

my mind goes to work to imagine where you're going with this and what you probably mean. I can't wait till you're done to hear *all* of what you mean because then there'll be no time to think up my countermove. So, in the interests of no "dead air" time, I start *thinking—not* listening—while you're still talking. Then, as soon as you finish, I'm ready. Funny thing is, I often don't even wait till you're finished.

The hallmarks of non-listening are interrupting and cutting off the end of someone's sentence; jumping from one subject to another with no connection to what's just been said; or several people talking at once.

Result? No flow in the discussion. No building up of ideas vertically. Just random blips on a flat horizontal line that don't accrue to each other or grow from each other to make a productive whole. Vital information and good ideas get lost. We don't explore issues thoroughly. We don't really know what we agreed to. We expect not to be listened to and understood so we repeat ourselves as we speak.

Not very useful in a meeting process that looks for solutions by a group.

How to fix it? It's not simple because physiologically we're built to think much faster than we can talk. That gives us all that leftover time I told you about in Chapter 2 (only 15 percent of the brain is needed for understanding words and 85 percent is left doing nothing), for thinking our own thoughts, criticizing yours, or just going off and thinking about other things entirely.

Techniques to Improve Listening

Try these, deliberately and actively, and see how much more you will hear and notice.

- *Put yourself aside*

Wipe your slate clean while I talk. I promise your word-well won't go dry, and when it's your turn to talk, you'll manufacture words again without having rehearsed them while I'm talking.

- *Get curious*

"What's *his* idea?" Since you already know what *you* think, make yourself find out and discover a new idea. It's interesting just to hear how differently we all think and how many solutions there can be to one problem.

- *Listen openly*

Suspend your judgment. We're so good at criticizing and finding reasons why *not* to do anything. Wait till you've heard the whole idea