

Communication Lessons From A Sales Trainer: Stop Talking And Start Listening

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How do I improve my communication skills? As a therapist, I get asked that question regularly. And the answer isn't usually about learning to be more assertive or learning how to explain things more clearly. Instead, the secret to better communication is all about improved listening skills.

Improved communication skills could go a long way in the business world as well. How many times have you been cut off by a salesperson who insists on telling you what you need, rather than asking what you're looking for? Or how often has your time been wasted by an associate who insists on explaining something that you already know?

I recently had an opportunity to speak with Dave Warawa, a leading Sales Trainer and Business Consultant in Western Canada. He's a firm believer that listening is the most powerful form of influence and he's even written a book about it, called *Shut Up! Stop Talking and Start Making Money*.

Although his book is geared toward salespeople, many of the skills and tips he offers are applicable to improving communication skills in other areas as well. Warawa makes it clear that many communication mistakes in the sales industry stem from trying to make others understand us, rather than trying to understand them (something that is often a problem in couples therapy as well).

Warawa offers simple, but powerful strategies for improved listening skills. He's clear, that effective listening isn't simply about remaining quiet, it's about working to gain a deeper understanding of what other people are communicating. Here are his five success principles that can improve your listening skills today:

1. Ask Great Questions - The person who asks great questions, learns a great deal from the customer. People buy based on their feelings. They justify based on fact. Keep these two formulas in mind:

100% of all talking = 75% from the client + 25% the salesperson

100% of all Listening = 75% the salesperson + 25% the client

The salesperson's talking should incorporate great questions and paraphrasing.

2. Actively Listen - Don't just listen to your client – hear them! Too many salespeople listen for a break in the conversation to make their point. Don't interrupt. Gain understanding of the person's feelings by considering this equation:

Feelings = Words Used + Emotions Expressed

3. Paraphrase - Repeat back to the client what you hear him say in your words, not his. Start your paraphrase with, "So if I understand you correctly..." or "Let's see if I'm on the right track..." Successful paraphrasing requires you to actively listen to the answers to the great questions you asked.

Successful paraphrasing = clarity of understanding

4. Summarize the Customer's Needs - Provide a verbal summary of all of the client's needs in a full statement. When you do so, watch for the smile and nod...you are gaining rapport, respect and trust – the key ingredients in building the strong relationship required to complete a sale.

5. Personality Projection - This is not rocket science nor open heart surgery. We are communicating. Smile, have fun and enjoy the journey to best understanding your client's needs. People like people who like people. Get it? The more people you like, the more people like you.

Full website reference:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/cherylsnappconner/2013/11/18/mentally-strong-people-the-13-things-they-avoid/>