



Five Levels of Listening

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I work with all kinds of leaders. Ones that are in positions of influence. Ones that are natural influencers. Ones that are developing their skills and competencies. And there is one tool I share with all them. Below are listed the five levels of listening. It is the one tool that all leaders can further develop - our ability to listen better. Doesn't seem like a difficult task, but with all the distractions in our lives, it is the one skill we spend little time on developing. And it's the one skill that sets authentic valued leaders apart. So, see where you spend most of your time listening and where you would like to spend more of your time and focus. Amazing how we improve when we listen to understand.

Level 5—Not Listening

Tuning someone out, thinking about something else, not paying attention. The "I'm sorry, what did you say?" syndrome.

Level 4—Listening to Tell your Story

Not really listening to what the other person is saying; instead, taking that time to prepare your remarks. The intent is to share how your story relates to the other person's for your own self satisfaction, not for their understand and learning. The "you think you had it bad, let me tell you what happened to me" syndrome.

Level 3—Listening for Judgment

Making assumptions and conclusions before you hear the whole story. Once you reach a "judgment" you no longer listen. The "here's your problem" syndrome.

Level 2—Listening for Application

Being able to listen to understand what you might take away from another's comments. Requires the suspension of assumptions and judgment. Requires us to listen harder. Very useful in groups gathering to learn from each other.

Level 1—Listening to Understand

Listening to just understand. Not to judge or apply, rather to understand the "what's it is like to walk in your shoes". And appreciating that by that active listening, not only is the other person heard, we as listeners are improved. This one takes practice, practice, practice.