

BECOME A LISTENING MACHINE

"Man's inability to communicate is a result of his failure to listen effectively." Carl Rogers

Have you ever done a really good job of selling, but the buyer did a lousy job of buying? Making the right presentation to the wrong person is generally the outcome of a failure to listen. Listening is the fundamental selling skill for value-added salespeople and a prerequisite for making your presentation. Effective listening is a three-step process that follows a computer metaphor.

First, you must observe what the buyer says and does, and input that information into your mental processing unit. Observing is active, not passive. It involves sensing, perceiving, and accepting. Observing places the other person at the center of attention. It is impossible to be a good listener if you are preoccupied with yourself.

Second, process this input. This means evaluating what the other person says. It requires that you suspend personal biases to understand fully what you have seen and heard. Other-focused communication is processing reality through another person's viewfinder. It adds meaning to what you have observed.

Third, respond to what the other person says. You output the result of your processing. This output achieves several things: you confirm what you think you heard, you demonstrate that you were paying attention and understand the buyer's situation, and you set an empathic tone for your presentation. Empathy and understanding beget empathy and understanding.

Inputting, processing, and outputting are the basic functions of a computer. They are also the basic functions of good listening. If you practice these three basic functions, you will become a listening machine.

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