

# 7 Keys to Impactful Listening



Before we can do anything for our customers we need to understand them. This is addressing the personal side by listening actively to what they are saying.

Often, we may be hearing but not really listening. We assume that listening is a passive activity. However, to listen effectively takes work. Hearing is a biological function. Listening relates to understanding the message. Impactful listening helps the speaker to reveal, clarify and understand *everything* there is to know about their message.

## *What does being prepared for a conversation mean to you?*

Here are some tips to help you prepare to be an impactful listener:

1. **Prepare:** Make sure you are able to handle the encounter both physically and mentally.
2. **Have a Purpose:** Know the objective of the conversation. Don't expect the other person to do all the talking. Get your point across yet be sure to understand their point as well.
3. **Take Notes:** Write down key information to stay focused and develop a frame of reference. Notes will help you guide the conversation and increase accuracy of information received.
4. **Listen Between the Lines:** Be alert for the subtleties of tonality, emotions, sense of urgency, etc.
5. **Ask Questions:** What do I need to get from the customer? Is there anything that is unclear or that I need to verify? Am I missing information?
6. **Providing Feedback:** It is important to let the other person know you are listening with short verbal cues or by summarizing or paraphrasing what you've heard.
7. **Avoid Distractions:** Turn away from the main flow of the office traffic and consciously stay focused on the conversation.

As we work to become more impactful listeners, we need to consider the numerous obstacles that hinder our efforts. Once we identify these barriers, we can then create strategies to help us overcome them.

Two types of listening barriers:

1. External: noise and distractions in your immediate environment.
2. Internal: your thoughts or emotions that conflict with listening.

*“We want to do business with people who help us **feel** understood and not people who try to make us understand.”*



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