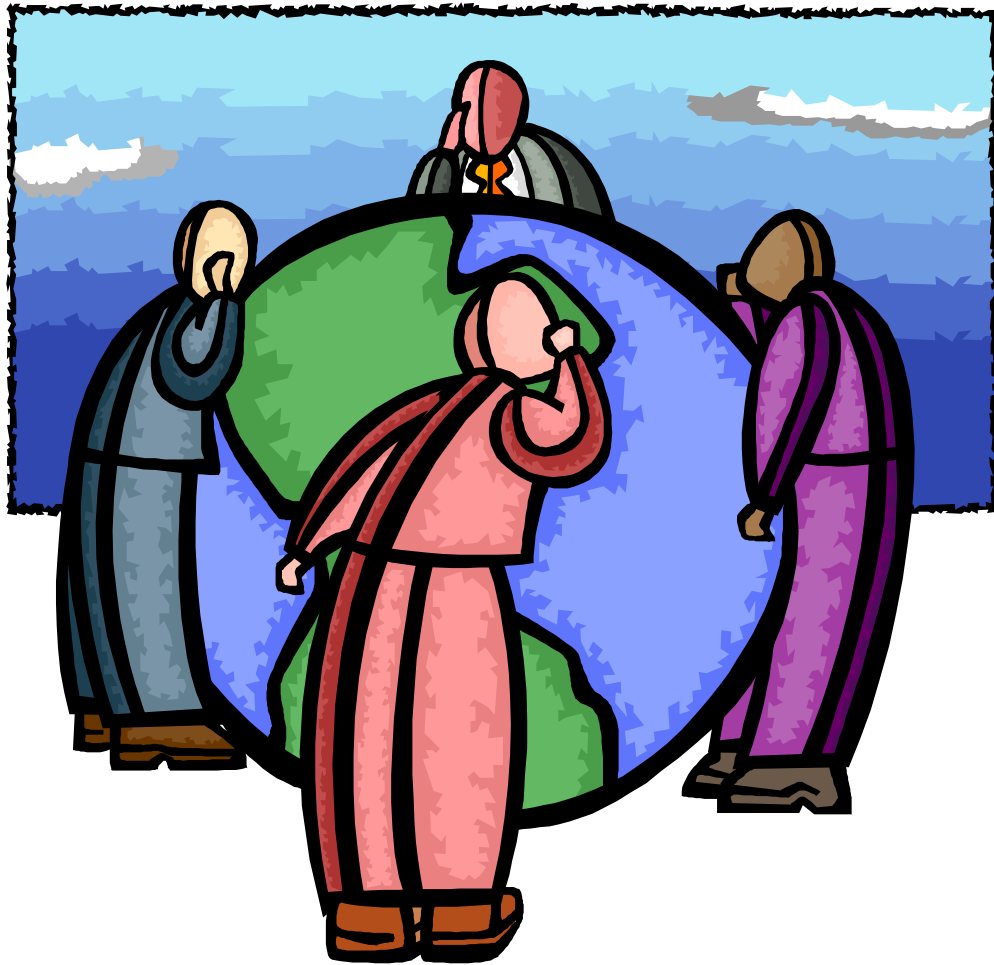
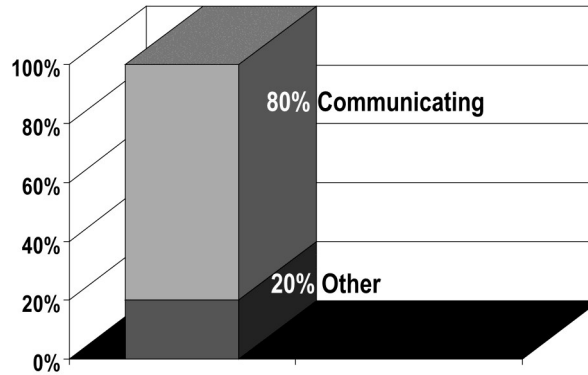


Is Anyone Listening?

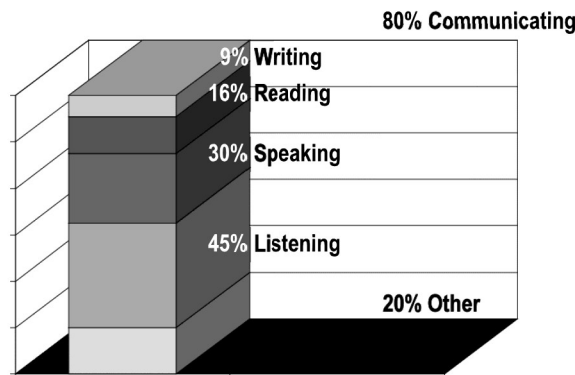
The Vital Role That Active Listening Plays In Effective Communication





Workday Activities

This graph shows the percentage of communication activities within our total workday activities. Workday activities may include filing, watering your plants, time walking between offices, in short, those things that don't require you to communicate with someone, unless you talk to your plants or yourself!



Communication Activities

Our daily communication activities are illustrated in the graph above. Listening comprises the largest block of our time. Learning to be a good listener will take effort, but in the end, will improve the quality of your work, and reduce the stress coming from miscommunication.

This workbook will help you polish those important listening skills.

Listening Facts

- Listening is not the same as hearing.
- You must be quiet to listen.
- We listen better when we're interested.
- We listen better when we find relevance.
- We don't listen to what we don't want to hear.
- Moods and feelings can block the willingness to listen.
- We listen more to speakers we like, ones that are more attractive.
- Listening is essential for human communication.
- You can't listen if you're talking.
- Listening is easy to fake.
- Active listening is the key to effective communication.

Listening Tips

- Minimize distractions.
- Put other things out of your mind.
- Take notes.
- Know who or what turns your attention off.
- Identify your down times.
- Consider the communication media.
- Know your hot buttons.



"Loretta's busy telling everyone how she's learned how to listen."

The Business of Listening

In Business...

Effective listening lays the foundation
for clear understanding.

Clear understanding allows
an appropriate response.

An appropriate response facilitates
high-quality communication.

High-quality communication promotes
organizational cooperation.

Organizational cooperation improves
employee morale.

High morale increases
job commitment.

Job commitment leads to
peak productivity.

Listening is Good Business!



Listening Self-Assessment

Choose one response for each of the items below. Base your choice on what you usually do, not on what you think you should do.

1. When you are at lunch with a friend, you:
 - a. Focus your attention on the menu and then on the service provided.
 - b. Ask about events in your friend's life and pay attention to what's said.
 - c. Exchange summaries of what is happening to each of you while focusing attention on the meal.

2. When someone talks nonstop, you:
 - a. Ask questions at an appropriate time in an attempt to help the person focus on the issue.
 - b. Make an excuse to end the conversation.
 - c. Try to be patient and understand what you are being told.

3. If a group member complains about a fellow employee who, you believe, is disrupting the group, you:
 - a. Pay attention and withhold your opinions.
 - b. Share your own experiences and feelings about that employee.
 - c. Acknowledge the group member's feelings and ask the group member what options he/she has.

4. If someone is critical of you, you:
 - a. Try not to react or get upset.
 - b. Automatically become curious and attempt to learn more.
 - c. Listen attentively and then back up your position.

5. You are having a very busy day and someone tells you to change the way you are completing a task. You believe the person is wrong, so you:
 - a. Thank him/her for the input and keep doing what you were doing.
 - b. Try to find out why he/she thinks you should change.
 - c. Acknowledge that the other may be right, tell him/her you are very busy and agree to follow up later.

6. When you are ready to respond to someone else, you:
 - a. Sometimes will interrupt the person if you believe it is necessary.
 - b. Almost always speak before the other is completely finished talking.
 - c. Rarely offer your response until you believe the other has finished.

7. After a big argument with someone you have to work with every day, you:
 - a. Settle yourself and then try to understand the other's point of view before stating your side again.
 - b. Just try to go forward and let bygones be bygones.
 - c. Continue to press your position.

8. A colleague calls to tell you that he is upset about getting assigned to a new job. You decide to:

- a. Ask him if he can think of options to help him deal with the situation.
- b. Assure him that he is good at what he does and that these things have a way of working out for the best.
- c. Let him know you heard how badly he feels.

9. If a friend always complains about her problems but never asks about yours, you:

- a. Try to identify areas of common interest.
- b. Remain understanding and attentive, even if it becomes tedious.
- c. Support her complaints and mention your own complaints.

10. The best way to remain calm in an argument is to:

- a. Continue to repeat your position in a firm but even manner.
- b. Repeat what you believe is the other person's position.
- c. Tell the other person that you are willing to discuss the matter again when you are both calmer.

Score each item of your Listening Self-Assessment.

- 1. a) 0 b) 10 c) 5
- 2. a) 10 b) 0 c) 5
- 3. a) 5 b) 0 c) 5
- 4. a) 5 b) 10 c) 0
- 5. a) 0 b) 10 c) 5
- 6. a) 5 b) 0 c) 10
- 7. a) 10 b) 5 c) 0
- 8. a) 5 b) 5 c) 10
- 9. a) 0 b) 10 c) 5
- 10. a) 0 b) 10 c) 5

Add up your total score.

80-100 **You are an active, excellent listener.** You achieve good balance between listening and asking questions, and you strive to understand others.

50-75 **You are an adequate-to-good listener.** You listen well, although you may sometimes react too quickly to others before they are finished speaking.

25-45 **You have some listening skills but need to improve them.** You may often become impatient when trying to listen to others, hoping they will finish talking so you can talk.

0-20 **You listen to others very infrequently.** You may prefer to do all of the talking and experience extreme frustration while waiting for others to make their point.

From: *Managers As Facilitators: A Practical Guide to Getting Work Done in a Changing Workplace*, by Richard G. Weaver and John D. Farrell, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco CA, 1999.

I know that you believe you understand what you think I said but...
I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.

Communication Tips From the Experts

In order to understand a message, all these things are required.

- A sender
- A message
- A medium
- A Receiver
- Effective Processing
- Accurate interpretation

Why Some People May Not “Get” the Message

- Physical problems
 - Hearing impairment
 - A processing problem in the brain
- Interpretation problem due to a conflict in values
- Never been trained to listen effectively
- Environmental noise, distractions
- Mental noise, distractions
 - Thinking about how to respond
 - Mulling over work to be done
 - Internal distractions
- Characteristics of the speaker are “turn offs”
 - Age
 - Sex
 - Ethnicity
 - Life style
 - Appearance
- Feelings clash
 - Emotional hot buttons
 - Sensitive issues
- Motivation - “What’s in it for me?”
- Negative predisposition to subject matter, situation, presenter

Prepare to Listen

- Keep an open mind
- Pay close attention
- Don’t let your mind wander



- Focus on the speaker
- Don't take copious notes, but do write main points
- Minimize distractions

Improving Your Mental Environment to Listen Better



- Listen from the speaker's viewpoint
- Concentrate on the major points, not just the facts
- Look for nonverbal cues
- Anticipate
- Review and weigh
- Withhold judgment, evaluation, or decisions during the listening process
- Ask mental questions
- Actively seek areas of mutual interest
- Exercise your mind daily

Good Listener's Body language to Keep a Person Talking

- Maintain eye contact
- Lean forward
- Nod occasionally
- Smile and indicate agreement
- Purse lips and nod head
- Lean head to the side
- Get on their level (especially for children or people in wheel chairs)
- Use appropriate facial expressions to go with the tone of the presenter
- Use open body language, no tightly crossed arms, no ram-rod straight back
- Keep annoying mannerisms and gestures in check

Be aware of cultural differences regarding special distances when communicating. Using inappropriate physical spaces can impede the listening process. Standing too close and we feel that our space is being invaded and will unconsciously move away; too far away from the speaker and we sense the need to move closer.

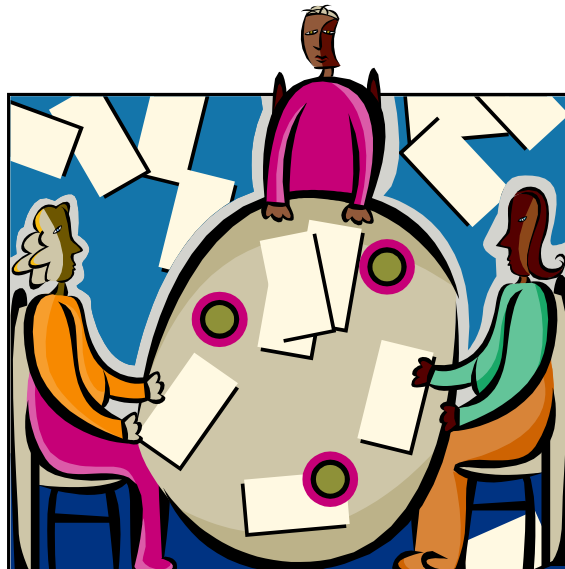
In the United States and Canada

- Intimate distance is 3–20 inches
- Social distance is 20 inches to 5 feet
- Polite distance is 5–100 feet

Consider wherein you agree with your opponent rather than wherein you differ.

Conversational Door Openers

- Verbal description of other's body language
 - "You seem angry..."
 - "I can tell this makes you tense..."
- Invitation to continue
 - "Tell me more..."
 - "Uh-huh..."
 - "Go on..."
 - "I see..."
- Silence—don't feel a compulsion to quickly respond, get comfortable with long pauses
- Ask open-ended questions; avoid questions that can be answered yes or no—they turn off the conversation
 - "How should we handle this matter?"
 - "Why do you think she's doing that?"
 - "Tell me what bothers you about this proposal?"
 - "How did that make you feel?"
- Reflect and respond, without emotions, accept the speaker without attributing good or bad to what is being said
 - "So you want to quit?"
 - "This was a very bad day for you."
 - "You are very disappointed with your raise."
- Summarize
 - "You're saying you can't work any weekends."
 - "So you'll finish the Sims report and I'll start on the McKenzie proposal."



Dilemmas and Solutions

Dilemma	Solution
Complaints	Change subject
Personal problems	Finish the conversation, then leave
Impossible request	Ignore
Tears	Reflect feelings of speaker
Hostility/Anger	Listen, then reflect back what they said, using their words
Rudeness	Show empathy
Denial	Admit your own feelings
Silence	Be honest
Intimate disclosures	Listen

If the Speaker is *Really* Boring...

- Change the subject to something where the individual will shine and you'll have an interest in the topic, "Tell me about your most favorite European vacation."
- Prep before you go so you're familiar with what the person will be talking about.
- Move the conversation along to get to the high point, "So how did it all end?"
- Introduce the person to someone else, then excuse yourself.
- Look at your watch and say, "Oh my gosh, I'm supposed to be somewhere else right now. Please excuse me."
- Pull another person into the conversation and let them take center stage with their story.
- Expand the topics you're interested in by reading, asking questions, and observing.



If the Speaker is someone you know and if the conversation is in an intimate setting (like your office, over dinner, in a small meeting group), here are some things you can do as a listener to show empathy and spur the speaker to action:

- Take action
 - “Shall we make the appointment right now?”
 - “Let’s start the planning process today!”
 - “I’ll get my calendar and let’s set up the meeting.”
- Build trust and show understanding
 - “I was a teacher for 10 years, so I can empathize...”
 - “My child also had problems in school...”
- Disclose
 - “When I first became a supervisor, I felt I couldn’t do anything right those first few months.”
 - “I got a mentor by walking into Mr. Clausen’s office and telling him how much I admire his leadership style.”
- Confront
 - “Why did you respond the way you did?”
 - “After your comment, I left the meeting feeling pretty uncomfortable...”

Conversation Stoppers

- Being judgmental
 - “What a stupid thing to do...”
 - “Why on earth would you do that?”
- Giving unsolicited advice
 - “If I were you, I’d...”
 - “I’ve got an even better story than that!”
- Showing disinterest
 - Looking around for someone more important
 - Continue keying
- Denying other’s feelings
 - “John’s a great boss. I’ve never had any problem with him...”
 - “That’s a wife’s job— to be supportive of her husband’s career.”
- Turning the spotlight on to you
 - “When I was your age...”
 - “You’re tired? My arthritis drags me down every day.”

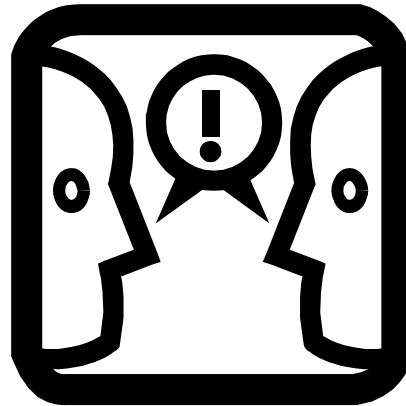


- Belittling
 - “You don’t have half the work I do...”
 - “When you’ve been around her for 20 years, like me, then you can complain
- Not acknowledging, not empathizing
 - “How can your wrist hurt? You’ve only been keying for a couple hours!”
 - “You’re making too much out of Phil asking you out for a drink...”
 - “You’ve already had three days off for bereavement—just how much do you *need*?”
- Trivializing
 - “Stop crying. It doesn’t hurt.”
 - “There’s a job opening on every corner. You just need to look harder.”

Conversation Tips

Do:

- Respect privacy
- Be sincere
- Have topics in mind
- Be informed
- Compliment
- Be positive
- Demonstrate empathy
- Keep it short and light
- Trust your instincts
- Be accepting
- Listen



Don't:

- Argue
- Focus on intimate topics
- Discuss doctors, health, or health issues
- Dwell on controversial or depressing subjects
- Belabor mistakes.

Two old-timers were having a rather heated discussion in an old folks home. One, however, seemed to be doing most of the talking. This went on for several minutes while the second man waited patiently for an opening to present his side of the argument.

Just when it appeared the first man was about to run down and the second could get in a few words, the one who was talking summed up his argument vehemently, then promptly turned off his hearing aid.

The basic key to effective communication is an awareness of self. The more you understand you and know how you feel, the better you will communicate with people.



Resources

The Art of Winning Conversation: Proven Communication Techniques And Strategies That Pave The Way To Business And Personal Success, by Morey Stettner, Prentice Hall: Paramus NJ, 1995.

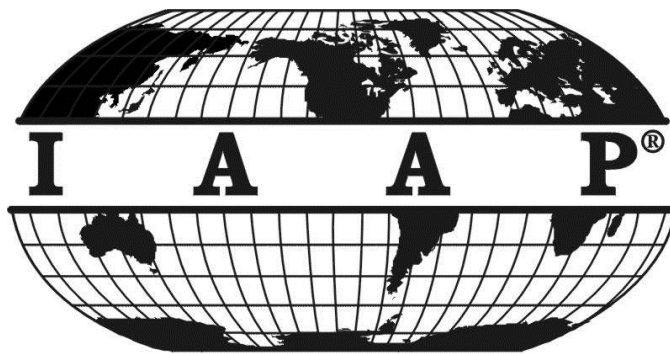
The Business Of Listening: A Practical Guide To Effective Listening, 3rd edition, by Diana Bonet, Crisp Learning: Menlo Park CA, 2001.

The Communication Coach: Business Communication Tips From The Pros, Jeffrey Tobe, editor, Chapter 2: "Listening Is Your Choice", by Sandie Akerman, Coloring Outside The Lines: Monroeville PA, 1998.

How To Say It For Women: Communicating With Confidence And Power Using The Language Of Success, by Phyllis Mindell EdD, Prentice Hall Press: Paramus NJ, 2001.

Managers As Facilitators: A Practical Guide To Getting Work Done In A Changing Workplace, by Richard G. Weaver and John D. Farrell, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.: San Francisco CA, 1999.





International Association of
Administrative Professionals®

10502 NW Ambassador Drive
PO Box 20404
Kansas City MO 64195-0404
Tel 816.891.6600
Fax 816.891.9118