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September 2013 Newsletter

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Thanks for reading.

Are You Listening? Master Talking to Master Listening

Question: If talk is cheap, why do we always find ourselves paying a price for not listening?

Answer: Because we have obviously undervalued the true worth of conversation. It is easy to do because there is such a large quantity of talk over our lives and the quality runs the gamut from time-wasting to life-changing.

The problems:

- Language is sometimes rather ineffectual. Your boss may be saying something and you may be thinking, “Why is she telling me this?” “How does he personally feel about this information?” “What is she actually saying without actually spelling it out?”
- We tend to make snap judgments concerning the impact of another person’s words and then allocate our attention accordingly.

At this point you might expect to tell you give a long list of simple techniques all centered on, “pay more attention.” However, paying more attention is of little help if you don’t know what to pay attention to. So instead I am going to give you some tips from my research on mediation and conflict resolution and my experience as a mediator about talking. That’s right, understanding the key elements of everyday talking will help you master the meaning behind what people say.

Disclosures: risk that build trust

Based on my research in mediation and conflict management, disclosing a bit or personal information can bring people closer together. Of course there are big and little disclosures. But it is the emotional risk taking that is the key ingredient for creating interpersonal trust. By listening to, recognizing, and analyzing the magnitude of disclosure you can also get some idea as to the amount of trust a person puts in you.

Reflections: acts of empathy

Basically a reflection says, “I understand what you’re saying and how you must feel.” I use the term reflection because what you say “re-present” the heart of the message. It does not try to solve the problem or add new meaning. Reflections simply show that meaning has been registered and they reveal an act of acknowledgement and empathy. If you consider good listening to be a means of getting the most from a speaker, then reflections is one of the most powerful talk tools.

Engaging: reshaping the message with interpretation

Engaging can take the person’s message and remanufacture deliver it back as a piece of news. Given sincerely, engaging interpretations try to tell what isn’t known to the listener. As a business listener, you may want to focus on the intent behind the other person’s message and interpret what you hear before acting on the information they relay. When it comes to engaging, the key is to listen for phrasing.

Questions: the innocent and the wicked

We use questions for reasons that are plain and veiled, innocent and wicked, protective and generous, and loving and spiteful. The most interesting thing about questions is not so much what they are

<p>Forward this to your friends and colleagues.</p>	<p>asking as what they are telling. Around the office we are constantly running into loaded questions. For example, “Isn’t it about time for you to clean up your office?” That person is not expecting you to say, “No, it isn’t time.” Or, “Don’t you think the way we do things around here is outdated?” This person could be a snitch looking for a malcontent to offer up a human sacrifice to the manager.</p> <p>A closed question such as, “Can you finish this by the end of the day?” Well, you can answer that question in one of many ways. However, the speaker probably wants a yes or no answer.</p> <p>What I have covered in this newsletter merely scratches the surface of communication and listening. But this much is certain: In business what is said and how it is said are at least as important as any metric or fact and figure.</p> <p>© 2013 Orlando E. Blake, PhD. CPT. All rights reserved.</p>
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