

Preventing Communication Misfires

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Wagner Consulting Group specializes in executive coaching and developing people.
Our goal is to accelerate profitable growth for our clients.

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LISTEN FIRST

Good listeners are better influencers. Listening can make your ideas, opinions or suggestions relevant to the person with whom you are speaking. Being “listened to” fulfills basic human needs for respect and empathy; it also forms the foundation for involvement with others.

Match your listening style to the situation and person. There are 3 styles of listening.

ATTENTIVE

- Full attention without any interruption
- Direct eye contact, leaning slightly forward
- Non-verbal cues of approval or understanding
- Your message: I care about what you’re saying
- Relaxes the speaker and improves their ability to think clearly

Use attentive listening when dealing with:

- Customers
- A new or unusual event
- An angry or upset person

ACTIVE

Active listening is the most common business listening style. In active listening, you continue to show interest, yet you are also responding in a number of ways.

- Summarizing or restating what was said
- Asking clarifying questions
- Asking for elaboration or for more detail

Active listening phrases

- ✓ Am I hearing you say...?
- ✓ Can I clarify something?
- ✓ Can you expand more on this thought?
- ✓ Where do you suppose that will lead?
- ✓ What other choices did you consider?
- ✓ What do you want to see happen?

AFFIRMATIVE

- Your questions and responses show that you are validating the person
- You are demonstrating caring, empathy, and respect
- You are going into a deeper level to find the meaning behind the statement

Affirmative listening phrases

- ✓ You seemed very concerned about...
- ✓ It sounds like you are very proud of...
- ✓ Regarding.... what's important to you?
- ✓ I can see how this situation frustrates you.
- ✓ When you said... that really rang a bell for me because...

Use affirmative listening when:

- Coaching
- Dealing with a person suffering some loss or failure

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

- Needs and expectations
- Frame of reference
- Experience and education
- Have they recently heard bad news? Any good news?

CHOOSE THE RIGHT METHOD

- Visual cues are overwhelmingly dominant in face-to-face interactions (55%)
- When communicating by phone, 84% of communication is vocal (tone, tempo) and only 16% verbal – the actual words used
- Still, the right words are important. The most persuasive word is the person's name. Other persuasive words are Easy, Results, Guarantee, Need, and Proven
- Visual and tonal cues should reinforce the content rather than undercut it.

The bottom line: Good communication makes you job easier.