

To Be a Trusted Advisor, You Have To Be a Good Listener

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All of us would like to be perceived as a “trusted advisor” by our customers. One of the key elements to creating a trusting relationship is being a good listener. However, not very many of us are good at listening. In fact, researchers say people listen only to the first three or four words of any statement. Instead of listening, most people concentrate on responding. Being a good listener takes real discipline and concentration.

It is important to demonstrate that you are a good listener by showing the appropriate non-verbals. From the look on your face, the speaker should see that you are attentive and concerned. If you are standing, you might move closer. You might also nod or smile. Obviously, strong eye contact with the speaker is mandatory. Additionally, short words or phrases like “oh,” “uh huh,” or “ok” convince the listener that you are clearly following what has been said.

Good listening skills require that you pause a lot. A pause for three-to-five seconds before responding shows people that you are trying to be deliberate and conscientious about what you are going to say. It also prevents you from interrupting before the speaker is actually done with his comments and helps you to focus on the whole picture. Pausing is the best tool someone wanting to be perceived as a trusted advisor has.

There are a lot of times, people respond incorrectly. Often, it is because they made an assumption and weren't clear about some of the details. Obviously, it is important to be sure you understand before making any type of response. When you have any doubts, be sure to ask. Questions for clarification show that you are trying to be accurate. Open-ended questions like, “How do you mean?” or “Can

you tell me more about why you feel...?” allows the speaker to add additional, critical information.

Finally, even if you are 99% certain you understand, it is a good idea to paraphrase before you begin your response. It further demonstrates to the speaker that you are trying to be selective or cautious in your recommendation. To paraphrase, you might say something like, “I want to make sure I have this straight. What I think I have heard you say is...” Often when you paraphrase, the speaker rethinks what he has said for accuracy and corrects any misconceptions.

By demonstrating that you are listening, you create trusting relationships with others. You show people that you care about them and have put aside your agenda to help them solve their problems. Customers want to do business with people who are good listeners because you have made them feel comfortable. To catapult your career to the next level, pay attention to your listening skills.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.