

LISTEN, LEAD & SUCCEED

How to be a Great Leader through the Power of SIER-ing

by Dr. Richard K. (Rick) Bommelje

A frustrated employee shared the following saga about her direct supervisor.

“On a weekly basis, we meet to discuss the status of the goals we’re working on. What amazes me is that, every time we meet, the only one who can get in a word is our ‘leader’. Whenever anyone else tries to speak, he cuts them off in mid-sentence, talks over them, and gives his own opinions. Every few minutes he pushes himself away from the table and scoots over to his computer to read his e-mail or check his Blackberry. If I, or anyone else in the room, feel a need to say something, he simply says our name over and over until we shut up and let him talk. When our leader won’t let any of us finish a sentence, I wonder if he really believes he is leading.”

One might reasonably ask, “Why would anyone continue to work for such a person?” Surprisingly, many do. Consider for a moment the negative impact of this non-listening manager on his immediate employees, on his organization, and on himself. Imagine the costs - - loss of morale, productivity, trust, respect and performance, just to name a few. Dr. Peter Drucker, the legendary Father of Modern Management, proclaimed that ‘the most important characteristic of a leader is the willingness, ability, and self discipline to listen.’ In other words, Great Leaders are Great Listeners!

One of the most successful approaches to great listening is the SIER Formula. Listening is defined as a 4-step process:

- Sensing
- Interpreting
- Evaluating
- Responding

Each step combines to form dynamic listening behavior.

Sensing is the beginning of the listening process and consists of physically using your 5 senses to receive a message. You hear it, see it, touch it, taste it, and even smell it. Your radar must be keen to pick up the many messages that come into your path.

The second step, Interpreting, consists of arriving at an understanding of what the message means after you have Sensed it. Encouraging the speaker to continue, asking questions and seeking the main point are a few of the skills that are used to Interpret.

Evaluating is the third step and includes the ability to analyze the evidence before jumping to a conclusion. Poor listeners make snap judgments and jump to false conclusions. Great listeners are responsible and disciplined to withhold making a judgment until they fully understand the message.

The final step is Responding - responding to the speaker verbally or non-verbally to let them know that the message has gotten through and is understood.

Success in life depends on getting the maximum results with and through others. Apply the SIER Formula and you can immediately increase your leadership effectiveness and propel you to become a Great Leader through the Power of Listening.

Dr. Richard K. (Rick) Bommelje is known as the 'Listening Doctor'. A faculty member at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, who developed and regularly teaches the Listening course, and co-author of *Listening Leaders: The Ten Golden Rules to Listen, Lead & Succeed*, Rick specializes in the development of leaders' listening behavior to increase their performance. He also currently serves as the Vice President of the International Listening Association.

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