

A Leadership Minute

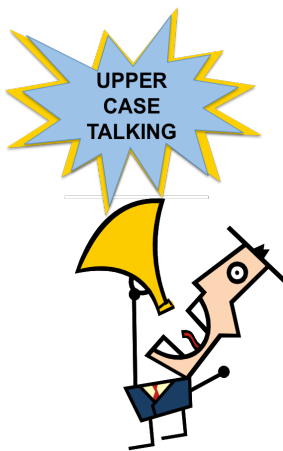
ON COMMUNICATIONS

The definition of

To Your Point

Phrase used to contradict another person's ideas, while making it feel like you have agreed with them.

...Urban Dictionary



“The act of listening is often confused with the exercise of waiting one’s turn to speak.”

–Anonymous

We stink at listening:

- ❖ *We take things in through filters*
- ❖ *We fake attention*
- ❖ *We give way to distractions*
- ❖ *We listen only for the facts*
- ❖ *We think about our responses*
- ❖ *We take notes*
- ❖ *We show impatience on our faces*

Beware, All Ye Who Enter the Corporate Tower of Babble

It can be pretty scary in there. Paradigms are shifting while co-workers are running around blue-skying, ball parking and getting their game faces on, nobody has enough bandwidth, and everybody always has to go back and sharpen their pencils or square the circle or step up to the plate. And it’s scalable. After you do a level-set.

Wouldn’t it be nice to have a magic wand and waive all that corporate-speak away with one hearty, ***Abacadabra!***

Well, that may be easier than you think. That ancient Hebrew word actually means ***I create as I speak***. And that’s real magic.

In our workplace conversations today, we don’t seem to ***create*** much when we speak. Part of the reason might be that the ancient Hebrews probably didn’t see smartphones or tablets or tweets or texts or vines or snaps coming. While research shows that when we speak to each other face-to-face, the listener only understands about 70% of the meaning. That dives to just 50% when we are on the phone and plummets further to about 35% when we use e-mail. We don’t know how much we understand from 140-character ***Twitter*** messages or photos that disappear after 10 seconds, but it’s probably safe to say we don’t always grasp the meaning.

But we can’t blame it all on technology. Speaking, writing, (or tweeting, texting or snap chatting) are all just one side of communication. ***Listening*** is the other half. And we don’t do that very well. When we are listening, we are often just waiting for the other guy to take a breath so we can get our point in...the one that advocates our parochial position while demonstrating our lofty status and clearly puts the other guy in his place. What’s magic is that we ever get anything done.

Corporate life is all about problem solving and decision-making. But in our rush to make decisions, we often don’t spend much time trying to understand the problem we need to make a decision about. We are usually under a great deal of pressure; the boss gave us this problem to fix—let’s get at it then. COME ON PEOPLE, WE HAVE TO DECIDE!

A **productive** conversation has a center; not sides.

“A new idea is a delicate thing. It can be killed by a sneer or a yawn; it can be stabbed to death by a joke or worried to death by a frown in the right person’s brow”

–Charles Brower

Active Listening Steps

1. Attend, encourage

I see...that’s interesting...uh-huh

2. Restate content

As I understand it, your plan is to...

3. Reflect feelings

That must have been difficult...I see how that would make you feel bad

4. Clarify

Did you mean to say...help me understand more

5. Summarize

Here are the key ideas I heard you say

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Like the uppercase talking helps...

So, how do we decide?

Typically, we begin by throwing out ideas and then casting aspersions on most of them. Hearing other people’s ideas isn’t the same as listening to them. Hearing is a passive state for your brain; listening is active. And that gets your own creativity going. Blood rushing, synapses snapping, electrons firing, receptors...oh; sorry, got a bit carried away there. The point is this: **listening takes work**. That’s probably why we do more hearing.

Active listening can’t help make decisions faster—but it can help make better decisions. Here’s what to do:

Listen with intensity:

- ❖ ***Don’t assume that you don’t need to listen to this or that part***
- ❖ ***Don’t give in to distractions; e-mails, phone calls, or side conversations***
- ❖ ***Don’t listen for only what you want to hear***
- ❖ ***Don’t plan what you will say in reply***
- ❖ ***Don’t interrupt***
- ❖ ***Don’t fake listening***

Listen for understanding:

- ❖ ***Suspend your own thinking***
- ❖ ***Recognize your stereotypes***
- ❖ ***Remember that not everything relates to how you think, feel or see the world***
- ❖ ***Listen to the body language as well as the words***
- ❖ ***Listen for feeling as well as content***

Take responsibility for your own comprehension:

- ❖ ***Can you tell us more about...?***
- ❖ ***What do those who disagree say?***
- ❖ ***Why do you think so?***
- ❖ ***What other choices are there?***
- ❖ ***Summarize what the speaker says, then restate it***

I create as I listen. Now, that’s really magic.

