

So You Want to be Heard, Huh? Then Shut Up and Listen

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“Why don't they listen to me? Why don't they understand what I'm trying to say? They just don't get it.” Sound familiar? Whether dealing with boards, co-workers, supervisors, spouses (supervisors) or children, the problem always seems to be the same. They just don't get what I'm saying. Did you ever stop and

wonder if perhaps, just maybe, it has to do in part with the way you are presenting the information? It is how we present information, as well as how we receive it, that plays a significant role in whether they “get it” or not.

In our daily lives, we are constantly trying to get a point across to someone, trying to make them understand something. Whether talking to a board or disciplining a child, the information we are trying to present must be received. If we are met with negativity (like that word?) and in turn we become negative ourselves, what does that accomplish? Nada. By recognizing certain character traits, and playing to those traits, we can often diffuse the situation and stand a better chance at getting our point across. Instead of responding to negativity with more negativity (I really like that word), shut up, take a breath, and listen to what is being said. Then respond in a positive, calm and professional manner. No sarcasm, no cheap shots. “I understand your concerns. I don't want to see this get any worse either. Blah, blah, blah”. I know what you are thinking, but it really works for the most part. Trust me. I'm trying it with my teenagers. By acknowledging the source of the negativity, and remaining calm and positive in your responses, you stand a much better chance at reaching the rest of your audience because eventually people will begin to think, “ hey, this guy knows what he's talking about”. They will be more interested in what you have to say. A positive trumps a negative, usually. Let's face it. There are some situations that you just can't win. In those situations, it's also important to know when to fold.

How often have you been talking to someone when you notice that his or her eyes have glazed over? They seem to be looking right through you. They fidget and do things while they are supposed to be listening to you. Frustrating, isn't it? Now put the foot on the other shoe. If someone is trying to tell you something and you don't give him or her your undivided attention, how can you respond appropriately? How do you know the right thing to say? (That's a rhetorical question - no answer required) Eye contact is very important.

Making eye contact reassures the person speaking that you are indeed listening to them. Don't try to finish their sentences. Shut up and listen to what they are saying and then respond. Answer the question that is being asked. Don't beat around the bush and go off on a tangent about things that seem related. Short, sweet and to the point. Just the facts, ma'am. If you don't know, say so. It does no one any good if you give an answer you THINK they want to hear.

Attitude seems to be the word of the times. It's promoted, taught, marketed and, apparently, accepted. Unfortunately, attitude is counter-productive. When attitude is met with attitude, more attitude is created. Learning to listen, remaining positive and diffusing the negativity (haven't used that in a while) will go a long way when you are trying to get your message out. Please try it. It's difficult, I admit. It may not always work. Patience and a....(no, not that one.) How about persistence pays off (yeah, much safer). Shut up and listen. You may be surprised at the results.

SIDE NOTE: In the past several months, I know of at least 4 operators that have accepted job positions outside the industry. HMMMMMM ♠