

Chapter 3:

Five Rules of a Great Listener

Give the other person 100% of your attention

Remove all distractions. Turn off cell phones, begin to truly listen and open yourself up to whatever the other person might have to say.

During a conversation there will always be the temptation to add your two cents or share similar experiences. This generally does not add the value to the conversation that one might think. Great listening requires the listener to shelve his or her own opinions temporarily.

Don't become judgmental or critical of the speaker

Learn to value their opinions. If the speaker is saying something that you strongly disagree with, control any unhelpful and/or harmful reactions. If the speaker's opinions differ from yours, keep an open mind. If the speaker disagrees with your point of view, recognize the value of what they are saying.

Encourage the other party with appropriate body language *Nod* your head to indicate that you hear what the other party is saying. Be engaged. Assume body positions that are similar to the speaker. This allows the speaker to relax, to feel comfortable, and to begin to trust and open up.

Never Interrupt

Interrupting others is one of the rudest habits some have acquired. Think about what this behavior communicates to the other party. Interrupting is not only rude, it's narcissistic. An attorney friend was telling me about one of her colleagues. She said that he constantly interrupted every conversation. He spoke over people and his behavior was so bad-mannered and disrespectful that other attorneys in the area had banned him from attending any future discovery meetings.

Listen to what is being said and what is *not* being said

Often what is not being said becomes more valuable than what is being said. Assume you are attempting to negotiate an oil and gas lease from a mineral owner. You offer your terms and ask if he is interested. He says, "Yes," but the entire time he is looking out the window and at his watch. You hear the word "yes" but what else have you heard? Is he really interested? Does he understand the terms? Is he in a hurry? At this point, a great negotiator would address what has not been said before proceeding with what has been said.

Listening Skills Test

Are you a “good listener”, an “average listener” or a “poor listener”? Answer the following questions and determine what kind of a listener you are. Read each statement and then choose the degree to which the statement is more or less true for you.

15 Questions:

1. If the speaker is saying something that I strongly disagree with, I am able to control any unhelpful and/or harmful reactions.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

2. If the speaker’s opinions and/or biases are different from mine, I am able to keep an open mind when listening.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

3. Even if the other person disagrees with my point of view, I still recognize the value of what they were saying.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

4. I wait until the other person is finished speaking before I judge the value of what was being said.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

5. I do not interrupt the speaker.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

6. If I disagree with people, I do not interrupt them immediately in order to set the record straight.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

7. While the other person is speaking, I do not mentally prepare what I’m going to say in response to their comments.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

8. I do not allow my opinions and/or views on a subject to interfere with my ability to listen to the other person's point of view.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

9. When the other person is speaking, I am aware of the speaker's emotions.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

10. When the other person is speaking, I am not judging them as a person.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

11. When the other person is speaking, I will normally ask clarifying questions.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

12. If the other person is rambling or mixing too many thoughts together so that I do not fully understand what is being said, I will normally ask clarifying questions.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

13. In order to make sure I have fully understood what the other party is saying, I will often summarize or restate what I thought they said.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

14. Knowing the value of body language, I use it to encourage the speaker that I am listening and engaged with what they are saying.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

15. If I have my computer turned on and am talking to someone on the phone at the same time, I will turn away from the computer

so that I can give all of my attention to the person on the phone.

Less True 1 2 3 4 5 More True

Score Yourself

If your Score is 15 – 27 out of 75

Sorry! You may think you are a good listener but you failed! You seem to be more focused on yourself than on others. You need help. Success in negotiating will be hampered because of your poor listening skills. These skills are learned and developed. For future success, practice good listening skills.

If your Score is 28 – 39 out of 75

From this test, we cannot conclude that you rate high in the listening category. You are missing much of what is being said. Your focus seems to be more on what you want to say rather than hearing what others are saying. Slow down. Engage the speaker. Value what they are saying. Listening skills must be learned and developed. For future success, you should set about to develop those skills.

If your Score is 40 – 52 out of 75

You rated within the average range. You listen pretty well and your score is promising! Others may not say that you are a bad listener but they might describe you as preoccupied or lacking concentration. From time to time you may come across as judgmental. Average is not good enough in negotiating. Listening skills must be learned and continuously developed. Success in future business ventures will be linked to those new skills.

If your Score is 53 – 64 out of 75

From this test, you rated as an above average listener. It seems that you possess some good listening skills and are probably aware that communication is a key to success. Since listening skills must be learned and continuously developed, set about to continuously practice those skills.

If your Score is 65 – 75 out of 75

From this test, you rated as a great listener. With these skills you have one of the abilities to be a great negotiator. You have learned your skills from someplace – possibly your family of origin or from your own personal quest. Please keep in mind that great listening takes constant development. Continue your quest and you will find that your listening skills will help you in your relationships and business ventures.