

Listen, Listen, Listen

I had the pleasure of visiting a friend in Oley, Pa. It's a very rural area near Reading, much different than my suburban home. On Sunday morning I was the first to awaken. I decided to go for a walk. It was incredibly peaceful and quiet. All I heard were birds chirping, roosters crowing and the trickling waterfalls from the creeks along the road. I laughed as the roosters crowded louder and louder. It's something I've rarely heard in my lifetime. I was so aware of every sound because of the quietness of the area.

As I walked and enjoyed the peacefulness I thought about how rarely people really listen. To truly listen and to be totally present is not something that happens by chance. People rarely listen.

One of the courses I took during my coach's training was called Listening. It was twice as long as the average course. It is the foundation of coaching. People hire coaches to listen. We so often are busy thinking about our comments, opinions and response that we don't listen to what the other person has to say. In addition to thinking about what we want to say we often have a slight buzz in the back of our

minds with thoughts of all we have to do. Our minds wander and we are not present.

If you are having a conversation with someone and you find yourself only partially hearing them, get back into the present and tell them. Instead of pretending you were following the conversation or responding to what you think you heard, the best thing to do is to tell the truth. Tell them you were drifting and ask them to repeat their statement. It takes practice to really hear someone. Being aware of your current listening skills is the first step to improving them. And once you begin to really listen to the words people are saying, you will find you can hear what their words aren't saying as well.

Business people making presentations also often don't listen well. They are so busy telling their prospects about how great their product or service is that they don't listen. Asking questions is the best method to sales success. Ask questions and then make sure you listen to the answer. Don't start thinking about the next question to ask. Don't start thinking about your response while they're talking. Just listen. The customer will tell you

what you need to know to sell them if you just listen.

Not only don't we listen to others, but we also don't listen to ourselves. Clients often ask me to help them make a decision about a goal they have set. I usually ask them what they think and they come up with the right answer. We usually have the best answers within ourselves, but rarely listen. I have a poster in my office that reads:

"Listening to your heart, finding out who you are, is not simple. It takes time for the chatter to quiet down. In the silence of "not doing" we begin to know what we feel. If we listen and hear what is being offered, then anything in life can be our guide. Listen."

Let's take some time to listen to our body. It usually has the answer.

Let's also make an effort to really listen to our coworkers, spouses, children and colleagues. It's the biggest gift we can give to someone. I know that I process my thoughts by speaking and so many others do too. If you are having difficulty hearing your own thoughts you might want to consider writing in a journal. As Julie Cameron, author of *The Artists Way*, suggests, write a few

pages every morning. It's called a "brain dump". Get your head clear and you can really hear your thoughts. Your creativity will be accessed by clearing your head.

The next time you go for a walk leave the Walkman and cell phone home and just listen to the sounds of nature. Also, listen to your own thoughts. When I walk or ride my bike my creative thoughts come alive and I listen to my own wisdom. We often do have the answers if we just listen.

Phyllis Sisenwine,
Master Certified Coach
Email her at:

Phyllis@PowerfulCoaching.com

Or via the Web at
www.powerfulcoaching.com



Published in
Smart Business Now Magazine