

Deal World Rule #10 - Listen Until You Feel It

Good negotiators know how to ask the right questions. But great negotiators have a far more powerful weapon in their arsenal – they know how to listen, truly



listen, to the answers. Mental understanding is not enough. You must listen till you can *feel* the story that the other person is experiencing. What they say and how they say it opens up a window into their world – skilled listening allows you to look inside that window. What's the point in planting the right question if you don't reap the resultant fruit?

Listening effectively is one of the golden tools of differentiation. Most people think they have this tool. But few do. If you listen effectively, your deals will prosper. Here are some quick tips to becoming a true listener:

1. **Do not begin with the end in mind.** When listening, temporarily open your mind. Start with a blank canvas. Don't assume anything. Ask and let the others paint the picture. Take in the picture without pre-conceived notions.
2. **Understand the context.** Figure out the other person's situation and analyze the surrounding circumstances. Understand how this individual sees the issue, what he or she is trying to communicate and why.
3. **Be focused and let them finish.** Attention is the one of the scarcest resources on the planet. It can be excruciating to allow the person to finish without interrupting. Let them finish. Do not multi-task while listening! You sacrifice focus if you multi-task. You cannot simultaneously e-mail and listen. It is a big illusion that you can divide your attention. Slow down and totally focus on the questions and on the answers.

4. **Get to the end of the thread.** People often answer questions inadequately (or answer a different question than the one asked). Others usually accept the incomplete answer and move on. But you shouldn't. Ask "why" until you get to the real answer. Generally the real answer is usually 3-6 "whys?" deep.

5. **Ask questions like Colombo.** Colombo (an awesome listener) was always working to get simple questions answered that told a story. Prepare like a good detective and ask questions aimed at eliciting answers capable of forming a clear picture of the entire story.

6. **Affirm and Confirm your understanding** . After you've listened, affirm and confirm your understanding -- ask the person: "So what I heard you say is ..."

*Some of these ideas are discussed on a cool web site: [Communication Nation – How To Listen](#).

If you really start to listen you will really start to learn. People who learn more develop more expertise and do a better job. Listening creates alignment with others and fosters effective results. Do you truly listen? If so, congratulations. If not, start today.

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