

Listening Effectively - How To Revolutionize Your Business and Relationships!

By Paul J. Meyer

You can speak approximately 125 words per minute. But the human brain can process between 400- 600 words per minute! What happens to all that “extra brain space” when you’re trying to communicate?

Have you ever had the experience of passionately presenting your ideas, feelings, or plans to another person when you suddenly became aware that their jaw had slackened and their eyes had glazed over? If so, you can be sure they took a little detour with their thoughts.

Because the brain can think or process four to six times as many words a minute as you can speak, that leaves a great deal of space for other activity within the mind of the person receiving your passionate presentation. While they may have the best intentions of giving you their full attention, the fact is they may be completing their grocery list or planning their next family outing while simultaneously picking up the gist of what you are saying.

Of course the truth of the matter is that we have all been on both sides of the equation. You may have found yourself tuning out in just the same way despite thinking you were fully engaged with what your boss or co-worker was saying.

It is human nature to want to talk more than listen, so if we are not careful, we can miss out on one of the most rewarding skills available to us, the art of creative listening. Once you master this skill you will be amazed at the incredible difference it will make in your business and personal life.

In fact, if you find you are not making good progress in your career, or you are experiencing increasing frustration in relationship after relationship, chances are you may need to improve your listening skills. Everyone wants to be truly heard, so only when you are able to listen with a trained and empathetic ear can you fully identify what is important to your client, friend, or spouse and respond accordingly.

Doesn't that take a lot of time? I'm so busy!

It takes a great deal more time to miss the mark in your sales presentation because you didn't slow down and really listen to the needs of your client or to try and put back the pieces of a personal relationship after a major misunderstanding than it does to listen carefully in the first place.

Showing willingness and interest in what someone else has to say not only benefits them, it benefits you. After all, when we stop talking because we think we know it all, we might learn something quite valuable for our own life.

When you are willing to give someone your complete attention, you also open the door to repeat contact with that person,

which, in the business world, can bring you tremendous advantage.

I really try to be attentive, but my mind still takes detours!

Let's start with a couple of very effective techniques that can help interrupt those thought detours your mind wants to take when someone else is speaking.

1. Organize: As you listen to what the person is saying, pay attention to the pattern and progression of the person's logic. Catalog in your mind the main ideas and key words that stand out. When the speaker is finished, summarize in a short way what you heard.

For example, if your boss has just communicated some ideas for a meeting the following week, you might say, "What I understood you to say is that you would like for me to have the reports on the current project available on Wednesday during the meeting with our new client rather than waiting until the normal Friday noon deadline. Is that correct?"

2. Analyze: Use your analytical skills to hear the ideas presented and then compare them with information you already have. Decide what items are relevant to the questions or concerns at hand, and look for logical cause and effect relationships. In other words, determine how the information being presented affects your personal or business goals and any relationships involved.

When you employ both of these techniques you decrease your tendency to be distracted and minimize your preoccupation with other matters. You will be less likely to miss important points the speaker is conveying and cut down on the boredom of an inactive mind that wants to wander off to other concerns.

All successful people are good listeners.

One of the major characteristics of all successful people is their ability to employ creative listening. The ultimate benefits far outweigh any learning curve that you might experience. Once you master the creative listening skills required, they will become second nature to you.

Someone once said that the human body was made with two ears and one mouth for a very good reason; we need to listen twice as often as we talk. Remember, if you aren't always talking, there's just no telling what you might hear!

Paul J. Meyer, best-selling *New York Times* author and founder of the Success Motivation Institute has written 24 full-length programs plus numerous books on attitude, motivation, goal setting, management, leadership, and time management. In his instructional CD, *The Art of Creative Listening*, available at www.pauljmeyster.com, Paul explains how mastering the skill of creative listening can move you from ho-hum to "top of the heap" in both your business and personal life.

