

SALES

2010

Go on Give your Customer a Good Listening to!



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9/9/2010



The Ultimate Sales Tool Kit

Give your customer a good listening to

Too many times we hear from customers how sales people don't excite them with their product because they don't take time to listen to what it must do first, instead they bore the customer with their best presentation of which most is irrelevant!

They receive the 'it's got presentation'; this is the pre-determined sales presentation of key features that a salesman has learned and gives to every customer. Often this has no relevance to the customer's individual needs and certainly doesn't create a measureable difference between them or their product.

The main complaint as a result of this kind of this kind of presentation approach is that the customers feel the sales people don't listen to what they want or need and why they want or need it. So get better at giving your customer a good listening to.

Active Listening is:

Listening to others to understand their ideas, opinions and feelings, and to demonstrate to them that you have done so.

An underpinning skill necessary to qualify expertly is the ability to listen actively. Hearing is NOT listening! Think about all the sounds that go on around you. When you are concentrating on something, someone can be talking to you and you do not hear them. Well, the fact is that we do hear them, but we do not switch our attention to them.

Your brain has shut down your listening to concentrate on what you are doing. Your brain selectively filters out the noises you do not want to interpret and lets in those that you do want to hear.





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You are expecting someone important to phone you, you have your head down and you are very busy concentrating, BUT that phone rings and you respond instantly, whereas if it were not important you may not even notice it.

We hear with our ears and listen with our brain. What does it feel like when someone is not really listening to you? Can you imagine the impact on your customer if they even once think that you are not listening to them fully? Active listening is about concentrating on the conversation and responding to and understanding what is said.

The reasons you do not listen could be:

- Allowing distractions around you to interfere
- Jumping to conclusions
- Mentally shutting off if what we are listening to is uninteresting to us
- Day dreaming
- Homing in on words or phrases we do not like and missing the message
- Pretending you are listening
- Boredom at having done this several times today
- Assuming you know what is needed
- Not respecting the person you are listening to.

Listening badly can be costly. A good listener collects good information, but a good active listener collects more! To listen actively demands high levels of concentration and commitment to reducing our own barriers to listening properly.

There are five main components to Active Listening:



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Give your full attention

Confirming nods of the head, full eye contact and encouraging sounds help the speaker to express their thoughts and feelings freely. What is the meaning behind the speaker's words will be learnt from their facial expression, gestures and body movements.

Reflecting the content

This process is like holding a mirror and reflecting back the ideas and phrases as you hear them.

With a slow speaker it is easy to use a pause after they have been speaking for a little time, to paraphrase what has been said.

With a prolific talker you may have to interrupt to get the space to reflect. This is acceptable if you signal your intention by phrases such as: 'Can I just check that I have a list of these points?' 'Bob, I am just interrupting to check my understanding.'

As the speaker carries on talking, reflect from time to time to break up the information into manageable sections.

Reflecting the feelings

In addition to the thoughts and ideas the speaker is discussing, you will sometimes be aware of emotions that are not being expressed. Reflecting these back will test that your perceptions are accurate. 'You sound angry about that.'

Sometimes what the speaker is saying and the emotions they are expressing do not seem to match. Reflecting back this inconsistency can help the speaker gain insight. As they become more confident with you, they will be more able to bring their thoughts, goals and ideas in line with the feelings they are experiencing.



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Summarising what has been said

When you have REFLECTED several times and you are beginning to grasp the ideas and thoughts of the speaker, then a SUMMARY helps you both to review where you have got to. It is a check on your mutual understanding of the conversation.

Think of REFLECTING as being the paragraph and SUMMARY as essential to pull together and round off your listening.

Interpreting

Sometimes, when you are sure that you are grasping the speakers ideas and feelings, it is possible to interpret what the speaker is saying.

‘So it sounds from what you said that you intend to’

However, beware of negative reactions from the speaker. They may feel you were distorting their message for reasons of your own.

Focus on the other person

Active listening is a non-directive technique. It is essential to suppress yourself, your own agenda, your own direction and to fully understand the agenda of the speaker. You must give up thinking of replies, trying to solve the speaker’s problems and asking leading questions to push the speaker in a particular direction.

When should you use it?

- Use it to show others that you have followed their views, thoughts and feelings.
- Use it to stop yourself from responding to, or arguing against, half understood ideas.
- Use it to break out of arguments with the speaker.



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- Use it to stop yourself from seeking confirmation of your own views or assumptions.
- Use it to help other people who are in disagreement to understand each other's views by paraphrasing both.

Remember LISTEN!

L Look interested ~ make your eyes, face and body show you are interested. Also use encouraging speech which shows that you have heard what is being said.

I Inquire with questions ~ asking sensible questions as in qualifying clearly shows that you are listening fully.

S Stay on target ~ keep focused on what it is you are trying to convey or find out during the conversation. This is particularly important in qualifying.

T Test your understanding ~ summarise at regular intervals to confirm what has been said/agreed. This shows that you have built up the picture of what your customer wants.

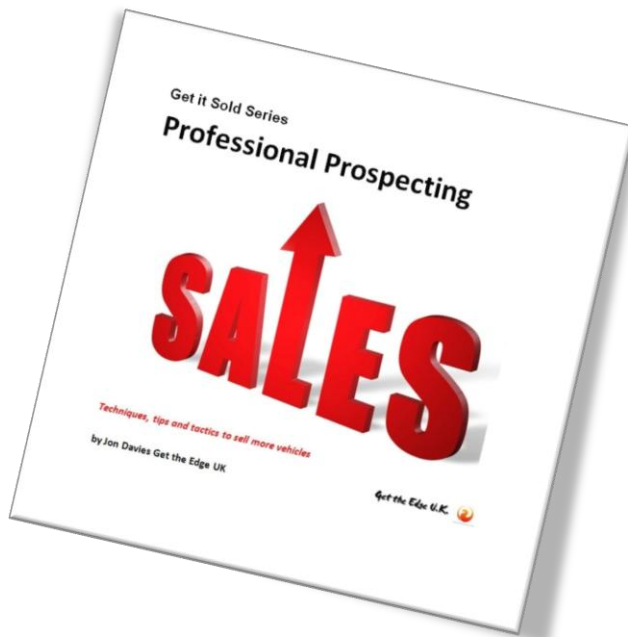
E Evaluate the message ~ identify the key messages that are being sent. These messages will help you in the sales process.

N Neutralise your feelings ~ emotions like impatience or boredom can get in the way of good listening. So, whatever you are feeling it needs to be controlled to maximise the information that you can obtain.



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