

A Leadership Minute

On Effective Communications

The definition of
To Your Point

Phrase used to contradict another person's ideas, while making it feel like you have agreed with them.

...Urban Dictionary



"The act of listening is often confused with the exercise of waiting one's turn to speak."

—Anonymous

We **stink** at listening:

- ❖ We take things in through filters
- ❖ We fake attention
- ❖ We give way to distractions
- ❖ We listen only for the facts
- ❖ We think about our responses
- ❖ We take notes
- ❖ We show impatience on our faces

Beware, All Ye Who Enter the Corporate Tower of Babble

Yeah right, but you still have to go into that office everyday. And it sometimes sounds a little like the Thanksgiving when your baby sister announced she was going to move to LA with that guy you thought had butter beans for brains doesn't it?

Remember when you were a kid and you needed some magic to make something happen? What did you do? Maybe you remember waving an imaginary wand and saying, ***Abracadabra!***

This ancient Hebrew word actually means ***I create as I speak.***

It really is magic...

In our workplace conversations today, we seem to have lost much of that magic. Part of the reason is our dependence on technology for communications. Research shows that even when we speak to each other face-to-face, we only understand about 70% of the meaning. Telephone conversations drop that down to about 50% and only about 35% of the meaning in our e-mails is clear to the reader. We have no statistics on how much we understand from a 140-character **Twitter** message, but it's probable that any understanding would be magic indeed.

But we can't blame it all on technology. Much of our issue is that we don't listen very well. Typically, we are just waiting for the other guy to take a breath so we can get our point in...the one that advocates our parochial position while demonstrating our lofty status and clearly puts the other guy in his place. What's magic is that we ever get anything done.

Corporate life is all about solving problems and making decisions. We need to **decide** and get on with it. To **decide** means to **murder the alternative**. But, you saw that coming didn't you?

So What?

In our rush to solve the problem, we often don't spend much time trying to really understand the problem. We are usually under a great deal of pressure; the boss gave us this problem to fix—let's get at it then. Come on people, we have to make a decision here!

Dialogue: a conversation with a center; not sides. It's thinking together.

“A new idea is a delicate thing. It can be killed by a sneer or a yawn; it can be stabbed to death by a joke or worried to death by a frown in the right person's brow”

—Charles Brower

For more on **active listening**, check out the Executive Team Leadership Workshop on our website.

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Typically, we begin by throwing out ideas and then casting aspersions on most of them. Hearing other people's ideas isn't the same as listening to them. Hearing is a passive state for your brain; listening pushes it into an active state. And that gets your own creativity going. Blood rushing, synapses snapping, electrons firing, receptors...oh; sorry, got a bit carried away there. The point is this: **listening takes work**. Probably why we do more hearing.

Real listening—**active hearing**—means three more things for the busy, stressed executive's To Do List:

Listen with intensity:

- ❖ *Don't assume that you don't need to listen to this or that part*
- ❖ *Don't give in to distractions; e-mails, phone calls, or side conversations*
- ❖ *Don't listen for only what you want to hear*
- ❖ *Don't plan what you will say in reply*
- ❖ *Don't interrupt*
- ❖ *Don't fake listening*

Listen for understanding:

- ❖ *Suspend your own thinking*
- ❖ *Recognize your stereotypes*
- ❖ *Remember that not everything relates to how you think, feel or see the world*
- ❖ *Listen to the body language as well as the words*
- ❖ *Listen for feeling as well as content*

Take responsibility for your own comprehension:

- ❖ *Can you tell us more about...?*
- ❖ *What do those who disagree say?*
- ❖ *Why do you think so?*
- ❖ *What other choices are there?*
- ❖ *Summarize what the speaker says, then restate it*



I create as I listen. Now, that's magic.