

Listening Effectiveness Feedback Report

User Sample

11/17/2009 1:09:16 PM

Introduction

The following information is provided to help you navigate the information that is included in your Listening Effectiveness report.

1. Overall summary chart

The summary results chart provides a quick visual representation of your scores in seven competencies that make up the Listening Effectiveness profile. The scores to concentrate on are those above 3.5 (strong) and below 2.75 (need further development). Please note that these competency scores are averages; individual question scores can be viewed by clicking on the individual competency link.

2. Category description pages

This report contains three sections for each of the seven competencies. The first of these three sections explains the competency, lists average scores, and then provides high and low score interpretation notes. The second section provides a graphical representation of individual question scores. The third section provides broadly-based improvement actions for those individuals wanting to develop their competencies.

3. 10/10 Report

The "10/10" Report page provides the raw scores for the 10 highest scoring questions and the 10 lowest scoring questions out of the 84. It also identifies which competency each questions is from.

4. Course and Reading suggestions

Development suggestions for the two lowest scoring competencies, including training courses and specific books that may provide some useful additional information, are included here.

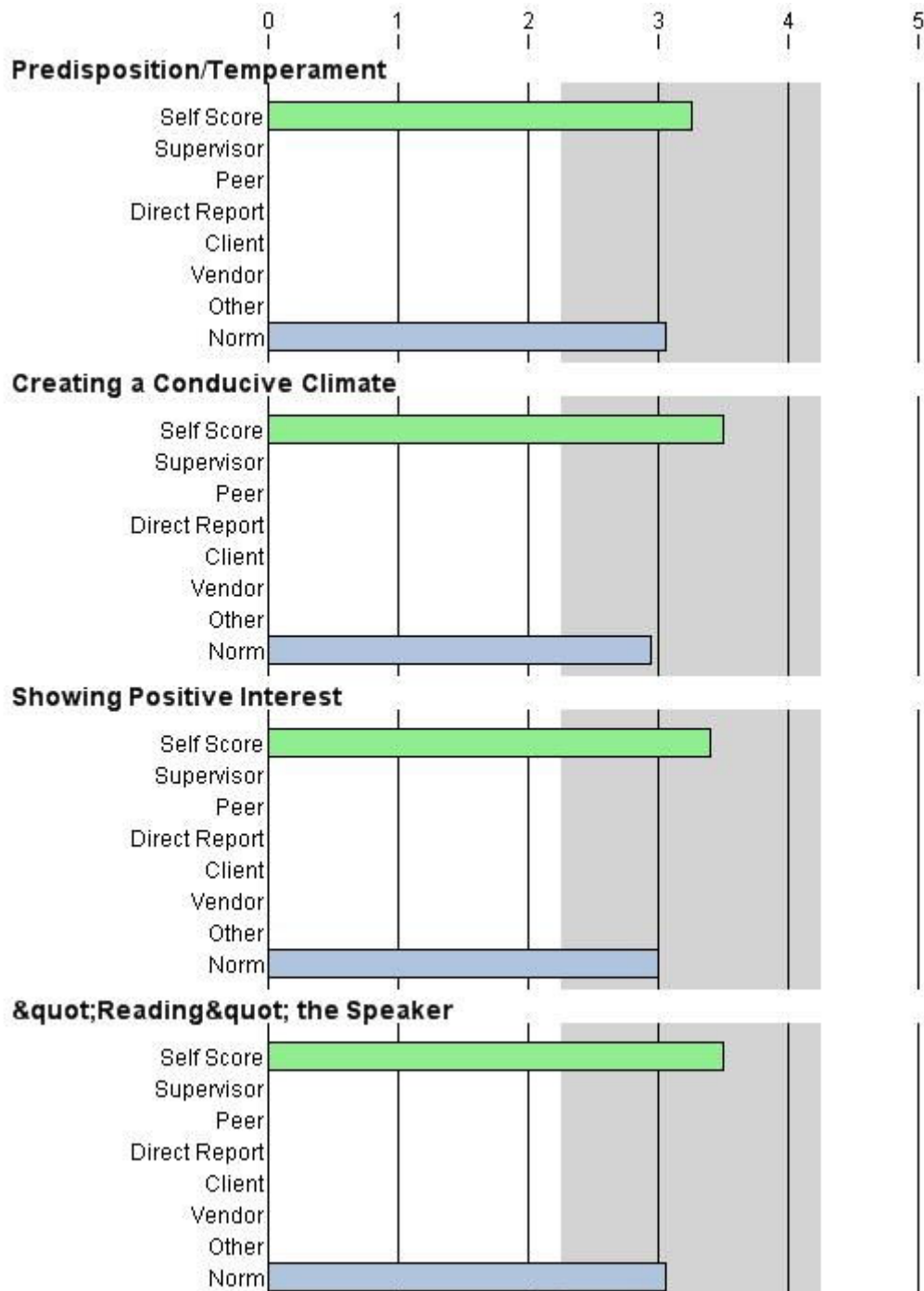
5. Development Plan

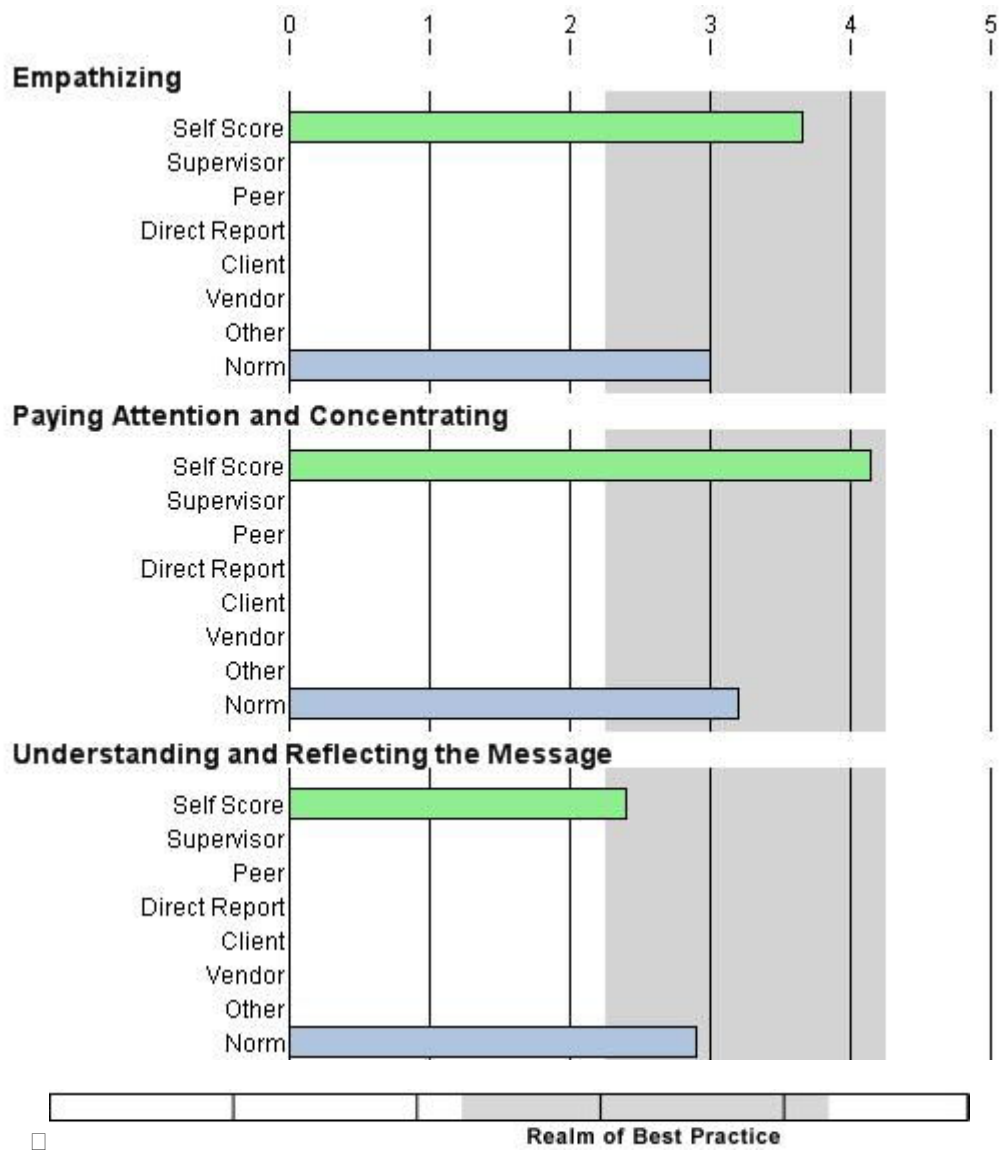
The development plan aggregates the five lowest scoring questions and puts them into a one page template. Individuals can use this template to record the specific actions they plan to take, as a result of their feedback, over the next twelve months. Individuals may draw upon the general guidance offered in their feedback report, or draw upon the "coaching tips" (see next section).

6. Coaching tips

The overall output report includes detailed coaching tips for the five lowest scoring questions. These coaching tips provide not only information about the particular questions, but provide some specific advice on what individuals might do to improve their skills or learn new behaviors in the future.

OVERALL SUMMARY





Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

Listening Effectiveness Profile

PREDISPOSITION/TEMPERAMENT

This section on Predisposition/Temperament looks at your basic character predisposition, temperament, and internal desire to listen and acquire the patience to do so. It asks the question: "To what extent am I willing to invest my time and energy in the "careful listening" process?"



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

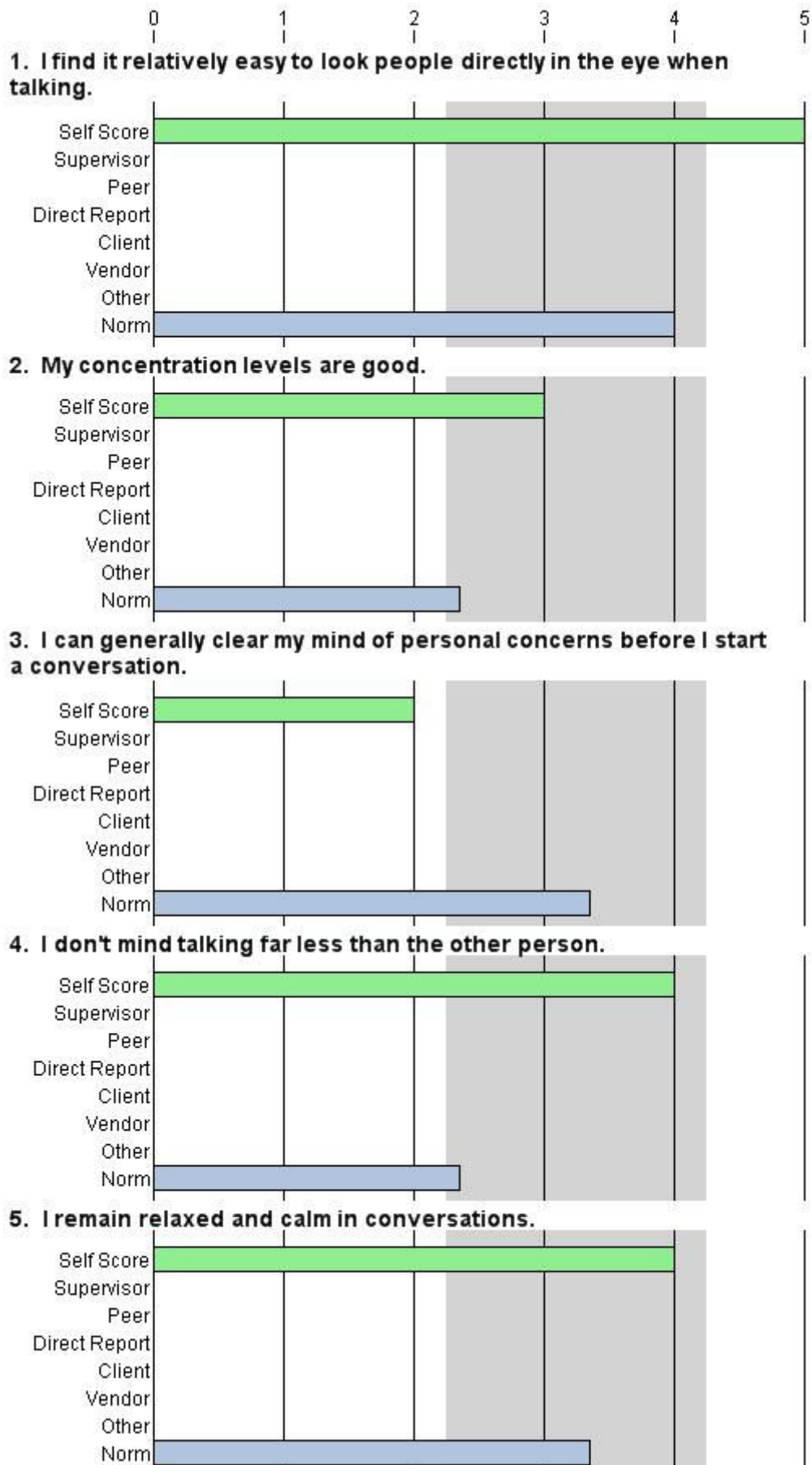
Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you are often too rushed or distracted to listen properly a lot of the time. You are likely to make a hasty determination that some individuals are not worth listening to at all!

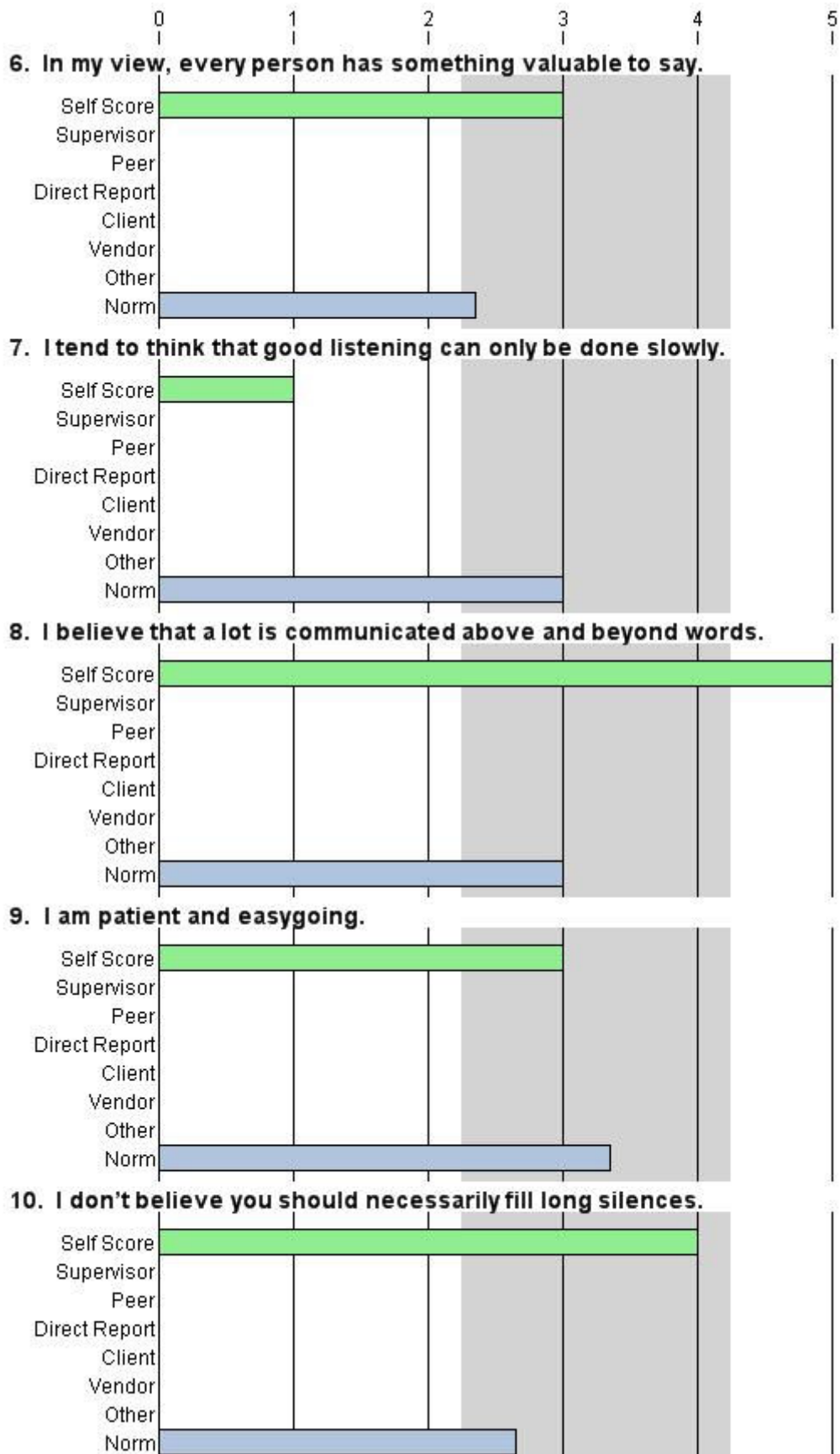
A low scorer finds listening attentively difficult in many circumstances, particularly when they have other things on their mind. Low scorers tend to interrupt more often, guess where the conversation is going, jump to conclusions, and become distracted more easily. This means that they are likely to miss parts of the communication message and won't even pick up on some of the more "subtle" points.

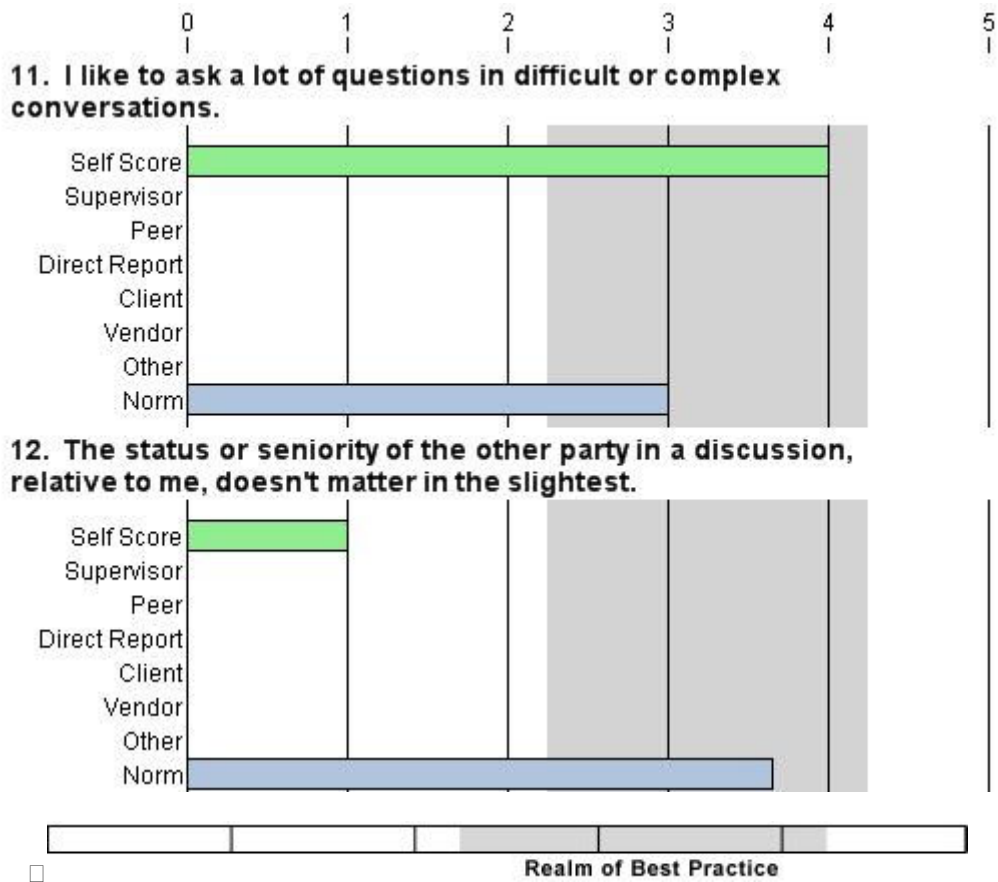
HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you take the time to listen to the speaker and focus on them so they are heard and understood. Your open, relaxed, and patient manner probably means that people will enjoy sharing their views and feelings with you.

A high scorer will tend to put a speaker quickly at ease and create a permissive environment in which they will feel safe to share their ideas and their feelings. The high scorer is also able to tease out and read the "deeper" meanings often lying behind the words of the communicator.







Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

This section on Predisposition/Temperament looks at your basic character predisposition, temperament, and internal desire to listen and acquire the patience to do so. It asks the question: "To what extent am I willing to invest my time and energy in the "careful listening" process?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to make a conscious commitment to spend more time listening. They need to force themselves not to jump to conclusions, form hasty opinions, interrupt, or finish other people's sentences. Instead, they should practice being more patient, using pauses and silence more often in conversation, and ignoring distractions. They must work to get rid of the habit of letting the mind drift. Low scorers would potentially benefit greatly by trying to find a quiet environment in which to listen in order to give their full attention to the speaker.

Predisposition/Temperament

- Make a conscious decision to talk substantially less and listen more.
- Use positive body language (stand squarely in front of people, avoid fidgeting, maintain strong eye contact, etc.) and demonstrate your interest in what every speaker is saying, regardless of what you think of the message or the person.

CREATING A CONDUCTIVE CLIMATE

This section on **Creating a Conducive Climate** looks at your effort to make sure that the atmosphere or environment is as appropriate as possible for effective communication. It asks the question: "Have you done everything you can to minimize distractions and create a climate for open conversation?"



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

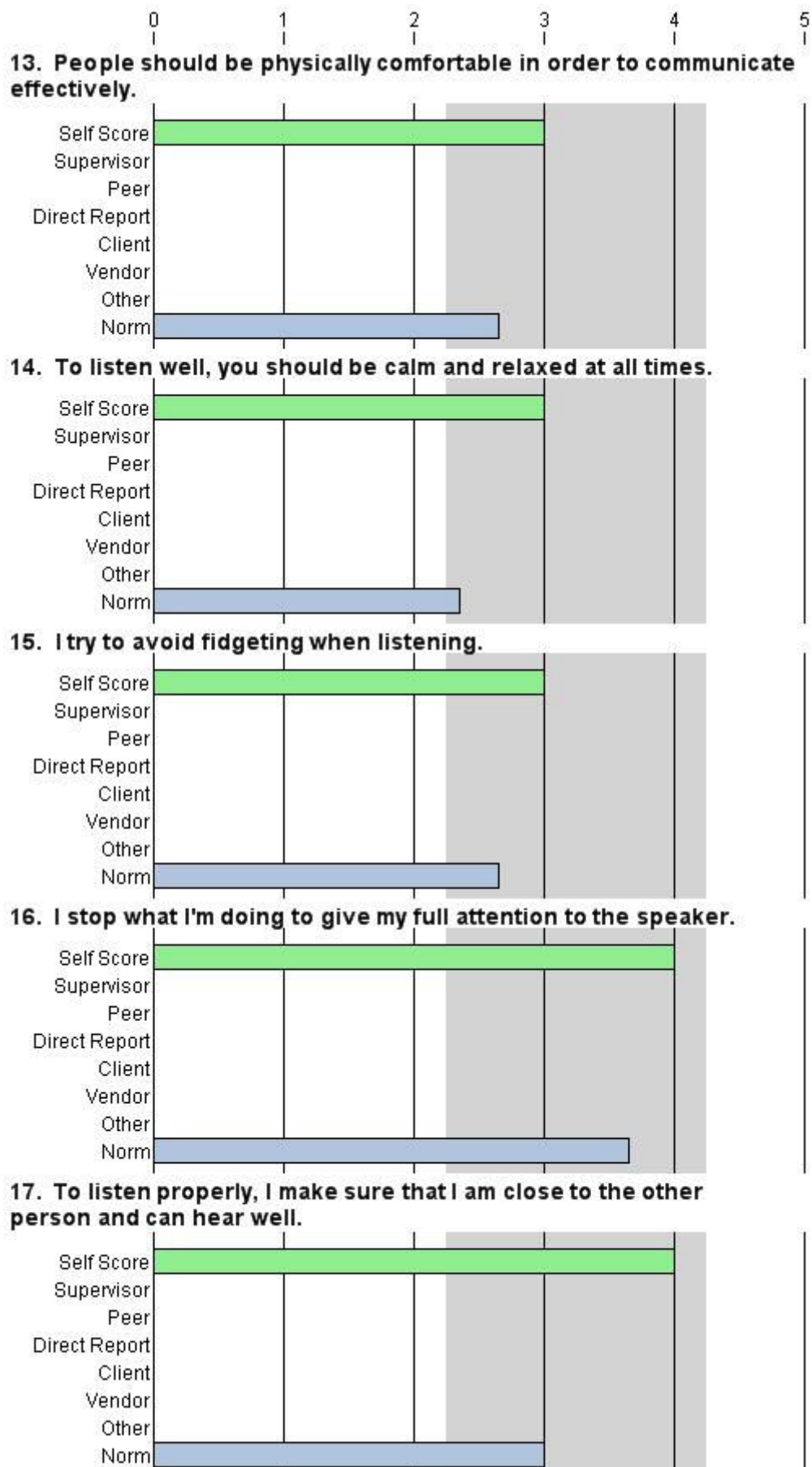
Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you find yourself talking or trying to listen in an environment that will quickly interfere with your ability to concentrate or give your full focus and attention.

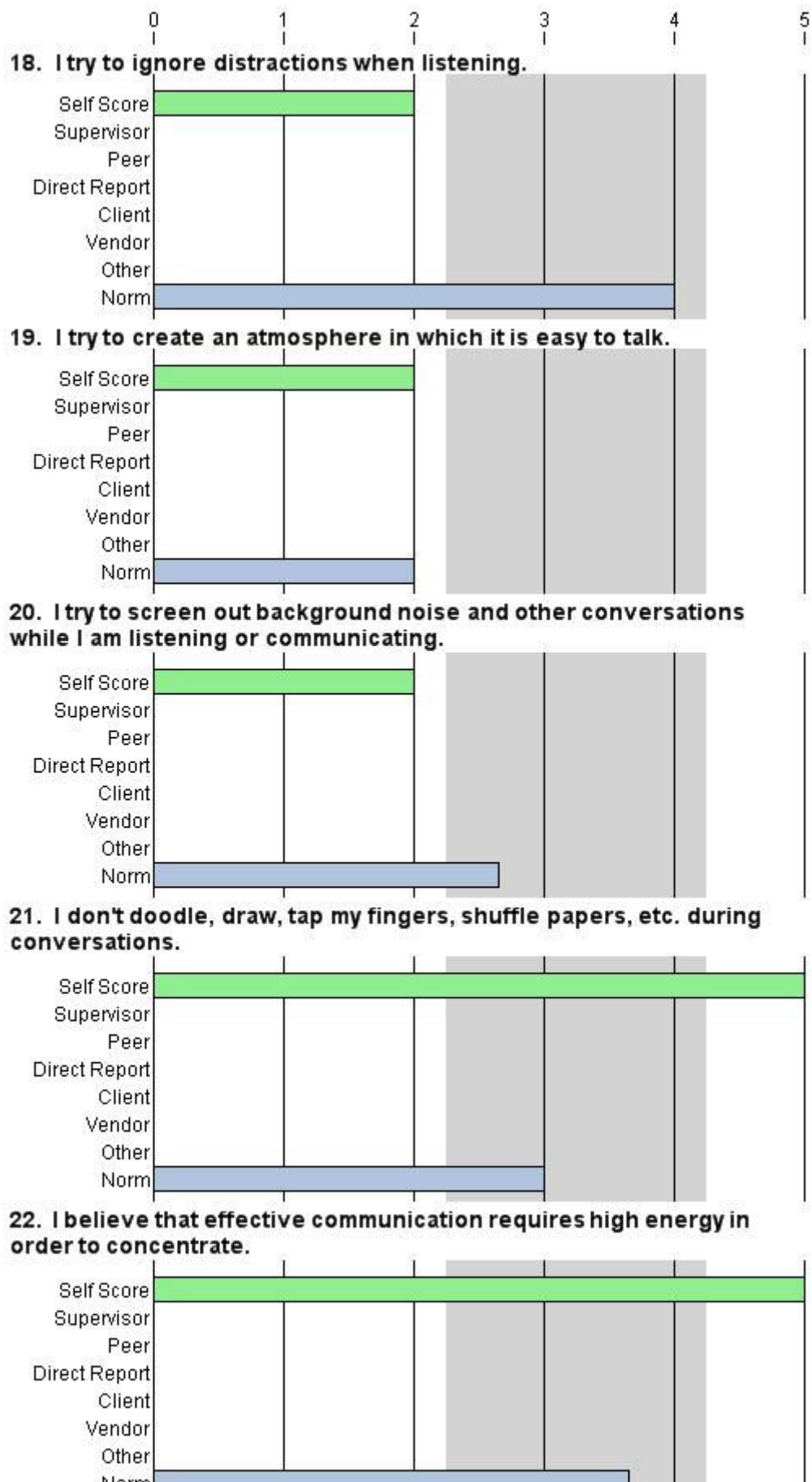
A low scorer tends to let the communication environment interfere with their attempts to listen. Some communications may therefore occur "on-the-run," or be confined to short or shallow messages.

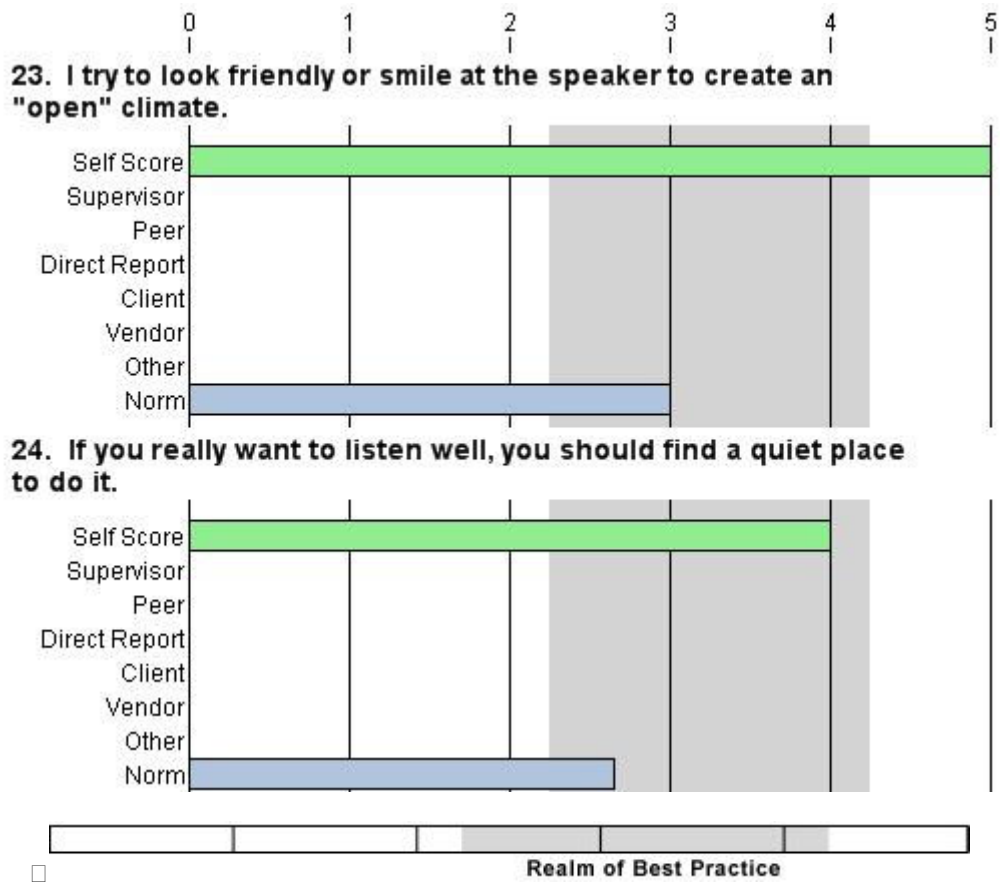
HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you are highly conscious of the need to find a quiet and calm communication environment, or one in which noise and distractions can be eliminated or at least managed so as not to be too intrusive.

A high scorer avoids trying to communicate anything more than idle "chit-chat" in an uncondusive environment, preferring to find a place that is quiet and where the parties are comfortable. Even if some distractions continue to occur, the high scorer will seek to filter these out or manage them so they don't interfere too much at all.







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This section on Creating a Conducive Climate looks at your effort to make sure that the atmosphere or environment is as appropriate as possible for effective communication. It asks the question: "Have you done everything you can to minimize distractions and create a climate for open conversation?"

Improvement actions

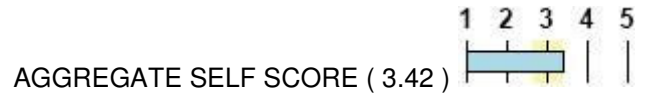
Low scorers need to formally ask themselves whether the listening climate is appropriate for the communication subject or time needed. Once this assessment has occurred, the low scorer needs to look for a calm place to talk or a comfortable room, and then try to minimize any physical distractions, including personal fidgeting. Low scorers should work on their "1" scores first, then the "2" scores, and so on. This approach of concentrating on weak areas first should be used in every category.

Creating a Conducive Climate

- Before the communication starts, mentally ask yourself the following questions: Is this communication environment comfortable for me and the other person to talk? Can we both hear properly? Are external distractions going to interfere? Can I personally avoid interrupting the other party's message?

SHOWING POSITIVE INTEREST

This section on Showing Positive Interest assesses your efforts to demonstrate how much you value the other party's message. It asks the question: "How much does the listener focus on the message and show the speaker that their message is being effectively received?"



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you give the impression of being aloof, disinterested, and even unconcerned about the speaker and their topic.

A low scorer will be likely to distract or even irritate the speaker by paying attention to almost everything else except the direct communication. Other parties are likely to learn to keep their communication with you short and terse, or look to others who will listen more openly or value what they want to say.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you openly show your respect for the other person and what they are trying to say to you. In addition, in conversation, you are likely to use a range of positive gestures and body language, and keep the discussion positive and open.

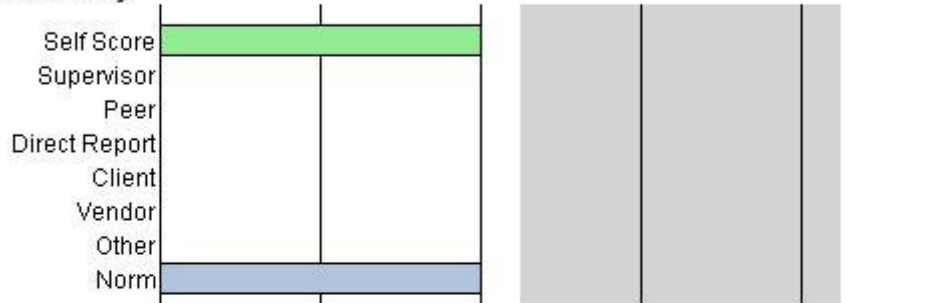
A high scorer immediately signals that they welcome the other person's communication, and sustains their focus and interest in full for the duration of the conversation. They deliberately use positive nodding and other signals to help the flow of the conversation along, and they make the speaker feel good about themselves and their ability to get their message across.

0 1 2 3 4 5

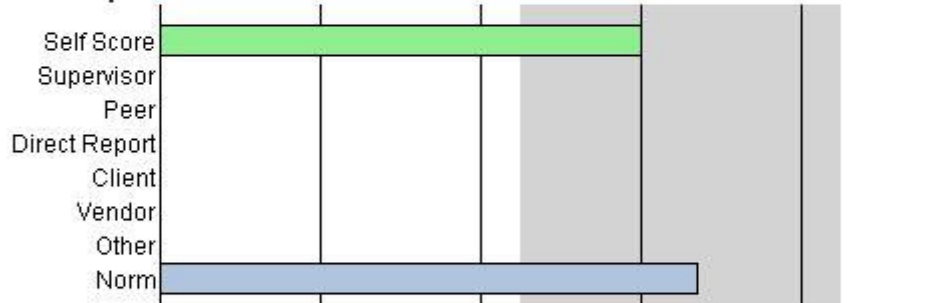
25. I don't let the other person's appearance distract me from what they are saying.



26. I show interest, even when the topic is of little concern to me personally.



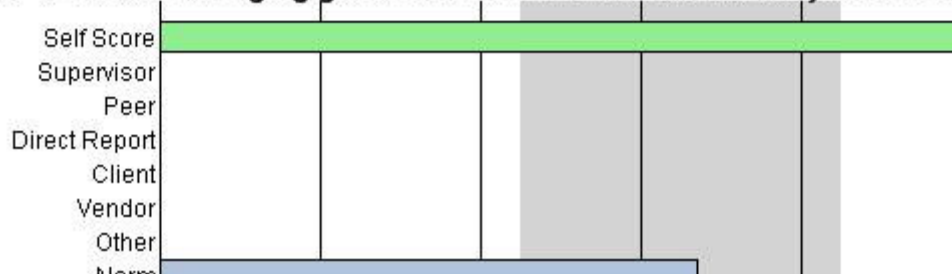
27. I try to avoid doing other tasks while I am listening to another person speak.

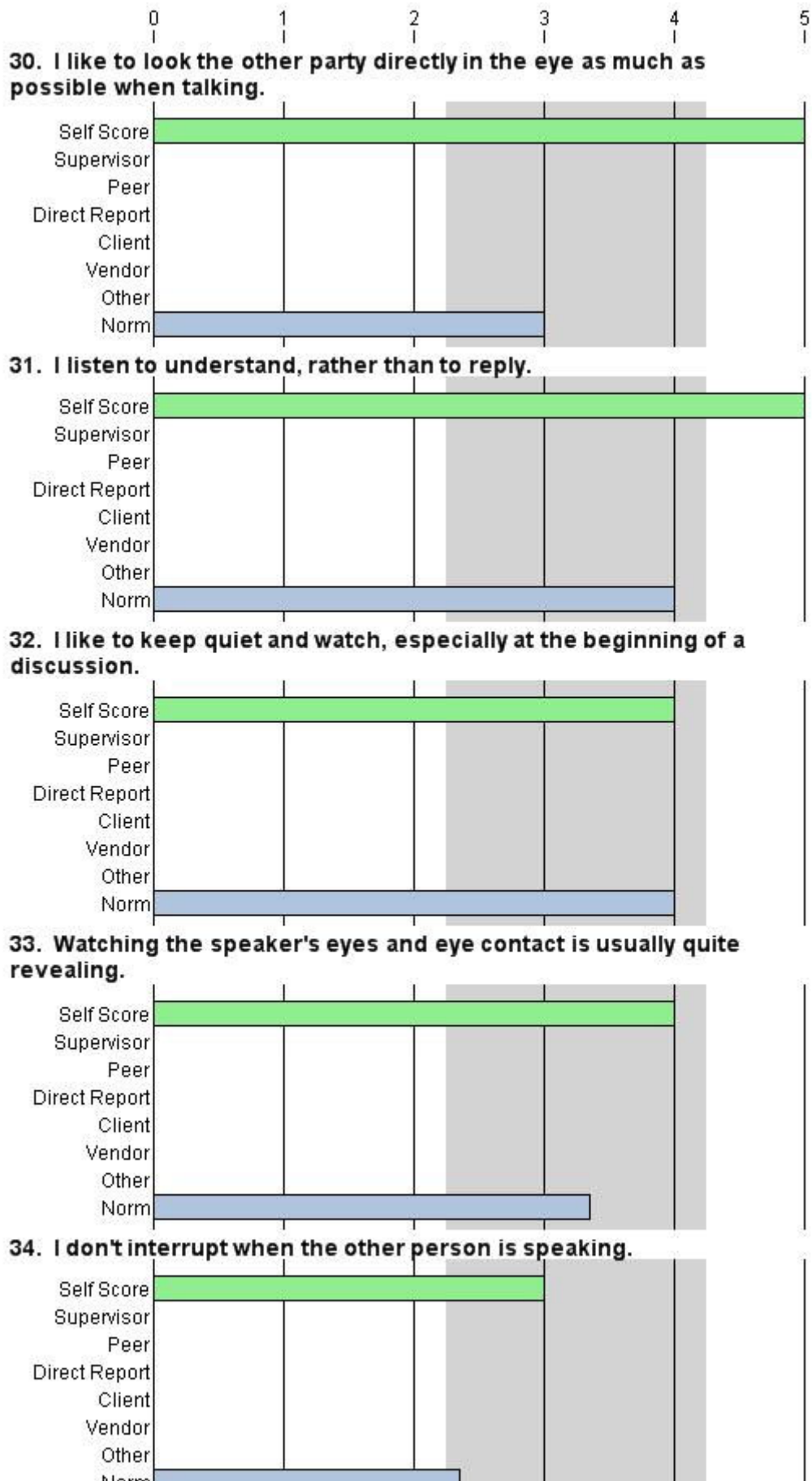


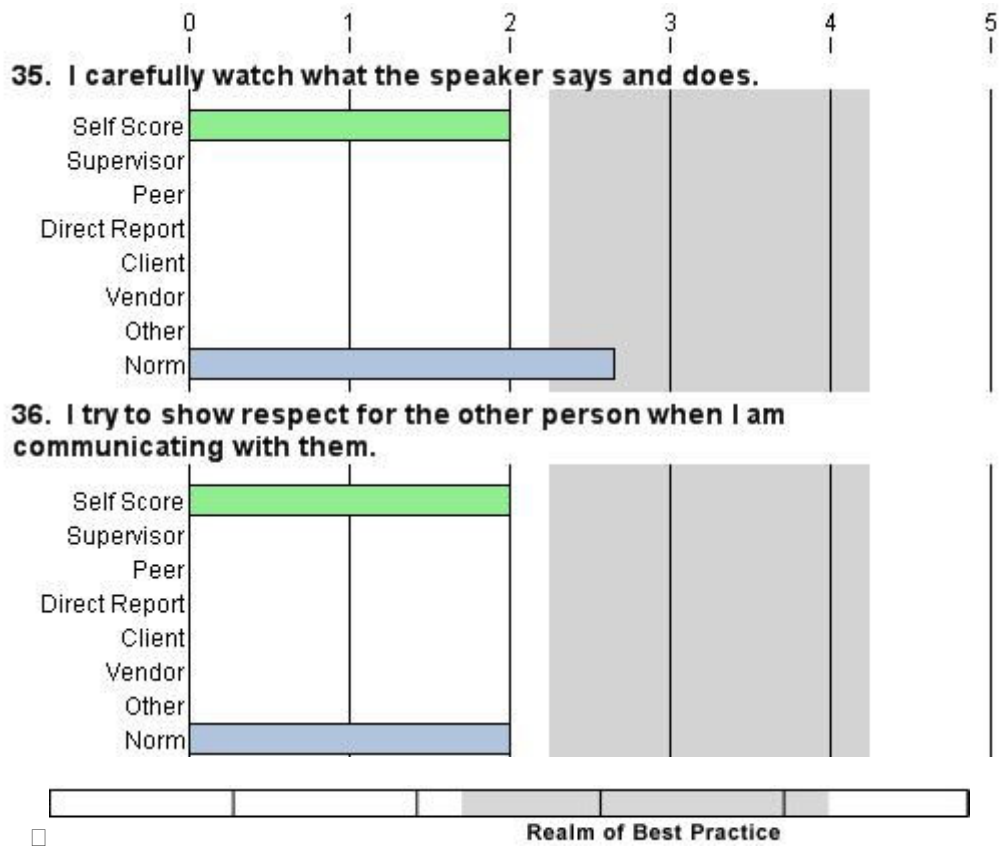
28. I avoid jumping into a conversation to take control.



29. I make encouraging gestures/sounds to demonstrate my interest.







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This section on Showing Positive Interest assesses your efforts to demonstrate how much you value the other party's message. It asks the question: "How much does the listener focus on the message and show the speaker that their message is being effectively received?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to become much less judgmental or opinionated about who and what is worth listening to. They must adopt a more neutral mode while listening and try to make more eye contact. They should also avoid interrupting, try feeding back what they have heard from time to time, and show respect for everyone who communicates with them.

Showing Positive Interest

- Even if this is hard to do in a completely sincere way at the outset, practice nodding, encouraging the speaker, recognizing good points that are made, and even smiling where appropriate. The more you do this, the more naturally that positive interest will be shown.

READING THE SPEAKER

This section on "Reading" the Speaker looks at the extent to which you accurately evaluate and understand the complete message being communicated or shared. It asks the question: "What is the speaker trying to say over and above their words?"



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

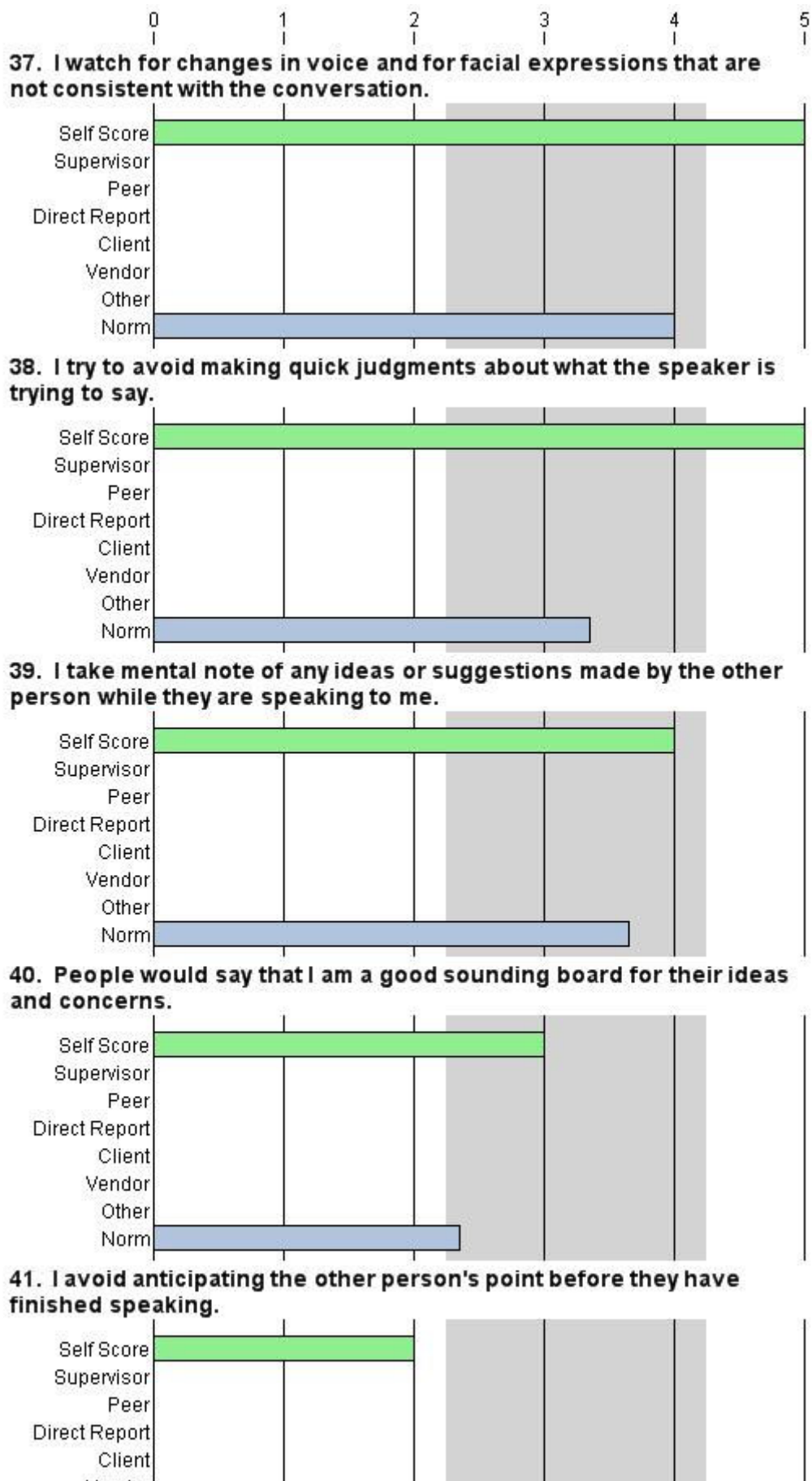
Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you do not spend time looking beyond the words in order to determine what the other party might be saying. Your mind is often "cluttered" with other thoughts and you might even believe that all this "between the lines" and "body-language stuff" is overrated anyway.

A low scorer misses much indirect communication given by another party, and therefore fails to understand people's statements, actions, or feelings. They make fewer efforts to listen, so they are less able to get the overall message.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

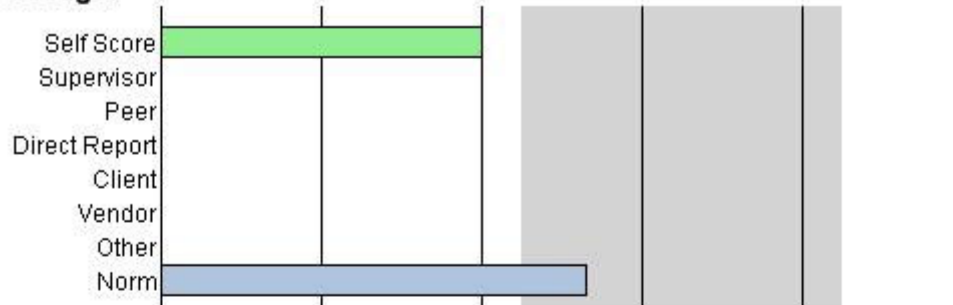
Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you stop yourself from anticipating what the other person means until you have read between the lines and behind the message. You are also likely to believe that observation is the key to effective listening and practice this skill frequently.

A high scorer almost senses the deeper meanings or more hidden messages in all but the most simple or shallow communications. This often gives them useful insight into people's statements and motives for future action.



0 1 2 3 4 5

42. I watch the speaker's general body language to get the complete message.



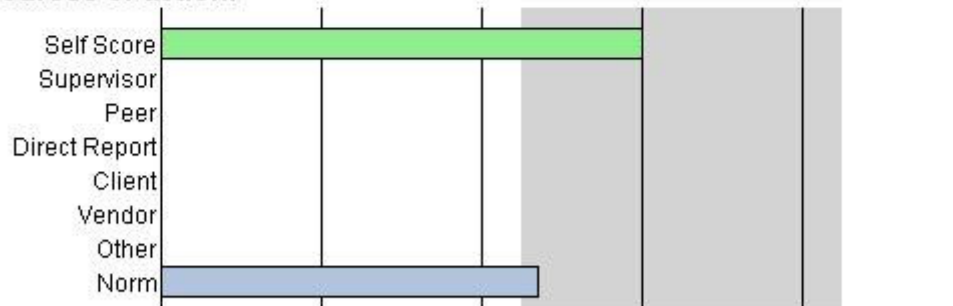
43. It is critical to look beyond the words when you listen to someone.



44. I believe that people can often communicate best without saying anything at all.

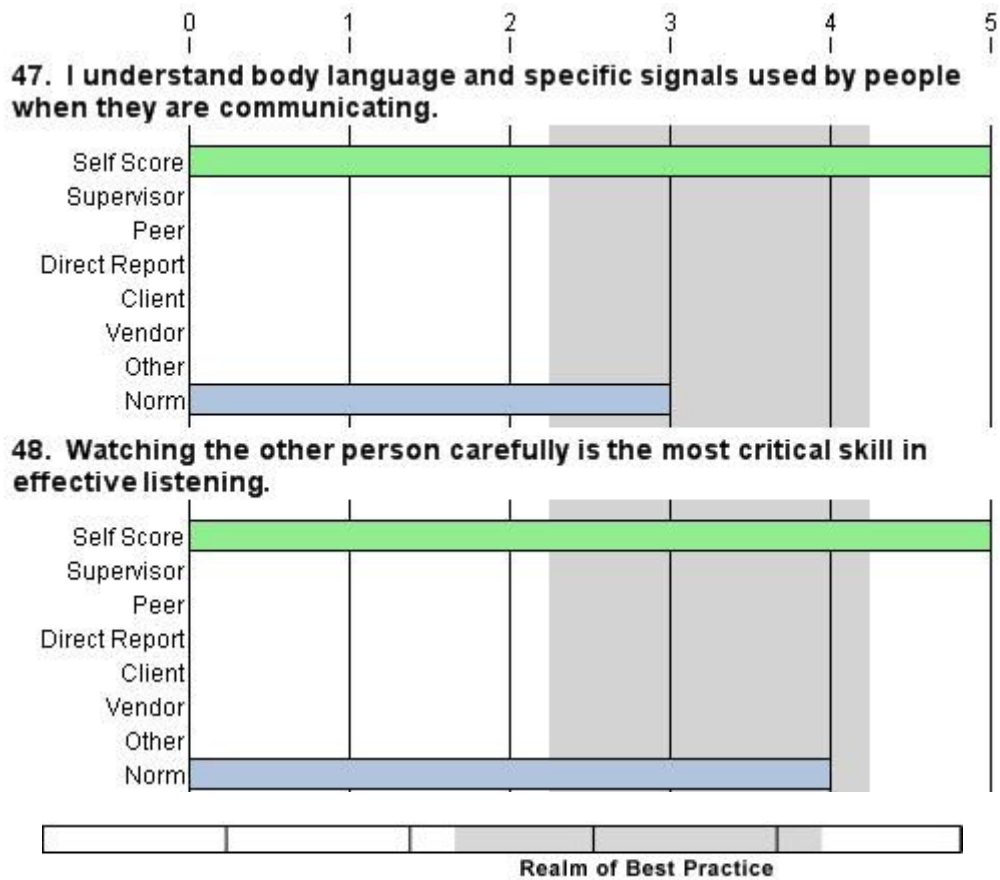


45. I try to help people discover the consequences of different courses of action.



46. People don't necessarily say what they mean or mean what they say in words alone.





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This section on "Reading" the Speaker looks at the extent to which you accurately evaluate and understand the complete message being communicated or shared. It asks the question: "What is the speaker trying to say over and above their words?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to recognize that words are only a small part of the overall communication mix and that they hinder their understanding if they don't work harder at the more underlying elements. Reading books on body language and communication theory might help a little, but quiet observation of the other person and their emotions is the most beneficial approach-with practice, even the lowest scorers can learn to read others in time.

Reading the Speaker

- Watch for small or subtle changes in the mood of the speaker or the way in which things are said (in words or actions).
- Watch the other person's eyes carefully, and listen for longer than might be comfortable so you get the full or complete picture.

EMPATHIZING

This section on Empathizing assesses the extent to which you as a listener demonstrate open interest and a commitment to understanding the other person's feelings and overall message. It asks the question: "Does the speaker feel that the listener values and understands them and their message, and appreciates the context in which it is given?"



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

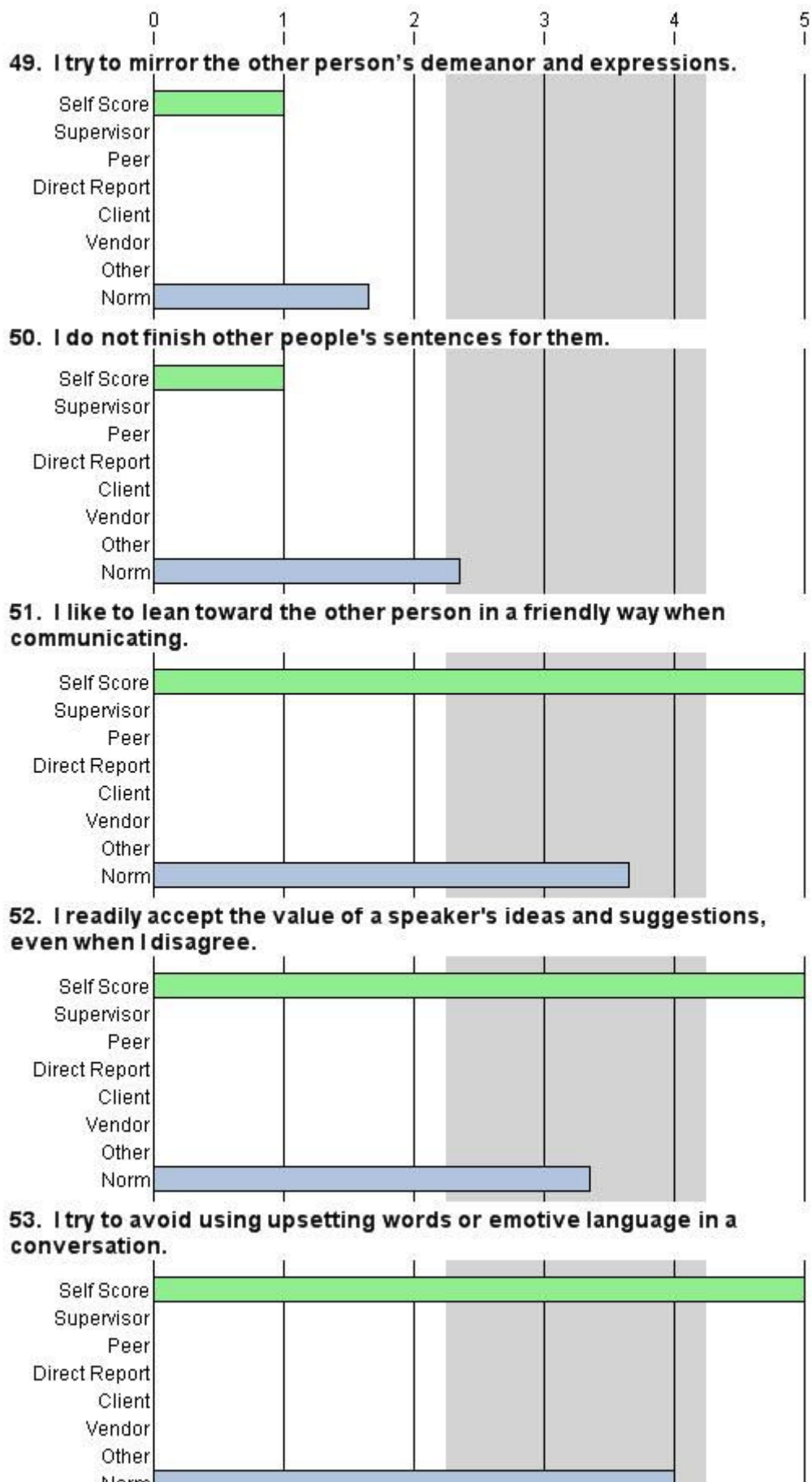
Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you spend little or no time in trying to put yourself in the other person's shoes and do not seem to pay attention to what the other person is feeling.

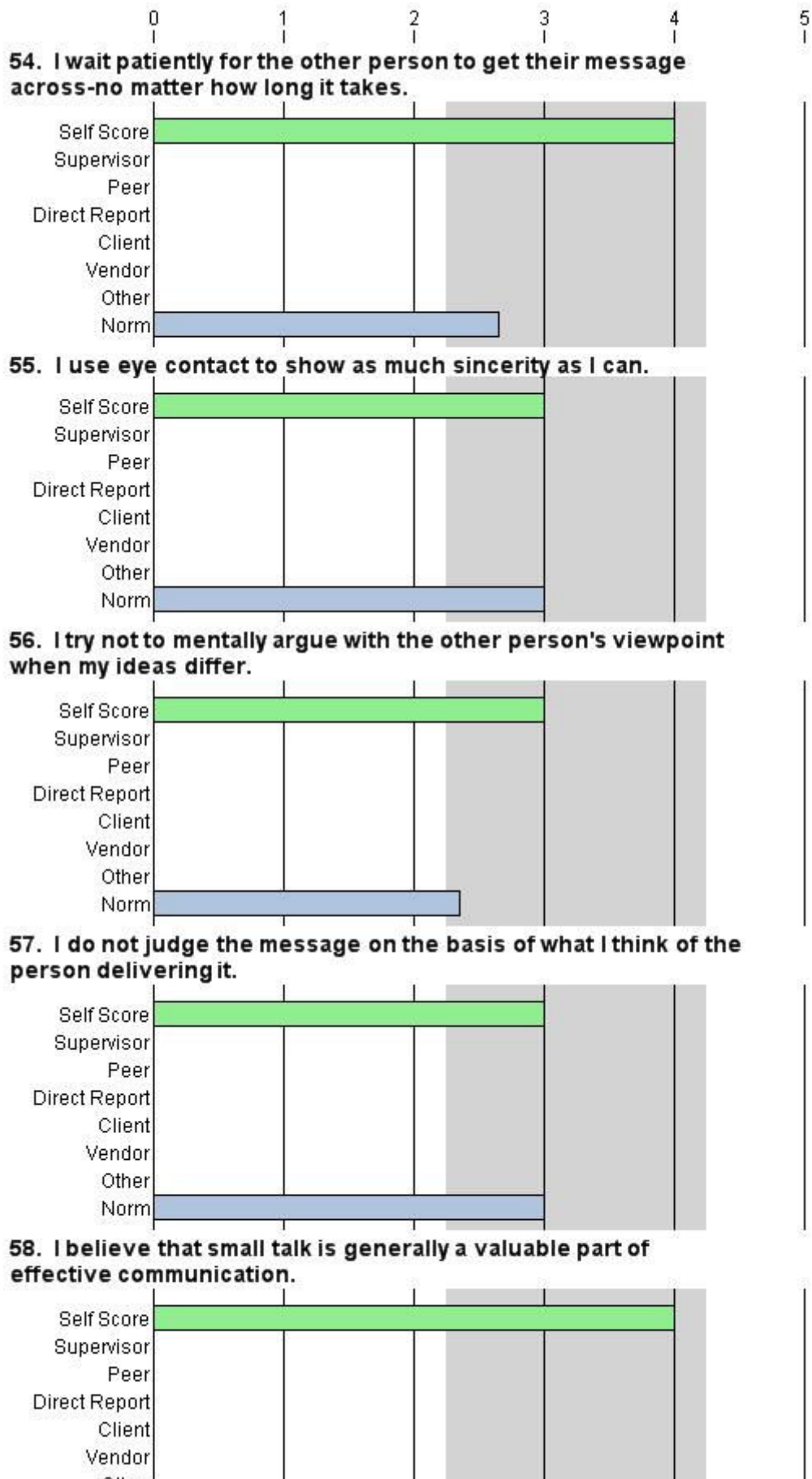
A low scorer tends to be a "transactional" communicator: An exchange will be a simple task to be completed before moving on to the next one. Low scorers are likely to listen from their own perspective and have little or no interest in knowing much about the other person.

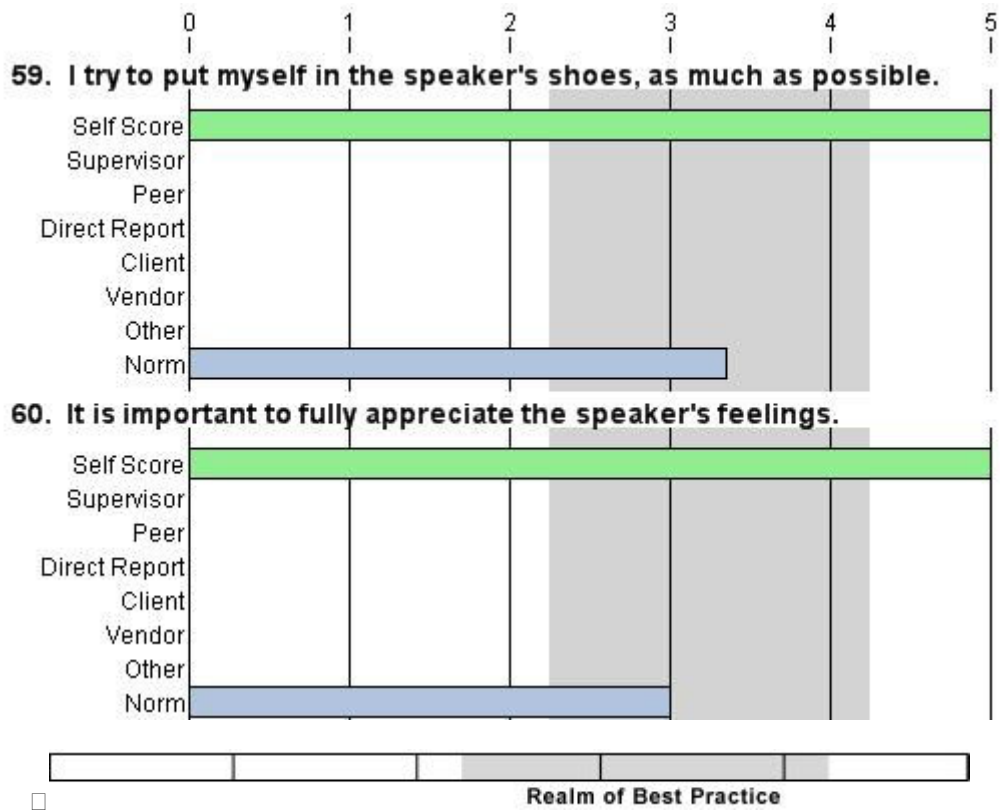
HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you quickly find common ground with whomever you are communicating with and demonstrate an appreciation for their feelings and their message.

A high scorer spends a considerable amount of time and effort trying to understand the other party's feelings and trying to respond in the most positive and empathetic way possible by sharing some of their own feelings. They are extremely effective at getting the speaker to "open-up."







Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

This section on Empathizing assesses the extent to which you as a listener demonstrate open interest and a commitment to understanding the other person's feelings and overall message. It asks the question: "Does the speaker feel that the listener values and understands them and their message, and appreciates the context in which it is given?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers should try to be less direct or "aloof" in their communication, and less "in-charge" of the conversation. They need to take the time to find areas of commonality, rather than areas of difference. Ask the question: What might I think if I were in their position?

Empathizing

- Try to imagine yourself in the speaker's position and try to appreciate the way the speaker is feeling as you listen to them. With a little practice, you can start to share a few experiences and feelings of your own and help open up the conversation.

PAYING ATTENTION AND CONCENTRATING

This section on Paying Attention and Concentrating looks at how effective you are at maintaining your focus on what is being communicated-both verbally and nonverbally. It asks the question: "How well do you look for the core message and reflect back to the speaker an accurate understanding of the message?"



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you take what is said at face value and drift off or let your mind wander, thereby missing important points in the discussion.

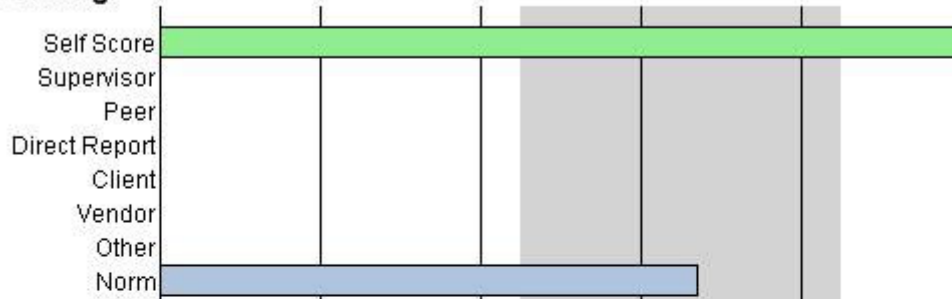
A low scorer pays as much attention to their own thoughts and reflections as they do to those of the person with whom they are communicating. They seldom ask questions of clarification (having neither the time nor the inclination), and become confused or misunderstand the message because of this.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

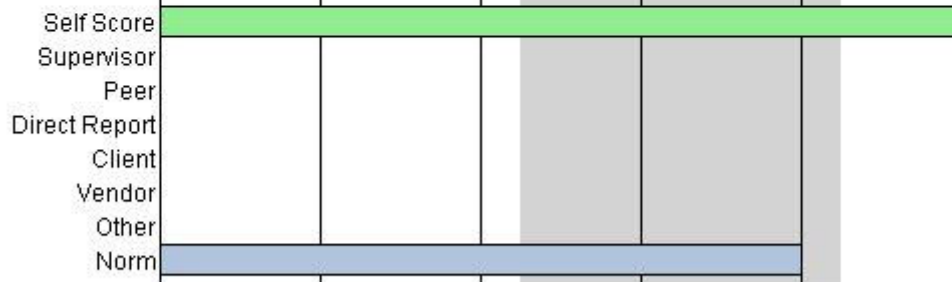
Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you understand the need to ask questions, to create clarity, as well as to paraphrase what is being said to keep the discussion focused and on track.

A high scorer expends significant energy and effort in constantly concentrating on what the other person is saying. This will usually entail asking as many questions as necessary in order to clarify and avoid confusion and misunderstanding.

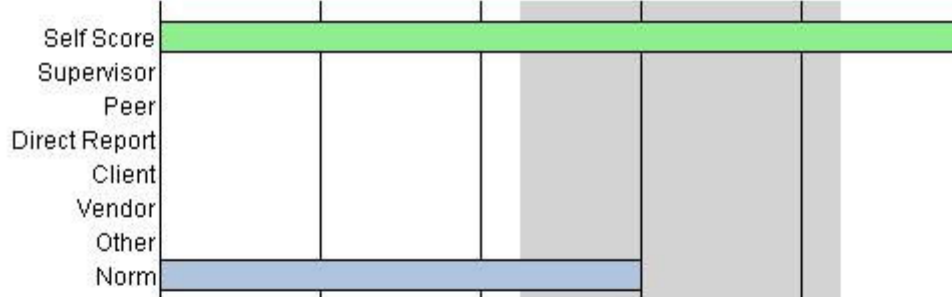
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61. I can easily prevent my mind from wandering when the other person is talking.



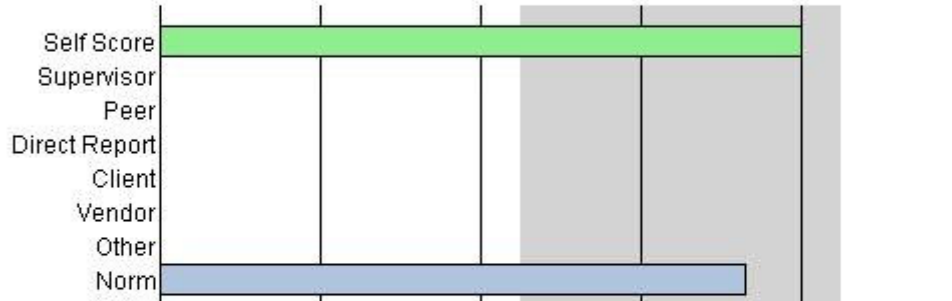
62. I like to paraphrase what a speaker is saying every so often.



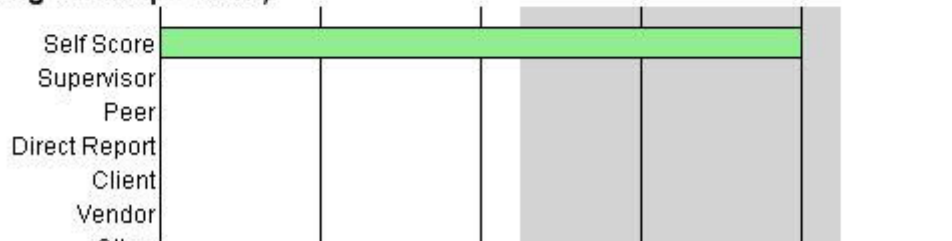
63. It is important to encourage/support the speaker by using non-verbal communication.

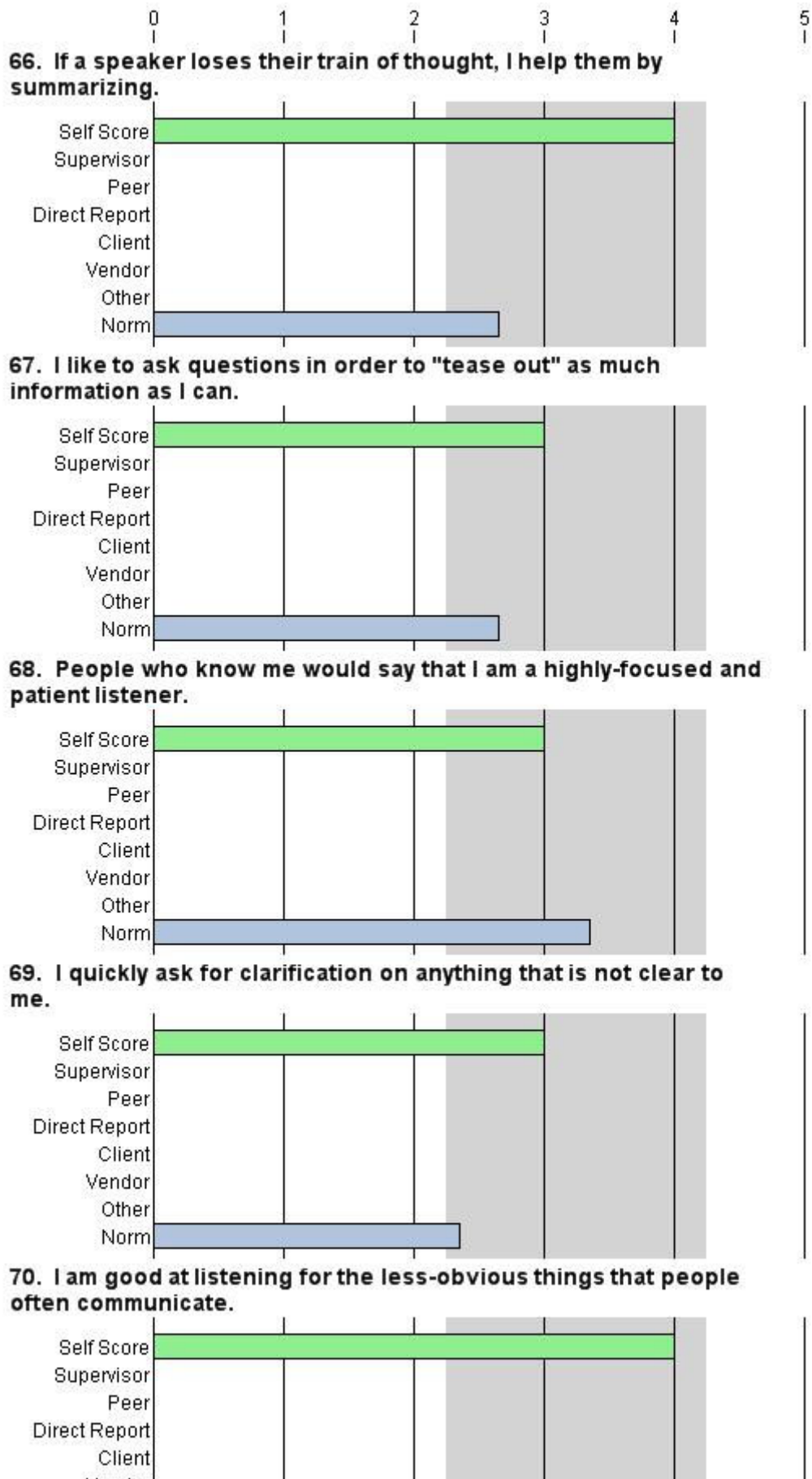


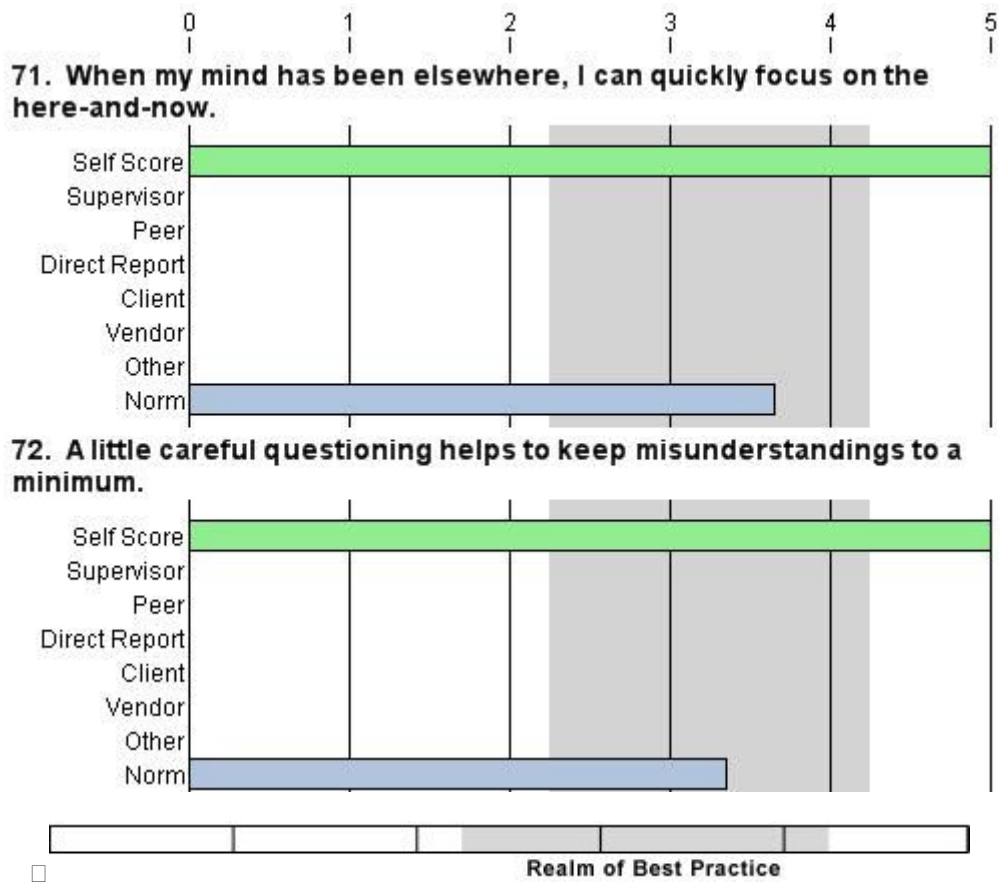
64. I gently question those points or arguments that I do not fully understand.



65. If necessary, I take notes (especially if the communication is long or complicated).







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This section on Paying Attention and Concentrating looks at how effective you are at maintaining your focus on what is being communicated-both verbally and nonverbally. It asks the question: "How well do you look for the core message and reflect back to the speaker an accurate understanding of the message?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to carefully think about how they can ask a range of questions in various conversations to help them concentrate and pay close attention to what is being said. These questions need to be practiced as often as possible. They should listen carefully for the answers they elicit before responding.

Paying Attention and Concentrating

- Concentrate as much as possible on not thinking about your next response while the other person is talking.
- If necessary, take notes on what you hear, and use "affirming" body language to show the speaker that you are focused on what they are saying.

UNDERSTANDING AND REFLECTING THE MESSAGE

This section on Understanding and Reflecting the Message looks at your effectiveness at interpreting what the speaker is saying and then letting them know that you have understood the message. It asks the question: "How well do you as a listener summarize the key points and accurately paraphrase what is being communicated?"



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

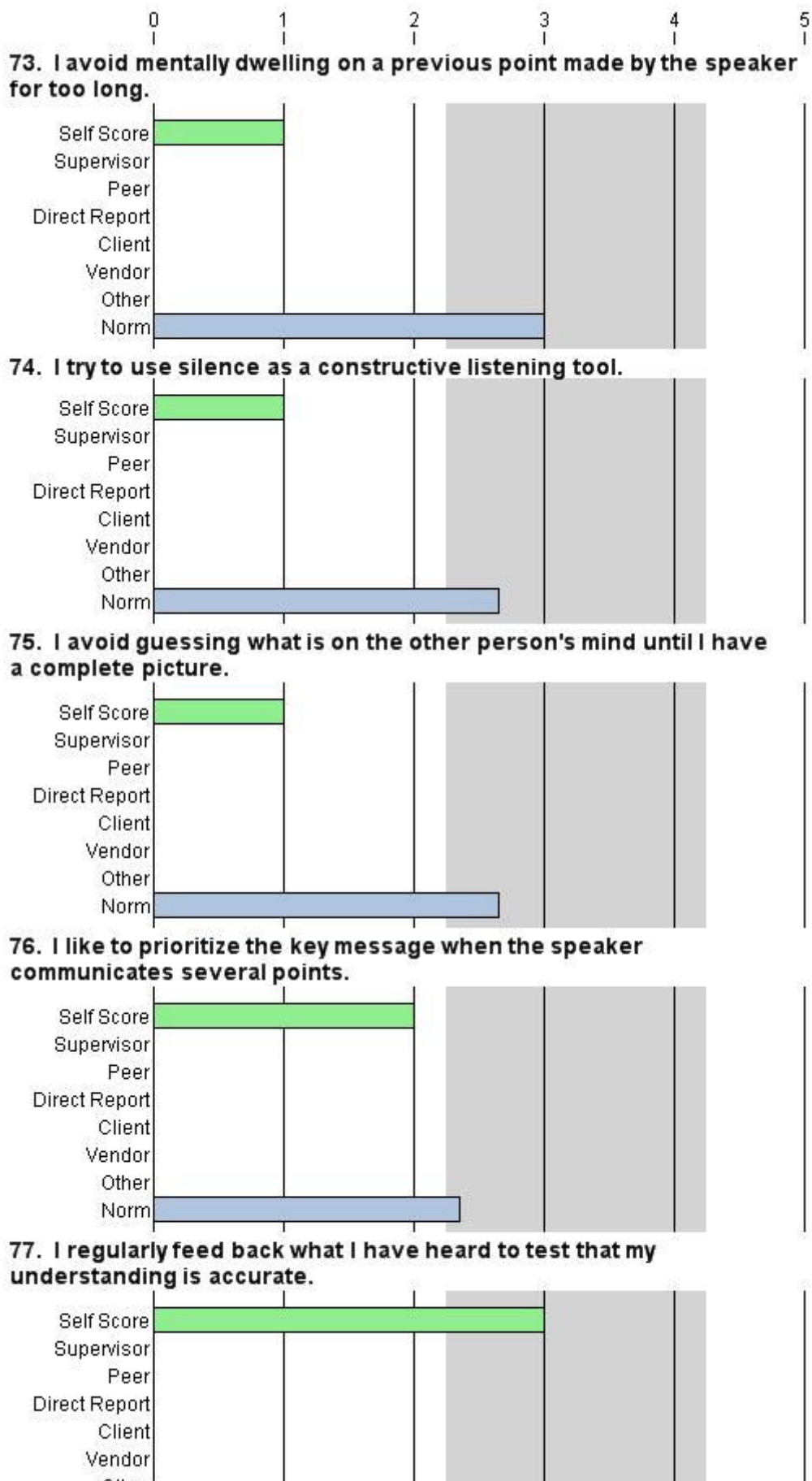
Scores predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you probably rush conversations and do not make good use of the opportunity to summarize or sum up (if at all).

A low scorer tends to selectively listen or only pay attention to parts of the conversation, and therefore has insufficient information to summarize well. The "quality" of conversations consequently suffers, and both parties are not always entirely clear if they have reached a common understanding at the end.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scores predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you work hard at interpreting and evaluating what a speaker is really trying to say, and repeat it back to them in summary form so that a mutual understanding can be reached.

A high scorer avoids lengthy passages of conversation without providing a quick summary or reflecting back the message before moving on. Communications are often therefore much more effective and focused.

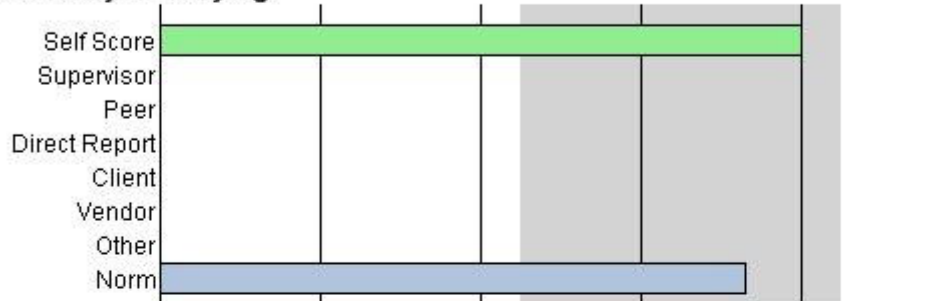


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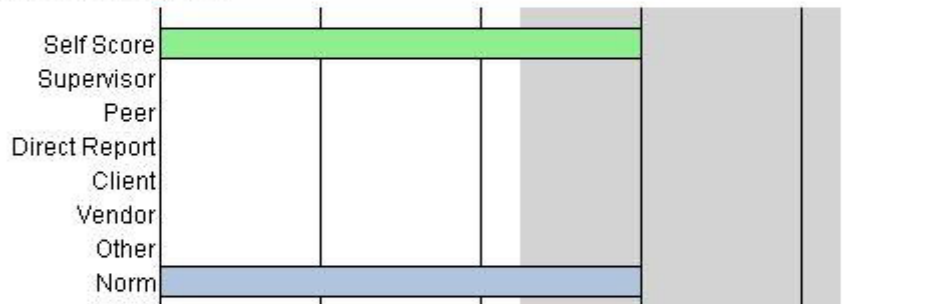
78. I raise previous points or arguments made by the speaker that they have forgotten.



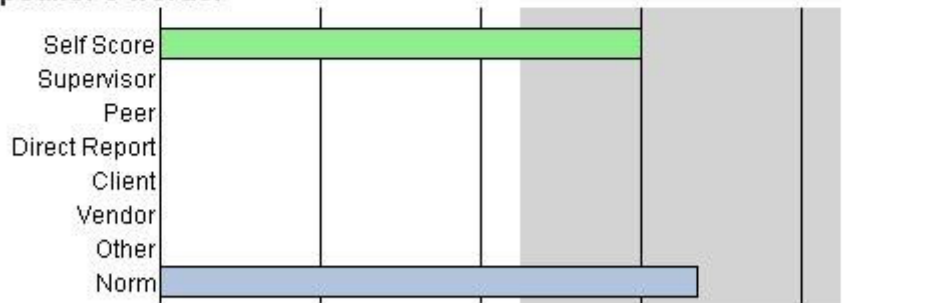
79. I try to understand what the other person is feeling, as well as what they are saying.



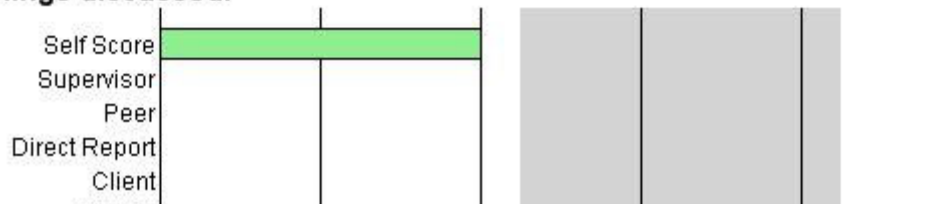
80. I use different language to make sure my interpretation of what is said is correct.

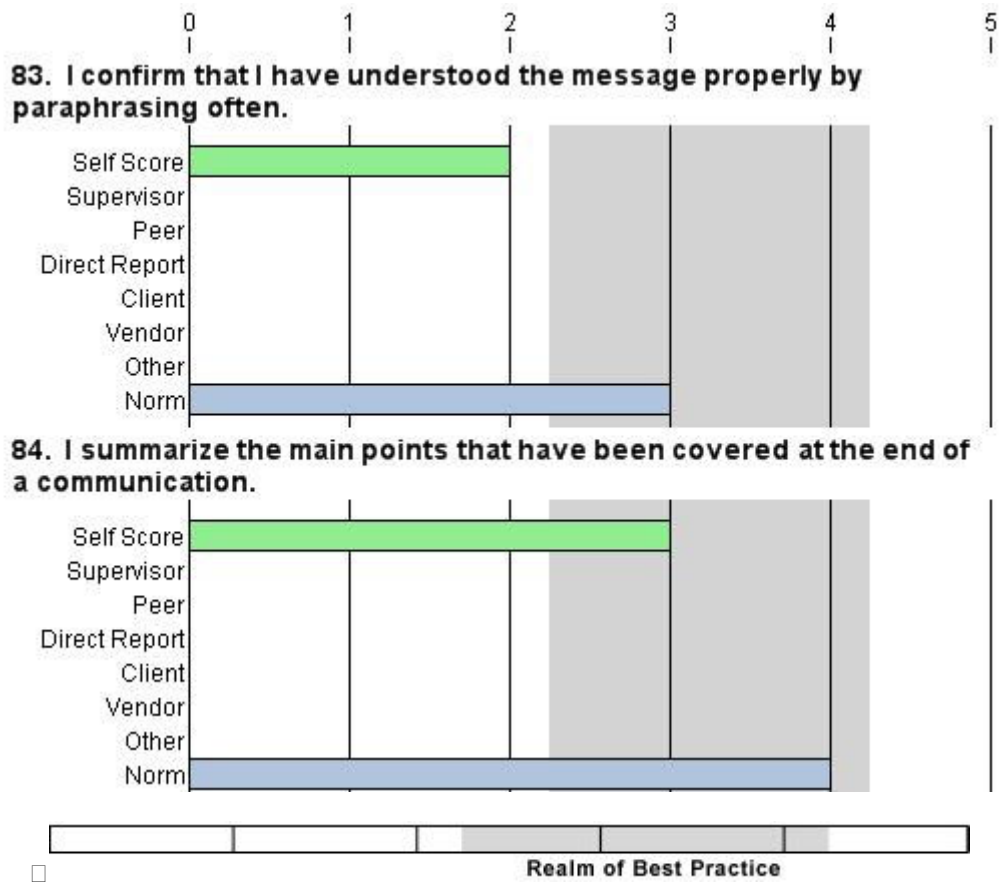


81. I try to listen for the overall message or key theme behind the speaker's words.



82. I try to close any conversation by reflecting back the major things discussed.





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This section on Understanding and Reflecting the Message looks at your effectiveness at interpreting what the speaker is saying and then letting them know that you have understood the message. It asks the question: "How well do you as a listener summarize the key points and accurately paraphrase what is being communicated?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to "tune-in" to the speaker as much as they are able, and try to provide a short mental summary of what is being said (without guessing or making assumptions). Think of the speaker as always having at least one key message: The challenge is to discover it and to confirm directly that this interpretation is accurate.

Understanding and Reflecting the Message

- Try to slow down your thinking during conversations and concentrate on the whole message from the speaker, including the words and the emotions that are transmitted.
- As a direct test of your ability, look to paraphrase what you hear from time to time, and directly check your understanding.

THE 10/10 REPORT

Top 10 Strengths

Predisposition/Temperament

- 1. I find it relatively easy to look people directly in the eye when talking. 5.00
- 8. I believe that a lot is communicated above and beyond words. 5.00

Creating a Conducive Climate

- 21. I don't doodle, draw, tap my fingers, shuffle papers, etc. during conversations. 5.00
- 22. I believe that effective communication requires high energy in order to concentrate. 5.00
- 23. I try to look friendly or smile at the speaker to create an "open" climate. 5.00

Showing Positive Interest

- 29. I make encouraging gestures/sounds to demonstrate my interest. 5.00
- 30. I like to look the other party directly in the eye as much as possible when talking. 5.00
- 31. I listen to understand, rather than to reply. 5.00

"Reading" the Speaker

- 37. I watch for changes in voice and for facial expressions that are not consistent with the conversation. 5.00
- 38. I try to avoid making quick judgments about what the speaker is trying to say. 5.00

Top 10 Development Needs

Predisposition/Temperament

- 7. I tend to think that good listening can only be done slowly. 1.00
- 12. The status or seniority of the other party in a discussion, relative to me, doesn't matter in the slightest. 1.00

Empathizing

- 49. I try to mirror the other person's demeanor and expressions. 1.00
- 50. I do not finish other people's sentences for them. 1.00

Understanding and Reflecting the Message

- 73. I avoid mentally dwelling on a previous point made by the speaker for too long. 1.00
- 74. I try to use silence as a constructive listening tool. 1.00
- 75. I avoid guessing what is on the other person's mind until I have a complete picture. 1.00

Predisposition/Temperament

- 3. I can generally clear my mind of personal concerns before I start a conversation. 2.00

Creating a Conducive Climate

- 18. I try to ignore distractions when listening. 2.00
- 19. I try to create an atmosphere in which it is easy to talk. 2.00

COURSE AND READING SUGGESTIONS

The following are general reading and course suggestions that may help you to better understand the two categories in which your scores were the lowest and to assist you in writing your development plan.

Predisposition/Temperament

This section on Predisposition/Temperament looks at your basic character predisposition, temperament, and internal desire to listen and acquire the patience to do so. It asks the question: "To what extent am I willing to invest my time and energy in the 'careful listening' process?"

Course Suggestion

- Interviewing skills
- Asking probing questions
- Paraphrasing and summarizing skills
- Communication skills

Other Suggestion

- If you feel comfortable to do so, talk to your direct supervisor/manager or a training and development specialist about personal training, coaching, and specific projects to improve your skills and other possible support they may be able to offer.

Reading Suggestion

- Between People : Communicating One-To-One, John A. Sanford. 1988
- Active Listening : Building Skills for Understanding (Active Listening), Marc Helgesen, et al.1994
- The Business of Listening: A Practical Guide to Effective Listening (Fifty-Minute Series.), Diane Bone, et al. 1995
- Speakers, Listeners and Communication: Explorations in Discourse Analysis, Gillian Brown, 1997
- The Art of Winning Conversation: Proven Communication Techniques for Personal and Professional Success, Morey Stettner. 1999

Understanding and Reflecting the Message

This section on Understanding and Reflecting the Message looks at your effectiveness at interpreting what the speaker is saying and then letting them know that you have understood the message. It asks the question: "How well do you as a listener summarize the key points and accurately paraphrase what is being communicated?"

Course Suggestion

- Emotional intelligence
- Relaxation methods
- Developing patience

Other Suggestion

- If you feel comfortable to do so, talk to your direct supervisor/manager or a training and development specialist about personal training, coaching, and specific projects to improve your skills and other possible support they may be able to offer.

Reading Suggestion

- How to Speak, How to Listen, Mortimer Jerome Adler. Paperback (April 1997)
- Effective Listening Skills (Business Skills Express), Abby Robinson Kratz(Preface), et al. 1995
- Emotional Intelligence by Daniel P. Goleman 1997
- Working With Emotional Intelligence by Daniel P. Goleman 2000

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Use the space below to write out your personal development plan for the next 12 months based on your results. Draw upon the general improvement actions in relevant areas of the report, and ideas that are suggested in the attached coaching tips.

7. I tend to think that good listening can only be done slowly. Score: 1.00

Action to Take:

12. The status or seniority of the other party in a discussion, relative to me, doesn't matter in the slightest. Score: 1.00

Action to Take:

49. I try to mirror the other person's demeanor and expressions. Score: 1.00

Action to Take:

50. I do not finish other people's sentences for them. Score: 1.00

Action to Take:

73. I avoid mentally dwelling on a previous point made by the speaker for too long. Score: 1.00

Action to Take:

1

Predisposition/Temperament

I tend to think that good listening can only be done slowly

When you take your time over any task which requires purposeful thinking, like eating or writing something or even just something simple like breathing, the results are always more efficient and effective (and generally more fulfilling or satisfying) than when you rush the task. For this reason, listening should therefore never be done in a rushed way, but time should be taken to do it well. In other words, to see or hear properly we must stop and process information, allowing it to register, comparing the data with experience and establishing its validity.

Thinking speed is so much faster than talking (about 500 words a minute, as compared to 125) that its almost inevitable that when listening you will jump ahead of the speaker, getting diverted down any number of distracting mental pathways while all along potentially missing whole statements and sentences. Listening slowly should not feel as if you are waiting patiently for the speaker to catch up with you, however. Everything that the other person is communicating needs to be considered and remembered in order to carry the conversation forward (and that takes time). Listening slowly involves harnessing your thoughts and being conscious of the moment when irrelevancies start to crowd your mind or when you have begun to form a response while the other person is still talking and returning at once to the message being conveyed.

Consider the following to improve your general effectiveness in this area:

- Draw as much as you can on your resources of concentration and patience (as listeners need to consistently appreciate a speakers' messages) without missing any key points
- Think about the words that you hear almost one by one to ensure that you fully understand and appreciate what is being said
- Slow the conversation down wherever necessary to increase understanding (a rushed discussion may be a very low quality one).
- Establish and maintain a steady, consistent and easy verbal pace, pausing if necessary until the speaker talks at an equally considerate speed
- In helping to maximize understanding, slow hasty speakers down by asking questions aimed at elucidating or expanding upon their thoughts
- The mechanics of thinking are extremely fast – to process information and ideas properly you must consciously apply a brake to your thoughts in order for the points and their implications to register and to be processed effectively
- Take time to reflect on what has been said and thoroughly consider your feelings on the subject before responding



1

Predisposition/Temperament

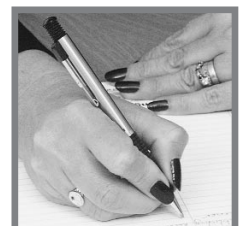
The status or seniority of the other party in a discussion, relative to me, doesn't matter in the slightest

Status is more important to some than others. To those in high level organizational positions who may feel they have earned the right to respect, and to others who may or may not feel they should recognize seniority and use most their powers of concentration and understanding on ideas and suggestion coming from those that they see as having more to say because of their rank or status. Whether or not people see rank to be important, effective listening is best achieved by giving equal consideration on every individual's contribution to a discussion regardless of their position or status.

An attentive listener will pay due respect to all those that are communicating with them but give no special attention to any one person, even where their organizational status for example is considerably higher than their own. In the same way, individuals whose status is in seen to be lower (in cultural or social terms for example) are also afforded the same amount of time and consideration.

Consider the following to improve your general effectiveness in this area:

- Aim to be even-handed and fair in dealings with all people that you talk to, being equally open and friendly as far as this is possible.
- Always strive to treat others with equal patience and affording the other person as much time and respect as you would like yourself
- Check out your pitch, pace of delivery, tone and speed of voice in conversations with people of different rank or status and ensure that you are not discriminating in any way as you listen or communicate in general
- Don't let status or seniority of the other party in a discussion make any difference to the way that you communicate. If they are senior to you, show appropriate respect but be yourself. If they are junior to you, build as much empathy as you can and show that you are genuinely interested in what the other person has to say.
- Always remember that fair-minded treatment is reciprocal and treating all individuals' suggestions with equal respect will lead to them listening with interest to your ideas



5 Empathizing

I try to mirror the other person's demeanor and expressions

In order to show the other person that you understand their point of view, that you relate to their feelings and can appreciate their stance you should ideally utilize verbal and physical evidence to prove it. In paraphrasing and summarizing their message, as well as in asking questions, this will typically involve capturing the essence of their message, reflecting, albeit in your own words, the core meaning and purpose of their communication, demonstrating that you have been listening, and comprehending and appreciate their perspective. This will be an ongoing process throughout the conversation, and you should ideally mirror key aspects of the other person's body language, from smiling when they do to displaying signs of apprehension and concern when they appear nervous. You are basically striving to accept their feelings, letting them know that you want to share in the discussion unconditionally, that far from judging them you are there to listen and understand.

People who have empathy with each other often unconsciously mirror each other's behavior. This can mean gestures and postures and verbal inflections and even laughter (as well as general facial expressions). By consciously doing this, and doing it with sensitivity, it is possible to convey empathy to the person you are listening to.

Consider the following to improve your general effectiveness in this area:

- Pay attention to the rich variety of micro-events that make up a person's repertoire of facial expressions. Note that the brow, the eyebrows, the eyelids, the cheek muscles, the mouth and the chin can convey so much. To sensitize yourself to just how much variety there can be within one face, stand close to a mirror, and act out different emotional and behavioral states (joy, depression, curiosity, affection, distaste, fatigue, concentration, determination, relaxation, and so on). Pay close attention to just how the different sections of your face convey these states.
- Begin to mirror the facial expressions of others. It may help to start off by simply concentrating on one part of their face and yours (for example, the brow and eyebrows, the mouth, the chin).
- Aim to put your faith in the principle that imitation is the best form of flattery, raising the speaker's confidence and willingness to open up by mirroring their more positive expressions, verbally and physically
- Develop the art of pacing, that is, reflecting back to the speaker their actions, such as tone and rate of delivery and breathing, and principal arguments and ideas
- Don't concentrate on pacing to the detriment of missing the message – it should become an unconscious means of adding to your and the other person's relationship
- Whenever a person is reluctant to describe their feelings, respond with questions which include encompass the kind of emotions they have been using themselves
- Remember that it is never sufficient to merely mimic the other person by repeating their speech verbatim – you should take their main points and extract the most appropriate words and phrases
- Pace the other person subtly and gradually – if they seem uncomfortable with your pacing then they probably suspect an element of sarcasm in your behavior



5 Empathizing

I do not finish other people's sentences for them

The implication you convey when completing other's sentences for them is that you know what they think. Whether or not you are right in your guessing, you run the risk of insulting and annoying them. Your motives may even be well-intended, such as trying to prove your mental alertness and enthusiasm, but the effect is almost always bound to be negative: just recall the occasions when its happened to you.

In setting the tone of acceptance in a conversation, of trying to hear rather than talk, you will invoke a culture of empathy. People may not consciously recognize the specific act of allowing others to finish their sentences but they will receive the overall impression that here is someone who cares enough about their message and opinions that they are willing to listen quietly and reflectively.

It is equally important for the effective listener to work hard not to anticipate or preconceive anyone's thoughts. By observing in group discussions, for example you may be surprised to hear how much interrupting occurs, even mid-sentence. The exercising of patience will eventually reap the rewards of courteous and considerate listening.

Consider the following to improve your general effectiveness in this area:

- Always allow the other person to finish their point or sentence; by disturbing their (and your) focus on the message you will destroy the continuity of the conversation and cause possible irritation
- Avoid giving the impression that you think you have license to jump in (behavior which may be perceived as discourteous, arrogant and inhibit the speaker's willingness to confide and expand).
- Bite your tongue when you feel like interrupting. The message conveyed by anticipating the other person's communication is that their contribution to the conversation or discussion is of little value and what they have to say is transparently obvious
- If you are trying to complete others sentences you must be talking more than listening, failing to properly pay attention and demonstrating impatience, i.e. analyze how much you are doing this and consciously try to adjust



7 Understanding and Reflecting the Message

I avoid mentally dwelling upon a previous point made by the speaker for too long

It could be regarded as a positive sign of interest and stimulation, on the part of the listener, that they should linger over a point that the speaker has made (assuming of course that the reason this happens is not down to confusion). In such circumstances, the other person may have transmitted information which pleases, fascinates or just interests the listener, but has then promptly moved on, barely pausing for breath, leaving them no time to savor your newly-acquired knowledge. Of course, this is the normal way that most conversations work. Short of stopping the speaker in full flow to congratulate them, the best option left to you is to nod and prepare yourself for more (and not dwell on any one point).

Few exchanges are made up of a dislocated series of facts and ideas; they contain a logic and structure in which isolated notions can only make sense considered in the context of the theme and purpose of a developing argument. Ideally, you will not even pause to view a single phrase or sentence as a separate and independent concept, but rather as a vital link in the communication, the meaning of which will only become fully apparent when you've heard the successive points until the speaker has completed their message. Hence, to dwell upon any of them will not typically bring any value to your understanding.

Of course, the temptation to linger may be due to misunderstanding, in which case you will know how to learn what the speaker means to convey by waiting for a suitable opportunity to ask them. In these circumstances, it may take a little time and practice to register the difficulty, while still managing to retain your grasp of the speaker's argument and requesting the intended meaning shortly afterwards.

Consider the following to improve your general effectiveness in this area:

- Guard carefully against thinking about a point or an idea mentally and potentially miss important data or discussion as a result – keep your mind open and focused for the duration of the conversation.
- Learn to link ideas as they are being communicated, weaving them into the overall argument or message then moving promptly on to the next point without dwelling on them too much – this helps to ensure that you do not miss anything
- Reflect what the other person is saying but aim to keep this reflection to a few seconds only and re-focus on the way the discussion develops.
- Make a mental note (or jot it down), with a view to exploring it later, whenever the message's factual comment is too varied or complex or the argument too intricate
- If the pace of the discussion is too fast and you would like to spend longer on a particular point, ask the other person to slow down rather than dwell on it mentally and say nothing

