult learners to prepare them for the entire process. Based on their results, the first course will ask learners if they see areas with room for improvement? How do you want to improve those areas? If you enhanced those areas, what would change for you in your organization? Are you ready to improve that area, and if not,

what is holding you back? These questions to the learner address Knowles' assumptions of needing to know, a readiness to learn, and motivation to learn. These questions guide participants in finding their inspiration, willingness, and enthusiasm for participating.

The second course, *Critical Communication Skills*, is a course that will cover the very basics of communication. As adult learners begin to understand the importance of practicing basic communication skills, they can incorporate their practice in subsequent courses (Jelphs, 2006, Samata, 2012). Adult learners will understand the importance of eye contact, the impact of raising and lowering one's voice, noticing one's body language, how to enunciate words, interpersonal skills, and written communication. This course will start by asking those in the room what they think they would improve on, what they want to learn more about and what skills would help your entire organization. These conversations at the beginning of each course allow the participants to plan the program for their group. It also allows participants to see a benefit when they use these skills both personally and professionally.

The following section in Chapter 3 is an example of a lesson plan the course *Understanding the Needs of Your Audience*, which homes in on developing active listening skills (See Appendix A). Any facilitator can use this lesson plan with the necessary supplies and put on a successful educational program. The lesson plan addresses the different assumptions and principles explained previously (Holton et al., 2001; Knowles et al., 2005). The learning process is now a learner-focused, learner-led, and learner-driven environment. As adult learners share and reflect, they are using their personal experiences for practical application. This reflection on those experiences is the lynchpin to the theory of andragogy. Knowles argues that life experiences are unique to everyone, and as adults, we want to continue to improve ourselves

through intrinsic motivation (Knowles et al., 2005). These life experiences create opportunities to reflect on past behavior and modify future behavior (Knowles et al., 2005).

Chapter 4 Successful Communication Moving Forward

Communication can be challenging for individuals, but there are solutions. By changing the process of the learning experience, adults can be engaged and reflective throughout the learning process. As individuals learn new skills and perspectives, they experience growth individually and shape organizational culture and structure. These changes individually and organizationally can create positive learning environments within workplaces that promote continued learning and development using adult learning and coaching practices.

What is presented in Chapter 3 reflects an approach to creating a learning environment in workplaces. The lesson plan in Chapter 3 puts the six principles and eight steps of the andragogical planning process into action. The first tier in SLK Communication Coaching addresses the first two elements of the andragogical process, preparing the learners and establishing a climate conducive to learning (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). First, learners will complete two courses in the first tier of SLK Communication Coaching. This tier prepares the learner for additional experiences with SLK Communication Coaching. Knowing that adult learners are not familiar with self-guided learning, these two courses are an opportunity for the learner to become more comfortable and familiar with a new style of instruction using personal experiences and reflecting upon those experiences (Albert & Hallowel, 2013). Second, the physical setup of the environment is vastly different from a traditional educational setting. Arranging plush chairs in a conversational circle rather than hard chairs and tables in rows can be a new experience for many adult learners. Ideally, this experience will make them feel more comfortable and willing to engage, share, and reflect throughout their process.

Elements three through five involve the learner's engagement, participation, and reflection within mutual planning, needs diagnoses, and learning objectives. (Rossman, 2000, Albert & Hallowel, 2013). As outlined in Appendix A, the lesson plan draws upon each of these elements uniquely. While not always perfect, each lesson plan brings the learner into the process. Each session will begin with the questions, why are you here, what you want to learn, and your motivating factor for participating. These questions allow the learner to guide the discussion by sharing responsibility in the planning process and working with the facilitator to let them know their needs and ultimately set their learning objectives. The facilitator should be aware that they will be responsible for adapting the content and discussion throughout the day to meet these needs.

The following three parts of the andragogical planning process include helping learners carry out their learning plans, involving the learner in the design process, and involving learners in the evaluation process. At the beginning of each session, participants write down their reason for being at the session, what they want to get out of it, and the motivating factor for achievement. The facilitator refers to these answers throughout the training, evaluation, and follow-up during coaching sessions.

Combining the learner-focused andragogical process with the GROW coaching model gives the adult learner confidence and commitment. This model enables supervisors to identify critical areas of learning and growth that their organization needs while also providing individuals a chance to tailor and individualize their learning experience. Coaching offers an opportunity for the adult learner to be intentional in their commitment to participate.

One can argue that an organization requiring professional development training contradicts the theory of andragogy, since it is not the employee making their desire to learn be known. However, adult learning is what occurs during the training and is not the product of a company requiring professional development. By using a coach as a facilitator in an adult learner-based training, andragogy becomes the means to an end. Employees develop the curriculum to achieve the employer end goal of having a more productive, more communicative workforce. The success of the employee is almost entirely dependent on how much they are willing to put into their training to be a better communicator. Using these techniques directly with employees allows for that naturally occurring tension to exist, but not interfere with the experience of the adult learner.

Adult educational programs happen for one of the following reasons: to encourage personal growth, to help adults respond to problems in the world, to prepare adults for future career opportunities, to help organizations navigate change, and finally, to find a way to be a positive change in society (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). The passion for SLK Communication Coaching came from watching so many individuals struggle to learn and master more challenging skills than they appear. It is my goal that a communication coaching program, as outlined throughout this paper, will help individuals find success in their lives.

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Appendix A - Active Listening Lesson Plan

SLK Communication Coaching

Tier: Becoming a Pro

Title: Can you hear me?

Time: 6 Hours – 9:00AM-12:00PM – 1 Hour Lunch – 1:00PM-4:00PM

Participants: 16-20 Adult Learners

Goals: Participants will understand:

- What it feels like to be heard and not to be heard.
- The elements of being an active listener.
- How to recognize actively listening.
- The importance of active listening in communication.
- The importance of asking clarifying questions.
- The benefits of active listening.
- Ways to increase their emotional intelligence by being more aware of people's emotions and feelings.

Classroom Setup: The classroom setup should be in a circle or square. It should have an atmosphere of collaboration. Ideally, the classroom would consist of more comfortable chairs in a circle that enables learners to have a casual and informal conversation. The classroom should NOT be set up to resemble a traditional classroom with rows of chairs or desks.

Materials Needed:

- Laptop
- Projector
- Speaker
- HDMI Cord
- A list of topics for group members to draw from
- Journals for each participant
- Provide writing utensils for each participant
- Three (3) half-sheets of paper, with a different color for each participant
- Twin size flat sheet (solid color, preferably black)
- Light adhesive spray (Elmer's Glue brand works well).

Time	Activity/Processing Questions
9:00 AM	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are you here? What is your motivation? • What do you hope to learn today? • Please write these goals down in your journal (provided by the facilitator) <p><i>The facilitator should take an extended amount of time to present who they are, their motivating factor, and what they want to learn. The trainer should take precise notes about each person for the next activity.</i></p>
9:20 AM	<p>Thank everyone for sharing. As the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does active listening mean? <p>After a discussion around active listening, begin to ask about specific individuals motivating factors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Does anyone remember what <participant> hoped to learn today?</i> • <i>Does anyone recall who said <insert one of the particular items that someone mentioned as a motivating factor></i>
9:40 AM	<p>Why don't we remember all the information?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate answers could be: • We have other things on our minds (either number these or move the list level to the right) • We are thinking about what we are going to say • I didn't know you were going to ask us to repeat it <p><i>Note: There is not a wrong answer to this question</i></p>
10:00 AM	<p>Have learners pair up with someone they don't know or don't know very well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner A and Learner B - Learner A has 7 minutes to speak about their life, passions, interests, family, etc. • Afterward, Learner B has 7 minutes to share the same. • Report Out – Each Learner has 30 seconds to give the group a summary of the other learner's story
10:30 AM	Break
10:45 AM	<p>Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did it feel to be the one talking? • How did it feel to be the one listening? • Which do you enjoy more? • Why? • Does this change how you communicate with others?
11:00 AM	<p>How did you know that your partner was listening?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate answers could be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Verbal body movements • Eye contact

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way they repeated the story back in summary to the group
11:15 AM	<p>Movie Clip – Multiple clips could be appropriate for this section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bad Active Listening Example – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_dAkDsBQyk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play the clip to 0:50 <p>Questions: Why is Amy uninterested in the conversation? What could she be doing to show more interest?</p> <p><i>Continue to play</i></p> <p>How does Sheldon's body language and attitude change?</p> <p>What has Amy done to change her reaction?</p> Empathetic Listening - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t685WM5R6aM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The clip should be watched until 0:51 – Discuss what has just happened <p>Questions: What is the character Disgust trying to do, and what is her thought process?</p> <p>How many of you have been like Disgust?</p> <p><i>Continue to play</i></p> <p>How easy or hard is it to be in the shoes of Sadness?</p> <p>Has anyone been in the shoes of Bing Bong? What helps when you are in that situation?</p> <p>What are some of the signs shown in successful active listening?</p> <p>Correct Answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-Verbal Feedback Reflective Listening – "So what I hear you saying"
	<p>Open the conversation to what research says active listening includes asking your group about specific interactions from earlier examples throughout the day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matching others' energy levels – What is Amy doing in the second half of the video clip? Providing advice (not a story about you or changing the subject) as done in Inside Out
12:00 PM	LUNCH
1:00 PM	Now that you have had some time to process your experiences this morning, do you have any additional reflections, questions, or comments?
1:15 PM	<p>Opportunity to share personal experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are some of the lessons learned overall? What are some of the continued frustrations we still have with active listening? What are some of the resources that you still need about active listening? What are some questions that you still have surrounding active listening?
2:00 PM	<p>Activity – Conflict, Disagreement, and Respond</p> <p><i>This activity is an opportunity for personal reflection – individuals can share if they feel comfortable.</i></p>

	<p><i>Provide ample time for learners to document and write down after each bullet point.</i></p> <p>Instruct learners to take their journals and write:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About a time that they had a conversation with someone that they had strong emotions or reactions. • Write the emotions down that you felt. • What specifically made you feel those reactions at that moment? <p>Now ask the learners to close their eyes and address the emotion in their mind in any way they find helpful. The goal is to acknowledge and name the feeling.</p> <p>Ask the learners to take each emotion and write it down and write out a possible response to that emotion in the situation from above</p> <p>E.g., if the feeling is anger: Interesting, can you tell me how you got to that observation?</p>
2:45 PM	BREAK
3:00 PM	<p>What are the tangible rewards for you and your organization by practicing active listening?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased relationships with clientele • Appear to be concerned and competent in your understanding and relationship • It's low risk – you don't lose anything if you engage in active listening <p>What do you hope to change moving forward?</p> <p>How will you make those changes?</p>
3:30 PM	<p>Evaluation – Learners will be given a piece of paper in the shape of a square, circle, and rectangle. Instruct learners to write:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the square piece of paper, one thing they have squared away. • On the circle piece of paper, one thing that is still circling in their head. • On the rectangular piece of paper, three ways to implement what they have learned and how they will keep themselves accountable. <p>You will want to make sure that the solid sheet is secured on a wall before this point. After the learners have filled out their sheets of paper, they will each come to the sheet and stick their half sheet of paper to the sheet hanging on the wall and explain their answer to the group.</p>
4:00 PM	Safe Travels