Power Listening Lessons

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Listening is the number one skill for success in business today. Poor listening skills make people angry and make them feel you don’t value them. They affect all relationships, especially business relationships.

Most people think they are good listeners. In reality, we listen effectively only 25% of the time. In fact, most people only listen to the first three or four words of any sentence. Instead of listening, they begin to formulate their response.

Even when people have been told they aren’t good at listening, they do very little to improve. They still think having their say is more important.

The following are some tips for listening in a face-to-face meeting or on the phone.

7. Never interrupt. When the other person is done speaking, take a two second breath, hold it for two seconds, and exhale slowly. Then begin your response.

8. When the other person is done speaking, frequently say just one word, “Oh.” Typically, he or she will continue to elaborate. As they put more words to what they are saying, they gain focus.

9. Only schedule yourself for meetings with others when your energy is at its highest. Before or after lunch are risky for all parties.

10. If you know you are out of energy, tell the other person that this is not a good time. In the end, the person will appreciate your honesty. However, be sure to reschedule the conversation.

11. If your job entails taking a lot of customer complaints, replenish your energy level. Practice stress management.

12. If necessary, when a conversation is over, keep a log of what was said, especially any next steps. Review the log before the next conversation or meeting.

Real listening takes effort. It takes commitment, but it is worth the effort. It will improve performance and build a strong team that will be noticeable by all.