

SPARKING IDEAS AND ACTION IN YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS
HARMONY COACHING & CONSULTING

Active Listening

For some reason, many people believe that the ability to speak articulately is an important prerequisite to achievement. Without downgrading the importance of good speech habits, it would do us well to upgrade the importance and quality of our listening habits. Disraeli noted that "Nature has given us two ears but only one mouth." This may be nature's way of telling us that listening is vital to our personal growth and development. Active listening is the complement to good questions.

Volumes have been written on the art of public speaking, how to deliver exciting speeches, and even how to exercise your vocal cords in order to have a pleasant voice. But little has been written or presented on "how to listen for understanding." If we agree that empathy and understanding are important traits, then we realize too, that it is impossible to find out what someone else is thinking or feeling if we are doing all of the talking.

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Are you really listening?

Recruit, Recruit, Recruit!!

Part 1 of 2

Get the right people on the bus

In his books, "Built to Last" and "Good to Great," author Jim Collins states that the best organizations have the best people in their organizations. This is no small task and is not just something that happened by chance. It was a very specific strategy the organizations set out to achieve. By having the best possible people on the bus all efforts can be concentrated into process, procedures, customer service, etc. for the organization to become even more effective.

In business today, owners and those with hiring and recruiting as part of their job function tend not to spend time in this key area to develop their organization. See if this sounds familiar – an employee comes in and quits their job. The manager then sets out to craft a newspaper ad or wording for publishing the job on an internet job search engine. They receive a number of resumes. Now they plow through the pile to either find nothing promising or lots of "OK" responses. They now have to interview to whittle down the number of candidates. This effort could take hours or even days of their time, which takes them away from more valuable activities.

This is an all too familiar situation for many business owners. The other one is when you have underperforming employees and are being held hostage by them because you feel you cannot afford to terminate them and find their replacement. Both of these situations are costing you money.

One method to help relieve this pressure is to create a strategy to constantly be recruiting.

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This is a real effort not just a casual one that you do when you meet up with a good candidate. The people in your business are the key success points. You need to constantly be looking to bring on the best talent that you and your industry can attract. This does not mean that you forget about your existing people. As you start a very conscious effort of recruiting your existing staff will step up to do their jobs more effectively. They will want to demonstrate their value to the organization. Should they choose not to step up then they can opt to take their talents to an alternative employment opportunity. This will not be as big of an impact as it has been in the past. With the recruiting effort in place you can allow some employees that would like to move on that chance as well.

By building a file of potential candidates you can have the flexibility to bring the talent on when most appropriate. Your team will know you have recruits waiting in the wings so they will have their best effort coming forward most often. You can raise the performance bar to help everyone achieve more than their previous high mark.

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A Little Humor – **Management Lesson**

A crow was sitting in a tree, doing nothing all day. A small rabbit saw the crow, and asked him, *"Can I also sit like you and do nothing all day long?"*

The crow answered: *"Sure, why not."* So, the rabbit sat on the ground below the crow, and rested. All of a sudden, a fox appeared, jumped on the rabbit and ate it.

Management Lesson? To be sitting and doing nothing, you must be sitting very, very high up.



Glass Down

A lecturer was giving a demonstration to his students on stress management.

He raised a glass of water and asked the audience, "How heavy do you think this glass of water is?"

The students' answers ranged from 20g to 500gm.

"It does not matter on the absolute weight It depends on how long you hold it.

If I hold it for a minute, it is OK.

If I hold it for an hour, I will have an ache in my right arm.

If I hold it for a day, you will have to call an ambulance.

It is the exact same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes."

"If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, we will not be able to carry on, the burden becoming increasingly heavier."

"What you have to do is to put the glass down, rest for a while before holding it up again."

We have to put down the burden periodically, so that we can be refreshed and are able to carry on. So, before you return home from work tonight, put the burden of work down. Don't carry it back home. You can pick it up tomorrow.

Whatever burdens you are having now on your shoulders, let it down for a moment if you can.

Pick it up again later when you have rested...

Rest and relax. Life is short, enjoy it!!

— Author Unknown

"The man who believes he can do something is probably right, and so is the man who believes he can't."

— Unknown

"Yesterday is a cancelled check; tomorrow is a promissory note; today is the only cash you have so spend it wisely."

— Kay Lyons

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Listening, then, becomes an "empathy" skill.

In order for you to integrate good listening habits into your personal communication, you must know some of the "how-to's" of listening and some of the "listen for's." The listening tips presented here will help you to sharpen your listening ability and sensitivity to the feelings of others:

1. **Take time to listen.** There are many things in life which can be heard that are not available through written sources. Your knowledge of local or national affairs may be broadened considerably by taking a moment out to listen to a conversation, a luncheon speaker, or a member of your family. When you are alone in a public place, "tuning-in" on a nearby conversation is excellent practice.
2. **Be attentive.** What people talk about is an indication of what is important to them. Whether or not you agree on the importance, any lack of attention will be perceived as a lack of respect for their thoughts, opinions, and themselves.
3. **Listen with an open mind.** When you open your mind and approach a topic from the other person's point of view, you have a good chance to round out a complete picture of the facts surrounding a situation. Once you prove yourself capable of doing this, the other person is inclined to want to be as fair and open-minded as you.
4. **Listen for feelings.** People tend to repeat those things that are important to them. Listen not only to what they say, but how they say it. Voice expresses emotion through pitch, intonation, hesitation, and speed of delivery. By listening to what people say and how they say it, you will discover the feelings behind the words.
5. **Listen for retention.** How often have you wanted to tell a good joke that you had heard, but simply couldn't remember anything but the punch line? If you do not consciously convey to your mind the thoughts that you hear, you will recall little of what is said. Advertising copy for radio and TV is read at a speed of 150 words per minute. However, advertising agencies know that the human mind can comprehend ideas much faster than that.



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"The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will."

— Vincent Lombardi



ONE MINUTE IDEAS

Do Not Call List For Cell Phones –

A directory of cell phone numbers will soon be published for all consumers to have access to. This will open the doors for solicitors to call you on your cell phones, using up the precious minutes that we pay lots of money for.

The Federal Trade Commission has set up a "do not call" list. It is called a cell phone registry. To be included on the "do not call" list, you must call from the number you wish to register.

The number is 1-888-382-1222 or you can go to their website at www.donotcall.gov



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The End Of Human Resources As We Know It

Conventional wisdom says that human resources finally has achieved its sought-after seat at the table. But the ability of human resources to add value at a strategic level "is currently more promise than reality." That's the sobering finding of *Creating a Strategic Human Resources Organization* (Stanford Business Books, 2003), a long-term study of human resources by Edward E. Lawler III and Susan Albers Mohrman.

The authors found that today's people managers still are most comfortable with traditional human resources activities. "If they want to be effective business partners, they need to change their skill set," Lawler and Mohrman say. Almost 30 percent of the companies in the study promote human resources executives who come from the business side, not human resources.

"In essence, some companies may have decided that the HR strategic-partner role is too important to leave to someone with an HR background." The study's conclusion: Human resources must reinvent itself. "The old approaches and models simply are not good enough."



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MAXIMIZING HUMAN TALENT

