



The Consulting Team

FACILITATING POSITIVE CHANGE

Facilitating positive change by increasing the effectiveness of leaders, teams, and organizations through facilitation, coaching, conflict mediation, and training.

Listening Tips for Meetings, August 2013

A Note from Marilyn —

Over the years, The Consulting Team has received many positive comments about our newsletter, Leadership Tips. We have 4,000 subscribers who continue to find our information helpful and easy to apply.

Our last issue of Leadership Tips focused on listening skills, an important, though sometimes neglected, communications' component. The article in July's newsletter, "*Listening: The Secret to Better Relationships*," presented many tips to improve personal listening skills. They are applicable in most situations.

This month our tips apply to a specific, yet common, work situation: meetings. It is difficult enough to listen one-on-one. It can be even more challenging when several people speak on an agenda item, especially one with high stakes. Everyone wants to have their opinion heard, and they don't always want to hear the opinions of others. Use The Consulting Team's time-tested skill-building practices to help you address these questions:

How can I set up meetings to promote better listening?

What can I do to become a better listener in meetings?

To review July's Leadership Tips, *Listening: The Secret to Better Relationships*, [click here](#).

Warm regards,

Marilyn and the Team

(650) 965-3663

Share



Listening Tips for Meetings

Listening is a skill that can be improved with attention and practice. Practice is defined as "repeated performance or systematic exercise for the purpose of acquiring skill or proficiency, i.e., 'Practice makes perfect.'" (dictionary.com). Below are tips that can improve meeting effectiveness and teamwork.

Use this CHECKLIST to prepare meetings for effective listening:

Create a clear agenda that states:

- Purpose
- Outcomes
- imed agenda items

- A clear agenda helps to guide discussion and supports the leader's and facilitator's roles.
- For meetings with complicated or contentious issues, assign:
 - A neutral facilitator
 - The facilitator's role is to remain neutral on the issues discussed and ensure that all parties have been heard. He or she also monitors discussion content to mitigate remarks that may trigger emotional reactions that block listening.
 - A timekeeper
 - The timekeeper's role is to ensure agenda item discussions meet the assigned time or are extended by agreement.
 - A recorder
 - The recorder's role is to capture the main points and document decisions and actions.
- Set ground rules that support listening.
- Examples: No side-talk. Focus your remarks to allow time for questions. Only one person speaks at a time.
- Use easel sheets to record key points.
- Post sheets for all to see what has been recorded.
- Use one easel sheet for a "parking lot."
- The parking lot captures good ideas, which are off the agenda, for later discussion.
- Consider "round table" discussions when everybody needs to provide input.
- Allow each person to speak about the agenda's subject uninterrupted. Consider allotting a specific time limit for each participant, depending on time constraints and subject importance.
- Allow time for a meeting evaluation.
- Ask: Did you feel heard when you spoke? What could improve our listening to each other? Did we accomplish what we set out to do?

Use this CHECKLIST for participants:

- Bring paper and pen to jot down thoughts.
- Sometimes people interrupt so they don't forget an important point they thought of during the discussion. If they jot down notes, they can share their thoughts from their notes after the speaker finishes and it is their turn to speak.
- Show up and be present through the entire agenda.
- Listening improves when all focus on the meeting. Avoid the temptation to text, check emails, etc. by turning off your cell phone. Leave other projects you are working on at your desk.
- Ask questions to clarify ambiguities and ensure you understand other's ideas and opinions.
- Be open to outcome, not attached to outcome.
- Attachment closes down listening needed for innovation, compromise, and consensus.
- Practice the personal listening tip from the last
- Leadership Tips issue of counting two seconds between when the speaker stops talking and you begin.

October Leadership Tips:

In our next Leadership Tips issue, we will offer further methods and strategies to make meetings that crowd a busy business schedule more productive, efficient, and team-enhancing.

For over 20 years the consultants of The Consulting Team have helped their clients solve difficult organizational and people problems. The Consulting Team, LLC, founded by international author, speaker, and certified management consultant Marilyn Manning, PhD, is a recognized expert in communication, training, facilitation, coaching, leadership development, change, conflict mediation, strategic planning, and team building. 94% of our work is repeat business.

Contact Us	Free monthly leadership tips	Our Mission
<p>The Consulting Team, LLC 945 Mountain View Avenue Mountain View, CA 94040 Phone: 650-965-3663 Fax: 650-965-3668</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sign Up Now</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>For Email Privacy you can trust.</small></p>	<p>Facilitating positive change by increasing the effectiveness of leaders, teams, and organizations through facilitation, coaching, conflict mediation, and training.</p>