



M-Level Systems: M-Guide

Reach New Levels

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We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak. -Epictetus

Have you ever attended a class on listening skills? If yes, then you are lucky to have had such training and I am guessing you're quite successful if you've kept your skills sharp.

I've never had such a course and had to learn the hard way.

Lessons Learned

* I sat in the hall for two weeks in seventh grade because I did not listen when our Principal Sister Mary Martina reviewed the school conduct rules at the beginning of term. Even though I was new in school, everyone learned who I was very quickly. Believe me, Hallway Girl is a pet name you do not want.

* In tenth grade, I was permanently removed from my typing class, because I did not listen when the instructor mentioned there were to be no beverages near the equipment. Naturally, my typewriter was floating in Coca-cola while everyone else was learning 50 WPM. Alas, I still type with two fingers today.

* At 21, my sale's staff rallied together and complained to my superiors about my steamrolling, one-sided leadership approach. Ouch...

Truth be told, I probably still didn't get it until I became part of a learning organization and was lucky enough to find a great mentor who had learned how to develop amazing listening skills.

What's a learning organization?

Learning organizations create a high performance work culture with their people. They invest in their people in order to create extraordinary results through their people. It's pretty simple; people thrive and perform at a very high level when engaged to this end. A high performance culture systematically sets the stage for productive communication, innovative solutions, great performance, and many other very valuable business results.

OPW

Poor listening skills can cause leaders and their people all kinds of unnecessary pain in the way of poor communication. Consider the message being sent by interrupting or talking over someone. Second guessing or cutting people off sours motivation, and can take a business straight to the fast track of low morale, missed opportunities, or even the turnover of talented people.

Those who do not use strategic listening miss out on the many benefits that come along with this very valuable skill. The benefits of Other People's Wisdom (OPW) can go far beyond anything you may accomplish on your own.

Great listening skills can be used as a powerful business tool to strategically gain understanding of your people and customers, build strong relationships, and move forward toward results. You can assess your own skills by asking your people or peers. When is the last time you heard someone at your organization say, "Hey Marty, how are my listening skills?" You may be surprised at how they respond.

I started thinking about the best listener I know. In my experience, I'd say that some of the best listeners have to be hair stylists. My stylist, Ray, works in Ft Lauderdale. Let's take a look at his technique.

Tip Alert

Use these nine strategic listening techniques... Learn to benefit from OPW

1. Paraphrase and clarify for understanding... Actively listen.
2. Be open and provide your full attention.
3. Do not assume.
4. Consider other's points of view.
5. Don't judge.
6. Don't interrupt.
7. Maintain consistent eye contact and positive body language.
8. Don't plan your thoughts while others are speaking... Listen instead of waiting to talk.
9. Consider whether someone is looking for a solution or just needs empathy and understanding, then respond accordingly.

Play The Ray Game:

Give your self one point for every listening technique that you and your people consistently use:

Perfect Score:

If you scored a nine, you are an expert listener and I challenge you to ensure those within your organization get to the same skill level.

Six or Better:

Over a six, BRAVO, you're on your way!

Under Two:

Those below two need to put these listening techniques in place ASAP to start reaping the benefits of Other People's Wisdom.

How close are your scores to those in your organization?

Your Next Step

Step One:

Find out what the current status is on listening skills in your organization. What's the employee morale like in your business? Are your people motivated? How can you build a culture that includes strategic listening?

Step Two:

Introduce the idea of a high performance culture to your people or superiors. Get their feedback and ideas on how you can get started!

Step Three:

Once you have assessed the situation, put a plan of action in place to get your team to the next level.

Is Your Team or Company Performing at The Level You Want?

Go to www.mlevelsystems.com to get our **Free Strategy Guide** on how to "Get started with the changes you want to make."

Cheers!

Diana



Diana Keith, owner of M-Level Systems Consulting, has been helping to create high performance organizations and teams for eighteen years. See her website www.mlevelsystems.com for valuable resources, and programs to get better business results through your people. Get a free copy of her Strategy Guide to create your strategy for success.