



NVLAP

Assessor Training

Assessment Techniques:
Communication Skills and
Conducting an Assessment



Characteristics of an Assessor

- **Confidential**
- Unbiased and impartial
- Independent
- Observant, good listener
- Knowledgeable



Assessor Attributes

Source: ISO 19011 and ILAC G-11:07/2006

- Open minded: willing to consider other points of view
- Sound judgment and good analytical skills
- Discerning: what's most important and how does it fit?
- Tenacity: persistent and focused on achieving results
- Ethical: fair, truthful, sincere, discrete
- Diplomatic
- Decisive
- Self-reliant



Abilities of the Ideal Assessor

- Highly functional communicator – excellent listening, speaking, and written skills
- Focused
- Collaborative
- Observant
- Systematic and organized
- Prepared
- Good time management
- Flexibility within the assessment
- Adaptable to changing work assignments and conditions



First Impressions

- Professional appearance
- Alert and focused
- Positive and balanced attitude: open-minded, curious, and respectful
- Obviously prepared and organized
- Open and communicative
- Able to establish rapport and set the tone for an effective assessment



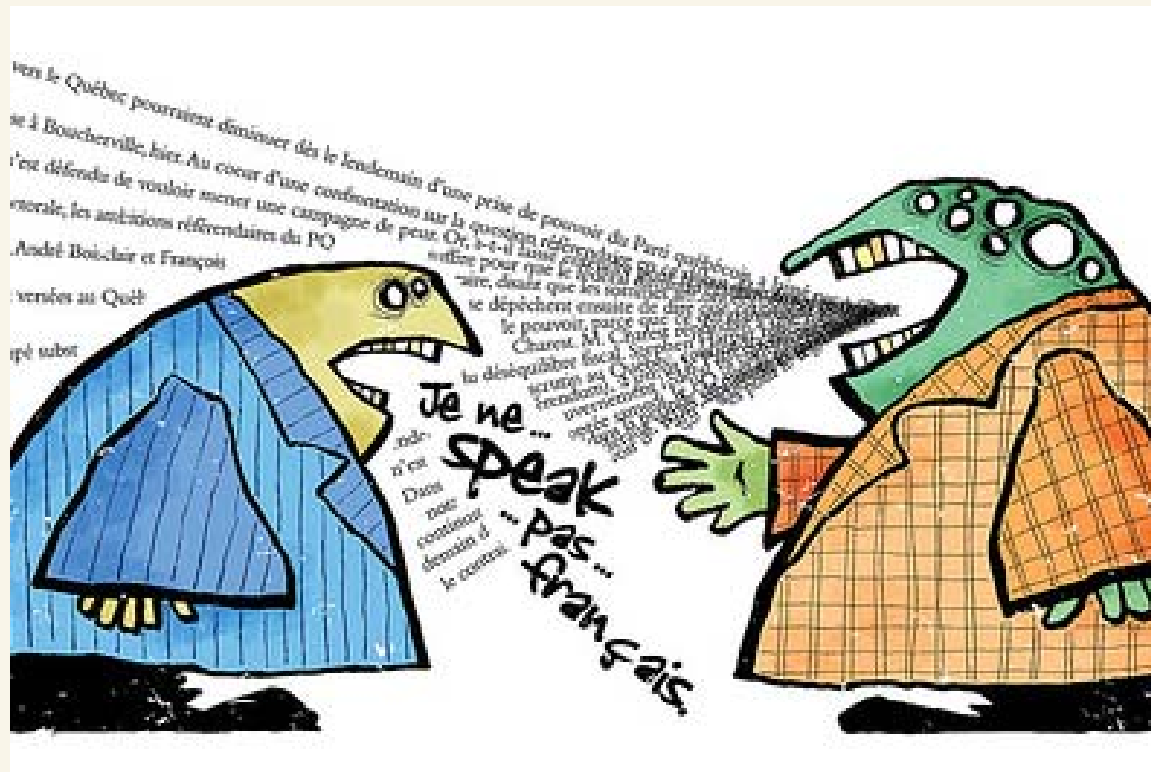
Communication Skills





How well do you communicate??

- What is said may not be what is heard
 - Choose your words carefully
 - Observe how they are received
- What is heard may not be understood
 - Engage in discussion to ensure understanding
- What is understood may not be accepted
 - The assessee may be defensive



I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realized that what you heard is not what I meant



Communicating During the Assessment: Things to remember

- Assesseees are under stress
- No one is a mind reader
- Don't assume
- Ask open-ended questions
- LISTEN to the responses



Listening Skills

- An assessor needs to be
 - Active and in the moment
 - Focused, perceptive
 - Respectful
- An assessor needs to
 - Ask open-ended questions
 - Request a description
 - Take notes

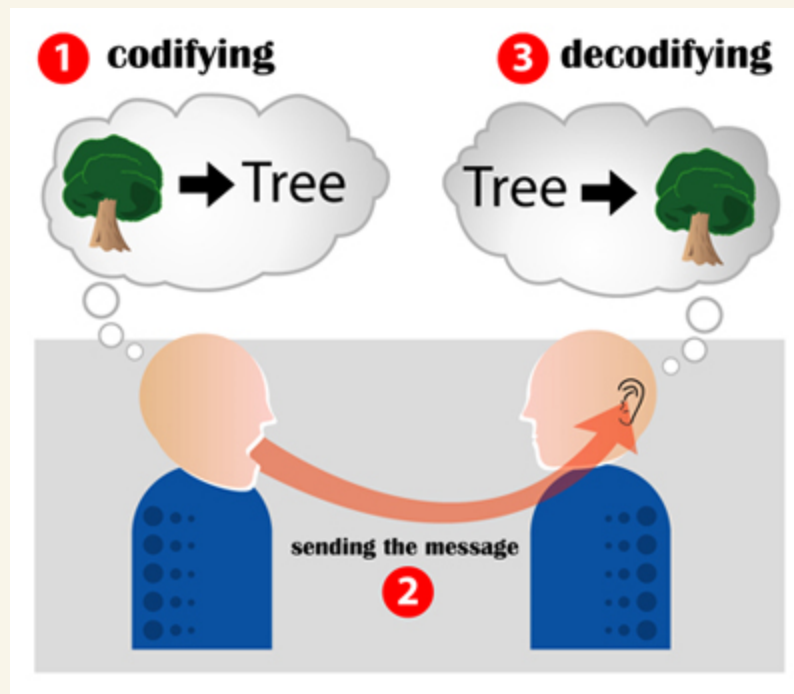


Communication Styles

- Down to business
 - All work and no play
 - Efficiency above all
- Chummy
- Collegial



Communication is Simple ...





Communication is Simple ...

- Message is ENCODED by the sender
- Transmitted to the receiver
- DECODED by the receiver
- Feedback is ENCODED by the receiver
- Transmitted back to the sender
- DECODED by the sender



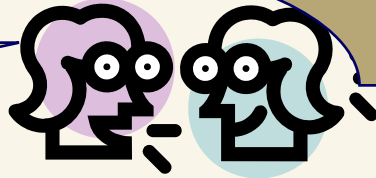
Communication is Complex ...

- Environment of competing messages
- Differing levels of experience/knowledge
- Overt distractions, such as
 - Conversations
 - Equipment noise
- Covert distractions
 - Underlying health issues
 - Family issues
 - “Discussions” with other staff/boss/family
 - Spinach stuck in the assessor’s teeth



Communication is Complex!

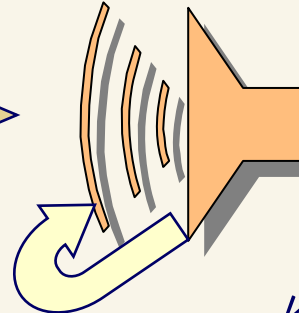
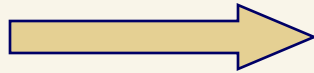
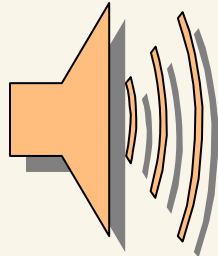
I was just telling my friend the other day that this lab...



I wonder if Joe is up for a tennis game at lunch?



SENDER



RECEIVER

I'll never get that paper finished and reviewed on time for the conference!



Hope this counts toward a good performance appraisal...

Wonder if the kids made it to school on time?



80% of Communication Is Non-Verbal

- Body Language
 - Posture
 - Eye contact
 - Arm position
- Facial Expression
 - Eyes
 - Mouth
- Overall attentiveness
- Communication is give and take ... what non-verbals are *YOU* sending?



Conducting an Assessment

- Reference
 - ILAC –G3: Guidelines for Training Courses for Assessors Used by Laboratory Accreditation Schemes



Types of NVLAP Assessments

- Initial
 - NIST Handbook 150:2006
 - Program-specific handbooks/requirements
- Renewal
 - NIST Handbook 150:2006
 - Program-specific handbooks/requirements
- Monitoring
 - Few designated items
 - Full review



Key Components of Assessment

- Preparation for assessment and provision of agenda
 - Communication to assessment team
- Opening Meeting
- Examination of quality system
 - Information gathering
 - Records of observation
- Technical review



Preparation for Assessment

- Pre-on-site review
 - Communication between NVLAP and (lead) assessor
 - Communication between (lead) assessor and lab
- Security
- On-site agenda provided by (lead) assessor
- Availability of Key personnel



Typical On-Site Assessment Agenda

• Day 1

- 0800 Team arrival at lab
- 0810-0830 Introduction of team and staff
- 0830-0840 Review of agenda
 - Time lines
 - Safety/security
 - Purpose of visit
- 0845 – 0915 Laboratory Tour
- 0915- 1115 Assessment begins



Typical Agenda - continued

- Management requirements: John Smith
- Technical
 - Thermodynamic – Jane Doe
 - Force/Torque – Fred Brown
 - Dimensional – John Long
- 1115-1130 Assessor meeting (progress report)
- 1130 – 1230 Lunch
- 1230 – 1630 Continue assessment
- 1630 -1700 Day 1 brief out



Communication with Lab

- High level review provided prior to on-site
 - Approximately 1 to 2 weeks
 - Why is this a good idea?
- Proposed agenda provided with review
 - Gives lab a framework
 - Minimizes uncertainty
 - Gives lab a chance to make adjustments/arrangements



Opening Meeting

- Introduction: who and why
- Outline the process - Sampling or Snapshot
- Review/modify agenda
- Review expectations
 - Assessor's
 - Lab's
- Safety and security
- Answer any questions



Other Considerations

- Are any special accommodations needed
 - Wheelchair or other physical accommodation?
 - Service dog?
 - Food allergies/sensitivities?
- Provide team information to the lab
- REQUEST these same things from the lab



Facility Tour

- Establish “state of quality”
- Environment
- Accommodations
- Overall atmosphere
- Allows lab to showcase



Roles of Technical Assessors

- Assessment of
 - Documented test procedures and their validity
 - Technical competence
 - Interview
 - Observation
 - Testing process (sample prep to reporting)
 - Calibration arrangements
 - Use of computers, software validation
 - Proficiency test performance



Assessment Tools

- Handbook 150 Checklist - Criteria for Accreditation
 - ISO/IEC 17025 Requirements & NVLAP Specific: Annex A, B
- Test Method Review Summary
 - Allows Identification of specific test methods and depth of review
 - Handwritten or electronic
 - Provides details for subsequent assessments
- Program-Specific Checklists
 - Do NOT supersede Handbook 150 Criteria checklist
- Available on NVLAP web site under Assessor Resources



Assessment Tools

- Interviews
 - Supervisors/Management
 - Technical staff (Bench metrologist, Technologist, Technician)
 - Supporting Staff
 - Administrative
 - Purchasing
 - Shipping/Receiving



Assessment Tools

- Observations - a Sampling
 - Test methods
 - Calibrations
 - Walk through a process
 - Follow a sample/artifact from receiving into the lab
 - Follow a sample/artifact during a test
 - Observe representative tests
 - Follow a sample/artifact through certificate/report
 - Follow the feedback process



Assessment Tools

- Record Review – a Sampling
 - Customer requests
 - Purchasing services and supplies
 - Test/calibration
 - PT results
 - Test/Calibration reports and certificates
 - Complaints
 - Feedback
 - Internal audits
 - Management reviews



Closing Meeting

- Summary of
 - Overall compliance with requirements
 - Specific findings
 - Nonconformities
 - Comments
 - Strengths
- Clarify but do not debate
- Remind of requirements of response
- Get the signature



Things to remember

- Assessors represent themselves
 - Expertise
 - Reputation
- Assessors represent NVLAP
- Assessors represent International Laboratory Accreditation
- Assessors support the Mutual Recognition Arrangements to which NVLAP is signatory



Don't forget

- Preparation is the key
- Take notes
- Breathe
- Use your imagination
- Smile
- Maintain your sense of humor
- Thank your hosts, thank your team