The Ethics of Listening

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The Laws of Forgetting

- We forget 50% of what we hear immediately because we don’t listen.
- And, we forget 75% of what we hear within two months because we don’t practice.
- And, of the 25% we do remember, only 60% is correct, plus we add things that were never said in the first place!
- That leaves 15% of what you hear today you will remember in two months. What will you choose to pay attention to today?
“... most of us spend our entire lives distracting ourselves and thinking so much about our past and our future that we end up missing the present moment, the only moment we have to live and the only moment we can affect.”

Janice Marturano – Finding the Space to Lead
Most of you are wired to be problem solvers.
You are an expert in your field.
You probably do know better.
It is easier and more efficient.
You are busy.
You’ve heard it all before.
You are trying to be helpful.
Hearing

• Accidental
• Involuntary
• Effortless
Hearing just happens.

Listening we do intentionally.
What could be the result of not really listening to another employee, a community member, a commissioner, or your boss?
At the most basic level, you have an ethical obligation to listen!

And you do, sometimes!
Can you find the mistake?

ABCDFGHJK
“The world is too big for us, too much is going on, too many crimes, too much violence and excitement. Try as you will you get behind in the race in spite of yourself. It’s a constant strain to keep pace...
... and still, you lose ground. Science empties its discoveries on you so fast that you stagger beneath them in hopeless bewilderment. The political world is news seen rapidly, you’re out of breath trying to keep pace with who’s in and who’s out...
... Everything is high pressure. Human nature can’t endure much more.”

• Atlantic Journal - June 16, 1883
Business

Busyness

Coincidence?
“Pizzled”

Combination of *puzzled* and *pissed* (2006). Captures the feeling people had when the person they were talking with pulled out their Blackberry and started talking to someone else.
In an information rich world, what information consumes is “the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.”

Continuous Partial Attention
“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

George Bernard Shaw
“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”

Winston Churchill
People who listen control the conversation.

- When people feel understood, they feel cared about.
- When people feel cared about they trust.
- When people trust they are willing to listen.
People don't need to have all their ideas adopted. They just want to be heard and understood.
When haven’t you listened to someone when you really needed to even though you knew how?
Why Don’t We Listen?

- Time
- Attention
- Energy
- Focus
- Distractions/Noise
Physical Noise
- Construction activity
- Barking dogs
- Loud music
- Air conditioners
- Airplanes
- Noisy conflict nearby

Psychological Noise
- Worries about money
- Crushng deadlines
- The presence of specific other people in the room
- Tight daily schedule
- Biases related to the speaker or the content

Physiological Noise
- Feeling ill
- Having a headache
- Growling stomach
- Room is too cold or too hot

Semantic Noise
- Special jargon
- Unique word usage
- Mispronunciation
- Euphemism
- Phrases from foreign languages
The #1 Reason ...
Because we CHOOSE not to!
TELL ME AGAIN WHAT THE ISSUE IS.
DO YOU WANT THE SIMPLE BUT MISLEADING EXPLANATION OR THE ONE YOU WON'T UNDERSTAND?
EITHER ONE IS GOOD;
I WASN'T PLANNING ON LISTENING.
I can look directly at someone, nod when they’re talking, maybe even throw in a “yeah,” and still not hear a single word they said...
5 Levels of Listening

1. I don’t listen because I don’t like you or your idea.

2. I don’t listen because I am indifferent to what you have to say.

3. I do listen, but with the intent to counter what you say and then make my point.

4. I listen for common ground between what you think and what I think.

5. I listen to see your point of view completely and accurately.
“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.”

Stephen R. Covey
(1932-2012)
Oh, I’m sorry … Did the middle of my sentence interrupt the beginning of yours?
Different ways of listening

1. NOT BEING INTERESTED
2. WANTING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM
3. KNOWING OR WANTING TO PROVE YOU ARE RIGHT
4. BEING CURIOUS, WANTING TO UNDERSTAND
Listening Exercise

• Get into pairs
• Speaker will take one minute to respond to: “When is it most difficult for me to listen to someone? Why?”
• Listener will practice active listening skills (No talking!).
• Listener will summarize the speaker’s main points.
Listening Exercise

• How was that? What did you notice?
• What was it like listening for one minute without talking? Speaking for one minute without interruption?
• When you were the listener, what question(s) did you want to ask? What did you want to say?
What makes it hard for you to listen?

Listener respond for your partner
When listening stops, needs get ignored or misunderstood. We solve the problem before we have even asked what is wrong.
“We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are.”
Just because you are right, does not mean I am wrong. You just haven't seen life from my side.
Curiosity – “Tell me more”

- Say more about that.
- What does that mean?
- Can you be more specific?
- Why do you think that?
- How did you reach that conclusion?
- Can you share some examples?
- To what extent, does that saying apply here?
- What do you really mean?
- Can you clarify that for me?
- How does that statement apply to…?
- Can you share more about that concept for us?
- What are the implications of that statement?
- What are you implying?
Am I staying **curious** – even if I’m certain I am right?

Am I attached to being right and getting **defensive**?
What will you remember in 2 months?
Listening Practice

1. Practice sitting in silence for 3 minutes every day for a week.
2. Intentionally listen to 1 person per day for 1 minute for 1 week without talking. Notice how people respond.
3. Listen to 3 people for at least 2 minutes and only ask them questions to learn more. Get curious!
Thank you!

LISTEN & SILENT
are spelled with the same letters
Think About It つ

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