

Active Listening Feedback

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Wednesday, 13 April 2016 17:57

Active listening is a critical skill for any person in business. As a business leader, you need to master this skill if you are going to effectively understand your clients' needs. However, active listening is not enough. You need to be certain that you've heard your client correctly and understand their feedback. A crucial technique in implementing active listening is the strategy of paraphrasing what you've been told and repeating it back to the customer.

When I work with clients I take notes. I endeavor to write down exactly what they told me. If I'm able to write down the exact wording, I use quotation marks in my notes. However, when I repeat this to my prospect or client; I rephrase what they told me using my own words. This is the critical difference. Rather than simply repeating what they told me, I reword it to demonstrate my understanding.

When I'm able to use my own words, this validates that I've heard and understood what my client has said. If I only repeat my client's words, they might assume we both understand the same thing. However, by using my own words I'm able to verify for myself that I've truly listened and understood my client's meaning. Only then can I act on my client's words effectively.

Luke related, "The crowd was listening to everything Jesus said." Luke 19:11a, NLT) The key in this passage is how the crowd was listening to everything Jesus said. We need to use this as a model when we listen to others. When someone tells us significant information, we need to go into active listening and think about the question that we want to ask. A witty comeback or talking over the prospect because we have something that is "more important" to communicate blocks our listening; it does not enhance it.

In your communication with customers, prospects, and work colleagues; employ this tactic consistently. You will find that your communication will be more effective and you will build better trust in your relationships with others. Repeating what someone else says in your own words does not necessarily endorse what the other person is saying. It simply allows you to use your understanding of what they told you to move the conversation to a different place. Until you've established exactly what was said and verified that you've understood correctly, you're not in a position to move the forward.

Active listeners are more successful in business than those who fail to listen well. Prove this principle true in your business by practicing active listening.

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