



Leadership Tips

September

2018:

How to Listen Mindfully

Contact:
The Consulting Team
650-965-3663
Marilyn@TheConsultingTeam.com



How to Listen Mindfully



It's been said that *wherever you go, there you are*. Yet how present are you at any given time and place you find yourself? Many professionals sometimes appear in body but little else. Whether with co-workers or customers: don't get marked as missing in action.

Recently I encountered the four different professionals who were missing in action.

Out of Tune

My local mail carrier arrived each day, listening to her iPhone and delivering my neighbors' business mail to my mailbox. She's in her own world. She dumps the mail in a pile each day. In addition to my mail I consistently receive mail from businesses up and down my street, as well as mail of businesses two streets over at the same street number. So much for accuracy.

Disconnect

An airport shuttle driver greeted my colleagues and me at our hotel and attempted to drive the entire route to the airport while engaged in a phone conversation he was in when he picked us up. True, the driver used an ear-piece so we only had to hear his side of the conversation. Yet whether on surface streets or the freeway his focus was the phone call, not our safety.

Sickening Service

I next showed up for a doctor's appointment and was greeted by...a lack of greeting. The receptionist was on the phone, and without making eye contact, stuck out her hand for my medical ID card, processed it, took my payment and returned my card, without saying a single word to me. Her attention was reserved for her call. The call proceeded long after I paid and sat down to wait for my physician. No greeting, smile, acknowledgment of me as a valued patient, or even as a person. Hers was an extended *personal* call. (How do I know? I was forced to listen in the waiting room for the next 10 minutes.)

Losing Face

Later that day I arrived for a scheduled face-to-face meeting and the person hosting the meeting took what seemed like multiple non-urgent calls. He showed by his actions that the calls were more important than I was.

Is it too much to ask that people be present when we interact with them? You say you're multi-tasking, but I say you could be acting anti-socially and also giving poor customer service.

You say you can do two things at once. I say it's disrespectful and often rude to divide attention from a customer or client who has called or is face-to-face. Errors, omissions, sloppy products and services can occur as well as missed opportunities to strengthen customer loyalty and allegiance.

Are you Present and Accounted For?

Audit your own interactions with co-workers and customers. Ask yourself the following:

- Do you greet them with genuine interest and full attention?
- Do you know and use their name? (Are you pronouncing their name correctly? Not sure? Just ask.)
- Are you giving them your undivided attention?
- Are you giving good and consistent eye contact?
- If the phone rings while you're in conversation, do you let it ring through?
- Are you preoccupied with a previous client, customer or call?
- Are you easily distracted by your surroundings?
- Do you listen actively and intently or are you "faking" and reading emails at the same time?
- When you lose focus, do you promptly re-engage with your conversational party and re-establish your connection with them?

Introducing Mindful Listening

The best way to be fully present is to practice **mindful listening** - listening with one's full attention. When you are fully present and commit your ears, eyes, mind and heart to the conversation, you are now listening at a deeper level. You are gleaning not just facts and figures, but emotions, fears, aspirations and possibilities.

When you engage in mindful listening you are also increasing your ability to empathize with your

conversational partner. It deepens your relationship, strengthens trust and generates good will.

Tips For Mindful Listening

The next time you engage in a professional conversation with someone, concentrate on:

- Giving great eye contact
- Showing understanding, empathy, appreciation
- Recognizing your ability to process ideas faster than the speaker can express them and avoid tuning out while they're finishing their thoughts
- Avoiding interrupting
- Not planning what you will say when they're done
- Re-focusing and re-engaging if your mind wanders
- Pausing after the other person finishes and reflecting, before *then* responding
- Thanking them for their input

Whether you are a long-time manager, a new supervisor or a professional dedicated to adding to your skill set, realize that listening mindfully is a powerful gift to others and to yourself. And being more present is, in itself, a gift worth giving.



Related courses of The Consulting Team to help you improve your listening skills:

[Ask, Listen and Influence: Develop Skills of Inquiry and Listening](#)

[Exceptional Customer Service: Putting People First in the Public Sector](#)

[Emotional Intelligence: What it is and how to increase yours](#)

Managing Conflict with Customers and Co-Workers

Do you have a leader or employee in need **coaching** to improve their leadership, communication skills (including listening skills), customer service, or emotional intelligence? **Let us help.**



Contact The Consulting Team to learn more about training, coaching, consulting assistance and also one-to-one training for leaders and employees.

Call us at 650-965-3663
or email us at
M@TheConsultingTeam.com
for more information.
www.TheConsultingTeam.com

The Consulting Team
— FACILITATING POSITIVE CHANGE —