

Sales Coach Series

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Listening skills

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Effective listening is key to building the strategic relationships we have been examining. But how well do we really do it?

Signs of poor listening include

- Filtering - only hearing the 'good bits'
- Persistent interrupting
- 'Nodding dog' syndrome
- Succumbing to external distractions
- Thinking about other things

A Turkish proverb states 'Listening requires more intelligence than speaking'.

It is only by listening that we can act in the most appropriate manner. It allows a more informed response which, not only addresses what was said, but also the intent or emotion behind it. Active listening minimises misunderstanding, promotes empathy, trust and rapport and makes the speaker feel valued.

Active listening is a state of mind and a skill. Indicators include

- Focusing attention on the speaker
- Demonstrating attention through body language
- Avoiding physical and mental distractions
- Asking clarifying questions and reflecting back to confirm and develop understanding
- Being non-judgemental and avoiding jumping to conclusions
- Separating fact from opinion to understand the speaker's viewpoint

We often leap from hearing to replying. Taking the mental effort to interpret and evaluate what we hear before responding will pay dividends in all relationships, business and personal!