
OPINION

The Power of Positive Listening

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The vice president of human resources was a short woman, standing 160cm, and did not strike me as an authoritative figure. First appearances can be so deceiving. I was soon captivated by her charm and grace. It was not just what she was saying, but how well we were getting on. I felt like I was talking to an old friend. I soon realized that I was doing most of the talking and she was controlling the meeting by asking great questions and responding thoughtfully. What made this woman such a good communicator? She was a great listener.

A good listener always performs well in an interview. This may sound basic, however, I see many candidates become so focused on giving the correct interview answers that they miss the question. Then the candidate begins to recite a prepared answer that has nothing to do with the question. They appear to listen but they do not hear.

In preparing for an interview, it is best to breathe deeply and clear the mind. The mind should be void of clutter and a clear head enables us to relax and respond to the question being asked. Often during an interview we are so focused on our response, we can forget to clearly understand the question or the comment.

There is no greater compliment we can pay to someone than to truly listen to every word they say. We should not simply wait until they finish speaking. We must really listen and empathize with their viewpoints. Listening is not passive, it is active. A good listener must lean forward, keep good eye contact and respond with clarity and empathy.

As I have mentioned in one of my previous articles on building rapport, people like people who are like themselves. Be observant of body language and take time to answer and ask for clarification when needed. Experts say 50% of our communication is non-ver-

bal. When a person connects with someone, they mimic their movements and become like them. This strategy is not a trick or manipulative ploy. It is a sign of respect. We naturally take on the body language of others who we are in tune with. The next time you are at a restaurant or bar watch people who are sitting in a similar fashion. They are clearly 'in tune' with each other (For more information read "The Definitive Book of Body Language," Alan Pease).

We can accelerate the personal "tuning" process with another person by sitting like them, using similar words, and finding common interests. In contrast, those with a very different set of movement and sitting positions are likely to be missing each others points all together.

As I previously mentioned, copying the movements and characteristics of the person you are talking to is not a gimmick or a trick, but a way to sincere way of connecting and become interested in the other person.

Many times I have waited for the other person to stop talking so I could share a story about my favorite subject - me. The person we are conversing with may also enjoy talking about themselves and their business. A candidate's objective is secure the position. So why not talk about the interviewer's interests, their needs, and their company. Be quick to listen and slow to speak.

Tuning up for an interview

Listen 100%. Remember that listening is active.

Be patient in your response. Ask for clarification if you do not understand the question.

Watch body language, be open.

Talk in terms of what is interesting to them, their company.