



NewThinking About ... LISTENING - DID YOU HEAR WHAT I MEANT OR DID I MEAN WHAT YOU HEARD?

Some basic ideas:

-  Communication has two components: **“conveying”** and **“receiving.”**
-  Communication is not complete unless what has been “conveyed” is actually “received.”
-  We give each other signals, sometimes consciously, and sometimes not – about what we **mean** as opposed to what we **say**.
-  It is very difficult to receive what is actually conveyed because we are usually primed to receive what **believe** is being conveyed – regardless of what is actually conveyed (we **receive** what we **believe**). is sometimes referred to by organizational consultants as “already listening.” **But it’s actually NRLA (Not Really Listening At All).**
-  We need to develop practices that allow us to check with interlocutors to find out whether or not what we think we’ve conveyed has, indeed, been received. We might think of this as **“actually listening.”**
-  Develop some polite methods of signaling your interlocutor if prior experience suggests that he/she has acquired patterns that block effective communication, AND, provide some access point for an interlocutor to signal you that he/she perceives a block in the **“complete communication flow.”**

In order to listen well:

-  stop talking
-  be genuinely interested
-  stop talking
-  observe nonverbal behavior
-  stop talking
-  ask questions for clarity to test whether or not you’re hearing what is actually being conveyed
-  stop talking
-  wait until the whole message has been delivered before responding
-  stop talking
-  resist the temptation to interrupt – no matter how intense that temptation becomes
-  stop talking

In order to convey your message effectively:

-  ask for attention if it isn’t obviously being given (another technique involves simply stopping talking until you have your interlocutor’s attention)
-  indicate that it will take a few or several sentences/minutes to convey the whole message and give clues that communicate your willingness to receive feedback when you’ve finished
-  know what you want to say before you start talking
-  invite your interlocutor to paraphrase back to you what he/she heard
-  offer to clarify or to answer questions
-  ask your interlocutor – politely – not to interrupt if he/she is having a hard time paying attention

Sources:

Yankelovich, *The Magic of Dialogue*

Bohm, *Dialogue*

Isaacs, *Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together*

Senge, *The Fifth Discipline Field book*