

Basic Leadership Qualities

Effective Listening

James 1:19, 20: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

To be an effective leader you must be an effective listener. A few simple rules and CONSIDERABLE practice can help **you become an effective listener.** Effective listening will improve your ability to communicate and it will improve your leadership skills.

The leader who learns to listen will project an image of interest to team members that will in turn motivate those team members to become more productive. Everyone is hungry to share their ideas if they feel their ideas will be heard and considered. Following these principles will improve your effectiveness as a leader. **An effective listener must also be able to demonstrate that he or she is listening by responding to the communication being transmitted.**

Proverbs 18:13 says, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

Listening Principles

- Listening is an active process which demands constant concentration. You cannot be a lazy or part-time listener and hope to be an effective listener.
- Do not make prior judgments as to the importance of the message being transmitted. If you fail to recognize the importance of the message, you may have the tendency to disregard the content.
- If you cannot hear the speaker clearly, correct the situation or else the time will be wasted for all concerned.

- You need to listen to the complete message and determine the meaning rather than making a snap judgment before the message is completed.
- Don't formulate a response until the message is transmitted in its entirety. The ineffective listener will formulate his or her response before the speaker finishes, often interrupting the speaker.
- Clarify the message with the sender to assure that the message is understood.
- Listen not only to the words being transmitted but the essence of the message being communicated. Listen intently to the feelings expressed by the speaker.
- Be aware of non-verbal cues. Remember that how a person is acting/behaving is just as important as what they are saying.

Updated and Expanded for 2018: **PUT DOWN YOUR PHONE!!** You can't listen effectively while looking at your phone or computer screen. It does not matter how good at this you think you are, you really aren't.

These two simple tools will further improve your ability to communicate and demonstrate that you are listening.

Two tools to help improve your listening:

1. Confirmation
2. Clarification

It is important that you understand what has been expressed. You may have been listening but may not have understood the message. You were actually paying attention but you want to confirm that what you understood is what the speaker was meaning to say.

Confirmation

Confirmation should be used when you feel you understand exactly what was said and why the message was transmitted.

You believe you understand what was said and why.

Confirmation is **especially important if you disagree with the message** or if you are being called upon to commit yourself to a particular course of action.

For example, you are a committee chairperson responsible for planning the Health Care Community banquet at your school, and you are talking to Mary, an active committee member.....

Mary - "It's not that I don't want to go to the banquet, I just don't have the money. I've had some money problems recently so I can't afford to go."

You - "Let me see if I understand correctly. You want to attend the banquet, but due to money problems, you don't feel you can. Is that correct?"

You feel you understand what Mary said and why. You feel that Mary has money problems, but you want to be sure you understand correctly.

Note that all you have done is attempt to confirm what Mary has said. Mary now has the opportunity to agree or disagree with what you've said. She also can see that you are trying to understand her and her concerns.

Remember: **Don't assume you understand. Confirm the message.**

Clarification

Clarification is used when you don't understand what is being transmitted **or you are not certain of the speaker's motives.** For example, if you are sitting at a meeting and:

Bob - "Believe me, I don't want to get out of being on our Parliamentary Procedure team, but it'll be the best for everyone if I do."

To use **clarification**, you might respond by saying:

You - "Bob, I don't think I understand what you mean. Please explain it to me."

Note that as the listener, you are **making no judgments or assumptions.** You want to **understand** what Bob is saying before responding – and **that is effective listening.**

- **To answer prior to understanding does not demonstrate good leadership skills.**

Being an effective listener requires practice. Leadership allows you the opportunity to practice your listening skills. When people feel that you are interested in their ideas and will consider those ideas, they will respond positively to you.

One major obstacle to being a good listener is assuming we know what the speaker means by what he is saying. We then assign our own interpretation to the words we hear,

thinking (or acting as if) we understand what is truly being said. This manner of “listening” will lead to trouble. Sometimes our assumptions are accurate, but more often they are not. Clarification will help you know what is actually true about the message.

It is important **not to be argumentative or challenging when asking for clarification.** Your concern must be genuine. Humility is key. Listen to what Paul says in Philippians 2:3-4:

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

You may still disagree with what the other person has said, but with confirmation and clarification you will have demonstrated that you are really interested in understanding.

Basic Leadership Qualities

Effective Listening

Listening Principles

- Listening is an active process. You cannot be a lazy listener and hope to be an effective listener.
- Do not make prior judgments as to the importance of the message.
- Make sure you can hear the speaker.
- Listen to the whole message and don't make snap judgments.
- Don't formulate a response until you hear the whole message.
- Clarify the message with the speaker.
- Listen to the meaning, not just the words.
- Look for non-verbal cues.

Two tools:

1. Confirmation

2. Clarification