

Title:

Can You Hear Me Now?

Word Count:

462

Summary:

We all think we know how to listen, yes? The fact is that very few people know how to truly listen. In our earnestness to serve, we get pulled out of a conversation by preparing for the answer while the other person is still talking. We wait for a pause and when the person takes a breath, we jump in to improve or remedy the situation.

Keywords:

Customer Service, Listening, Communication

Article Body:

When you listen to a customer (or co-worker, spouse, significant other), your brain is constantly making hundreds of assumptions. Each word, inflection, and tone of voice is interpreted, but not always as the speaker intended. Research shows that 2/3rd of all employees feel management isn't listening.*

We all think we know how to listen, yes? The fact is that very few people know how to truly listen. In our earnestness to serve, we get pulled out of a conversation by preparing for the answer while the other person is still talking. We wait for a pause and when the person takes a breath, we jump in to improve or remedy the situation.

Or, we worry about the question that we may be asked that we might not be able to answer intelligently. Will we know the answer? Will we be able to respond appropriately? What if I am asked a question I don't know the answer to? What if I don't understand the question? What if they find out that I'm new on the job/on the equipment/at this company? What if they get angry at me? What if I frustrate them? What if, what if, you fill in the blank. We are anywhere but listening to the other person.

Our intentions are good. We want to give the best response we can, hopefully the right answer. However, if we are not present to the conversation, the other person feels not heard, unimportant, ripped off, and the like. If there was no upset on their side to begin with, it now exists big time. Fact: if you are not listening to the customer, there is no way you can answer the question. The

truth is you probably haven't even heard it.

Listening is our least used and weakest communication skill. None the less, great customer service professionals are first and foremost great listeners. Active listening forces us to tune in to what the customer is saying, instead of trying to think of what our responses will be.

Hearing and listening are not the same, though many people use the words interchangeably.

Hearing is a physiological process whereby auditory impressions are received by your ears and transmitted to your brain.

Listening involves interpreting and understanding the significance of the sensory experience.

The derivative of listen is 'list,' which means to lean toward one side. Have you ever noticed how you lean in when someone is talking to you, or vice versa? Even on the phone?

When you listen, you win and the other person wins. But it is not enough to just listen, you have to communicate to people that you're listening. Sometimes people don't think you're listening when you are because you're not communicating that you're listening.

*Training, December 2006, p. 9.