

Listening Tips To Close More Deals and Create Powerful Relationships!

Evaluate Your Listening Skills

How well do you listen when someone else speaks? Complete the following evaluation exercise after you've had a:

- Conversation with a client who has a problem or challenge
- Conversation with a team member who is passing on information
- Conversation with a prospect (first meeting)
- Group problem-solving session where you were very concerned about the decisions being made
- Group problem-solving session in which you were only mildly concerned about the decisions being made
- Negotiation session
- Casual conversation
- Discussion with a colleague

Evaluation Checklist

Instructions: Circle the most appropriate response.

Do You/ Did You Frequently:

Interrupt?	Yes	No
Show impatience as you waited for the person to finish speaking?	Yes	No
Finish their sentences for them?	Yes	No
Suggest solutions before the problem was fully explained?	Yes	No
Misinterpret what was said (hear what you wanted or expected to hear rather than what was meant) so the speaker corrected your interpretation?	Yes	No
Demonstrate by your gestures (leaning back, looking bored) that you were uninterested in what was being said?	Yes	No
Spend a great deal more time talking than listening?	Yes	No
Find that your mind often wandered to other subjects causing you to miss what was being said?	Yes	No
Think about what you would say next rather than about what the speaker was saying?	Yes	No

Even if you responded “No” to all the statements above, you can become an even better listener than you are now. In the space below, identify some actions you aren’t using at the present time, but should be using, to become a better listener

Five Levels of Listening

1. Ignorning

State of Mind:

- Typically thinking of self, personal issues and challenges

Nonverbal Cues

- Yawning, eyes averted, looking over speakers' shoulder, distracted

2. Pretending

Typical State of Mind:

- Still focused on own issues and thoughts

Nonverbal Cues

- Lots of nodding and uh-huh's

3. Selective

Typical of State of Mind:

- Selectively choosing the bits of interest - typically of interest to self only
- Getting caught on emotionally laden words, or buzz words

Nonverbal Cues:

- Occasional animation

4. Attentive

Typical State of Mind:

- Paying attention to the words and interpreting their meaning
- A focus on facts, details

Nonverbal Cues:

- Good eye contact, leaning forward, nodding

5. Empathic

Typical State of Mind:

- Paying attention with both sides of the brain, emotionally involved as well as understanding the words and their meaning
- Listening for the meta-message

Nonverbal Cues:

- Listening for feeling and behaviour, as well as for words
- Pays close attention to incongruities between verbal and non-verbal cues and uses information to build rapport

A Good Listener Speaks Volumes

Poor listening is the biggest barrier to effective communication. Most people are not as good at listening as they think they are.

When we think of communicating, we tend to picture ourselves talking. We often think that if we speak more clearly, more slowly, or simply louder - people will understand us better.

Good communication is so much more. Listening accounts for about 75% of communication effectiveness!

Building Rapport Worksheet

Effective communication is made up of three different variables: **VERBAL** (the words we use), **VOCAL** (our tone of voice and intonation) and **VISUAL** cues (our body language, the nonverbal component).

What percentage of the message does each of these variables account for?

VERBAL 7%

VOCAL 33%

VISUAL 60%

Think about the following nonverbal cues. How do they enhance or detract from the first impression we make and our ability to build meaningful relationships?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Eye Communication | 2. Posture and Movement |
| 3. Gestures | 4. Facial Expressions |
| 5. Dress and Appearance | 6. Voice and Vocal Clarity |
| 7. Pauses, Jargon and Non-words | |

The Importance of Inquiry: Asking Good Questions

Inquiry is about being willing to put my viewpoints aside and to seek to understand new perspectives.

Questions are a powerful mode of communication. They send people on a journey in their mind to help them come up with solutions and ideas to problems or concerns. When people develop their own solutions they are likely to be more committed to them. Instead of giving people your answers, ask questions to direct and focus their thinking. They may come up with the solutions you were about to offer, or some even better solutions.

The best leaders don't say the right things, they ask the right things. Here are some tips about asking questions.

The Power of Questions:

- ☐ Recognize the power of questions.
- ☐ Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- ☐ Keep your tone of voice and posture consistent with positive genuine interest.
- ☐ When discussion drifts, ask a question to refocus.
- ☐ When you are unsure how to respond, ask a question.
- ☐ When you feel threatened or attacked, ask a question.
- ☐ When a relationship is faltering, ask a question.
- ☐ When a customer complains, ask a question.
- ☐ When you want people to reflect on their behaviour, ask a question.

What Message Are You Sending?

Instructions: *Quickly review the list below. Write beside each one, what message you think it sends.*

What do the following nonverbal cues mean?

1. Nodding the head
2. Rolling the eyes
3. Rubbing eyes
4. Stroking the chin
5. Clearing the throat
6. Open-palmed hands pushing forward at chest height
7. Hands open at chest level, palms up
8. Leaning back in chair or turning body away from speaker
9. Crossing arms over chest.
10. Leaning forward or facing speaker directly
11. Sitting back and steeping your fingers together
12. Deep sighing
13. Hands clasped behind back
14. Pointing

Listening Well in a Team

Being an effective listener in a group requires the same skills as listening one-on-one. However, people can easily fall into some additional pitfalls in-group listening.

Examples of poor listening behavior in teams include:

- * Having side conversations
- * Doing paperwork
- * Preparing your presentation
- * Looking away from the speaker
- * Answering the phone while in a meeting or during a conversation

To be more effective at listening in groups:

- In group situations, notice any tendencies you have to drift off or to do anything other than listen. When you find yourself not listening, begin instead to use appropriate listening skills such as:
 - * Looking at the speaker
 - * Refocus your attention on the speaker
 - * Asking relevant questions
 - * Nodding
 - * Leaning forward
 - * Smiling when appropriate
- If you tend to become preoccupied, especially in large meetings, sit close to the speaker
- Use the listening skill of summarizing to move discussions to closure or decision points
- Use open-ended probes to generate interaction in the group or prompt a reaction to your statements

- Observe your reactions to people who have side conversations or do paperwork while you are talking. This may sensitize you to the impact of your own behaviours.
- If the content of the discussion does not pertain to you or your area of responsibility, challenge yourself to find something to learn from the person or group doing the talking. You might watch how the speaker tries to influence others, the way a group member builds rapport for his or her position, or the way in which visual aids are used.

Some Common Traps

“When is it my turn?”

- ✍ The challenge to suspend our own needs.
- ✍ Listening is how we show empathy and create closeness.
- ✍ Genuine listening means suspending our own beliefs, opinions and judgments.
- ! Listening is one sided - a gift to the other person.

“That reminds me of the time”

- ! People don’t want to be interrupted to hear about the time it happened to you it diminishes the importance of their own experience.
- ! The emphasis is on the speaker not the listener.
- ! Good listening encourages the speaker to go deeper into his own experience.

“Well if I were you”

- ! Listening is not giving advice.
- ! Listening is providing a sounding board to allow people to vent and come to their own conclusions.
- ! Listening isn’t shifting the topic to your own interests.
- ! It’s not about always being the jokester.
- ! This quip demonstrates not listening, but using something the speaker says as a trigger to make a joke or change the topic, to make it “your show”.

You Hear Only What You Want To

- ! You let hidden assumptions dictate what you hear.

Reacting Emotionally to What Others Say

- ! This is the main reason conversations turn to arguments.
- ! The comments are taken personally, as a remark about you personally.

Listening With a “Clenched Mind”

- ! Not listening because you’re protecting yourself from the message of what the other person is saying.
- ! Listening is hard because it involves a loss of perceived control and if you’re afraid of what you’ll hear, it feels unsafe to relinquish control.

Not Acknowledging What the Other Person Says

- ! Dialogues where neither person acknowledges the other person are uncomfortable to have and even to observe.
- ✍ It’s like a game of Ping-Pong - there is no real connection or understanding.
- ✍ These conversations often end in violent agreement. (people who agree but don’t know it because they’re not listening)

Not Listening to People Who Are Hard to Listen To

- ! People who talk too much are difficult to endure but their need for attention is genuine.
- ! Not listening increases their yearning to be heard.
- ! Resist the temptation to turn away.
- ! Set limits and demonstrate patience and caring.

1. *Which traps are you most likely to fall into?*

2. *How could you avoid the traps?*