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Assignment 1

Listening is a complicated communication process because people struggle with internalizing the information that they are hearing in real time. Each of the five steps of the listening process (receiving, decoding, remembering, evaluating, and responding), can be affected by internal or external forces that disrupt the overall internalization of information. For example, a listener’s reception can be hindered by outside noises; likewise, an unexpected distraction can cause issues in transferring a message from short-term memory to long-term memory. Distractions are almost always present even within the brain, as humans have the ability to process information faster than another human can speak it, encouraging a listener’s mind to wander to other things. To become a better listener, people can implement measures such as taking notes of the relevant points made, using nonverbal cues to confirm that the message is being received, and eliminating as many external distractions as possible.

Nonverbal communication is important in its own right because it conveys additional information beyond the actual content of a message. Important nonverbal cues include facial expression, gesture and posture, vocal characteristics, personal appearance, touch, and time and space. These nonverbal signals can be powerful enough to undermine or supplement a message considerably, as they provide additional context to the listener about the speaker’s mindset when delivering the message.

The success of business conversations can depend greatly on how they are initiated. Whether the conversation is informal or formal, it is often effective to have some base of research from which topics can be selected, allowing an individual to craft a substantive conversation regardless of whether it was planned. As the conversation flows, both parties must treat each other with respect and class. They must stay engaged and show the other individual that they care about the subject matter, which can often be accomplished by actively asking pointed questions that prevent the conversation from getting stale. This back-and-forth climate also allows for the conversation to be ended gracefully, as frequent pauses within the conversation provide room for either participant to end it comfortably.

Workplace conflict is an inevitability due to the competing interests and ideologies of different people and departments. These conflicts can take many forms. Structural conflicts are fixtures of being in business, such as fund allocation, and cannot be eliminated entirely due to their nature. Situational conflicts stem from temporary forces within the business, such as the members of a project team disagreeing on the goals and priorities of the group. The final type of conflict, interpersonal conflicts, originate from the choices or personality traits of one individual negatively affecting another. To resolve a workplace conflict, an individual must first decide if it is harmful enough that it merits attention. They must then critically examine their own beliefs and behaviors to identify any ways in which they are contributing to the conflict. The conflict’s origin can then be identified, and a common ground can be established to foster a collaborative environment between the parties. Finally, the two parties must agree on a strategy for resolving the differences, which can include avoidance, accommodation, compromise, or collaboration.

Mastering the negotiation process is critical for a person to achieve their professional goals. Negotiation is difficult to approach intuitively because it exists at a middle ground between competition and collaboration for the involved parties. One must prepare thoroughly in order to negotiate effectively, which involves understanding one’s own position, evaluating the other party’s position, and selecting a specific strategy based on the situation. When making the first offer in a negotiation, it is important to set it at a value that will not be immediately accepted but is still somewhat reasonable. Doing so means that an individual will maximize whatever it is that they’re negotiating for; if their offer is immediately accepted, they probably didn’t ask for enough. After the initial offer has been made, counteroffers ensue. A greater importance is placed on listening rather than talking, as this can provide cues as to the other party’s reservations or thought process. Finally, a final offer is made and a deal can be reached if both parties agree that it is fair.