

LISTENING

The missing link in communication

Participant's Manual



PREFACE

The ability to effectively communicate is probably the most sought-after skill in the business world and is one of the most valued tools in our personal lives. While effective listening is an integral part of two-way communication, it is rather surprising to observe that the amount of effort to develop our listening ability has been long superseded by our constant attempts to improve our verbal communication. No doubt, our oral communication skill is every bit as important, but it is of little or no value, if not accompanied by an equally strong ability to listen effectively.


The *Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary* defines the term 'listening' as "*making conscious use of the sense of hearing; being attentive in order to hear*". While attentiveness is indeed a critical pre-requisite to effective listening, it alone is not enough. In fact, effective listening requires a true understanding of what the other person is driving at – not simply what he or she is saying, but what he or she means – this is the real essence of effective listening. In other words, listening on an 'understanding level' serves as the most important precursor for effective verbal communication to take place. Simply put, a good communicator has to be a good listener. Failure to listen with understanding remains a fundamental and the single most crucial reason why a breakdown in communication becomes a commonplace in all walks of life.

This interactive digital learning program, **Listening - The Missing Link in Communication** explores the issue of listening, on the understanding level. Among the several interesting and useful sources, the work of the late Jud Morris on this topic has been a cornerstone in my effort to develop the framework and content of this program. This program captures some of the well established, yet seldom consciously realized possible reasons why most of us fail to listen with appropriate understanding at all times. These reasons are referred to in this program as "*stumbling blocks*" or simply put, our bad listening habits that hinder us to effectively listen with understanding. As you listen and work through the interesting and entertaining skits, quizzes, conundrums, and exercises during this program, you will discover your own level of effective listening and become cognizant of the various pitfalls that you need to avoid. This program also offers a self-improvement action plan, which, if undertaken with diligence, can substantially improve your ability to listen with understanding, and as a result, can help you become an effective communicator.

There is no denying that the need to improve our listening ability is timeless – it is as essential now, as it has been for the decades past and will remain so in the future.

So, relax, open your mind, and get ready for your enjoyable journey towards personal excellence!

Jal Dastur, Program Author

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**Most of us do not know the limits of our comprehension.
We have never tried our powers to the fullest.**



We must listen, UNDERSTAND, and then, judge!

SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE #2

Answer the following questions by choosing the most appropriate choice or filling in the blank. Upon completion of this exercise, verify your responses by referring to the answer sheet following this page.

1. We all have a tendency to prematurely judge before we really understand. When someone makes a remark which just happens to sum up our ideas, we:

- a) think the world of them.
- b) do not formulate any thoughts.
- c) normally underestimate their intelligence.

2. When someone makes a remark, which runs contrary to our ideas, we:

- a) think the world of them.
- b) do not formulate any thoughts.
- c) normally underestimate their intelligence.

3. Benjamin Franklin, in his autobiography, wrote *"I dropped my abrupt contradiction and positive argumentation, and put on the humble inquirer and doubter."* The key to putting **Stumbling Block #1** in its proper place is to make sure that we have understood what the other person has said. We need to refrain from agreement or disagreement, until we really know what the speaker's views are. We can do this by using the *"Thought-Provoking"* technique.

True

False

4. The *"Thought Provoking"* Technique:

a) Step #1:

b) Step #2:

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STUMBLING BLOCK #5: Closed Disposition

CASE STUDY SCRIPT – TOM AND CATHY

Conversation #1

Tom: "Boy! They sure don't build houses like they used to!"

Cathy: "Yeah but look at what you get in a house these days."

Tom: "What I mean is, in the old days, a real craftsman would spend months and months..."

Cathy: "Yeah, did they have sliding doors on the closets? Did they have two bathrooms in every house? Did they have built-in stoves, refrigerators, and dishwashers?"

Tom: "That's not what I mean. I mean that the actual construction was done by one or two..."

Cathy: "Everybody is always beefing about the way they build houses these days. I say it's just a bunch of sour grapes. The average house today makes those old-time monsters look like medieval dwellings. Give me the present-day home any time."

Tom: "Hmmm..."

Conversation #2

Tom: "Boy! They sure don't build houses like they used to!"

Cathy: "Oh? Don't they?"

Tom: "Nah! 50 years ago, a guy spent half his life learning how to build a house and the other half building it."

Cathy: "And?"

Tom: "By the time he got it built, he was stuck with it for the rest of his life, like it or not."

Cathy: "You mean the modern way is better?"

Tom: "You bet it is. These days, I can have exactly what I want – sliding closet doors, built-in appliances, stall showers, the whole works. And I can have it in six months and completely rebuild it in the next six months if I want. Give me the modern method every time."

Cathy: "Then as I understand it, you like the way we build houses these days and you're glad they don't build them like they used to. Is that correct?"

Tom: "You better believe it!"

COMPREHENSION TEST #2

Howard Thomas, a consultant in land development, was retained by the Western Development Corporation, to investigate the feasibility of a new method of sub-division. He assigned two of his senior associates to the project and gave each of them an unlimited expense account. He then dispatched his best associate, John Thomas, to New York to perform an “on-the-site” analysis of the situation. Within one month, John Thomas had completely revised the corporation’s outdated approach to the project.

True False

1. Howard Thomas sent one of his best men to the East Coast to perform an “on-the-site” analysis of the situation.
2. Howard Thomas was retained by the Western Development Corporation, to investigate a better method of sub-division.
3. The two associates who were assigned to the project were each given unlimited expense accounts.
4. Within one month, John Thomas had developed a more efficient approach.
5. While in New York, John Thomas was given an unlimited expense account.
6. Howard Thomas’ senior associate, John Thomas, was sent to New York to investigate the corporation’s outdated approach to the project.
7. Only two associates in the Thomas organization were given unlimited expense accounts.
8. John Thomas was a senior associate of Howard Thomas, who was retained by the Western Development Corporation.
9. Two men who were assigned to the project were given unlimited expense accounts.
10. John Thomas was related to Howard Thomas.

IMAGERY EXERCISE



**In our attempt to get a look at the squirrel,
did we or did we not circle the squirrel?**

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STUMBLING BLOCK #3: Biased Inference



We encounter people daily whose minds are closed to any ideas but their own.

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PLAN OF ACTION