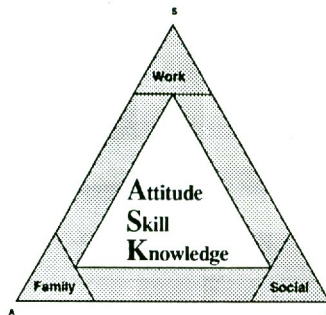


HOW CAN YOU LEAD? IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO A-S-K

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Across the nation, leaders embrace the art of listening as the most valuable in strengthening partnerships and organizations. Time after time, we all have experienced the aftermath of deficient listening skills. Loss of sales, employee moral, and relationships are a few results that can occur without proper understanding.

The first step in enhancing your listening skills is to establish a strong listening foundation. Building a solid listening foundation is the number principle, but it's not enough.



A-S-K (the development of Attitudes, Skills, and Knowledge) has provided many leaders with a set of useful listening leadership guidelines. Outstanding listeners should be constantly reminded that serving others as a leader begins and ends by refining listening attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Establishing positive and productive listening attitudes and constantly expanding knowledge about listening and leadership provides the required foundation for developing and refining the basic underpinning of specific listening skills and behaviors.

The A-S-K Model highlights three basic elements that are crucial in all effective listening development programs. Any individual or organizational effort to improve listening and leadership must recognize and focus on the essence and importance of each element.

A=ATTITUDES

Attitudes underlie and permeate all behaviors. Listening leaders who establish and practice positive listening attitudes and values in all leadership situation thrive, whether at work, within their families, or in social settings. On the other hand, leaders who exhibit negative and counter-productive listening attitudes, and/or lack the requisite knowledge about listening, undermine their existing listening skills.

Positive listening attitudes begin with a bone-deep belief that listening is central to leadership success, and that the people you are privileged to lead and listen to deserve your total focus. Dr. Jim Tunney, a long time educator, an outstanding author and a Hall of Fame professional speaker, is known as the “The Dean of NFL Referees” after refereeing for 31 years, including three NFL Super Bowls. Jim’s experience in working with a multitude of leaders reinforces his belief that, “The key’s to success are preparation and awareness, which affect attitude.” Dr. Tunney reminds everyone of the ageless wisdom, “It’s not our aptitude, but rather our

attitude, that determines our altitude.” Attitude is a critical component that requires constant attention from all serious listening leaders.

S=SKILLS

Skills center on a multitude of listening behaviors, competencies, techniques, and abilities necessary to thrive as a leader. First, as just established, it is critically important to constantly have positive listening attitudes. Second, combined with specialized listening insights and depth of knowledge, it is imperative to translate your listening attitudes into specific skills that can create leadership value for yourself and others. There are many practical and productive skill sets in our Listening Leaders Pyramid that we will explore throughout this book. However, the skills only become operative and powerful when they are coupled with productive and positive attitudes and are grounded in solid knowledge.

K=KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge about the degree, importance, costs, rewards, purposes, stages, process, strategies, and barriers of listening, dramatically impacts both listening and leading attitudes and skills. What you don't know about listening will adversely color your attitudes and development of skills. On the other hand, heightened insight and understanding of specific facts about listening and leadership will provide meaningful substance to the “who, what, why, where, when, and how” as you listen and lead.

For example, just knowing eight simple, but powerful, benchmarks of listening can alter your focus on developing productive attitudes and important skills. Reinforced by the research of many, we understand that:

- Leaders are communicating beings. Communication is the primary activity of all effective leaders.
- Listening is the primary communication activity of all effective leaders.
- Listening is central to all leaders' success.
- Although listening is both an innate and a learned behavior, generally it is not overtly and systematically taught.
- Many leaders are generally ineffective and inefficient listeners.
- Poor listening results in extraordinary individual and organizational costs.
- With focused attention all aspects of listening can be improved.
- When leaders grow as listeners, everyone wins.

Imagine how many projects could have been completed on time or mistakes avoided by just listening and apply A-S-K.

It really is possible to curtail rework and mistakes by implementing the essence of A-S-K? Yes! By applying the following six progressive listening steps, you'll be well on your way! Be Aware; Be Ready; Take Aim; Take Action; Build Positive Habits; Create Automatic Behaviors.

SIX STEPS TO A-S-K

1. Be Aware
↓
2. Be Ready
↓
3. Take Aim
↓
4. Take Action
↓
5. Build Positive Habits
↓
6. Create Automatic Behavior

GREAT LISTENING LEADERS understand that failure to be aware of, and to focus on, the state of their listening attitudes, skills, and knowledge will result in listening passivity.