

IRRITATING LISTENING HABITS

Top-achieving salespeople spend 60% of their time listening on a sales call. Listening is a core competency for salespeople, yet too few companies and managers emphasize its importance to success. Schools rarely teach it. Training budgets generally ignore it because it is a soft skill. Most people assume that if you have two ears you know how to listen. Wrong. Here are some of the irritating listening habits I have noticed in training salespeople:

Competitor—this person is a master of one-upping the other person. The competitive listener typically says, “You think that’s something, let me tell you about something I did.”

Anticipator—this person spends most of his or her listening time thinking about what they will say next.

Rusher—this person is always giving the other person the bum’s rush. The attitude is, “Hurry up and finish, I have something to sell you.”

Distracted—this person is a walking billboard for attention deficit disorder. Every little distraction catches his or her attention. Their being distracted distracts the speaker.

Disinterested—this person cannot even feign being interested. They find the conversation dull and make no pretense to be interested.

Multi-tasker—this person thinks they can effectively communicate with others as they check text messages and emails. This is the phone conversation when you can hear the keyboard in the background. This is just plain rude.

Effective listening requires the listener to put his or her focus on the other person, not themselves. Too many people fail to subordinate their interests in an effort to understand the other person. You can only fully understand what someone is saying (and feeling) when the conversation is more about them than you. This is good listening. This is good selling.

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