

## **HOW CAN YOU LEAD? IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY FOLLOWERS**

Dr. Rick Bommelje

Each of us can easily name a few of our histories great leaders - Mahatma Ghandi, John Kennedy, Rosa Parks – there are many reasons why we consider leadership great. One particular item is undeniable. Great leaders have followers. Followers who choose to take paths not taken, for belief and trust in their leader.

Is it possible to LEARN how to inspire others to positively follow?

The answer is YES! Leaders must begin by building a solid listening foundation and develop impactful habits through enhanced listening skills.

We can only empower other to follow when we honestly discover the current level of our listening behaviors. One way to gain preliminary insight into your own listening behaviors is to clarify your tendencies and habits. This type of analysis will naturally allow you to separate the effective and ineffective listening habits that move others to follow. A few simple steps can get you started:

How do you think others would rate and describe you as a listener?

How often do you:

- Call a particular subject uninteresting?
- Criticize another speaker's delivery or mannerisms?
- Listen primarily for the facts?
- Fake attention to the speaker
- Allow interfering distractions?
- Daydream while others are talking?

They have found that an interesting pattern emerges from the thousands of listener responses. Most individuals generally do listen better to their leaders rather than to others because of the consequences if they don't – but – what can Leaders do for their employees to ensure their message is heard and realized. Leaders must 'walk the talk' by exemplifying the benefits of learning to listen.

Learn to Listen – and – they will follow....

Listening leaders can build their skills and, in turn, profit by diligently practicing the following 10 prove habits of effective listening:

1. Find areas of interest: Listen optimistically and seek to share your employee's enthusiasm for and interest in the subject.
2. Judge content, not delivery: Effective listening leaders focus primarily on the content of the message and consider the deliver as secondary.
3. Don't jump to conclusions: We all have opinions. Listening leaders can avoid making judgments when they fully comprehend the message. Don't let enthusiasm, anger, or emotion blur your focus.

4. Listen for the main point of the message: Poor listeners have a tendency to listen for only the facts and often miss the central idea. Identify the speaker's purpose and listen for main themes.
5. Take notes, but adjust your note-taking to the speaker: Understand that poor note-taking and poor listening are interrelated. Effective listening leaders are flexible and adapt their notes to the speaker's structure.
6. Pay attention: Listening leaders give genuine, sincere, and heightened attention to every listening situation. They expand a great deal of energy paying attention and tracking the speaker's message.
7. Resist Distractions: Distractions overpower and disrupt the unprepared listener. Learn to identify YOUR distractions and remove them – for your employee's sake.
8. Exercise your mind: Don't limit your listening to the simplistic messages and messages you choose to handle. Listening leaders seek out the challenging and difficult messages.
9. Check your emotions: Effective listeners understand that you cannot avoid emotional reactions, but you can keep them from interfering with productive listening leadership.
10. Utilize the gap between speech speed and listening speed: Poor listeners loaf when they could be listening more effectively. Learn to develop a strategy that stays the pace with the speaker and not drift off.

Close the loop by Planning to Report (PTR) back. Embrace your listening level and share it with others. Prove to your employees that by following these 10 steps listening skills can be get better.

Practice really does make perfect. Show your employees what it means to be a great listener – you'll feel the benefits of a motivated organization who follows because they listen and believe.