Practice This Important Skill to Get Your Way Every Day



Listening is a powerful tool to deepen trust and understanding.

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A Note From The Editor

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“Nobody learned anything by hearing themselves speak.” — Richard Branson

Did you know that an anagram for the word *listen* is *silent*? As an entrepreneur, have you ever found yourself frustrated trying to speak to someone who would not be silent and simply listen?

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Whether you were immersed in a conversation with a client, at a company meeting or stuck in the negotiation of a business deal, it can be annoying when someone interrupts the flow of things, stealing away from your experience. It can be especially difficult when you have an urgent need to communicate something important or accomplish an objective and you need to get your way.

However, did it also occur to you that perhaps you'd been the first to interrupt, thus neglecting to listen? Oftentimes, though largely unintentional, we force our opinions upon others, simply due to a lack of awareness.

The act of listening seems like it should be natural. However, in the business world, it's one that needs to consciously be developed to manifest greater success. The act of listening varies from situation to situation, but it can be used as a powerful weapon to overcome adversity and ignorance.

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So, ask yourself: Are you merely hearing, or are you actively listening? If your honest answer isn't a favorable one, consider these five steps as reliable ways to not only connect on a deeper level with people through listening but to get your way as well:

1. Repeat or rephrase to demonstrate understanding.

First, listen intently to what was just said. Then, either repeat or rephrase it so you know you've understood. Even better, your listener will know you did what mattered most — took the time to actually listen. This forces you to stop thinking about a response. Later on, if your audience makes a strong claim about what was said, you're able to reference what you did to ensure mutual understanding.

Of course, when dealing with difficult individuals, there's not much that can be done. As is the case with every rule, there's an exception, and for this one, this is it. To avoid this kind of situation, should a critical conversation be on the horizon, consider taking notes. When it comes to listening, it's one of the most sincere forms of flattery.

Also, be sure to pay close attention to listen to what is *not* being said, too. Like subtle body movements and other nonverbal cues that will alert you to critical information that will help you to get your way. Pay attention to them. They will help you to get a better feel for where a discussion is headed and how you can be more persuasive.

In his international bestseller *What Every BODY Is Saying*, former FBI counterintelligence officer Joe Navarro states, "Just as careful listening is crucial to understanding our verbal pronouncements, so careful observation is vital to comprehending our body language."

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2. Make your listener feel

important.

This isn’t easy, but if you can completely focus your attention and energy when listening, people will like you more. As stated above, the people you engage with want not only to be recognized but to be understood. When you don’t actively listen, it’s all but impossible for a favorable impression to be made.

Make your listener feel like they’re the only person in the room. Give them your undivided attention. Resist the urge to look around or check your phone. In today’s day and age, with so many competing distractions, this kind of focus is rare. You’ll be remembered and respected as someone who does things differently.

Former President Bill Clinton was famous for his ability to do this. No matter how long the engagement, treating people properly can curry favor for a future need. It’s no secret that people typically will help those they like, right? Needless to say, it’s much easier to get your way when you’re liked, and this is a great way to increase the likelihood of that happening.

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3. Resist the urge to always be talking.

In any business-related conversation, you’d prefer to be in the “driver’s seat,” right? Believe it or not, during a negotiation, the person who speaks the least tends to be perceived as the one in control. Unfortunately, most entrepreneurs believe the opposite – if they’re busy talking, they’re in control. The truth of the matter, however, is that he or she who’s loudest frequently comes off as aggressive,

egotistical or even desperate.

By listening, you learn. As you learn, you gain knowledge and wisdom. As you grow wiser, you'll gain influence and become more charismatic. If you develop your listening skills and become an exceptional listener, you'll be amazed at how attentive people will be when you finally do speak your mind. Now that you have their attention, you can share everything you've learned from your conversation and you'll know exactly what to say to get your way.

4. Be present in the moment and listen to your intuition.

Imagine for a brief moment that you're in a conference room at a large networking event. The majority of your peers can't wait to "vomit' all over you with mind-numbing information about what they do, how they offer it and why you stand to benefit.

Sound familiar? It's a familiar scene for relationship-driven entrepreneurs.

Yet, what's funny about all this is that it really takes only one introduction to the right person for your business to take a quantum leap forward. So, rather than trying to meet everyone, focus on how you feel around those in attendance *before* introducing yourself.

Are you ready to learn the secret of being a great listener? Simply pause for a moment and take a deep breath.

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When you breathe deeply and in a controlled manner, you're forced to focus on the present moment. This allows you to sharpen your self-awareness as you observe your surroundings

with clearer and broader vision. In this deeper, more intuitive-driven stage of listening, you're free to release tension and doubt, helping prepare you for difficult questions, rejections or even objections. When not placed under pressure, you're able to listen with your entire self: the body, the mind and the heart.

Bringing consciousness to your breathing develops intuition. With intuition on your side, you're prepared to listen and (and learn) through the lens of your highest logic. The result? Others feel content and confident. Even better, you're in a position to truly connect, as opposed to correct. All this from taking a much-needed breath or two before talking.

5. Invest in building "relationship equity."

Have you heard of the term "relationship equity"? It's become very popular recently. Truth be told, there's a reason for it — every time you demonstrate the ability to listen, you deposit "relationship credit" into your audience's account.

Then, when it's your turn to speak, the chances of the favor being returned with deliberate listening are increased. If not, gently remind the other person of the fact that you gave her the stage to speak her mind first and you'd simply like the same respect and courtesy now.

By listening first, you'll influence others to reciprocate and return the favor. Reciprocity is a powerful subconscious tool to creating influence according to behavioral scientist, Robert Cialdini, in his latest bestselling book, *Pre-Suasion — A Revolutionary Way to Influence and Persuade*. As an entrepreneur, you can use reciprocity to your advantage through listening.

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People not only need to be heard, but they deserve it, too.

Both inside and outside of the working world, at the core of each one of us, lies a need to be understood and accepted. Active listening is a simple method that supports emotional intelligence. It not only makes others feel special but also demonstrates your ability to focus.

With this new focus, we can now effectively shift our attitudes from those of want and neediness to those of gratitude and even compassion. Actively listening summons feelings of security and stability in others. This is important, as it is actually an evolved form of recognition.

Even in business, listening is one of the best gifts that can be given. Listening magnifies your perceived value and validates your power of authority as a leader and an expert in your field. Intentional listening unlocks greater self-awareness, which is a state of consciousness that leads to joy and fulfillment. In this state, you have a much better chance to influence conversations and get your way by listening, as long as you have the best intentions in your heart and that it is for the highest good.

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