

## Communication - Listening

**To be able to listen well is the most important point in communication.**

Improving our listening skills will improve our speaking skills. Listening is the accurate perception of what is being communicated.

However, be warned, 'listening is a *natural* process that goes **against** human nature.' (from 'Effective Listening – Kevin J. Murphy.)

- ♦ When a problem arises, do you often react before gathering all the facts?
- ♦ When you receive an answer to a question and the other party begins to speak about an unrelated subject, do you lose interest?
- ♦ Do you sometimes daydream at a meeting after making your statement or presentation?
- ♦ Do you often finish sentences for the slow, deliberate speaker?
- ♦ Do you think listening to a personal anecdote is a waste of time, rather than an opportunity to gain some insight into the speaker's personality?
- ♦ Do you feel uncomfortable asking if people understand your instructions?
- ♦ If you were told that a problem had developed, would it occupy your thoughts for the remainder of the day?
- ♦ When a problem is confusing, do you hesitate to ask questions that may clarify the situation?
- ♦ Are you nervous or apprehensive in the presence of top leadership?

Are **you** a good listener?

### **The Four Stages of Listening.**

If you answered 'yes' to **any** of the first nine questions, your natural tendencies are inhibiting your ability to listen under the pressure of day-to-day activities.

If you answered 'no' to **all** of the first nine questions and, are not the chief executive officer of your company by now, you should either inform a company's owner of your nearly super-human abilities or take a polygraph test.

Anxiety, preoccupation and pressure, can undermine the abilities of the best 'natural' listener. Would you like to try again? Now -

**Are** you a good listener?

Do you want to be a more **effective** listener?

Remember, listening is not synonymous with hearing. However, sensing the sender's message is basic to the other three activities involved in listening. If a listener doesn't receive the message aurally, nothing can be done about it.

Once the message is sensed, the second activity comes into play – accurate interpretation. At this point listeners need to understand what the message really means. Effective listeners are aware that “words have no meaning – people have meaning.”

Active listeners now advance to the next step – evaluation. Do we agree or disagree? What conclusions do we reach? If we begin this step too early, and do not hear the full message, then, sensing and interpretation stop – and, so does listening.

To be complete, the listening process must result in some response, verbal or non-verbal. This shows the speaker that the listener has received the message.

If there is a breakdown at any stage, it will not be apparent until the response stage.

**“Friends, Romans, Countrymen! Lend me your ears! I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.”**

**Did Brutus get it right? Do you think the Roman people received the correct message? Did the senate miss the messages being sent by Caesar? Did he orchestrate his own death?**

### **Communication - Spoken**

**Communication** means more than the transference of data to, and from another.

**Good** communication is based on discriminative and analytical listening.

**Listening** is the accurate perception of what is being communicated. A leader should also know how to listen.

“The meaning of a word is the action it produces” - (Ashley Montague.)

When communicating, a leader must make sure that the import of his/her words are clearly understood. The Speaker should not be saying one message and the listeners hearing a different one.

A good leader knows that being 100% ‘accountable’ is accepting how much his words impact on others.

Answer these two questions before you speak:

***What message do I want to send?***

***How do I want people to feel?***

(Dr. Loretta Malandro. Ph.D)

“Developing excellent communication skills is essential to effective leadership” – - -

“If a leader can’t get a message across clearly and motivate others to act on it, then having a message doesn’t matter.”

(Gilbert Amelio, President and CEO of National Semiconductor Corpn.)