



The Lost Art of Listening

By: Gerry Layo

Have you ever noticed that your ears don't shut but your mouth does? The former CEO of GM, John Smith, once said, "We listened to what our customers wanted and acted on what they said. Good things happen when you pay attention." Often salespeople attend seminars and read books about how to give professional presentations; how to get your point across; using power phrases that sell etc. etc. It seems that as sales professionals we are constantly working on better ways to say what we want to say. Although all of this is important, what I notice getting lost on most salespeople of today is the tried and true art of listening.

I believe that one of the most valuable skills a successful sales professional can use to positively impact a sale is that of effective, enthusiastic listening. When salespeople are listening enthusiastically, they are learning about the prospect/customer. With more effective information on the prospect/customer's needs, salespeople have a better shot in recommending the proper solutions for the customer's "pain". When salespeople are enthusiastically listening, they are building trust. If a salesperson will listen effectively, the customer will tell them what to say (or ask) next.

How then does one most effectively listen and do so enthusiastically? Picture in your mind someone leaning in or sitting on the edge of their chair, eyes locked on whomever is talking, eyebrows raised, nodding in understanding, hanging on every word, and responding with requests for more. See in your mind's eye a child listening to an exciting bedtime story for the first time and asking things like "What happened next?" "Who is that?" "Why did she do that, Mommy?" "What does he look like, Daddy?" and so on.

In the profession of sales, that same wide-eyed enthusiasm over the words of our prospects/customers may be quite appropriate to a certain degree. "Interested" is the word that we want to highlight. The best way for a prospect/customer to be "interested" in you is for you to be genuinely "interested" in them. The problem is that most of us feel that we have to be "interesting"! We feel that we have to speak eloquently, have a solid canned "pitch" that is compelling, and through these tactics, we will win over the hearts and minds of our prospects/customers. It's inspiring to finally get that it's not about you! It's about them and their pains, their fears, their desires, their highest value needs.

By listening enthusiastically, you will show the prospect/customer the greatest respect that you can. You will show that you care about *their* needs - - not yours. You will show that you are interested in how to best create a solution for them. You will show that you are different, that you stand out! Listening is a skill. Like all skills, the more you practice it, the more proficient and successful you will be at mastering it. Tap into as many resources as you can to sharpen the skill of effective and enthusiastic listening. See for yourself if this often over-looked wonder doesn't create greater sales success for you.

*BIO: **Gerry Layo** is one of the nation's most dynamic and sought after speaker, trainer, author, and coach. Gerry delivers energizing and innovative world-class keynote addresses, seminars, and workshops. As Head Coach and visionary for Sales Coach International, Gerry is instrumental in using his unique approach to dramatically increase growth and profits for companies throughout North America. He is the author of top selling book: "Smart Selling-Strategies to Reinvent the Sales Process". For more information visit: www.gerrylayo.com or call 866-979-LAYO (5296)*