

**Lecture : 10**  
**Topic : Listening**

We have thus far concentrated on the “hard” issues in relation to communications, i.e. the technology, channels, and media, but are communicating all about the effective use of techniques and methodologies while relegating the personal skills. An effective communicator must consider the process and objectives of the communication before considering the tools for the job.

These are known as “soft skills”, and a study of white collar workers shows that they spend their time on average as follows:

Writing – 9%  
Reading – 16%  
Speaking – 30%  
Listening – 45%

Therefore we should look at ways in which we communicate to others by looking at our skills, which allow other people to communicate with us.

These skills are also important in face-to-face communication. In other words, as well as words used in the communication, there are plenty of other cues to enable/hinder effective communication

### **10.1 Listening**

This is a skill we all must enquire effective listening is obtained through practice and training over a long period.

You must say that you have been listening since your birth and you listen all the time. But that, unfortunately is not true. What you have been doing is hearing most of the time and listening is a skill that you have under utilised.

Listening is not just hearing but also actively processing the information.

### **10.2 Active Listening**

The listener must be actively engaged in the process. We cannot sit at a lecture and pretend we are listening, because all we are doing is hearing.

One has to think about what is being said and relate it to one’s experience while relating to one’s expectation of the communications.

Listening must be approached with an open mind, not blank or accepting everything being said, but there must be honest and open appraisal of what is being said in a non-judgmental manner, actively seeking to make the experience a positive one.

### **10.3 Level of Listening**

Active listening is more than just hearing the sounds being generated and interpreting them for action. Listening involves a number of our senses and faculties, each geared towards the obtaining of different types of information.

### **10.4 Listening With Ears**

This perhaps sounds obvious, but actually invokes more of our abilities than we perhaps realise. You will recall the difference between hearing and listening mentioned earlier. In essence, to listen effectively with our ears, we should learn to listen for facts. This may be done by resisting distractions, remembering key words, setting aside our own bias, being flexible and working hard to listen. Listening effectively with our ears provides us with the information necessary upon which to decide how to undertake our future actions.

### **10.5 Listening with emotions**

This refers to the skill of empathy or the ability to identify oneself mentally with (and so fully comprehend) another person. It involves us 'listening' for feelings and emotions, on our part and on the part of the person with whom we are speaking. This can be done by trying to listen from the speaker's point of view, watching the non-verbal communication, listening for the speaker's meanings of words, listening with our emotions assists the communication process tremendously, as it encourages a sense of trust and openness.

### **10.6 Listening with the mind**

This involves listening with our powers of reasoning, our critical faculties. It means approaching the listening situation with an enquiring and open mind, ready to discuss, to explore, to challenge where necessary, to accept where necessary. It approaches the communication asking the question 'how does what I am hearing allow me to better achieve my objectives'? Listening with the mind often creates situations where interpretations and consequences previously unknown to us become apparent, and so is extremely important in the stimulation and development of new ideas.

### **10.7 Listening with pleasure**

An often-neglected part of commentaries and books on active listening, we need to remember that listening is above all, an enjoyable experience where new situations and new horizons can be opened up before us. If approached as a pleasure, more often than not it will be. If you anticipate that the listening will be a chore and unpleasant, it probably will be. Many of these situations are caused by our own

making, projecting out own interpretations and expectations onto a situation and making them into what we are expecting them to be.

### **10.8 Listening in feedback**

This is a key feature in any business relationship where listening plays a key role. It is not just about listening to someone with a view to obtaining information, or solving problems, it is about improving relationships, and giving encouragement.

### **10.9 The communication purpose**

Remember, however, the communication purpose diagram. Understanding is only part of the process, albeit an important part. If the parties to the communication understand each other, but do not agree, that at least forms the basis for discussion and negotiation if they do not even understand each other, there is no common groundwork from which they can build any successful relationship. Even enemies can respect each other if they understand each other's perspectives and approach. An example of this in the author's own case is that he was working with a University in developing a course of study, and help a particular view on the approach to be taken. A number of others at the meeting agree, a number disagreed. However, through discussion, we were able to understand each other's perspectives and even see that both perspective and approaches were correct (if there can ever be anything that is really 'correct' in every sense of the word 'Valid' was the phrase used). This then enabled a constructive and forward thinking movement towards an agrees set of outcomes, which would not have been possible if the members of the meeting had not been able to listen effectively and so develop an understanding of each others' opinions and views.

#### Exercise

Look back over the occasions in which you were involved in listening today. Were you utilising active listening skills? Were there any of the criteria for active listening which you did not use?

#### Summary

In summary, active listening can be enhanced through the following elements:-

- show interest
- give attention
- feedback to ensure understanding
- use empathy to prevent defensiveness

## **VERBAL COMMUNICATION (TALKING)**

In this section, we are looking at verbal communication in its broadcast sense. The specific requirements of talking over the telephone will be discussed in more detail at a later point.

The advantages of verbal communication are as follows:

- 1) it is fast, convenient and efficient as a medium of communication relative to other methods.
- 2) immediate feedback can be received; this is particularly important when a point or issue needs to be clarified.
- 3) in face to face interactions, non-verbal cues can be used to emphasise point's made and further information received from the actions of the recipient that are observed.

Verbal communication is particularly important in face-to-face interactions such as interview where the parties can discuss, clarify and agree on issues raised or negotiated, this saves time and money in the future. It is particularly important as a communication method when immediate, timely action is needed.

The difficulty with verbal communication is that it requires the people involved to be in contact with each other at the same time. This is increasingly a problem in the modern global business environment, where business is conducted over a number of continents and time zones. As such, on a global scale, verbal communication can be difficult as there is often only a very small window of opportunity within people are able to communicate in this way without it being very early or very late for one or the other party.

Another difficulty with verbal communication is the difficulty in keeping records of the conversation. The message is not permanent. As such, if a dispute does arise over the contents of the communication at a later date, it is difficult to prove exactly what was said, without some form of permanent record. As such, in business situations, it is often important to follow up a written record of the results and decisions made.