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Taking Sales to a Higher Level

12 Questions to Assess Your Listening Skills

ARE YOU AN ACTIVE LISTENER?

Eric lowered his voice to a whisper "What do we say now?"

Tom, Service Manager, with him on this call smiled and said nothing. In the background the radio was playing pop songs. A low murmur of voices wafted in from the cafeteria.

"What shall we talk about?"

"Nothing" said Tom.

"What do you mean, Tom? How can you be so cool? This was a major service failure and the procurement chief behind that big glass door is going to chew us up!"

"I know. After decades of service activity, I can tell you this Eric: **Ears get better results than mouths in these situations**".

"Sales and service is supposed to be about talking and convincing the Customer. So, what happens in difficult sales conversions and closures with challenging Customers?"

"Same rule works everywhere in sales and service. **Listen twice as much as you speak.**"

Do you agree with Tom?

Why listen?

What do you want to achieve with your sales call?

Please the Customer? Make the closure? Seed a relationship for future business?

The easy way to do all of this and more is to listen – raptly and with empathy. Listening with total attention, is the highest compliment you can pay to another person. Surprisingly, this works even if you don't understand the language spoken.

Listening cools rising tempers, smoothens frayed nerves and cements relationships

The best thing is, listening doesn't demand any expertise. Willingness and understanding are all that is required. By way of a bonus, listeners get richer in knowledge as they absorb more than those who dominate conversations. What stops us from listening then?

Obstacles to listening

Often our own personality quirks come in the way of active listening. To listen actively, requires that you be **'present'** all through the conversation. It hardly matters whether it's a face to face with the Customer, or a phone or web meeting. Surprisingly this applies even to interactions on impersonal communication platforms such as emails and social media. Being **'present'** fully in the exchanges promotes active listening. Anything detracting from the **'presence'** impedes active listening. How can we know if we are listening actively in our sales communications?

12 questions to assess your active listening skills

These questions are binary and require just a Yes or No

Do you

1. Make assumptions about the person you're listening to?
2. Have prejudices (may be occasional) about certain personality types?
3. Find yourself inwardly criticizing/commenting on what the other person has to say?
4. Feel compelled to prove your point (especially when the other person is wrong on facts or ideas)?
5. At times become 'hyper' (over stimulated/over enthusiastic)?
6. Frequently often have something else on your mind?
7. Become too busy to listen?
8. Feel too tired to listen?

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- 9 Find people boring and repetitive and feel tuned out due to lack of interest?
- 10. Easily get impatient?
- 11. Nurse an ego, though not consciously?
- 12. Day dream and allow your mind to wander off?

Give yourself points for every 'No'. Higher the numbers of 'No's the better is your active listening profile. If you score 10 or more, you a truly active listener. A score of 6 or less will mean that you need to work on improving your listening skills. And that can make a world of difference to your sales success too!

Will Tom, in our story, qualify on the active listening self-check?

*For more tips, strategies and ideas on improving sales communication, explore the Mercuri Insight document on **"Effective Sales Communication - 5 Stages and 3 Traps"** , fill in your coordinates *on this page* to download the complete file.*



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