

## Active Listening: 4 Elements to Boost Your Business!

### HEART: BUSINESS PRACTICES

In the business world “listening with your heart” can be the key to unlocking employee retention!

More than anything else, your employees want you to listen to them.

In Captain D. Michael Abramshoff's business book “It's Your Ship” there is a chapter entitled “listen aggressively”. I love that! In the book he talks about reading exit interviews to find out why people are leaving the military. He assumed that low pay would be the first reason, but in fact it was fifth. Instead, one of the top reasons for leaving the military is also one of top reasons people leave any job: it's because they feel they are not being listened to.

**Studies found employees will endure difficult corporate struggles if they simply feel what they have to say is being heard. Employees don't need all of their ideas adopted. They simply just want a voice at the table. The desire to be heard runs deep in all of us. John Yokoyama said, “I can't afford to say yes to all my staff's desires, but one thing is certain – I can't afford the outrageous cost of not listening to their requests.”**

So here are some suggestions for how to practice the principle of listening with your heart: First, don't stop asking questions. This tip works magically in sooo many different scenarios, like being interviewed for a job, sales, performance reviews, and so many more. Asking questions and then listening to the replies unlocks something powerful in the person talking!

Another idea: after listening to someone tell them how you think that makes them feel. This can be as simple as replying, “wow. that's frustrating.” or “oh, I hate it when that happens” or “I bet you're super-excited!” or even “and that's why I never leave food in the company refrigerator”. Replying with an emotion lets the speaker know that you didn't just hear, you listened with your heart.

Something else you can do to show you are listening with your heart is tell them the action you are going to take because of what was said. Maybe you can tell them “I'll tell management about this” or “I'll follow up with them later today”, or “I'll send an email” or “I'll get that done asap”... Showing actions you are going to take is a powerful way to show someone that you truly listened.

Lastly, go into a conversation reminding yourself “two ears and one mouth”. Don't listen only with the intent to reply. Decide ahead of time that you want to listen more than you talk!

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