

## **Listen More, Speak Less**

No matter what the situation - an interview, interacting at a networking function or just visiting with friends - we could all benefit from improving our listening skills. Listening required focus and discipline and mastering that skill can reap more benefits than all the speaking in the world.

Listening is about honoring the speaker and listening with your ears, eyes and heart. That can be difficult for many of us. But sometimes we need to set some of our ego aside and give up the need to control the conversation.

Here are some suggestions to improve your listening skills:

- Dial into the person you are talking to. Look them in the eyes and show your interest.
- Be alert to “iceberg” statements where 90% of the story is just below the surface. This will give you an opportunity for follow-up inquiries.
- Listen 80% of the time and get more information – information is power.
- When you meet someone, listen for how you can help him or her. This creates a strong connection.
- Let the other person lead the conversation. For now, they are the most important person in the world.
- Ask a question and then listen generously to their concern. Resist the urge to interrupt.
- Listen beyond the words to what is not being said. Only 7% of our communications are verbal.
- Pause after someone has completed a thought – it suggests you are carefully digesting what has been shared.

For social or networking situation, there are even more guidelines:

- Join a group of people you haven't met and listen more than you talk. If they welcome you, introduce yourself and then invite them to continue.
- It's usually okay to eavesdrop, listen and ponder, but be alert to clues you are invading someone's privacy.
- Everyone has something to share – banquet banter.

It is said that since we have only one mouth and two ears we should know to listen more than we speak. So remember that no one cares how much we know until they know how much we care and the best way to show we care is by truly listening to what they have to say.

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