



## **TOPIC: LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT**

### **TITLE: THE POWER OF LISTENING**

Listening is a skill we all strive to master. But on occasion, many of us feel as though we're not heard or listened to. I hear about this problem every day - from clients, their employees, parents, shoppers and many others. That's because communication is how we get things done, and when it isn't effective, the result is stress.

I'd like to share some tips that have helped me and many others improve our listening skills.

#### Stay unattached to the outcome

When someone else is talking, we're often so focused on the result it interferes with listening. True listening requires you to let go of the outcome and focus not only on what someone else is saying but also on his or her point of view. When we do, we remain quiet as we hear the other person's words, rather than the competing thoughts running through our own mind.

#### Recognize the power of a different perspective

Imagine how different our world would be if no one challenged a viewpoint or thought differently. Different perspectives can be powerful because they help us look at things from another angle. Even if you don't agree, you can appreciate that someone views the situation differently. In fact, you might even learn something from their viewpoint.

#### Listen for understanding

Good listening encompasses far more than just being quiet while someone else talks. It means that you embrace what they're saying. What is this person trying to say? What is their body language telling me? How do they feel as they're talking? What's important about what they're saying? This requires you to be quiet so you can connect with the other person, even though you may have to force yourself to maintain your silence as you fight the impulse to speak.

#### Let go of the need to be right or have someone else be wrong

The need to be right is a no-win situation. We all have the right to a different perspective. When we try to make our point of view the right one, it usually means that someone else feels wrong. The trick is to recognize the power of different perspectives, acknowledge their presence and make your decision accordingly.

#### Summarize back to the listener

It's not enough to simply be quiet as someone else talks; instead, the speaker needs to know that you understand what they said. Summing up what you heard the listener say is key to helping them feel heard. It helps you make sure you understand, and it lets you clarify further if need be.

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In all honesty, I'm still working on my own listening skills. While I'm not sure I'll ever master the art of listening, I hope to continue improving.

My challenge for you is to assess your own listening skills.

On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 as low and 10 as high), how well would you rate yourself at listening?

How different would that listening score be if you asked your employees to rate you? How about your colleagues and peers? Your customers? Your spouse or partner?

Imagine how different the world would be if we all mastered the skill of listening -- or even just improved it. It all starts with you.