

Deep Listening

We hear so much yet understand so little.

Deep listening is more than capturing sound that meets the ear. Deep listening precedes understanding. It is not enough that we know our customers' needs, wants, and fears; we must understand these and the driving forces behind them.

It is difficult for salespeople to listen deeply because we listen for advantage. We listen for the opportunity to sell something. We judge as we listen, the imposition of what we value. We assess as we listen, seeking an angle to gain leverage. We listen competitively, perched for one-upmanship.

Deep listening is attempting to understand what the other person values. It is accepting that person. It is learning *why* they believe they need what they need. It is capturing the essence of their motivation and the context in which they make the decision. It requires taking the focus off of ourselves and fully onto the other person. It is difficult to do this in sales because our minds are crowded when they need to be quiet.

We crowd our minds with fears of missing quota, achieving bonus, and making the President's Club. We crowd our minds with dictates to move inventory and increase volume. We crowd our minds with our personal agendas that have nothing to do with understanding the customer.

Quieting our minds is the first step. This means that we suspend our fears, worries, and desires for the moments that we spend trying to understand the customer. It is opening fully our eyes, ears, and minds to what they say and do. We listen for facts and feelings. We listen for the meaning that their words have for them. We listen deeply.

Author byline: Tom Reilly is a professional speaker and author of twelve books. Tom is literally the guy who wrote the book on *Value-Added Selling* (McGraw-Hill, 2010), the book that started the value selling revolution. For more information on Tom's presentations, training, and products, visit his website www.TomReillyTraining.com or call his office, 636-537-3360.

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