

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1776 Great Listening Makes a Difference – Part 1

There might not be a more important skill for anyone in the workplace. Everybody needs it, some more so than others. Everybody has it, some have developed it more than others. I'm Jerry Roberts, and today I've got a way for us to improve, coming next on The Extra Point.

If I could offer you a surefire way to lift your career game a notch or two, and it didn't cost you a dime, would you be open to that?

I'm talking to executives, everybody in the supervisory class, team leaders, and everyone on the front lines. Everybody. I've got one skill I know you can improve upon.

Listening. I mean serious listening, not just hearing. Not just looking at someone and sort of catch what they're saying because your mind is half on something else. It is the skill known as *active listening*.

Active listening has long been recognized as a crucial skill for effective leadership, but it's really for each and every one of us.,

Unlike passive listening, which often involves simply waiting for a chance to respond, active listening requires full engagement with the speaker. This means concentrating on their message, genuinely understanding their perspective, responding thoughtfully, and retaining key information.

Despite its significance, many people struggle to implement active listening in their daily interactions.

Studies reveal a startling contrast between self-perception and reality in listening skills. While nearly 96% of individuals believe they are effective listeners, research indicates that people typically retain only about half of what they hear. This discrepancy raises an important question: if active listening is so widely promoted, why is it not more commonly practiced?

One major reason for this gap lies in the

tendency to listen with the intent to reply rather than to fully understand. "Just as soon as he takes a breath, I'm going to jump in and give my brilliant reply."

It's true, many individuals focus on preparing their next response instead of absorbing the speaker's message. This approach undermines effective communication.

What's the big deal with that? You may well miss something the other person says, which is obvious by the nature of your response. This is embarrassing and tells them we didn't listen.

I teach active listening in some of my training courses, and I can't give you all the details in a few minutes. However, I will give three tips that will make you a better listener today.

1. Eliminate all distractions. Whether the other individual is in front of you or on the phone, get rid of whatever might get in the way of you giving your complete attention to them. Don't look at your computer, and move your phone out of site, keeping it in vibration mode.
2. Ask if you can take notes. This is especially important in tough customer service situations.
3. Ask open-ended questions that begin with what, why, and how. These get people to open up and give more details. You can also say, "Tell me more."

There's actually a fourth tip today. This is the one that will help you to avoid jumping in and replying too soon. When it appears that the person has finished giving information, you say, "Would you like to add anything else?"

Maybe they will, maybe they won't, but the key is that you let them get everything out and you heard it all.

When this is done, you can figure out what appropriate action to take.

Tomorrow, there's another side to this that we've never talked about. In fact, you've likely never even heard or thought about what we'll be discussing.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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