



**CEO SELF-ASSESSMENT:**

***What Kind of Listener are You?***

One of the reasons we are inefficient listeners is that we tend to focus most of our preparatory thought and attention on what we want to communicate to others while failing to prepare or discipline ourselves to listen effectively. There are lots of identifiable reasons for this condition, such as ego, social/positional expectations, lack of practice, and the fact that we think so much faster than we can speak. The simple truth is that people, as a species, don't typically listen well, and leaders are often the worst offenders of all!

**EXERCISE ONE:**

For fun, let's check out where each of us stands according to our own perceptions. We'll use a self-assessment tool from the book, *Listening: The Forgotten Skill* (Madelyn Burley-Allen, John Wiley & Sons, 1995), a guide for those wanting to improve their listening skills. Let's take it as a group and compare our results. For each question, circle the number in the column reflecting your answer.

|                                |  | USUALLY | FREQUENTLY | SOMETIMES | RARELY |
|--------------------------------|--|---------|------------|-----------|--------|
| 1                              | Tune out people who say something you don't agree with or don't want to hear?  | 1       | 2          | 3         | 4      |
| 2                              | Concentrate on what's being said even if you're not really interested?         | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 3                              | Assume you know what the speaker is going to say and stop listening?           | 1       | 2          | 3         | 4      |
| 4                              | Repeat in your own words what the talker has said?                             | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 5                              | Listen to the other person's viewpoint even if it differs from yours?          | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 6                              | Learn something from each person you meet, even if ever so slight?             | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 7                              | Find out what words mean when they're not familiar.                            | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 8                              | Form a rebuttal in your head while the speaker is talking?                     | 1       | 2          | 3         | 4      |
| 9                              | Give the appearance of listening when you aren't?                              | 1       | 2          | 3         | 4      |
| 10                             | Daydream while the speaker is speaking?  | 1       | 2          | 3         | 4      |
| 11                             | Listen to the whole message the speaker is sharing (verbally and nonverbally)? | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 12                             | Recognize that words don't mean exactly the same thing to different people?    | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| <b>SUBTOTAL FROM THIS PAGE</b> |  |         |            |           |        |

|                                 |   | USUALLY | FREQUENTLY | SOMETIMES | RARELY |
|---------------------------------|---|---------|------------|-----------|--------|
| 13                              | Listen to only what you want to hear, blotting out the speaker's whole message?   | 1       | 2          | 3         | 4      |
| 14                              | Look at the person who is talking?  | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 15                              | Concentrate on the speaker's meaning rather than their looks?                     | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 16                              | Know which words and phrases you respond to emotionally?                          | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 17                              | Think about what you want to accomplish with your communication?                  | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 18                              | Plan the best time to say what you want to say?                                   | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 19                              | Think about how the other person might react to what you say?                     | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 20                              | Consider the best way to conduct your communication (memo, phone, email, verbal,  | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 21                              | Think about what kind of person you're talking to (hostile, friendly, shy, etc.)? | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 22                              | Seldom interrupt the other talker?  | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 23                              | Think, "I assumed he/she would know that?"  | 1       | 2          | 3         | 4      |
| 24                              | Allow others to vent negative feelings toward you without being defensive?        | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 25                              | Practice regularly to increase your listening efficiency?                         | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 26                              | Take notes when necessary to help you to remember?                                | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 27                              | Hear noises without being distracted by them?                                     | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 28                              | Listen to the talker without judging or criticizing?                              | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 29                              | Restate instructions and messages to be sure you understand correctly?            | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
| 30                              | Paraphrase what you believe the talker is feeling?                                | 4       | 3          | 2         | 1      |
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|                                 |   | +       | +          | +         | +      |
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|                                 |   |         | +          | +         | +      |

- 110-120 = *Super*
- 99-109 = *Above average*
- 89-98 = *Average*
- 77- 87 = *Fair*
- <77 = *Hearing test!*

**FINAL GRAND TOTAL =**

### EXERCISE TWO: *The Pay-Off is in Application*

Having the necessary skill and tools to listen well is, of course, just the first part of a three-part equation. The second part is actually being intentional about changing the communications 'mix' to more heavily leverage your listening opportunities – both interpersonally and organizationally – followed by actually taking action based on what we hear. Even though we always operate before our eternal "audience of one," many of us tend to behave differently depending on the setting.

With this in mind, take a moment to honestly evaluate your current level of intentional listening and follow-through as you interact with (and serve) key stakeholders in your life and business. Simply check the appropriate box (boxes are at progressive levels from 1 to 5) for each stakeholder group below. Carefully consider the sixth column in relation to how you "listen" to God in seeking His will before taking action.

|   |   | SPOUSE AND CHILDREN | COMPANY STAFF | TARGET CLIENTS | KEY SUPPLIERS AND VENDORS | C12 PEERS | GOD |
|---|---|---------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------------|-----------|-----|
| 1 | I download information and decisions on an "as needed" basis.       | ✓                   | ✓             | ✓              | ✓                         | ✓         | ✓   |
| 2 | I desire input, but I'm too busy just getting things done.          | ✓                   | ✓             | ✓              | ✓                         | ✓         | ✓   |
| 3 | I hear them out before before doing what I already know to be best. | ✓                   | ✓             | ✓              | ✓                         | ✓         | ✓   |
| 4 | I listen and learn from them before making my own decision.         | ✓                   | ✓             | ✓              | ✓                         | ✓         | ✓   |
| 5 | We make win/win decisions that we all "own".                        | ✓                   | ✓             | ✓              | ✓                         | ✓         | ✓   |

As leaders, we're motivated to quickly fix things, so we might "listen" to what people say but less often hear what's truly on their minds and *rarely* take the time to listen to their hearts. Let's wrap-up by discussing where we need to retool our communications habits by becoming better listeners. ***Are you listening?***

***As a result of this self-assessment exercise, the material that we read and our discussions today, what "To Do's" am I fully committed to complete?***