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Focus

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Good Listening is Good Business

Effective listening is good business. Good listeners are better at selling their ideas and are more effective leaders. There are three types of listening, and the most appropriate type depends on the situation.

Attentive Listening: In attentive listening, you are demonstrating interest by giving your full attention to the speaker without any interruption. You are giving direct eye contact and leaning slightly forward. You are acknowledging the person with a smile or a nod or any other nonverbal cue of approval. When you listen attentively, you are communicating that you care about what the person is saying. When people are allowed to speak in a relaxed way, they are better able to think clearly.

Active Listening: In active listening, you continue to show interest, yet this time you are responding in a number of ways.

- You may be summarizing or restating what someone has said
- You may be asking clarifying questions
- You may be asking for elaboration or for more detail

Affirmative Listening: In affirmative listening, you are listening for the person's emotions and feelings.

- 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

When in doubt about the best listening approach, use the Attentive style to gain a clear understanding of the situation. Listening to the sequence, without interruptions that throw the story off track, allows the speaker to identify all the issues. Sequence clarifies context, and frames key issues. It also helps the listener avoid imposing their own structure and making false assumptions.

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