

COACHING TIP

From Rex C. Houze

IT'S HARD TO GET AWAY FROM A GOOD LISTENER

Listening involves more than your ears. It involves your eyes and any other senses you can put into play. When you see what a person pays attention to, you can tell what their intentions are. Listen to the words they use. Watch their facial expressions and body language. What is important to them? Are they using contradictory terms or phrases? Are they avoiding answering certain questions or skirting certain issues? Are they making eye contact? All of these are signals you can interpret to help you communicate. This is called active listening. Think of listening as a precious gift you are giving the other person. Even in the most difficult situations, people appreciate it when you listen.

Some of the Benefits of Active Listening Include:

- Prevent misunderstandings
- Improve insight into people's wants and needs
- Enhance relationships
- Increase opportunities to learn
- Reduce friction and resolve conflicts
- Enlist support and favorable responses
- Encourage a more honest and sincere exchange

People Fail to Hear Because They Are:

- Too busy preparing what they are going to say
- Letting their mind wander (We listen at least four times faster than we speak.)
- Lazy (It takes effort to listen effectively.)
- Faking attention
- Egotistical or mentally set (They lack interest in what other people are saying.)
- Impatient

To Encourage Others to Talk So We Can Listen:

- Will Rogers said, "Never miss a good opportunity to shut up." Most people have a favorite topic – themselves. Keep in mind that it is hard to get away from a good listener. People will think you are brilliant when you let them talk about themselves.
- Be sincerely interested in what other people are saying. People can sense insincerity and they will stop sending.
- Encourage people with supportive nods and phrases.
- Guide the conversation with questions. Remember, the question mark is mightier than the exclamation point.
- Avoid interrupting other people.
- Concentrate on what other people are trying to say – their words, ideas, and feelings related to the subject.
- Make eye contact.
- Stay in the moment. Compartmentalize any other issues that might distract you.
- Get rid of distractions. Put down papers or pencils, unless you are taking notes. Turn off your cell phone or put it on silent mode. Turn your computer monitor off and/or shutdown your computer or laptop.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand a point or idea.

GIVE PEOPLE THE PRECIOUS GIFT OF LISTENING