

## Listening isn't waiting for Your Turn to Talk

Do you need agreement with others to build your business? Of course you do, whether they are internal conversations with those who work with you or external conversations with prospects, customers, partners and suppliers.

People who talk themselves out of anything usually do a vast majority of the talking and too little of the listening. Another truth is people who use their mental skills instead of their verbal skills do most of the listening and very little talking. The first step toward improving your listening skills is simply to begin doing it. Keep a mental stopwatch for yourself and your prospect. How much time are you each logging?

Once you are listening instead of talking, you will be ready to enhance your listening skills. Listening is a skill that can be learned and continually improved, but most of us have never been trained to listen. For example, which do we do most during the day, read or listen? Most of us generally listen more than we read, yet how many listening lessons did we get in school? It is not surprising that most people need help in becoming skillful listeners.

In our consulting work we consistently see business people with miserable scores in the areas of listening skills.

Here are **10 great tips** we use to help sharpen listening skills in any situation:

- 1) Begin listening from the very first word and give the other person your undivided attention.
- 2) Open your eyes, mind and ears to be truly receptive to the messages the other person presents.
- 3) Focus on what the prospect says. Avoid trying to figure out what the person is going to say; you may miss what he or she actually says.
- 4) Do not try to read meanings into what you think the person is saying. Actively help the other person convey his or her meanings accurately to you.
- 5) Never interrupt! Interrupting is offensive and rude. Also, it sends a subtle message that you are not serious about listening, possibly cutting off the dialogue flow. Never interrupt, but always be interruptible!
- 6) Control outside interruptions and distractions. Thinking about the proper environment in advance is critical to achieving an impactful conversation.

## Listen People into Agreement... cont'd

- 7) Use open-ended questions (5 W's, How, Describe for me..., Tell me... to encourage people to talk and to clarify your understanding of what they mean.
- 8) First ask permission before making notes of important points. It shows the other person that you anticipate a meaningful conversation. Look for connections between apparently isolated remarks.
- 9) Get your whole body involved in listening and show that you are paying attention. Look the person squarely in the eye, using facial expressions and other non-verbal clues to show that you hear and understand what they say.
- 10) Remain calm. Never overreact to highly charged words and tones. Hear the person out, and then respond. Most people will cool down and begin to talk calmly once they vent their anger and frustrations. Remember, your objective is to 'listen' your prospect into agreement. You do not need to remind yourself of what you think, you must find out what your prospect thinks. There is not one communication's effectiveness principle that reminds you to "get your two cents in."

### Conclusion

Follow these 10 tips and as we like to tell our client's "Listen People into the Ground". **Effective listening is the #1 step in effective communications.** You will be amazed at how this will change both your businesses internal and external conversations. The result will be better profits, more referrals and improved morale throughout your business.

-30-

For follow up or to comment on this article, please contact:

Tim Maloney                      Telephone: (905) 332-4809  
**Newport Group Inc.**      Direct: (905) 331-7303  
3017 St Clair Ave,              Cell: (416) 254-6955  
Suite 118                              Email: [tmaloney@newportgroup.ca](mailto:tmaloney@newportgroup.ca)  
Burlington, ON  
L7N 3P5

