

Interpersonal Skills

Dealing with Challenges to Authority and Boundaries

When confronted with individuals who challenge your authority or the boundaries set by your client, it's crucial to handle the situation with effective communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal. One proven method is LEAPS, derived from the communication technique known as Verbal Judo (Thompson, 2004). This method is designed to achieve cooperation and compliance.

LEAPS Method

The LEAPS method involves following specific steps in a particular order. Though it may seem time-consuming initially, practicing LEAPS regularly will make it an instinctive part of your communication. Investing time in using LEAPS can prevent situations from escalating further.

L - Listen

Engage in "active listening" while the individual speaks. Active listening entails giving your full attention to the speaker, not just hearing the words but also observing non-verbal cues. Demonstrating active listening makes it evident to the speaker that you are attentive and respectful, which can often lead to the compliance you need. Here are some tips for active listening:

- **Maintain Eye Contact:** This shows the speaker that you are engaged.
- **Acknowledge Points:** Nod or make affirming gestures when appropriate to indicate that you are following along.
- **Stay Focused:** Avoid distractions such as looking around, flipping through your notebook, greeting passersby, or checking your watch.
- **Wait to Clarify:** Do not interrupt the speaker. If you need clarification, wait until there is a natural pause before asking.

By incorporating these strategies, you can enhance your ability to manage and resolve challenging situations effectively.

E - Empathize

Empathizing involves understanding the situation from another person's perspective without necessarily agreeing with their feelings. For instance, if you are on duty at a fire scene and someone tries to cross the perimeter to reach a friend they believe is in danger, your orders are to keep all non-emergency personnel out. Despite explaining this, the individual might ignore you or become upset.

To empathize, you could try to imagine the fear they are experiencing, which influences their judgment. You wouldn't change your orders or let them in, but you can show empathy by saying:

"I understand you are very worried about your friend and want to make sure they are safe. However, letting you inside could put you in danger or obstruct the emergency personnel trying to help. The best way you can help is to stay out here where it is safe."

Empathy can be challenging in certain situations. For example, if you encounter someone stealing to sell goods for drug money, it might be hard to empathize. Instead of focusing on their motivation, view them as a person who feels desperate and sees no other options. This shift in perspective can make it easier to relate.

Remember, empathy is not about feeling sorry for someone. It's about understanding why they are behaving a certain way so you can communicate effectively.

A - Ask

Ensure you fully understand what the other person is saying. It's perfectly acceptable to ask them to repeat something or clarify a point you don't understand. Being polite is crucial, as the person might already be frustrated by the situation, and you don't want your questions to add to their frustration. When seeking clarification:

- **Be Respectful:** Avoid making the person feel inadequate. For example, say, "Could you please repeat that? I didn't catch it clearly."
- **Be Specific:** Clearly indicate what you need clarification on. If you're vague, the person might doubt whether you were listening.

P - Paraphrase

Paraphrasing involves restating what the speaker has said in your own words. This technique has two main benefits: it demonstrates that you were listening, and it allows you to verify your understanding. Misunderstandings during communication can often lead to increased conflict. Paraphrasing helps reduce this risk by ensuring both parties are on the same page.

S - Summarize

At the conclusion of your conversation, it's important to summarize the discussion, including any agreed-upon actions. For instance, if you deny access to someone without the correct ticket, you might summarize as follows:

"To ensure we are both clear, I cannot allow you into the floor seating because you do not have the proper ticket. You mentioned that your girlfriend, who is already seated, has the ticket. You

will move to the side and call her on her cell phone to bring the ticket to you. Once I verify your ticket, I will allow you into the seating area. Do you understand?"

By summarizing, you clarify expectations and provide options (e.g., retrieving the ticket or choosing another seating area). It also politely signals that the discussion is concluded.

Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills, also known as people or communication skills, involve effectively using abilities such as active listening, appropriate tone of voice, delegation, and leadership. These skills determine how well you communicate and conduct yourself with others.

In a business context, interpersonal skills refer to a person's ability to navigate social communication and interactions within an organization. They are essential for how individuals relate to one another.

For security guards, who frequently interact with a diverse range of individuals, conduct is crucial to the professional image of the security industry. Security guards must be vigilant in identifying potential problems and act preventatively to avoid escalation.

Being courteous and professional helps establish rapport and build trusting relationships. Strong interpersonal skills enable security guards to relate well to others and prevent or diffuse challenging situations.

Customer Service

While each customer has unique needs, a Security Guard should generally aim to: (a) Anticipate the customer's needs; (b) Listen and respond to the customer's needs; and (c) Exceed the customer's expectations.

On the Phone

Answer the telephone in a courteous and professional manner. The Guard should identify their position and location, and provide their name. Speak clearly in a normal voice, ensuring the tone conveys a willingness to help.

At an Access Control Point

The initial impression a Guard makes can be lasting. At that moment, the Guard represents both the company and the client, and their public relations efforts can significantly enhance the image of both entities.

Appearance

The appearance of a Security Guard greatly influences first impressions. Maintaining a high standard of dress and personal grooming is crucial for public relations. Remember, when interacting with the public, you are seen as the direct representative of the company and the client.

Accepting Favors

"Officer courtesy" refers to Security Guards receiving free items or services from third parties, such as money, food, goods, or preferential treatment. Accepting such gratuities can compromise a Security Guard's impartiality and decision-making when dealing with the provider of the gratuity. It also undermines the public trust and support that the security industry has worked hard to build. A single poor decision can tarnish the reputation of the individual officer, their company, and the security industry as a whole in the eyes of the public.

Integrity and Discipline

Integrity is a crucial quality for a professional security guard. It serves as an inner guide that dictates positive reactions to the outside world. Individuals with integrity are respectful, reliable, honest, and principled.

Respect

- **Self-Respect:** You appreciate and take care of yourself.
- **Respect for Others:** Treat others as you wish to be treated.
- **Respect for Laws and Orders:** Recognize the importance of following laws and directives.
- **Respect for Property:** Honor and protect others' property.

Reliability

- **Dependability:** Perform your duties to the best of your ability.
- **Composure in Emergencies:** Stay calm and take control in urgent situations.
- **Punctuality:** Arrive and leave on time, ensuring smooth information transfer between shifts.

Honesty

- **Truthfulness:** Always tell the truth.
- **Accountability:** Take responsibility for your actions rather than blaming others.
- **Confidentiality:** Keep sensitive information private.
- **Sincerity:** Be genuine in your actions and words.

Principles

- **Fairness:** Treat everyone justly.
- **Advocacy:** Speak out against unfair treatment when you witness it.

Demonstrating Integrity

Security guards show integrity by:

- **Adhering to Rules and Orders:** Obey all company, worksite, and legal regulations.
- **Setting an Example:** Be a role model for others.
- **Being Reliable and Professional:** Ensure punctuality and professionalism in all duties.
- **Commitment:** Fulfill promises and complete tasks as pledged.