

## LECTURE 4: EFFECTIVE LISTENING

### Communication

- Communication is the basic component of all lasting relationships.
- The more you communicate with someone the more likely it is that a positive relationship will develop.
- The converse is true. The deeper a relationship is, communication within it will be good.

But's not just about talking, it's about listening too. You must listen too, and if you don't, you just aren't communicating.

Good communication is good listening

- \*One of the major skills in effective communication is the ability to listen well.
- \*Listening is the "receiving" part of communication.
- \*It is receiving information through your ears and eyes.
- \*Good listening is an active, integrated communication skill that demands energy and know-how.
- \*It is purposeful, powerful and productive.

A good communicator is a good listener. She adjusts and readjusts the constellation of symbols she displays depending on the feedback she gathers through simultaneous listening.

- Research shows that effective communication involves 50% more listening than talking.
- It is important to realize that listening is not just paying attention to the other person's *words* but also to his *tone and facial expressions and body language*.
- Listening is different from Hearing! Hearing is physical BUT Listening is a mental activity. Apart from just hearing, it involves Interpretation, Evaluation and Response.

### Effective Listening

- Effective Listening is possible only when the people involved are fully present, attentive and responsive, with their preoccupations, distractions completely sorted out.

For Effective Listening The Mind should be open...

"The mind is like a parachute—it functions only when it is open!" *Robert Schuler*

### Listen without Prejudice

- Students at the University of California were asked by Mr L Agnew of the department of Medical History for their reaction to the following :
- "The father has syphilis, the mother tuberculosis. They have had four children—the first blind, the second died, the third was deaf and dumb, the fourth had tuberculosis.

The mother is pregnant with her fifth child. The parents are willing to have an abortion. You have to make the decision."

- Most of the students voted in favour of abortion. Mr Agnew's comment to them: "Congratulations, you have just murdered Beethoven!"

Listening is an active process

- Listening is the process that involves actively hearing what another person is communicating and attending to that communication.
- Listening is how we receive the verbal portion of a person's message as well as how we perceive the non-verbal connection.

Types of Listeners

- Active Listeners  
Listen to not only *what* has been communicated but also *how* it has been communicated.  
Active Listening is more helpful when it comes to Effective Communication as it makes the other person feel loved and cared for.
- Passive Listener
- Only listens to *half the message* and *ignores the subtexts*, thus getting incomplete communication.

Non-Listener

- He does not hear the speaker at all. Easily recognized by his blank stare and nervous mannerisms, this person will fake attention while thinking about something else. He does most of the talking, constantly interrupts and has the last word.
- Considered as a know-it-all, these individuals are seen as insensitive and non-understanding.

Marginal listener

- This person *hears* the words, but *not the meaning and intent*.
- He evades different or technical discussions, and tends to listen only the data and bottom line, *not the main ideas*.
- Marginal Listening is *dangerous* because there is enormous room for *misunderstandings, errors and problems*.
- The speaker may be lulled into a false sense of security that he is in fact being listened to and understood.

Evaluative Listener

- This refers to a person who evaluates the message strictly on the basis of the words said, totally ignoring the message conveyed by the speaker's vocal intonation, body language and facial expressions.

- This individual tends to be a logical listener, but is still more concerned about content than feelings and is emotionally detached from the conversation.
- Evaluative listeners believe they understand the speaker, but the speaker does not feel understood. This is the level of listening that people employ in most conversations.

#### Active Listener

- This person focuses on understanding the speaker's point of view.
- This is the most comprehensive and powerful level of listening.
- It is also the most demanding and tiring, since it requires a deep level of concentration and attention on the thoughts and feelings of the speaker as well as the spoken word.
- Active Listening requires suspending our own thoughts and feelings to give attention to the message and intent.

#### Barriers to Effective Listening

- Weak language Proficiency  
Not necessarily technical words.  
Not asking for clarification because of fear or shyness.
- Non-serious Listening  
Occurs when people allow themselves to be distracted like when talking over the phone, flipping through a book during a conversation, etc.

#### Lack of Interest

- May result in the listener concentrating on other subjects during a conversation.
- For example, even after watching hours of news bulletin one may not remember much. But that may not be the case while watching a cricket match!

#### Antipathy towards speaker

- The biggest cause of poor listening has little to do with language or physical settings.
- It consists of the listener's physical/mental/ psychological barriers.
- If we dislike a speaker or disapprove of him, the message that we reconstruct is almost always distorted.

#### Lack of confidence

- Poor listening occurs if we decide in advance that we will not be able to make sense of what the other people are going to say.
- This is partly in common in class rooms and technical conferences where complex issues are discussed or concepts are explained.

### Impatience

- A listener who is impatient will always find that the speaker is always slow and he tends to fill in words for the speaker.
- The impatient listener guesses too soon what the speaker is going to say and on that assumption concentrates on formulating his response.

### Strong Convictions

- Our beliefs and convictions can act as a barrier that stops new ideas and new proofs from reaching our minds.
- It may also result in marginal listening due to disagreements with the speaker.

### Active Listening Techniques

Ask Open Questions. DON'T ask YES or NO questions

E.g: Instead of saying, "Has this been going on for a long time?" ask, "How long has this been going on"—you encourage the other person to keep talking.

### Summarizing

It helps to show that you have listened to and understood what has been said.

E.g: "So you are being treated terribly by your partners, but you still love them"

### Reflecting

Repeating back a word or phrase can encourage people to go on. If someone says "So it's been really different recently," you can keep the conversation simply by repeating "different ..."

### Clarifying

If the person you are speaking with glosses over an important point saying, "Tell me more about it..." or "sounds a difficult area..." you can help him clarify the points not only for you, but also for himself.

Pay complete attention.

Don't think ahead as to what you are going to say next.

Don't rehearse your own comments while the other is speaking.

Don't interrupt. Remain silent while the other person speaks.

Listen for feelings underneath words—and to the nuances in language.

Read the body language.

Keep an open mind—don't judge immediately.

Encourage the speaker to continue—clarify what is being said, if necessary.

## **Tips for Effective Communication**

When verbally communicating—

1. Keep an open mind about what people say. Don't presume anything before the communication is completed.
2. Ask a specific question when you want a specific answer.
3. Take notes wherever possible; e. g. telephone conversation.
4. Speak in as natural a tone as possible to create a warm environment.
5. Use humour where and when appropriate. Humour has the effect of diffusing difficult situation and lighten the atmosphere.
6. Avoid using indecipherable or convoluted word—Avoid using unclear and complex words, they tend to confuse the reader.
7. Always try to put yourself in the other's shoes while in the midst of a conversation and respond accordingly. This will assure the speaker that you are indeed listening and helps building the trust level.
8. And finally do give relevant feedback. This is very important as it helps the speaker to know what you feel about his communication.

**SEE MORE, HEAR MORE, SPEAK LESS!**