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Silence as a listening tool

*by Sanjay Limaye.
Principal Consultant.*

Silence as a listening tool.

We hear mostly, what we want to hear, not what the buyer is trying to communicate to us. Many sales opportunities can be closed & many conflicts can be resolved, if we learn how to listen along-with how to sell.

We are so busy making sure that the buyers hear what we have to say that we forget to listen. The key to success in selling & (or) negotiating-is using silence and listening to what people have to tell.

Learn to listen.

It turns out that listening is not a difficult art to master. In fact, it's quite simple. The hard part is shutting up. If you can train yourself to keep your mouth shut most of the time, you will be a great listener and a greater closer. Learn to listen with your ears & eyes. Observe the body language. In fact body speaks louder than words.

Listening Tips.

Once you have learned how to keep yourself from speaking, the art of asking questions is the shortcut to effective listening. Here are some tips for asking questions:

Ask open-ended questions.

Questions that can't be answered with a simple yes or no. "How could we do this?" "What do you think?" Your objective is to get the buyer to talk as much as possible.

Don't ask questions that put them on the defensive.

For example, "Why?" is intimidating. Don't ask "why?" Ask "how come?" Ask "What if?" What if we did it this way?

Ask for their advice. "What would you suggest we do to resolve this?"

Everyone loves to be asked for advice.

Offer alternatives. "Which way would you prefer?" This demonstrates your respect for the buyer and is a great closing technique.

Ask about their feelings. "How do you feel about this?" People love to have their feelings validated.

Repeat back what they said.

"Let me be sure I understand what you're saying. You're saying that...?"

This technique will prevent misunderstandings and convince them that you really are listening.

Note: Silence puts pressure on the weaker party. Normally within 15-20 seconds the weaker of the two individuals will start speaking to fill the

unbearable vacuum of silence. The individual will unfortunately reveal number of things, which he need not. Observe this phenomenon in your HR department - taking job interviews or with your purchase people - listening (or enjoying?) sales talk of suppliers.

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About Sanjay Limaye:

As a consultant with over two decades of experience in sales, sales management, marketing and corporate management, Sanjay brings clients wide-ranging expertise in developing, growing and running sales and marketing organizations in today's global economy.

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