

SUCCESS:
CORPORATE, PROFESSIONAL, PERSONAL

THE POWER OF LISTENING

श्रुत्वा धर्मं विजानाति श्रुत्वा त्यजति दुर्मतिम् ।
श्रुत्वा ज्ञानं अवाप्नोति श्रुत्वा मोक्षं च विन्दति ॥

सुहृदां हितकामानां यः शृणोति न भाषितम् ।
विपत् सन्निहिता तस्य स नरः शत्रुनन्दनः ॥

अप्रियस्य च पथ्यस्य परिणामः सुखावहः ।
वक्ता श्रोता च यत्रास्ति रमन्ते तत्र संपदः ॥

सहस्रं ग्रन्थं पठनात् चिन्तनात् व्यवहारतः ।
यो लाभः स मनुष्याणां मुहूर्तं श्रवणाद्भवेत् ॥

N.H. ATTHREYA

MMC SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT,
PUBLICATION DIVISION, BOMBAY

SUCCESS:
CORPORATE, PROFESSIONAL, PERSONAL
THE POWER OF LISTENING

WITH A RESOURCE GUIDE

N.H. ATTHREYA

**M M C SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT,
PUBLICATION DIVISION, BOMBAY**

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By the same author

- Public Speaking & Committee Meetings.
- Read Faster, Read Better
- What Makes People Give Their Best.
- Over the Telephone - Etiquette and Efficiency.
- How to Select Well: Thought Processes, Techniques and Tools
- Organisation & Administration of Research and Development
- Law for Factory Executives: (Jointly with C.M. Shukla)
- Management by Implications
- Professional Secretary
- Professional Office Assistant
- Rapid Reading Practice Manual
- Getting and Keeping Good Key Personnel
- Ideas that Save (Jointly with B.K. Batra & B.T. Dastur)
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INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

Since I wrote the book in 1968, corporate listening has come of age. Every book on customer service excellence waxes eloquent on the place of active listening (Tom Peters calls it "Engaged Listening") in the creative caring of the customer.

Every time they ask me to do a training workshop on quick reading, I point out that quick reading is an input skill and so is active listening and, therefore, this subject may also be included. The idea does not readily appeal to them. A few grudgingly say: Let us give it a try.

At the end of the programme, they however confess: Yes, **Listening has power.** We were not aware of its potential. Now we are. It'll mean much to us at home and work

This explains why this **revised** edition carries the logical title: *The Power of Listening*

Bombay

N.H. ATTHREYA

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

45% of our wakeful hours or **more**, several studies show, we are **receiving messages** through the **spoken word**. The studies also reveal that our listening efficiency is about 25% or **less**.

And still, listening does **not** find a place in the school, college or management training curricula, the systematic training of the listening skill we mean. Just as **speaking in public** is mistaken for **public speaking**, so is **hearing** mistaken for **listening**. Those who are short of hearing are indeed pitied; those who are short of listening are not.

That listening is a skill, that it can be cultivated, that it pays rich dividends **in getting things done**, and in interpersonal relationships, is a finding of recent times. Pioneers like Professor Ralph Nichols of the University of Minnesota and Professor Wesley Wiksell of Lousina State University (to both of whom the author is deeply obliged) have done devoted work for this emerging art in the last two decades.

In our consulting assignments on individual and institutional effectiveness, we found that the presence or absence of this skill can make a difference on **job performance**. We have been including Listening Skill, therefore, in our Executive Development Programmes since 1955 and with rewarding results.

Like any other skill, it takes energy and sustained effort to develop this skill. Like any other skill again a headstart is the thing: once one gets to know the possibilities of and approaches to a particular skill, one keeps moving -- though how far and how fast is an individual matter. It is just to provide this **headstart that this workbook has been prepared**. Like the other workbooks, this too is slanted to **professional self-development**.

There are special sections on
Listening at committees
Listening at Union negotiations
Listening at interviews

In view of the fact that listening skills are best developed in the schools, we have given special attention to the needs of the teachers.

Bombay
24 December, 1968

N.H. ATTUREYA

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To
Lalitha, Usha & Pranav

THE AUTHOR : N.H. ATTHREYA

Dr. ATTHREYA describes himself as "a student of overall wellbeing of individuals and organizations". A leading thinker, educator, professional problem solver and a concerned citizen, he has been editing a monthly, "Management Ideas" since 1963. His other interests include Human Excellence and Patanjali Yoga.

Why This Unconventional Printing Format:

End to end, run-on printing we are all used to .
It has its value - it saves paper and cost.
For the Reader, more important than cost
is the effort and the time.

Reading research shows
that reading comprehension is facilitated
when material is presented **like this**
in terms of thought units or whole phrases.
In places, such writing may sound poetic
but that is more a matter of substance and style.
I do **not** intend this to be free verse.

TREES, TREES, TREES.....

Our Artist has chosen trees to "illustrate" the text.
He says: Trees mean different things to different
people, for example, seed, soil, shade, strength,
nature, nurture, leaves, flowers, fruits,.....
All symbolise a beneficial **POWER**.

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1

LISTENING POWER & CORPORATE SUCCESS

1.1

GOOD LISTENING IS GOOD BUSINESS

Good listening, appropriate listening makes for good business.

It improves results, relations and reputation, in the short and the long run.

That has been the experience in India as elsewhere. Conscious and systematic attention has, however, increasingly been given to this opportunity area only in the past ten years.

In every human interaction at work whether with customers, seniors, peers or juniors, there is an economic dimension. A higher **level** of listening skill positively influences the outcome of such interactions.

Stray cases of "**the cash benefit**" of skilled listening we all hear from time to time.

What is uncommon is of corporations going for listening skill input in a big way and **keeping scores**.

Even more uncommon are corporations that have made their scores findings public.



THE SPERRY STORY

Sperry Rand is one such company.
The company **chanced** to see the value of listening
twenty years back
and it has made it a winner for the company.
The stepped up state of this skill in their employees
has visibly improved the relations,
internal and external.
It has improved the results on many fronts.
It has improved the image of the company no end.

The corporate slogan of Sperry is
We understand how important it is to listen.
This is more than a slogan.
Worldwide, over 80,000 employees
have attended the formal seminars.
The company has produced
audio visual and printed material
for liberal distribution
among the company personnel and the public.
A spokesman of the company reports:

"The results of the educational efforts are
being felt in three ways worldwide -
in relationships within the company,
in the employees' domestic lives,
and in the overall marketing effort."

Here is a little more of the Sperry Listening story.

"At Sperry, we've emphasized good listening
for many years. Research shows that it's
been important to our success and is one
of our greatest strengths in the marketplace.
We're proud of that but we aren't satisfied that

we're listening, understanding and responding as well as we can.

"That's why Sperry's corporate advertising theme, **we understand how important it is to listen**, is more than a slogan. It expresses a basic management philosophy and is fundamental to the way we do business. We're dedicated to listening effectively and responding in the right way to the people who have direct interest in the products and performance of the company.

"Long before the advertising program was conceived, Sperry had stressed the importance of listening and responding in its personnel development courses, management conferences, small group meetings, roundtable discussions and other continuing programs.

"But because the training covered other aspects of communications, as well, it was felt that more concentrated attention should be devoted specifically to the development of listening skills.

"Additional training was prepared by Sperry's own senior management development specialists, and listening classes are being conducted for our personnel.

"They are tailored to the special needs of our managers who supervise the work of others, our marketing executives and other employees as well.

"The Sperry instructors who conduct the classes received orientation to make them more familiar with the subject matter and how to teach it effectively.

"The training in listening has four objectives:

- * To build an awareness of the importance to business of listening.
- *To increase understanding of the nature of listening and its impact on the total communications process.
- *To diagnose listening abilities and practices.
- *To develop skills and techniques to improve listening effectiveness.

"Group participation is emphasized, rather than lectures by the instructor. Also employed are film, videotape, audiotape, individual self evaluation, testing of abilities, analysis of listening case situations and role playing in small groups.

"Attendance at each session ranges from 16 to 24. That assures a good level of interchange during the group participation exercises without making the size of the class unwieldy.

"The training covers understanding the listening concept and its various elements. It concentrates on specific on-the-job applications showing how Sperry employees in various real-life situations can do a better job of responding - the end product of the listening process.

"Real listening occurs in four stages -
sensing {hearing the message},
understanding {interpreting it},
evaluating {appraising it}
and responding {doing something with it}.

"Intelligent, sincere response is central to the Sperry philosophy, and is, in fact, the ultimate point of the training."

THE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE LOSS

In business circles, we talk of loss of profit.
We can therefore also ask:
What do we **lose** by poor listening?

Professor Lyman K. Steil, an international authority, speaks broadly of billions of dollars of waste in U.S. industry through poor listening.

He narrates an incident to make the point.

"On the airplane recently, I talked with the president of a small company. I asked whether his firm had experienced any problems because of his employees' inability or failure to listen. The man's eyebrows went up. He told me how the company had recently lost a million dollar sale. "Two of my employees were involved," he said. "One didn't hear the important message at all, and the other one misinterpreted it. He did not hear that it was wanted in two weeks. The upshot was that we **lost** out on a bid that we should have won hands down."

Can that hidden loss be less in our country?
Let us do some arithmetic.

Most working people make more than one listening mistake every day. A listening mistake can cost the organization from ten rupees to ten lakhs of rupees.

On a modest estimate of 100 rupees a mistake, as a result of poor listening skill, we can visualise the colossal loss a workforce of seventy million can cause the country, year after year, and avoidably.

This does not include the indirect loss of poor listening in terms of opportunities missed, relationships spoiled, ideas not heard or availed of and images marred.

WHAT DOES GOOD LISTENING DO TO AN ORGANIZATION?

In working with and working through people, over 40% of the work time is found to be spent in the communication act of listening. That is a major chunk of working time.



Listening efficiency herein will influence the outcome of the interactions and this efficiency has been found to range between 25 and 50 percent.

Together, this area throws up a large opportunity for outcome improvement. Some have cashed in on this opportunity.

Joan Koob Cannie notes in *Keeping Customers for Life*, that Florida Power & Light Company

saved **\$42 million** annually
by systematically listening to their customers.

How do we explain that ? Says *Cannie* :

"Atleast half of all new service ideas, and 80 per cent of new product innovations, come from customers".

Tom Peters of "*In Search of Excellence*" fame waxes eloquent on **engaged listening** with customers.

"The organization prepared to move, fast is the listening-intense organization - not only in sales and marketing but in engineering and manufacturing and even management information systems."

Tom Peters talks of large and small companies that have made appropriate and attentive listening a key part of their companies' work culture - furniture companies {eg. David-Edwards, Baltimore}, hospitals {eg. Planetree Model Hosp., San Francisco}, parishes {eg. Lutheran Parish in Bendersville}, forest product firms {eg. Trus Joist}, departmental stores {eg. Wal Mart}, public services {eg. Police Dept. Santa Barbara}, convenience stores {eg. Price's market, Richmond} and others {eg. Toshiba America, Apple, Milliken, Perdue, The Limited and the classic Stew Leonard's Store}



**LISTENING AND LOYALTY GO TOGETHER
SO DOES LISTENING AND LEADERSHIP**

The forty year old field research finding that listening and loyalty go together, that listening and leadership go together is put to systematic work by companies that have made corporate excellence their conscious choice.

The compliment then was "My boss listens". The compliment today is "My supplier listens". In a corporate context these compliments turn out to be complementary.



1.2

A LISTENING CLASSIC

No argument in the world, observed a thinker, can compare with a dramatic demonstration. We reproduce in this section a story on the classic Stew Leonard's Store, which proves listening pays handsdown. We also reproduce the store's open offer to share its customer listening secrets.

STEW LEONARD'S SEARCH FOR EXCITEMENT *

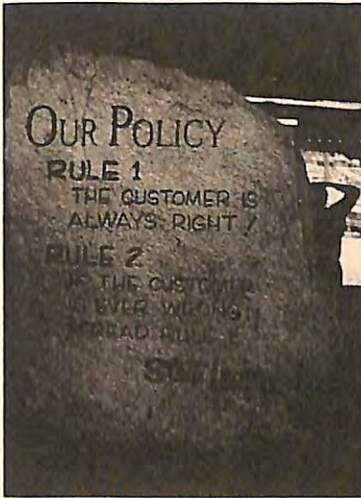
by Michael Sanselo

How do you build a single 35,000-square-foot store into a \$100 million-a-year legend? Stew Leonard did it by **listening**.

Take this past Memorial Day weekend, for example.

The concern at the Norwalk, Conn., store was how to accommodate the expected traffic.

An employee had an idea. Give free ice cream cones to everyone who parked at the most distant of the store's three parking lots. Stew Leonard Jr. was skeptical, but in his father's style, decided to give it a try. "We are



* Source and courtesy *Progressive Grocer*

always willing to try things for a week or two. How can you argue with that?" he asked.



On the Saturday of the holiday weekend, the store rang up \$542,000 in sales.

Of course, free ice cream cones alone did not produce that blockbuster sales day, but they were symbolic of what makes Stew Leonard's different. Stew Leonard Sr. is always looking for a good idea and then makes sure it gets done right.

"We do things anyone else can do. We share ideas, we take ideas. This store is just 20 years' worth of ideas," said Leonard.

He **listens to everyone** - customers, employees, visiting retailers and even reporters. And while it would hardly be wrong to leave the store thinking that what makes it special is the Disneyland-style of merchandising, Leonard might disagree. "People come around and take pictures of our machinery. I tell them, 'Take pictures of our people. They're what makes this store go. We do it here with people,'" he said.

Of course, it's pretty hard to ignore the machines or the many theatrical merchandising touches at Stew Leonard's. How many stores have petting zoos in the parking lot? How many feature mechanized cows, dogs, milk cartons and eggs above cases singing to customers? Where else can you find employees (and sometimes the owner himself) walking around in a cow, chicken or duck costume? This is not the typical supermarket.

Actually it's not a supermarket at all. The sign on the store points out that Ripley's "Believe It or Not" called Stew Leonard's 'The World's Biggest Dairy Store.' From a strict definition, it is actually a limited assortment store. The dairy side is very strong, thanks to the in-store bottling facilities, but dairy is only part of the story. Meat, fish, bakery, deli, hot foods and produce are equally prominent.

There are groceries, but only one brand at a time is usually available in any category. Non-foods are non-existent, although Stew Leonard Jr. said he is considering stocking a single line of mouthwash. According to Leonard, the store usually carries about 800 items, but shoppers see all of them, as there is only one aisle. Once you enter the store, you have little choice but to travel the entire distance.

Not that it's boring trip. Shoppers enter the store by walking right through the heart of the bakery. With ovens and displays on both sides, shoppers are smothered by the warm smell of baked goods. Leonard said his sister Beth, who runs the bakery talked him into the unconventional setup. Since the change, bakery sales have nearly doubled to \$140,000 a week.

After the bakery, shoppers walk past the dairy operation and into the heart of the store. Along the way, they may encounter traffic jams of children crowding the one aisle to watch a show going on above the cases.

Throughout the store, merchandising is rampant, though simple. As is the case in the bakery, the sights, smells and taste of products dominate. Mass displays are everywhere. Perishables are available in bulk and cases are overflowing. Samples are readily available. Grocery items are merchandised in cut cases stacked in big, eye-catching displays.

The merchandising goes well beyond the products. The free ice cream cones given out during Memorial Day, for example, did much more than get customers to use another parking lot. Since many families shop at the store, each free ice cream cone usually led to the sales of one or two others.

"Merchandising is what turns shoppers into buyers," said Stew Leonard Sr.

It's the products that keep them buying time after time. "All we try to do is sell fresh food and handle it well," said Stew Leonard Jr. Throughout the store, the food is the star. "Everything has to be super fresh," he said.

The Leonards have no choice but to do everything right. The limited product mix guarantees that shoppers will go elsewhere to pick up products they can't find at Stew Leonard's. The competition includes some of the toughest chains in New York.



Of course, the Leonards don't leave the chains many advantages. While the emphasis is on quality, prices figure prominently at Stew Leonard's. A local tour guide not only listed the store as an attraction, but noted that its prices are lower than any of the competition's. Stew Leonard Sr. said he manages to hold the prices down by doing his own buying in bulk. He uses more than two-thirds of his 100,000-square-foot building as warehouse space.

Yet the merchandising goes much further than just price and product. People are paramount at Stew Leonard's and that, more than any singing animal, is what makes the store different.

At Stew Leonard's, customer service is such a passion it's etched in granite. Right at the front door sits a huge stone explaining the store's two rules : 1) The customer is always right; 2) When the customer is wrong, see rule number one. Immediately after the checkouts is a suggestion box with a request for ideas or comments - good and bad.

"We educate our people that the mission here is keeping the customer happy and keeping them coming back" Stew Leonard Sr. said. The goal - displayed prominently in the store - is customer satisfaction, not profit. "Profit is a reward, not a right. Profit comes from doing a great job" he said.

Leonard constantly makes his employees aware of the importance of their roles. Throughout the store there are pictures of employees honored as "Stars of the Month." At the checkouts, there are signs about employees who have climbed to ever bigger jobs in the store.

Customers get involved by leaving notes in the suggestion box about courteous employees. Stew Leonard Jr. tells employees about the responses.

A recent edition of the employee's weekly newsletter carried a letter from a shopper who was unable to find garlic bread in the bakery. When she asked if there was any more, an employee said there wasn't but that she would make some. "That is just the special attention this store demonstrates to its customers. Thanks for employees like Beverly," the customer wrote.

Leonard and his children - all four of whom are involved in the business - know the importance of that kind of response, especially as they finalize plans for a second, bigger store 20 miles away. Leonard said he knows that, to some extent, what gives him an edge is having just one store to watch over.

What will make the second store work is the family's presence at both units - son Tom has been overseeing the second operation - and employees' awareness of the family's goals.

Those goals can be simply be summarized. Stew Leonard Sr. said he always tries to keep one thought in mind when dealing with customers. The typical Stew Leonard's shopper, he said, spends \$100 a week in his store. That's \$5,200 a year or more than \$50,000 over five years.. "When I look at a shopper I see \$50,000 on her forehead. I don't ever want to lose her."

A Standing Offer

Stew Leonard's

Worlds Largest Dairy Store

Something new and refreshing!

We'd like to invite you to take part in a fun filled, idea filled 4-hour Customer Service Seminar at Stew Leonard's University.

During the year we receive many requests for store tours, for meetings, for explanations of our philosophies. That gave us an idea. "Why not offer a seminar and share what works for us, realizing we are all in the same business really - the "people business".

It begins with an inside look at proven ways of making your people as well as your customers happy. No academic stuff taught by theory people. The entire seminar will be spent inside the World's Largest Dairy Store. Your teachers will be managers - the managers and line people that actually serve our 100,000 weekly customers.

Yes, there'll be lunch and a special behind the scenes tour.

Yes, there'll be workbooks and packages to take home.

Yes, it will be exciting, enjoyable, and motivating.

We'll open up to you our entire way of doing business. AND, we'll answer any questions you have.

Our goal will be to share with you the concept and philosophies that work for us and you will graduate with sparkling ideas and enthusiasm that you can bring back home and put into use in your organisation.

For the next open date, please call me at (203) 847-7213, extension 263. I look forward to telling you more.

Sincerely,

Sd.

Jill Leonard, Dean

Stew Leonard's University

2.

OUR CURRENT STANDING & ITS IMPLICATIONS

2.1

WHERE AM I? WHERE CAN I BE?

Listening skill level varies among people.

How good is **ours** currently?

Tests have been devised to measure it complicated and simple tests.

The simplest test is to ask a few of our dear and near ones, both at work and at home:

How satisfied are you with my listening skill level?

What if I do you will say

my listening skill is good enough?

Having asked, we would do well to listen to them!

No defending, no interrupting, no explaining, no excusing ourselves but just do purposive listening and the purpose is to become awake of our current state of art?

The purpose also is to answer two questions:

How good can we make it to be?

How can we go about?

These two broad questions are answered in depth in the coming pages, both from the organisational point of view



and individual point of view.
Though listening skill is individual
and calls for self-development effort,
corporate support to sharpen the skill,
in **every member** of the organisation
can make a big difference.

2.2

OUR CURRENT STANDING: HOW MUCH TIME?

The value we derive from this skill depends partly on the amount of time we spend on the listening activity.

To get a fair idea, we may collect the following details, from an estimate to start with (column 1), and then from a log kept for a week (column 2).

For purposes of recording, we may take an average day, and the average day of a recorded week.

2.3

DAILY TIME SPENT IN LISTENING ACTIVITIES.

Activity	Estimated		From the log	
	Hrs.	%	Hrs.	%
Speaking
Writing
Reading
Listening
Total		100%		100%
Listening to boss
Listening to colleagues
Listening to juniors
Listening to customers
Listening to suppliers
Listening to friends
Listening to family members
Listening to speakers
Listening at committees
Listening to small talk
Listening to oneself
Listening to yet others
Total listening on an average day		100%		100%

Date recorded

Week recorded



2.4

HOW WELL DO PEOPLE LISTEN?

You talk to many people each day -
your bosses, your colleagues,
your juniors and your customers,
your wife, children, and friends-
at work, at home and elsewhere.

How many do you think actually listen to you?

How well do they listen to you?

What are YOUR observations?

Please list them here.



2.5

SURVEYS SAY

In one company, a number of supervisor-subordinate interviews were tape-recorded.

Each supervisor was asked to estimate how much he spoke during the interview.

The estimates ranged from a low of 35% to a high of 60%.
Actually, they had talked from a low of 75% to a high of 90%.

A study of big business showed that when top management speaks not everyone jumps.

When the chief gives the word, the vice presidents get about 80% of the message, and the plant managers about 55%; farther down, the operating supervisors get about 40% and finally, the men on the line receive 20%.

(We have not succeeded in locating a study which estimate similar figures for a message which start at the bottom!)

According to a study (1927) by Dr. Paul Rankin of the Ohio State University, people are spending 75% of the working day in verbal communication (half of which time is spent in listening) and the break-up is as follows:
9% of the time is spent in writing,
16% of the time is spent in writing.



30% of the time is spent in speaking,
45% of the time is spent in listening.
Dr. Rankin's results have stood through
the research that has been done in the years since.

Studies at Columbia University and
the University of Minnesota show
that people who are **not** trained for it
are only 25% effective in their listening.

In a well-known study of public speaking classes,
Irving Lee reported that only 25% of the audience
"got" the central idea of the speeches given.
"Most of the audience did not seem to listen.
Or if they listened,
it seemed with only half the ear."

It is likely similar studies have been made
in countries other than U.S.A. and recorded too.
If we do not give them here,
it is because we have no access to them.



2.6

WHY DON'T PEOPLE LISTEN WELL?

If many do not listen,
and if even the few that do listen
do not listen well,
there should be a good reason
or set of reasons.

What can be the good reason or reasons?

Maybe they honestly feel
listening is an avoidable waste of time.

Many superiors may sincerely believe
that their business is to talk
and the subordinates' to listen.

Some may have a nervous inability to listen.
There may be many other reasons
Please list them here.



2.7

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?

If few listen to you,
and fewer still listen to you well,
what does that mean to you?

Yes, in terms of gaps in understanding
between yourself and others,
and the resulting consequences?

Please list them here.



2.8

IMPLICATIONS RECORDED

The following implications have been recorded by several keen observers in the work area:

For most jobs, communicating is an important job activity, both in terms of the tasks to be accomplished and, of the time devoted to communicating. And, of the time spent in communicating, more persons spend more time listening than reading, writing or speaking.

The cost and consequences of not listening well are high indeed.

Not listening creates great gaps between ourselves and those with whom we wish to have understanding **and** through whom we have to **get things done**.

The greatest enemy of communication is the illusion of it.

We have talked enough, but we have not listened. And by not listening, we have failed to concede the immense complexity of our society—thus the great gaps between ourselves and those with whom we are seeking understanding.

Communicating is interaction.

If we don't play the game, we ourselves would be

without a listener.

What causes upward communication to dwindle or dry up?

A major cause is **authoritarian listening**.

Another is corrective listening- by immediately bombarding him with our point of view.

A third is hasty **evaluative listening** -- listening with the intent of passing immediate judgment.

Hailed as a virtue for generations,* only in recent decades it has been discovered as an art and a science.

A large number of grievances that come upto management are traceable to the failure to listen, to learn to get at the facts why the employee had the grievance.

Many small grievances, trifles in themselves, become distorted in the minds through continued preoccupations.

Grievances often originate as small irritants. Sometimes the causes are valid, other times not; the grievances, however, are real in the mind of the worker.

He tries to talk about them to his immediate boss. You may think they are unimportant, and therefore pay no attention to them. So the man goes to his union representative for support, and a minor irritant may develop into a major conflict.

* please see page 199

To the question,

"Why do you go to your union fellow
when you have a foreman?",

one answer in a survey was:

"Well, you see, it is like this:

my foreman won't listen to me,

or anyone else for that matter!

He's always busy doing something else,

and so I go to my union fellow-

he listens!"

To the question, in another survey,

"What don't you like in your boss?",

many replied:

"He never listens to me."

If you do not listen, we really do not know
what another person thinks or what bothers him.
And what he thinks and what bothers him
will influence his behaviour.

The capable men in a business,
the ones the boss does not want to lose,
want him to listen to their opinions,
ideas and suggestions.

If responsible men are always being told
just what to do,
and never asked what they think should be done,
they will probably strike out for a job
where they feel their ideas
will be given a better hearing.

People want understanding **more than** sympathy.
They are anxious that the listener
gets this understanding.

If they get the feeling he does not give it,
they feel aggrieved.

Maybe because they have the hunch
that understanding is likely to lead
to fair play and justice.

People gravitate to those
who try to understand their point of view
through thoughtful listening,
inside or outside the organisation.
non-listening literally drives men away
from us **and** into the hands of others.

This is true even of equal levels.
Whether line and staff men
work together effectively and cooperate
in achieving their organisation's goals
depends not so much
how they talk to each other
as to how they **listen**.



3.

WHY LISTEN?

3.1

DOES IT PAY?

Do we think

it pays to listen well?

If so, how does it pay?

Can we spell out our thoughts here?



3.2

LISTENING PAYS

Those who have consciously and systematically observed and developed and are practising listening skill point out that listening pays hands down. Here are a few statements of theirs:

In all areas of public and private life skill in listening is of the utmost importance.

In any two-way communication situation—most work situations are of such a nature — to speak effectively, we should do the **first** part of communication **first**: we should listen.

Good listening aids us in sizing up a person, a meeting, a line of argument. It improves our messages going back to the speaker, deepens serious conversation and reduces verbal conflict.

I believe that the first step in good communication - anywhere - is listening. In planning, deciding and communicating on matters concerning how people think and feel and act and grow, one has only two general ways of getting at the data on which to manage — observing and listening.

Much of what we learn is obtained by listening.



It is as important to know
how well we understand what we hear
as it is to know
how well we understand what we read.

Good listening is vital to a manager's success:
If he is to communicate
and work effectively with subordinates
he must first understand
their reactions, feelings and viewpoints.

Listening increases competence.
One can learn by listening;
it provides time to think,
helps solve problems,
helps one make better decisions,
gives one self-confidence,
and can help sell.

Being a good listener has commercial value.
Lakhs of rupees in time losses,
hundreds of strikes,
and bad relationships of all kinds,
could be avoided if managers would listen
when irritations develop.

Paying attention to small gripes
often prevents them from blossoming
into big grievances.

If I do listen,
I can often keep the **little** grievances
from becoming **big** ones.

The manager who can listen to his staff,
who is prepared to understand their point of view



before he does anything finds that this action alone is often enough to dispel frustrations and to release the speaker's own abilities to handle the problem.

Listening is probably the superior's **strongest means of anticipating and preventing discontent and creating and maintaining high morale.**

It can reduce tensions and release the individual's creative forces. Difficulties are brought to him easily and are dealt with at the stage when they are easily seen as **mutual problems.**

By far the most effective method of tapping the ideas of subordinates is understanding listening in the many day-to-day informal contacts within the department and outside the work place. There are no full-blown systems that will do the job in any easier manner; nothing can equal a manager's willingness to hear.

Of all the sources of information we have, by which we can come to know, and accordingly 'size up', the personalities who are with us, **listening** to an individual is the most important. The easiest way to influence people and to impress them favourably is to induce them to talk about their own affairs and problems—and listen.



When **salesmen** listen, they will be better able
to tune in on customer cues
and make not merely sales but clients.
Poor salesmen do most of the talking themselves.
When one talks about something,
one often gets less critical;
one often modifies his opinions in his own mind.

We all need the reassurance
and satisfaction of an attentive listener.
Active listening gives satisfaction
to the man listening.

If you can put the newspaper away,
put your daughter on your knee, and ask her,
"What did you do today?"
and then listen thoughtfully
to what she says
for just fifteen minutes,
something wonderful happens to her **and** to you.

Trouble often disappears
when someone listens to us.

One friend, one person
who is truly understanding,
who takes the trouble to listen to us
as we consider our problems,
can change our whole outlook on the world.

Much of the art of medicine resolves itself
into the art of listening.
People judge even a doctor by
whether he is a good listener.



Listening skill improves our speaking skill.
There is a correlation
between effective speaking and good listening.
An extreme case in point is
that persons who are hard of hearing
are frequently unable to adjust
to the demands of a speech.
They speak louder than necessary.

At times, listening keeps
us out of trouble.

The first requisite of a good **conversationalist**
is an ability to listen.
Listening to another human being
is one of the friendliest acts we can perform;
it is also one of the most flattering,
whether at home or on the job.

A good listener is not only popular everywhere
but after a while he knows something!



3.3

LISTENING IS A SKILL

If there are so many advantages,
why don't people listen more or better?

It is because listening is
neither easy nor simple
even under the most favourable circumstances;
and the circumstances are **not** favourable
most of the time.

Listening consumes substantial physical energy.
When we listen well,
our heart beats pick up,
our blood circulates faster,
and our body temperature rises slightly.

It is difficult in another sense.
The **listener** has far more
to assimilate and to work with
than the **reader**.

The instantaneous nature of listening
necessitates concentrated effort.
The listener has no opportunity, as does the reader,
to go back over material and "listen again"
to anything he may have missed.
He must listen - that is hear and understand—
the moment the stimulus is presented.

Listening is not hearing.
Hearing is done with the ear.
Listening is done with the mind.



Hearing is something that comes naturally while listening is a **skill that has to be developed**. Skill at listening can, however, be cultivated as skill at tennis, piano playing or golf. But it needs sufficient practice. The practice itself should be in **correct listening habits**. **Practising bad habits, for however long,** cannot make us skilled listeners. Until the habits are formed, good listening means hard work. There is only one way to learn listening and that is to listen.

In any systematic skill development the following major steps are found:

1. A sense of urgency.
2. An awareness of possibilities.
3. An understanding of basic principles.
4. Adequate application of practices based on these principles.
5. Formation of integrated habits.
6. Constant upgrading.

To facilitate achievement on a self-development basis, each step is detailed in the following pages.



4. LISTENING RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 WHAT IS LISTENING?

Listening has been described in many ways.

Listening is an active communication process.
It is the first half of communication.

Listening is the process of
using the ears, the eyes and the brain
to seek out the meanings and the feelings
behind what the speaker is saying.

Listening is "getting inside the speaker"
for a full understanding
of his meanings and personal feelings.

"Learning while listening
is inside action on the part of the listener".

Listening is much more than hearing.
When we hear, we perceive only sounds;
when we listen we attach meaning to aural symbols
and to all other elements of the total situation
in which the words are uttered.

To listen would mean to get meaning
from every aspect of speaking situation.

Since the assimilation of meaning
sometimes starts before a speaker says a word,
and since it very frequently continues

long after he had said his final one,
listening is not merely limited
to the immediate speaking situation

Listening is also **a function**
of the nonverbal symbols
which accompany a speech.

For example, our interpretation of
how firmly an expressed conviction is held,
how cordial a verbal welcome is,
or how soon a proposed action should be taken,
results as much from what the listener sees
as from what he hears.

That is, the listener must interpret
both visual and oral symbols
to determine the meaning intended.

Listening may be defined
as **an attitude towards other people**
and what they are attempting to express.

It begins with attention,
both the outward manifestation
and inward alertness.

It includes constructive responses
that help the other person express
both his thoughts and feelings.

Listening can also be defined
as giving close attention
with the **purpose** of hearing in such a way
that **understanding** is achieved.

We listen with more than ears.
We listen for more than sound.
We listen with all appropriate senses
to perceive the total situation,
to receive the total communication.



Committees** are a **complex** listening situation. The **process of listening** in such a situation is described thus by one authority.*

- a. The stimulus, primarily sound, originates from some member of the conference group.
- b. Other stimuli such as bodily movements, facial and manual expressions, and external distractions, join, reinforce or even dilute the sound stimulus.
- c. The audible stimuli strike the ear and are "auded".
- d. The non-audible stimuli are directed to the other senses such as sight, smell, touch, taste, fear, pain, balance etc.
- e. Aided by conscious effort on the part of the receiver to gain understanding, the various stimuli are conducted to the nervous system of the receiver where they are decoded, interpreted, and reinforced by experience.

** Communication is giving and getting a message. If more than two people are present, the ratio of listening increases. If there are five people around, listening will be around 80% of the time.

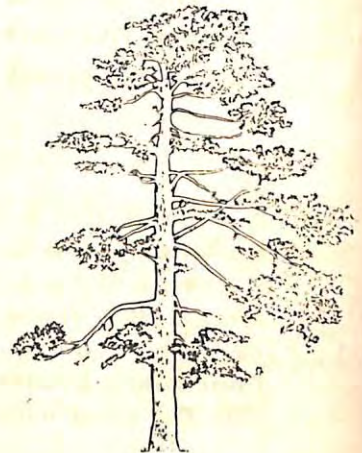
* Earnest D. Nathan, **The listening Spirit And The Conference Leader**, *Training and Development Journal*, Jan. 64. Used with permission.

- f. Decoded and reinforced,
and combining the effects of all sense involved,
the communication is completed
resulting in understanding
in the terms intended
by the sender of the stimuli.

"Perceptive listening

is a conscious, cognitive effort
involving primarily the sense of hearing
reinforced by other senses
and leading to understanding."

When perceptive listening is inspired
by a sincere desire to understand,
it becomes more than a sensory process.
It becomes a dynamic process;
it becomes an attitude
well expressed by George Eliot
as a "listening spirit";
it makes way for the skill or art of listening.



4.2

SOME FACTS OF LISTENING

Listening is a complicated process.
At the present time we do not
have enough scientific data
to enable us to describe completely
the total listening process,
involving, as it does, the physical,
intellectual, psychological and social forces.
We have enough facts, however,
to learn the skill systematically.

Facts do not oblige us.
We have to oblige facts.
Research so far has brought out
many facts on listening.
We may consider some here.

The **root** of the listening problem is
that the brain can work faster than the mouth.
Ears can respond to speech sounds
even at 300 words per minute.
The brain of course functions even more rapidly.

The average rate of speech of Indians is
around 130 words per minute
whereas it has been found
that people can comprehend speech
at as much as 400 words per minute
without significant loss.

This leaves a wide **gap**
between speaking speed and listening speed,
creating problems and opportunities



for the one at the listening end.
The more our psychological set
or state of expectancy
coincides with the actual content of a speech,
the more effective will be our listening.

Thanks to this gap,
the brain 'loafs' along,
only partially occupied with trying to comprehend
what is being spoken at any given instant.
The **spare time** is, in fact, used for
what we are going to say,
what we should have said,
any associated idea,
or even an idea not so associated.
This extra thinking capacity can be put to use
in improving the comprehension and retention
of the spoken message.
In the average listener,
just the reverse occurs!
The brain engages in activities
that impede comprehension.
Often, day-dreaming takes over this vacuum.

One such **impending activity**
is planning items of individual interest.
These may be more interesting
than the message of the speaker.

The brain ignores the speech
for longer and longer periods
and a significant portion of the message is lost.

The speaker's utterances
play upon the entire past experience of the listener,
stimulating him into response at many levels.



It takes good training to avoid succumbing to irrelevant **internal distractions** while listening.

The distractions can even be relevant. The speaker may attack our fond beliefs. Instead, of concentrating upon the message, the brain uses some of the unoccupied time to summon up arguments against the speaker's position. Or the message can be such that we find the opinion similar to our own.

" I know what he is going to say next." So saying we slacken and the important differences are lost in the mental maelstrom.

Is this not avoidable?

It is if listening is learnt properly; but **people learn to listen** the way they learn to walk, say; at an early stage they start to do what comes naturally.

Like poor postures in walking, bad listening habits come fairly easily to many people.

If posture becomes too bad, some corrective exercises are thought of. But little is done about poor listening except to urge that they "pay attention when I'm talking." It has been assumed that children know how to hear everything that is said to them



unless of course the child has a hearing defect.
This is left to nature,
unlike in reading, writing
and to some extent speaking.

Practically in no part of the world
listening is being taught at school,
systematically that is.

What little we have learnt about listening
is through **accidental absorption**.

It has not been consciously cultivated
as a personal skill.

Many teachers assume that their students get
so much listening practice in their classes
that training in listening is unnecessary!

If a person has not acquired the listening skills,
his ability to understand what he hears will be low.
irrespective of his level of intelligence,
it has been observed.

It has also been observed that learning to read
will **not** automatically teach us to listen;
that listening ability is
not closely related to hearing acuity.

Nor does the daily opportunity to listen
make us perfect.

We may be practising faults instead of skills.
Listening requires different skills from reading
because the spoken word is not connected
in the same manner as the written word.

Another finding **regarding listening is this**.
Immediately after we have listened



to someone talk
we remember only about half of what we heard,
no matter how carefully we thought we had listened.
Two months after listening to a person,
most of us remember 20% or less.

There is a **wide range** of listening ability—
the highest performer does
about **six times** as well as the poorest—
and the best listening ability is found
at the lower age levels.

Many listen to **facts and not to ideas;**
yet knowing the facts
without understanding the idea behind them
is like having a photographic mind
and not being able to do anything
with the information recorded.

From the time we acquire awareness,
and certainly from the time we begin school,
we develop a great respect for facts.
This is proper.

But all we do is to try to get the specific—
the instances, statistics, definite quotations,
proper names, the narratives—
then we miss the significance—
the important generalizations that should emerge
from good, analytical, critical listening.

Facts illustrate and support generalizations.
"We should listen
essentially then for the letter—
to get the gist, the main idea—
and test the specifics to see
if, in fact, they justify the generalizations.



To the extent that we can also remember the specifics, fine; but the primary listening objective is the over-all reasoning".

Another unhelpful fact is that we tend to listen to almost anything that supports our secret feelings and aurally reject what doesn't support those feelings.

Then we have **emotional filters**.

There are words and phrases that upset us emotionally and thus impair our listening.

They block a word or a phrase trying to enter our ears.

They turn into **deaf spots**.

If the Accountant comes to us and says, for example,

"I have just heard

from the Income Tax Department,"

we suddenly breathe harder and think:

"That blessed department, can't they leave me alone?"

We have stopped listening to the Accountant.

meanwhile, the Accountant is saying:

"There is a chance by which we can save 3 lakhs rupees this year."

But we don't hear him

because the words "Income Tax Department" have inflicted an emotional deaf spot.

Something of this kind happens to all of us; only the words that send us temporarily deaf are different.



Thus, the one relevant to us may be
communism, free enterprise or sex.

All of us hold in our mind
a list of emotionally laden words
that are trouble-makers
in the listening and learning process.
As soon as we hear them,
we mentally switch off.

Most of us use **labels**
and labels when heard trigger off
a whole surge of emotions
that we have learned to associate with the labels.
When this happens, emotions take over
and logic is tossed out.

Every listener has special **soft spots**
where messages are blocked or distorted.
There are thus people who cannot listen
to figures or politics.

We do **the converse too**.
When someone says
what we especially want to hear,
we open our ears wide, accepting everything—
truths, half-truths or fiction.

In a listening situation,
most people seem to be
self-centered rather than **client-centered**
with the result we are more interested in
what **our** next statements will be,
or how well we seem to get **our** message over,
than getting what the other person has got to say.



According to LeRoy Wilkie,
most of today's adults attended schools
that devoted about six years to reading study
but not a single day
to teaching listening techniques.
So, after graduation, they stepped out
to make a living in a world of
radios, telephones, conferences,
societies, committees, interviews and the like.

In this world of spoken words,
they would spend
half of their communications time listening—
with no thought of listening intelligently,
systematically, meticulously, purposefully.
But it's not surprising, he adds.
Who would ever think listening is a skill
that can be learned and improved
through conscious effort and training?

As we progress on the job,
we tend to listen less.
We all did a better job of listening
when we were beginners,
on our first jobs, in the first few days;
despite the situational necessity
that as we go higher up in management,
our decisions become more important
and we've to rely more on
what others know, feel and tell.



4.3

THREE TYPES OF LISTENING

The three major types of listening are:
appreciative listening,
informative listening and
critical listening.

We do **appreciative listening**
when we listen to oral interpretation of literature,
humorous speeches and theatrical performances.
We seek here pleasurable sensory
and intellectual satisfaction.

In **informative listening**
we learn essential facts, relationships and processes.
The aim here is to increase comprehension.
Accuracy plays an important part
in this type of listening.

The goals in **critical listening** are
analysis and judgement.
Here we seek to evaluate.
We weigh the evidence presented,
we look for fallacies in reasoning,
we judge contents by accepted standards
and we try to determine the feasibility
of any action suggested.

The three types of listening
are not necessarily mutually exclusive.
We listen critically even when we are concerned
primarily with comprehension;
we certainly enjoy the niceties
in a persuasive speech.

5.

BARRIERS TO LISTENING

5.1

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO GOOD LISTENING?

If people do not listen well,
there should be some obstacles in the way.

What can be those obstacles?

Some of the obstacles may be
within themselves
and some outside in the environment.

What according to you
are the obstacles within themselves?
And what outside in the environment?
Please list them here.

5.2

EXTERNAL BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING:

The following factors in the environment have been noticed as barriers to effective listening:

Impaired hearing may be the reason.

If one's hearing is below par, one surely cannot listen well.

Or it may be fatigue.

Listening means being alert and that means energy:

it takes more energy to listen than even to do physical labour.

Lack of energy may be the reason for poor listening.

Listening is affected by tiredness and indisposition.

Distractions can prove a barrier to good listening.

Distractions may be from things or people.

Heat, for example, makes it difficult to listen- and more so after a sumptuous meal!

Or it may be competing **noise**.

A few can tune out what they do not want to hear and tune in what is important to them; not all people can do that.

Or **glare**, may be.

If a man sits with a window behind him,



the person facing the light
cannot comfortably see the other man's face.

Then, of course, there are **the interruptions**
from people and telephone.

Despite our good intentions, therefore,
we cannot listen effectively,
if our hearing is impaired,
or if we are tired or tense
or if there are distractions
from noise, light, and heat
or interruptions from people.

The indication then is
that we should take note
of the physical and environmental facts
and **consciously** provide for them.

Can we think of a few remedies
to improve the conditions for listening?
Please list them here.

5.3

INTERNAL BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING:

The other category of obstacles is more subtle and inside oneself: this set of barriers takes the form of **mental attitudes**.

For example, we **prefer things to men**—
we prefer processing papers,
or checking machines.
Listening to our men "can wait".

We also tend to be **self-centered**:
we see everything only in terms of ourselves;
we find others not quite so interesting.
The others talk about themselves, their interests,
and this is not what we wish to listen to.

All of us have our **prejudices**
and prejudices prove
a block to productive listening.
They prevent us from hearing things as they are.
For, prejudice means **prejudging**,
it means making up our mind
in advance of the evidence
and with no intention of changing it.
If not in so many words, we say:
"My mind is made up;
don't confuse me with facts."
Prejudice lets us hear only what we want to hear;
the rest gets lost or distorted.

Modified forms of prejudice
equally affect good listening.
We permit a single statement of a speaker
to let us vote for or against him.
If the single statement fits in
with our own earlier belief,
we are for the speaker; otherwise, we are against:
we do not hear him fully.

Yet another modification is
that we **avoid listening** to another viewpoint
lest our established ideas may get a blow,
lest we have to change
our present way of doing things.
We find it convenient
not to be exposed to 'all sorts of ideas'.
There is the all too human tendency
to hear what we want to hear
and turn a deaf ear
to unpleasant and discordant notes.

This we continue to do
even after paying for such attitude once.
Another hindrance to good listening is
that we tend to **dwell**
on the inadequacies of the speaker,
on his manner of speaking.

We say: Look at his shabby shoes,
and rashly conclude:
How can this man say anything worthwhile?

A related hindrance is prejudice;
depending upon our persuasion
we would rather not listen
to a Communist or a RSS leader.



Even when we are in the same social level,
we have problems of listening and understanding.
When there are gaps in these levels
and there are **social distances**,
whether in a working place or elsewhere,
listening becomes all the more complex.
This particular barrier must be considered
first from the standpoint
of the subordinate as a listener
and second from the standpoint
of the superior as a listener.
Normally, we tune ourselves to the speaker
when we respect
the authority and traditions behind him.
Not so to the subordinate.
The result is that instead of listening
to a superior's words,
subordinates frequently place undue importance
upon physical and non-verbal stimuli.
A superior's smiles, gestures or scowls
may colour or distort a message
so that it becomes lost.

Status is frequently a barrier to good listening.
The status of the superior demands
that he be preoccupied with matters
somewhat foreign to those of the subordinates.
He is likely to be concerned
with profits, costs, taxes and efficiency.
The subordinates know about such matters;
but are concerned with 'lower' level problems.
Subordinates interpret the message
in terms of their own status and background.

There is then **the cultural barrier**,
the barrier bred by a competitive society.



Our tendency is to contain than to consult,
to speak than to listen.
Even when we listen,
our orientation is in error;
we listen to refute, to offer a rejoinder.
This necessitates half-hearing;
for the rest of the time
is spent in making up our reply.

Tendency to interrupt **the speaker**
is a big barrier.

We chop off sentences other people start;
we raise our voice until the other person stops;
or, worse still, we talk simultaneously.
We cannot wait for the opportunity
to express our own opinions.
We crash in with words like,
"that reminds me."

We are all deeply **preoccupied**
in ourselves **and our own worlds**.
We think that what is in our minds
is more important
than the subject under discussion.
Often we want to show off.
We want to tell a good story,
propose an idea first, or ask the first question.
We want to prove that we too had the same idea,
or we want to amplify it.
So we do not wait
till the other man concludes his remarks.

Also, we are so anxious to prove
our quickness of thinking and understanding
that we **assume** what he has in his mind
before he speaks!



We do not let him explain himself;
we interrupt with a "I know your problems."
This particularly happens
when someone comes to us with a problem.
Almost a moment after he begins speaking,
we think we have the answer !
After all, we are smart;
we have met the problem before;
we are quick to understand it.
Why waste time?

Our first impulse is to interrupt.
If we have restrained ourselves,
we give the answer
that we have had in mind from the first,
even though this may be inappropriate
in view of the details he gave later.

If active interruption is a hindrance
passive indifference is also a hindrance.

Some of us are *ashtavadanis* and *satavadanis*—
we can do eight things at a time,
or even hundred things at a time.
So we tell them:
Don't mind my attending to other things;
you go ahead and say what you wish to say.
Only, with such a kind of reception
the other person is not happy—
he or she does not feel like talking
on a sufferance basis,
unless he/she **has** to.



Equally a hindrance,
from the speaker's point of view,
is the obvious **impatience of the listener.**

We are rushed for time and we make this known;
we hurry the speaker:
and he does not wish to proceed talking.
The impatience is occasionally shown by the fact
that we play with objects on the table.
We avoid looking at the speaker
and look out of the window;
we almost invite outside distractions.

We all like to preserve the **status quo**.
So when ideas that we do not like
are spoken by others,
we flick the switch and turn over the receiver!

Another hindrance to good listening,
not so obvious to the speaker,
is our **fighting for the floor**,
our **planning** what we will say next.
We use the time the other person is talking
to **frame** our next remark.
And we are so busy organising our replies
that we do not make sure
we know what we are replying to.

We have then **faked listening**.
Some of us look at the speaker,
nod, smile and shrug our shoulders
and even laugh mechanically.

We do not wish to listen
but we want the other person
to think we are listening.
He is, however, **not fooled**—
our fixed stare and our senseless comments
tell the real story.



These are all serious barriers
to productive listening
and are not easy to tackle.
What steps according to you
are indicated to keep off
these blocks to productive listening?
Please list them here.



5.4

THE SEMANTIC* BARRIER

*Do we receive a speaker's words
as he expects them to be received and interpreted?
Since we have no direct control over the speaker,
how can we avoid misinterpreting what he says?
Obviously, we can find the correct meaning
in a conversation
by asking the speaker for clarification.
But what about speeches, the radio, etc.?
This is where our grasp of semantics
and understanding of our own mental processes
will help us to listen better in a big way.*

*First, let's take a look at
some of the problems**
caused by the "semantic barrier."*

WORD LIMITATIONS.

A noted semantics researchers, Prof. E.H. Babbitt, made a vocabulary study showing that the typical college student has a grasp of about 60,000 words. The "average" person understands and uses between 25,000 and 35,000.

* General semantics is the study of the relations between language, thought, and behaviour: between **how we talk**, therefore **how we think**, and therefore, **how we act** (S.T. Hayakawa).

** This is an extract from the article: **The Elusive Art of Listening** by Le Roy Wilkie and Charles Vervalin in *Refiner* Aug., Sept., Nov. 1962. Used with permission.

These so-called average people
would have approximately a ninth grade education.

The point is, words are **finite**.
They are limited in both number and meaning.
Yet, words must be arranged and used
in a way to convey concepts and messages
about an infinite number of things.
Thus, **language has no meaning in and of itself**.
It takes meaning only when a word is spoken
and someone reacts to it.

Meaning, then, does not exist in words
but in people.
Very abstract ideas must be uttered
through the relatively non-abstract
media of speech.
So this is the crux
of the "semantic barrier" in communications.

IMPERFECTION OF LANGUAGE.

Like brushing one's teeth,
the act of defining a word
is both boring and essential.
It's boring
because it is more interesting and exciting
to listen-talk-read,
without considering the meaning of words.
Everyone knows what "refining" is.
Why define it?
Everyone also knows
what "justice" and "truth" are.
Yet, is there really agreement
on how such abstract words should be defined?



Definitions are essential
if communication is to be intelligible.
Most people are aware of this.
And modern semanticists feel
they are very original
when they repeat the truism
in their own complicated terminology.
But it remains pleasanter and easier to simply say
"justice is being upheld"
or that "truth is being defended"
than to indicate the precise meaning of such terms
by using less abstract words
or specific illustrations.

All language is imperfect
because words,
in the terminology of modern semantics,
are only signs or symbols
for the speaker's experience
or the objects or situations he speaks about.
But by placing yourself
in the psychological mood of the other person
(the lover does this with reference to his beloved,
and the reader of poetry
to the glowing lines before him)
you are thus better equipped to understand others,
and to be understood.

THE MEANING OF MEANING.

The famous psychologist Kurt Lewin
did some interesting research showing the dangers
of the over-simplified
labelling (stereotyping) tendency
in our language structure.



He blamed Aristotle's influential attempt to classify things as a better means to understanding them, as having contributed to the "labelling" problem. Thus, most languages have taken on words which although creating order by placing objects in categories, do not do justice to the unique characteristics of objects thus described. This is especially true of the human organism, or other abstractions such as are often found in engineering. Let's further clarify this point by some illustrations.

ILLUSTRATION 1

Alfred Korzybaski, another psychologist who dealt with semantics, once brought out the problem this way to a New York magazine editor:

"Language is very tricky.

Words don't mean what you think.

When a young lady says you are 'going too far' she really means you are 'coming too close'.

Now those are one-syllable words, almost every one should know.

Yet, what do they mean?

Is 'too far' actually 'too close'?"

ILLUSTRATION 2

Here's how Dr. Warren Guthrie, head of Western Reserve University's



Speech Department

illustrated the same point in a speech he made:

"I was once confronted with this problem
as a news reporter on television.

I had to use a word

to describe a tragedy

in which two ships had collided off Cape Henry,
one a Navy oiler, the other a civilian tanker.

"There had been a fire

and a number of people had been killed
in the collision.

As I reported that event

my language ran something like this:

'There are seven men known to be dead
on board the Navy oiler,

and there is an excellent chance

that a number of others

are trapped between decks.'

Now what I actually meant by excellent was

that there was a very high probability...etc.-

that it could be reported, virtually as a fact,

that this had happened.

But an amazing number of people

who had heard the programme

(and weren't reluctant to let me know about it)

thought I was taking

a kind of sadistic joy in the fact

that these poor fellows had been trapped.

No smile was on their faces

when they wrote letters indicating this reaction.

Was the important thing what I meant? No.

It was what people thought I meant."



ILLUSTRATION 3

The renowned Rabbi Robert Kahn, Houston, Texas,
tells the story
of an American minister in a bilingual pulpit
who alternated his preaching,
one week in German - the next in English.
He became troubled
by a recurring pattern of reaction of his sermons.
When he preached in German,
older members of his congregation
whose native language it was
were pleased and appreciative,
always complimenting him
on his fine sermon and excellent ideas.
But when he preached in English,
these same people made critical remarks.
His "ideas were too modern, - too unorthodox."

This happened so often
that he determined upon an experiment.

In an eight-week period
he gave four sermons.
First he delivered them in German —
then gave an exact translation in English.
To his amazement (and amusement)
the same thing recurred.
The week he preached in German,
older congregants were pleased.
But when he preached the same sermon in English
they made critical comments
about his "modernism."

The implication of this curious experience is
that the congregation did not really listen



to the German sermons.
It was **enough** to hear their familiar mother tongue,
to savour the memories
of childhood in the old country,
to relish the turns of German speech.
They listened without hearing.
But the English, being strange, required
concentration to understand.
When they understood it,
the ideas, were "too modern."

ILLUSTRATION 4

One final illustration to show
how jumbled our "word world"
can get sometimes:

Let's take the simple word **fast**.

A **fast** racehorse is one that runs rapidly.

He is **fast**, that is, unless he has been tied **fast**,
in which case he is no longer **fast** because he is **fast**.
If he were not tied **fast**
he would be **fast**
because he would no longer be **fast**.

Now let's use **fast** to refer to a colour.
If a colour is **fast** it doesn't run at all
as our racehorse did when he wasn't **fast**.
How about using **fast** in connection with religion?
When we **fast**, we abstain from something.
But not too many years ago,
a young lady who abstained from almost nothing
was referred to a **fast**!
See, the word is the same,
but its meaning has changed several times.



Suppose the process engineer
casually mutters something to an uninformed
layman about a "cat cracker."
How easy it could be to infer
that "cat cracker" is some sort of tidbit
(like a dog biscuit) for a cat.
This really isn't as facetious as it sounds.

Suggestions to tackle the semantic barrier
are discussed in a later section —
the last section on Action Pointers.



6.

TESTED LISTENING PRACTICES

6.1

PERSUASIVE LISTENING PRACTICES: AS OBSERVED

Over the years good listening behaviour has been observed; but more recently this has been systematically observed and recorded by keen students of communication. This is described 'good' in the sense it makes for effective communication—proper understanding, fruitful response, and enduring reaction and results generally.

In all probability you would have observed the many aspects of good listening behaviour yourself and absorbed them too.

Since listening is both an attitude and an act, the listening behaviour of executives has been spelled out in this section in some detail. Hopefully, it will provide an action-starter to some and self-audit checklist to others.

Listening is an art and it is reasonable, therefore, to concede there is more to it than is said here.

You would like to add from your own observation.

When we consider these for possible practice,
we should remember
they are not mere mannerisms for imitation;
they are all external expressions
of internal attitudes.

Those who listen to good purpose
and thereby step up their effectiveness
are found to do the following and more:

PHYSICAL AIDS

With annual physical examination
they take a **hearing test**.

"If the doctor prescribes a hearing aid, I wear one.
There is no more stigma attached
to hearing aids than to glasses, I suppose."

If climate, noise or other surroundings
are unhelpful,
they make it a point to get up, walk around
or go to a more **congenial place**,
a place where distractions are minimum,
where the other man can talk without strain,
and where they themselves can listen well.

They **arrange** their offices so as to make light
help listening rather than hinder it.
And some are found to close the Venetian blinds
or turn off the lights on their desk.

They **schedule** their listening sessions
to the mornings.

"To listen well, I have to be fresh."
Generally, they are found to **make it easy**
for the men to talk to them
and for them to hear the men.

SUPPORTIVE STEPS

They seem to have realised that non-listening is discourteous and listening is **courteous**.

When another person starts talking, they stop. They are found to say,

"I'm sorry, you please go ahead",

"I'm sorry you were saying".

They **avoid interrupting-to disagree or correct**.

They wait until the speaker is through before responding.

They go for "the pregnant pause".

"I tell myself: No reply

until thirty seconds after the last pause."

They wait a few seconds after a man stops talking to give time to think about their reply.

"This gives me an opportunity to digest what was said,

also gives me time to frame a good reply."

More importantly, this motivates the juniors to come out with things that are hard to say.

They give themselves plenty of **time for listening**-they organize their work in that fashion.

"Listening costs time but it pays.

It saves time and costs

that might develop from mistakes and grievances."

They listen to all concerned,

not only to a 'select' few.

Incidentally, they listen to **many subjects.**

They have developed

"an appetite for listening"-

for listening to a variety of expository presentations,
cultural, educational and inspirational.

When they give twenty minutes,

they give twenty minutes.

It is clear to the other person

they are **in no hurry,**

and he won't be rushed.

They listen with obvious willingness to listen.

They listen to **all** the subordinates;

they do not select their communicators.

When they listen, **they listen.**

They turn to him, watch his eyes,

nod their head from time to time,

comment, question and actively participate.

They **hear a person out.**

They give each man full opportunity

to have his say:

they let the problem off his chest;

they do not cut him off or interrupt him.

"If he is full of emotional steam

and if we do not let him blow off steam,

the steam will only build up pressure.

By listening understandingly,

We will reduce his anger and resentment:

we will also learn about his problem."

They respond to feelings

without criticising them.



"The recognition you provide encourages further upward communication and improves employee's morale by giving him greater freedom to express himself."

They actively **encourage** by gestures and words the other man to talk.

One valuable technique they adopt is to put open-ended questions, and avoid questions that call for a yes-or-no answer.

They are heard to make statements like:

"That's interesting. **What** did you do then?
I realise the situation has been difficult for you;
how did you feel about it?"

They ask questions in a **permissive fashion**.

They ask questions like-

Why don't you.....?

Don't you believe.....?

as against

Did you.....?

Do you believe.....?

From time to time, they 'play back',

they reflect their feelings,

they restate in their own words

what has been said by the other person.

They are found to say:

"As I understand it, you would rather not..."

In **counselling sessions**,

they are found to reflect the clients' feelings.

"Until I can repeat it back

in my own words to your satisfaction,

how can I assume

I have understood your position?"



If the person contradicts himself,
they simply reflect the statement
as it was expressed
without reference to the inconsistency.

They make it known they don't mind bad news
and they receive such news
the same way they receive good news.

"If I give the impression
I don't like bad news,
I will not get bad news
though there is bad news."
They listen to complaints'
as easily as to praise.

When they come for a **talk**,
they sit alert,
leaning forward to what is being said.
They do not indulge in or
encourage side talks.



6.2

PERSUASIVE LISTENING PRACTICES: AS REPORTED

Good listeners,
when they were approached
to reflect and spell out
the conscious steps they have taken
to build certain helpful habits,
mentioned the following:

Just as I take effort when I **give** a message
I take effort when I **get** a message.
I have learnt the process of communication.
Maybe, the other person has not.
I try to present **an informed behaviour**.

I try to avoid what may be described
as **authoritarian listening**.
I **realise my unwillingness to accept**
information or any ill effects of my decisions.
If I project an image of infallibility,
only a foolhardy subordinate would say anything
that may affect the image.
Even the dullest of my men
are sensitive of my image of myself.

The first step to good listening
is being **ready to listen**.

My receiving set is open all the time.
I **am ready to listen**, any place or time.

If I have a listening appointment, however,
I **prepare myself** environment wise.



Whatever the distractions outside
I tune out what I do not want to hear,
and tune in what the visitor has to say.
If I feel unequal to the task,
because of illness for tension,
I manage to postpone the listening sessions,
atleast the more important ones.

I prepare myself mentally too.
I **inform myself** on the subject
about which the person wishes to speak to me.

I try to hear more and talk less
and I look for visual cues and interruptions
that show I am talking myself or about myself.

Papers and machines are important to me.
Much more important
are the people behind those papers and machines:
I tell myself.

I try to think
in terms of the other man's interests as well.
Then only understanding is possible, I find.

I listen with a purpose—
the purpose from the speaker's point is
that I do act on the message.

Either I do or report back.
If I can't, I explain to him why.
Otherwise, I know he'd stop sending messages.

I listen with a purpose—
often the purpose is to find out
what the other fellow thinks and feels.



**I am alert to everything
that my conversational partner is saying
and to what lies behind his words.
I don't assume anything.**

**Nor do I give the impression
that I already know what he wants to say.
I try to understand the real reason
behind his efforts to communicate with me.
I make sure, however,
I do not concentrate on each word
or on minor points.**

**I watch for and resist the tendency to be distracted
by the speaker's look or voice or mannerisms.
If I find it too distracting, I close my eyes
so I may concentrate on what he says.
I try to be relaxed
with a view to be alert,
with a view to concentrate
on what he is trying to convey.
I hold out my judgement
until he is through talking.**

**I listen to a man fully.
I have developed consideration,
If not respect for other's opinions.**

**I don't interrupt therefore.
If I need clarification I ask at the end,
after he has had his say.
Only occasionally I see the need though.**

**I do evaluate a speech but after and not before.
The main object is to comprehend each point made
by the speaker.**



Judgements and decisions should be reserved
after the speaker has finished.
I listen for the total meaning.

I listen not only for words or content,
but **also for feelings and attitudes.**
I listen with the eyes.

I keep my eyes on the speaker
for his tone of voice, his facial expression,
and the manner in which
he plays up or down a particular point,
his hesitations, his head and hand movements.

Sometimes **manner is message—**
the anger or the disgust, for example.
I listen to the message, not the words.

I realise people hold the meaning;
the words in themselves do not.
If I assume that I understand you
because I know what your words mean to me,
I am mistaken.

I know words have **multiple meanings.**
Identical words may not mean the same thing
to you and me.

I try to interpret the words
in terms of the speaker's experience.
Seeing the world through the other person's eyes
is not easy but essential
for understanding the other person's point of view.
for understanding the other person's point of view.

I check to see by frequent summarising
that we have the same referents,
that there is meeting of the minds.



I request him to explain
what sounds vague to me.

We may not agree on what is said by us;
we should understand the same thing
by what is said.

I have tried myself to be sensitive
to **implied meanings**.

I look for the unstated purposes of a speaker.

People hesitate to say little things
because they might make them
look small or stupid.

I look for these little things.

I am more interested to know
why a person thinks in a particular way
than what he thinks.

When a complaint is made about someone,
I take special caution
to keep off prejudice,
to remember accusation is not proof,
to **remember first informants influence me unduly.**

I don't rush to conclusions.

I vote for delayed reaction.

I should perhaps emphasise this.
Understanding does not mean agreement;
but unless I understand
I may not know the areas of disagreement.

I do one thing more: I **practise empathy.**
I try to place myself in his shoes,



and think up supporting arguments
he himself has overlooked.
This way I am able to understand his point of view,
and handle it realistically.

Yes, I take a **client-centred**
or speaker-centred approach.
I try to see things from his point of view.
This is what I do when I speak;
this is what I do when I listen too.
I learn about his background and position
and try to figure out why he speaks what he speaks.
This does not mean I do not relate what I hear
to my own application of the message.
This does mean that by analysing the message
in terms of the sender,
I understand it better,
and I am better organised to deal with it.

If a person comes to my office
for advice or counsel,
the rule with me is to avoid giving advice,
but listen and play **the non-directive listener.**

I just mirror what the man tells me
and let him decide what he is to do.

In the words of the great psychologist Carl Rogers,
understanding **with** a person, not **about** him,
is effective in bringing about
major changes in personality.

I also remember to have heard this.
One of the fundamental principles
of psycho-analysis
is that the analyst remains almost totally silent



while the patient leads himself
to his own solutions.
The analyst merely guides him
over the rough spots,
constantly prodding and encouraging him.

I do pre-listening.

If I have to attend a talk,
one on a difficult subject,
I prepare myself by thinking about the subject,
by reading about it.
I prepare, so to say, my goals for listening.

Certainly I don't avoid
what I find difficult to understand.
In fact, I listen to radio talks
on **varied subjects.**
No subject is now uninteresting to me.

I start with the basic assumption
that even the most boring person
may have some good ideas to share
and therefore are worth listening to.

I make the further assumption
that unless I hear a person 100%
I may miss **the** 1% sense
if that is the **only** sense available.

I also make the assumption
that there are very few skilled speakers,
and message is more important
than the mode of delivery.
The world is too full of
poorly organised talks,
disjointed conversations and rambling letters.

If I wait for them
to oblige my standards of encoding,
it will be a long wait indeed.

Whether the speaker works hard
to put the ideas across,
I do not quite care.
But I work hard to "draw"
the ideas and information
from the speaker.

As soon as possible, I review the notes
and listen to what was **not** said,
the obvious points the reader has skipped.

After the speech is over,
if any point he made is not clear,
I ask for more information, more clarification,
and more elucidation of technical jargons.

I evaluate too as I listen.
I determine what is factual,
what is judgment, what is assumption
and what is crucial.

I agree this calls for effort
but it keeps me out of trouble.

I don't rush to evaluation;
I reserve my decision and judgement
until after the speaker has finished.
Then I review the main ideas
and make an assessment of them.

Being human, I too desire to hear
only what I want to bear.



and turn off anything I do not want to.
I **remind myself** of this phenomenon, however.

I am developing the habit of
looking for negative evidence.
I used to look for evidence
which proves me right in what I believe.
Now I look for evidence which proves me wrong.
I look for both sides of the picture,
in other words.

While listening to speeches,
I fight off distractions—
physical distractions like a dropped pencil,
and mental distractions
like an impulse for rebuttal.
My experience suggests
that the other man's point of view,
though partially erroneous,
contains ideas which offer
a refreshing approach to the problem discussed.

Negative feelings about the speaker and the situation
will block and distort any listening.
Only if I want to understand the speaker,
I can listen effectively.
I try hard (and succeed I would say)
to develop a real interest in the other person.

As a speaker makes his presentations,
I follow the central idea, the main points,
and **make brief notes** of them on 5 x 3 cards.
My notes are in abbreviated form;
I resist the temptation to get lost in my paper.
I do not try to remember all the words;
I do not get lost in all the details.

If I get time in between,
I summarise for myself what he has said so far,
reflect on what was said;
I talk to myself in amplification and support
of what I heard, and try to anticipate
what he is going to say further.

I find I listen well
when I take a dispassionate
noncontroversial, objective, attitude
as against a controversial, refuting pose.

Certain words bother me
like other words bother others.
I have made a list of them.
I have examined them at leisure.
They disturb me less now.

I wish to communicate
and communicating is not a matter
of just sending the message.
It is a two-way process, a **circular process**
between the speaker and the listener.

Listening is the other half of speaking.
Unless I complete my half, I won't be in business.
The grim fact is that unless the receiver is tuned in,
I can accomplish pretty little.
I should do the other half of speaking,
namely, listening **first**.
That is how I consciously create
an atmosphere for listening.
My listening puts him
in an attitude to listen too!



7.

PROBLEMS OF LISTENING

7.1

LISTENING PROBLEMS

If listening holds out opportunities,
it has its problems too.

TIME PROBLEM

The first problem is time.
Where is the time to listen
"to all the people"?

The tested practices adopted are:
You can set certain times for listening.
It is not the amount of time spent in listening
that counts, but the way you listen.
If you listen well and show it
by referring to what has been said,
you will cut your listening time in half.

If you take notes
and develop a reputation for **following things up**,
others will cut short their talk.
One reason they repeat is
they want to make sure you understand.

You can hold committee meetings*
of specific length, say, thirty minutes.



The reader may refer to our publication *Public Speaking
and Committee Meetings*

**You can go to your men
instead of having them come to you.
Reflect on your supervisory behaviour.
If you do not delegate
you cannot help your men
discussing the details by the hour.**

ENDLESS REPETITION PROBLEM

Some people repeat themselves—
they repeat again and again and still again
an idea, an attitude, an expression of feeling
or a description of an incident.

Why do they do so?

Maybe because such expressions represent
their more intense reactions;
they may represent the areas
of strong emotional involvement;
and they may represent a picture
or the particular reactions
they are wishing us to accept.

It can also be because

they are **not sure** of our attention.

They all provide valuable clues to understanding
and probably assisting the individual
or the organisation.

One answer is to give undivided attention.
The simple effort of facing the client'
and being alert to his questions,
changes in tone and facial expression,
and topic trends
helps him get over the obstacle of mistrust.



THE FREQUENT VISITOR PROBLEM

There is a group that will come again and again
for a good heart-to-heart talk with us.

They assure us

that they will do what we ask them to,
but they don't get around to doing it.

They are the sympathy seekers,
the complainers, the overly dependent people.

One way to tackle such people is
to make it known right at the beginning
that the interview will last
for a fixed length of time.

There may be an extra session,
but not an unending series of sessions,
and even the extra session may be conditional.

THE DULL SPEAKER AND OTHER SITUATIONAL PROBLEMS

Some speakers are difficult to understand—
they mumble, or hesitate or slur,
or are confusing or dull.

How can you manage to keep your interest
in **what** they say
when **how** they say it is confusing?

There is no easy way
to listen to such people
and absorb information.
Since it may pay to do so,
it is good to consider steps
to meet the situation.



One step is to relax
and keep our ears pricked with the idea
that we can learn something from the speaker.
We can hear him out before we raise our objections.
We can make notes of the main points.
A great audience makes a great speaker.
said John Milton;
and we can constitute a great audience;
we can be animated listeners.



7.2

CRITICAL LISTENING

If listening is difficult,
even more difficult is critical listening.
The reasons are not far to seek.

When we read persuasive material,
we have time to re-read,
we have time to reconsider,
we have time to react.

When, however, we listen to persuasive words,
the speaker almost wants an immediate answer and
the temptation is to say "Yes".
It is far easier to say "No",
to a printed page than to a living being.
The **time element** is against critical listening.

More people are more persuasive
in speech than in writing.
Spoken words in themselves persuasive
become particularly effective
in the hands of the skilled,
in the hands of the committed,
who are out to mould opinions,
who are out to get a premeditated response.
Unless we are **equally skilled in listening**,
they have an advantage over us.

It is easier to exaggerate,
to edit facts to fit arguments,
to play up or play down,
to take liberties with sense and sound,
to dramatise with tones and gestures, tears and
threats, when we speak than when we write.



When we write, we are more guarded
in what we say and the way we say it.
**This phenomenon goes against
the uncritical listener.**

When we read, we tend to be critical.
When we listen, we tend to **drop our defences.**
We seem to explain by saying
that the speaker has no motive
other than the simple desire to talk things over,
and accept without question much of what we hear.
We summarize and swallow;
we do not check and evaluate;
we **are credulous by way of the ear.**

Perhaps the most crucial factor
is **our craving for "inside dope".**
Unlike the written word available for any,
this is presumably for our exclusive consumption
and we do not wish to deny ourselves the privilege!
Much more so, when the speaker
speaks to us in a confidential fashion.

PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES

We have then the propaganda techniques,
used deliberately by interested parties,
in the knowledge that most people
are untrained and uncritical listeners.

Name calling is one such technique.
It takes the form of labels;
the propagandists and the unthinking speakers
alike use labels like "agitators", "union men",
"parasites", "no good", and "exploiters".

They select the labels
to produce a negative reaction in the listener
against something, cause or person.
The labels, when heard,
flood the listener with emotion,
his mind stops working on a logical basis,
and he may,
without giving his decision careful thought,
take the action
desired of him by the persuasive talker.

Glittering generalities also use labels
but they are aimed to play up
somebody or something.

"Patriotic", "socialistic", "efficient"
are such labels.

Such words cause good feelings
to fill the listener on an emotional level,
and again he may make a decision
to accept the speaker's proposition
without reasoning it out.

Glittering generalities are as difficult to resist.

A third technique is **transfer**.

With this device the speaker frequently refers
to sources of authority, prestige or reverence
that his listener respects.

He will not explicitly say
that the sources support his cause,
but he gives the impression that they do.

Such sources might include
a religious organisation,
the flag or "the will of the people".

Testimonial is a fourth.

The speaker cites testimony

from respected, well-known people,
in support of his cause.

This is particularly done in radio advertising.
Because a film star is well-known,
the noncritical listener fails to question
how the actor is qualified
to talk about technical factors
of an airconditioner, say.
The opposite version but used for the same effect
is the **plain folks** technique.
To sway the listeners,
the speaker tries to give us the feeling
that he is one like us.

A more common technique is **card stacking**.
The speaker edits the oral material
to prove the point he wants to make out.
He speaks any evidence
that supports his proposition,
and shrouds in silence any adverse evidence.
The noncritical listener accepts what he hears,
failing to look beyond the spoken words
for the full evidence.

Equally common is the **band wagon** technique.
This technique appeals
to follow-the-herd instincts
that are strong in most of us.
The persuasive speaker points out
that "millions" of people are accepting his idea,
often leaving the listener with a feeling
that he too should join the crowd.

Other techniques used in oral persuasion
would include:



flattery, appeals to fear, hate, anger,
frustration or discontent
growing out of lack of opportunity or misfortune;
the creation of devils or scapegoats
on which to place blame;
repetition and more repetition;
wishful thinking, rationalisation, humour, distrust;
identification with the great,
the beautiful and the good;
prophecies and positive suggestion.

Critical listening is becoming
more and more important
in this electornic era,
when we live in a world of
telephones, radios and mass media,
among politicians, faddists,
lobbyists and super-salesmen.

In its absence,
we will become victims of
commercial, nationalist and ideological
propaganda.

We will do things
we would not like to do—
we may even vote away our right to vote.

Critical listening is needed
as much as, if not more than,
critical reading.

Critical listening is particularly needed
in the areas of communication
called gossip, rumour, the "grapevine",
and character assassination.

All these depend mostly upon the spoken word
rather than on the written word.

The rumour-monger, gossip carrier and grapevine

think we are not critical of what we hear. They accept stories about other people or events, slander, predictions, and "exclusive information" for which there is little or no basis of facts. Once accepted, the misinformation is almost always passed along in a more distorted form.

Critical listening in our every day contact with the people is one answer to this form of twisted communication.

Critical listening does not mean we should challenge every word and sentence. It means that we should comprehend first and evaluate second.

It means we do not rush to conclusions; it means we pause, evaluate, and then accept or reject.

To so evaluate, four tests come in handy.

FOUR TESTS

Test of time is the first test.

The logic is that evidence that was good yesterday is not necessarily valid today.

We should try to determine the age of evidence that we hear.

If it is old, we should scrutinise more carefully than ever.



A second test is the test of source's competence.

The basis of this test is that evidence is affected by the source from which it comes. As listeners, we should carefully consider the source of evidence that we hear.

A third test is **the test of prejudice.**

This refers to the speaker's neutrality, or lack of it, on the subject on which he speaks. The politician's evidence is likely to be affected by the desire for votes.

The salesman's "facts" may be prejudiced by his natural desire to sell.

As critical listeners, we should quickly try to see what the speaker stands to gain from our acceptance of what he says.

The **test of completeness** is the fourth test.

The speaker skirts certain points that should be included in his talk.

As critical listeners, we should ask ourselves if the speaker is leaving anything out of the oral discourse.

If so, why does he leave it out?

If we use these four tests, among others, the man who uses oral persuasion for less honourable reasons will find his task **becoming increasingly difficult; which is as well for the society at large.**



7.3

CRITICAL LISTENING FOR TOP MANAGEMENT

If critical listening is important at any level, it is much more so at Top Management levels. If others have handicaps to critical listening, **Top Management has many more.**

For one thing, there is loneliness at the top. Top Management can meet only a limited number of people. A good section of this limited number is made up of those who attend to his personal needs, whose work makes possible physical proximity, the PA and the chauffeur, for example. The rest is made up of close friends or relatives. The balance is made up of the really enterprising who are out to get his ear.

For another, Top Management is **in a vulnerable position;** those who have the boss' ear often come prepared for a kill.

They know that Top Management is not quite organised or inclined to check and verify their statements.

They know too that Top Management men, perhaps because of the tensions under which they operate, are impulsive. These men dish out the material in a way that impulsiveness can feed on it fast.



This handicap is over and above the other handicaps of listening referred to in the earlier sections.

Those who have the advantage of Top Management's ear and who by sheer repetition, if not by judicious whispers, can influence the boss' behaviour are, often, ordinary, vindictive people. If any one whose "fate is in the boss' hands" care to slight **them**, consciously or unconsciously, they resort to character assassination, and, where possible, go for their head.

The close friends perhaps have no personal motives; they are only victims of those who use them as a medium to reach the boss's ear. Being not trained listeners, they do not check and doublecheck statements they hear from interested parties. At the same time, they pass on the message to the boss as if they are their deliberate verdicts on men.

Coming as it does from friends, men in Top Management position tend to act on such messages, often committing an unfairness to the aggrieved.

The result is that almost daily thousands of people get injustice at the hands of Top Management.



Charitably disposed as they are,
and understanding as they are,
the aggrieved **do not blame** the Top Management;
they say 'it is because of the devils in between'.
At the same time, **such avoidable injustice**
affects the larger interests of Top Management.
The **mischievously inclined** do not know,
and perhaps do not care,
for the larger interests.
Unless, therefore, Top Management,
while accepting this handicap as a reality,
provides for it consciously,
they may have to go
without the able and the decent.
When competition stiffens, Top Management
cannot forego the able and the decent.

What can Top Management do about it?

The **realities** are indeed grim.
We want the company of friends
and we do want to please them;
and acting on their word unquestioningly
does please them.

We are **human**.

We form impressions of people
on the basis of what we hear of them
for the first time.

Repetitions are hard to resist.

Eternal vigilance is not merely the price of liberty
but of leadership as well.



Applying the four tests of critical listening outlined in the earlier section would greatly help.

Though more common in India, this is a **universal phenomenon**; and as such tested approaches have been developed to forestall the sad effects; a few of the reported ones are outlined below.

One is to read and re-read books like *Panchatantra*. Insights available in such stories (as, for example, the story of the Lion, the Bull and the Jackal) are of great practical and personal value to Top Management.

Another is to vote for **reaction time**. They listen to the inevitable company but take **time off** to consider action thereon. They do not react immediately— they ask for and insist on time to consider.

A **third** is to ask people: What makes you say that? How did you come to this conclusion? They are keenly aware of the tendency of people to generalise on the basis of a **stray event**.

Where it is a matter of character vilification, they insist that the man vilified be present when the charges are made. They say: I would like to hear **his** side of the story.



Where this is not possible,
they make it a point
to hear the other man's side of the story
and they make a special effort to listen to him
since they know their mind is already prejudiced.

Another approach is to say:
"To be fair to everybody, I am taking notes.
I will check up with him
and get his side of the story.
Later, probably I will discuss it all
in the presence of both of you."

Yet another approach taken is
to silence such men.
"You won't bring another such story to me.
Do you understand?
Yes, I don't like this wormy behaviour."



7.4

OVER-LISTENING: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

**Anything can be overdone
and listening is no exception.**

It is well therefore to listen
to the warnings of a researcher:*

The danger of listening lies
in our idealizing or attempting
to ape the "parlor psychoanalyst."
Excessive listening can confuse the listener
as much as it does the speaker,
who in many cases, believe it or not,
is looking for an answer to a problem,
not psychic ointment for a deep emotional wound.

Here are some of the mantraps
into which excessive use of ears can land you:

YOU WAKE SLEEPING DOGS.

You can get in over your head
in so-called "emotional content."
For example, it may be, perfectly obvious to you
from a subordinate's words
that you are his father image.
You know he is venting
his repressed hostility on you for that reason.



* The following extracts are reproduced from *DEVELOPING YOUR EXECUTIVE SKILLS* by Auren Uris. Copyright by McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1955. Used with permission.

Where do you go from there?
Unfortunately, that information does not give you
much of a foundation
for practical dealing with the man.

In most cases, you would be smart
to blink at such revelations.
Forth-right, matter-of-fact dealing with people,
even the office neurotic,
is more likely to keep you out of trouble
than trying to apply the crumbs of knowledge
you recall from your college courses
in abnormal psychology.

YOU PROJECT.

An employee brings you a personal problem.
You are perfectly willing to let him talk himself.
But it is natural that you will interpret
what he tells you on the basis
of your own experiences and your own problems.
It takes professional training
to be able to do otherwise.
And although you think
you understand what his problem is,
you may be miles away
from an accurate and objective assessment,
no matter how sympathetically you listen.
It is probably professional help he needs—
a doctor, lawyer, bank officer—
not an amateur, however well-intentioned.

OVER-COMMUNICATION.

By being ever ready to lend an ear,
you run the danger of being talked



deaf, dumb, and blind.
And you just simply haven't got the time.
Sure there are situations
when the greatest service and kindness
you can render
is to let a man unburden himself to you.
But you have got a job to do.
Just as truly as first things must come first,
second things must come second.
You may create dependency
on the part of subordinates.
You may provide too much emotional satisfaction.
They may come to count on you
the way a dope addict relies on the needle.

EAR-MUSCLE-BOUND.

Listening skills are similar to other abilities.
If you overdevelop yourself in one skill,
you tend to use this avenue of approach
to every problem you face.

You see this type of handicap, for example,
if you try to get a garage built.
You have a carpenter come down
to give you an estimate.
He will tell you a wooden structure is
what you need,
and he will proceed to give you
an estimate on that basis.
A bricklayer assures you
that a brick structure is
best suited to your needs,
and he will give you an estimate
on the brick garage.



Now if you called in a general contractor who could give you anything you wanted, he would be in the strongest position to help you pick out the type of construction that is actually best for your needs.

In the same way, the executive who goes overboard on the advantages of listening will lose the ability to deal with a problem according to the treatment that will prove most effective.

There are other ways of handling people or problems besides listening.

STRIKE A BALANCE

There is only one voice to which you should never turn a deaf ear. That is the voice of reason.

Listen to it now:

"There is a time to listen.

"There is a time to talk.

"There is a time to act".



8.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT EXERCISES

8.1

ACTION POINTERS

Listening skill can be learnt
just as tennis, piano playing or golfing.

But it needs practice.

The practice **itself**

should be in correct listening habits.

Practising bad listening habits, for however long,
will not make us good listeners.

Until the habits are formed,

good listening means hard work.

We learn by listening, not by talking,
and we **can learn to listen.**

Awareness, attitudes and approaches

help developing the listening skill.

Exercise, however, is the most important step.

What exercise or exercises,
is the natural question.

Ralph Nichols, the great authority,

has listed out scores of them

and for the major categories of work.

The idea, presumably, is that we may choose
according to our situational needs.

Let us choose the relevant ones,

and let us be at them long enough;

skill takes time to develop.



8.2

ACTION POINTERS FOR FAMILIES

We may remind ourselves of the many ways listening helps us in getting along with others.

They include:

preventing trouble, helping to resolve disagreements leading to better work and cooperation from others, stimulating the speaker, perhaps solving others' problems and possibly winning friends.

Have members of your family take turns reading from a magazine, a book or a newspaper- and listen carefully.

To test how well you listened, discuss with others

what you heard and remembered.

You can also test yourself in the same way after listening to a radio item.

Another game can be this.

All the assembled members can be perfectly still for two minutes and try to give the fullest attention to a child talking or the birds' singing, or the typewriter ringing, or a passing auto hooting.

At the end of the two-minute period they can exchange notes on what they heard.

Practice may not make you a perfect listener. But it can make you a **good** listener.



8.3

ACTION POINTERS FOR EXECUTIVES*

Good listening is a blessing to ourselves and those about us, and it can be developed through formal study or personal initiative. Here are pointers for group work and individual efforts.

Devote an executive **seminar** to a discussion of the role and function of listening as a management tool.

If possible, bring in qualified speakers and ask them to discuss listening with special reference to how it might apply to management.

Assign individuals to read, digest, and report on specific articles on listening.



Though a seminar, or a questionnaire designed for the purpose, ask executives to think of incidents in the past that were affected directly by the way people listened. Are these examples in which

* These and accompanying extracts are from "*Are you Listening?*" by Ralph Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens. Copyright by McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., New York, 1957. Used with permission.

bad listening has caused trouble
and good listening has produced
exceptional results?

Ask executives to rate themselves as listeners.
Provide a questionnaire based
on the listening skills described in this book:
Questions might be answered
simply by "yes" or "no".
Some of the question might be as follows:

- a. As people talk to you,
do you find it difficult
to keep your mind on the subject on hand,
to keep from taking mental excursions away
from the line of thought
that is being conveyed?
- b. Do you listen primarily for facts,
rather than ideas,
when someone is speaking?
- c. Do certain words, phrases or ideas
so prejudice you against a speaker
that you cannot listen objectively
to what is being said?
- d. When you are puzzled or annoyed
by what someone says,
do you try to get the question
straightened out immediately,
either in your own mind
or by interrupting the talker?
- e. If you feel it would take
too much time and effort



- to understand something,
do you go out of your way
to avoid hearing about it?
- f. Do you deliberately turn your thoughts
to other subjects
when you believe a speaker will have
nothing particularly interesting to say?
- g. Can you tell
by a person's appearances and delivery
that he won't have
anything worthwhile to say?
- h. When somebody is talking to you,
do you try to make him think
you are paying attention when you are not?
- i. When you are listening to someone,
are you easily distracted
by outside sights and sounds?
- j. If you really want to remember
what someone is saying
do you try to write down most of his discourse?

For all these questions
the answers would be "no"
if the person is a good listener.

Give a test on listening ability to executives
and show them the scores they make.
There is atleast one standardized test
for this purpose,
The Brown-Carlson Listening Comprehension Test.
Discuss the meanings of the scores
with the individuals tested.

Pair up executives who work with each other, as "Listening Partners".

Ask each man to evaluate his partner's listening ability over a period of time.

Hold a discussion about what is found in these evaluations.

Ask executives

to **survey** their letter writing over a short period of time to see if some of the written communication could be handled orally.

If a man finds he is writing down much material that he could transmit orally, ask him to try to discover why he feels it necessary to write such communication.

Build up a library of spoken-word records of literature, speeches, etc., and make them available in a room that has a record player.

Also lend the records to executives who might wish to take them home to enjoy at leisure.

For such a library, material pertinent to the executive's work might be recorded so that interested people could listen for educational purposes.

Record a number of actual briefing sessions that may be held

by plant superintendents or others.

When new people go to work for the company,

ask them to listen to these sessions as part of their initial training. Check their comprehension of what they hear by means of brief objective tests. Emphasize that this is being done because listening is important on the men's new jobs.

Get permission to record an actual conference held in the company. During a training session, ask the trainees to listen and then discuss the part that listening played or failed to play in the conference.

Instead of asking executives to read "must" articles that may appear in trade journals or technical publications, record the material and ask executives to listen to it.



Set up "role playing" situations wherein executives are asked to cope with complaints comparable to those they might hear from subordinates. Ask observers of the role playing to comment on how well an executive seems to listen. Do these remarks reflect that he has done a good job of listening? Does he keep himself from becoming emotionally involved in what the subordinate says? Does the executive do things that would encourage the subordinate to talk freely?

Frequently bring executives from different divisions together at informal meetings where they may talk and listen to each other freely. Perhaps one day a week the executive's lunch room could be organised so that men who ordinarily do not get together will be seatmates.

If budgets and space allow, **bring in** lecturers on interesting subjects for evening meetings. Invite executives and their families to hear the speakers. Such lecture programmes could be an integral part of the firm's listening improvement activities.



8.4

ACTION POINTERS FOR SALES PERSONNEL

Good feelings toward each other apart, listening can serve as a means of learning customer's needs and problems in relation to what they want to buy or are going to be asked to buy.

The "**listen before you act**" approach to selling

is built around a central question:

How can a person sell either himself or his product if he does not know

what the prospective buyer wants?

This premise is simple enough, but it still remains unrecognised by men who sell.

If a company's sales personnel will listen to the customers, and if the firm's management will listen to the salesmen, the company maintains an open channel to the public's desires.

It is a channel that can catch, continually, changes in market sentiment which might have an effect on the company.

Divide a notebook up into sections, one for each customer



After making a call, write down all the information received aurally from the customer.

As the information grows, refer to it before each return visit to a customer.

If at all possible,

sales people should listen to their **own sales talks**.

A tape recorder beneath a counter might be used to record a retail sales clerk, for instance.

There should be no element of "eavesdropping"; the recorder should be used

only at the volition of the sales person himself, and the recording should be heard

only by persons selected by him.

People in other sales fields

where recording actual talks is impossible,

might orally re-enact a sales interview

and record it.

Hearing one's self in the act of selling

may often point up the need

for more listening in the process.



Where a sales organisation

has a number of friendly customers,

invite some of the more articulate ones

to join salesmen

in a group discussion of sales techniques.

How do the customers feel about

talking and listening on the part of salesmen?

Try to get the customers to make **critiques**

of the salesmen,

and really listen to what they have to say.

Devote a sales meeting to the subject of listening.

If possible, bring in an outside speaker

on the subject.

Open the meeting up

to a discussion of listening **in relation to sales.**

A purchasing manager, provided he is articulate, might be willing to present his thoughts on the subject to a sales meeting.

Inventory listening and talking on sales calls over a period of time.

After each call, estimate the **percentages** of time spent listening and talking to the customer. Average the percentages at the end of the period. How does the average of talking compare with that of listening?

Ask salesmen to rate their own listening abilities. Also give them a listening comprehension test.

When "role playing" is used in sales training, **tape-record** the sessions.

Listen to the recordings, paying special attention to what they reflect about listening on the part of people playing salesmen's roles. Do the salesmen give customers a chance to speak freely?

Do their remarks reflect that they have listened well to prior statements from customers?

Install a record **library.**

Also record important reading material for salesmen.



8.5

ACTION POINTERS FOR COMMITTEEMEN

*Listening can take as much as 90%
of the time in a committee meeting.**

*And some of us are spending
near 90% of our time
in committee meetings!*

The pointers here could mean much to us.

Plan conferences as far ahead as possible.

For each conference

write a statement of its purpose

and distribute copies to each conferee,

asking him to prepare

to contribute all the facts and ideas that he can

in regard to the central problem

that will be discussed.

If possible at the meeting itself,

set a deadline for making recommendations

or reaching a decision.

When these steps are taken,

people are better motivated

for listening during the discussion.

In a training session, plan and hold conference

on a selected problem as described above,

and tape-record it.

Afterward, play back the recordings.

Discuss it in terms of listening.

Do the contributions of different participants

reflect good listening?



* The reader may refer to our publication *Public Speaking
and Committee Meetings*

If the conference goes off track,
try to analyse the causes.

In a training session, assign one problem
to two groups.

Ask them to meet in separate rooms
and reach their decisions within a time limit.

Record both discussions.

Bring the groups together
and **play back** the recordings.

Compare the decisions made by the two groups.
Which group seemed to do the better listening?
How was the group's listening reflected
in its decision?

Get permission to record an actual conference.

Play back the recording
before a training group.

Ask the conferees to apply
the four listening concentration skills.

Part way through the recording
turn it off and ask the trainees to write:

- (1) summaries of what they have heard,
- (2) predictions of the conference's outcome and
- (3) a short commentary

a short commentary
on the evidence they heard presented.

Allow the trainees to hear
the remaining part of the recorded conference,
and hold a discussion of the entire exercise.

When acting as a conference leader
with a group meeting for the first time,
give a one-minute talk



emphasizing the importance of listening.

Ask all to agree that they will make an effort to hear each other out.

After a conference, if time allows, hold a listening **critique**.

Ask each conference member to evaluate the listening attention that he received while talking, and to report an analysis of his own listening performance.



8.6

ACTION POINTERS FOR TEACHERS

*The best place to begin
developing the listening skill
is the classroom.*

*Here is a handful of exercises
every teacher in India
can give his students.*

*It is true we may not be able
to try out currently all that is suggested
but we can certainly improvise.
Even under present conditions,
we can do much that is suggested here
to develop training skill in children.*

As a teacher
inventory your own listening and talking.
If you talk very much more
than you listen to the pupils,
try to bring the situation into closer balance.
Children imitate listening
as well as anything else they observe.

Try to present **orally**
many of the regular tests in all subjects.
Read a test's instructions aloud,
and also all of the questions,
giving the pupils time to write each answer.
When there are messages to be carried by pupils
from classroom to classroom, or classroom to home,
try putting the communication on an oral basis.



Ask the children to list all of the sounds they hear in a given period of time; for instance, a bird singing outside the window, the noise of an airplane passing overhead, the teacher's voice, etc. Discuss what sounds the children like or dislike and why. Also discuss what sounds are most important and why.

Speak the last syllable of a word to the class ("ick", for example). Ask the pupils to speak aloud as many words as possible ending in the same sound (like tick, sick, pick, etc.) without repeating any words.

Read the description of a physical scene to the class. Encourage the youngsters to draw pictures from what they heard.

Read aloud a poem which is likely to evoke emotion and then encourage the pupils to discuss their feelings.

After hearing a song, ask the children to describe the story behind the song's words.

Whisper a short message to a child at one side of the classroom. Ask him to relay the material, in a whisper, to the child nearest him.



Continue this procedure until the message has been passed to every child around the room. Ask the last child to repeat **aloud** what he heard, and then compare it with the original paragraph whispered to the first child. Try this game frequently in an effort to make the relayed message match the original as closely as possible.

Play a listening **game** by giving increasingly difficult instructions to one child and then another.

To the first child you might say:

"Peter, take the apple from the desk and place it on the chair."

To the next child:

"Fred, take the apple from the chair, show it to Mary and then return it to the desk".

To the next child:

"Ellen, take the apple from the desk, show it to Peter, show it to Fred and then put it on the chair."

The game of instructions continues until someone fails to follow the directions correctly.

Play a listening game which asks that each child in turn repeat the words he has just heard and add one more word.

The teacher gives the first word, such as "The", and calls on a pupil to add a word. He may say, "The house..."



The next child might say,

"The house that...."

The game continues until a participant fails to repeat the words correctly or to add a word that makes sense.

In all class activities

make a policy of not repeating instructions.

If repetition is necessary

call on the pupils

to repeat what was stated.

Establish the same policy

in regard to the school public-address system

that announcements will be made only once

and repetitions will have to come

from classmates.

Encourage the children to develop

a set of **standards** for good listening;

print and post them in the classroom.

The standards should be decided upon through class discussion.

One such standard might be:

"The good listener keeps his eyes on the person talking."

Read a short poem to the class,

give those present the assignment

of summarizing and passing on orally

the instructions missed by the absentees.

Select a few paragraphs of narrative material

from a book or story

and read aloud.

Have members of the class act out

what they heard.

When a guest speaker is coming to the school,

have a discussion with the children



concerning what the person might talk about.
After the speech, have another discussion
concerning what the speaker did talk about.
Try to direct the second discussion
toward determining the speaker's main point.

Occasionally play the game of
"Twenty Questions."

Build the game around people or things
currently being considered in classroom studies,
such as history or literature.

Develop a class discussion on listening manners.
For example,

a discussion might evolve around the question:
"Why is it important to 'hear out'
what a person has to say?"

From a play or story, select a few hundred words
of pure conversation between
two or more characters.

Read it aloud to the class
and then have the pupils guess
the story behind the conversation.

Read descriptions of well-known people—
perhaps people being studied in class—
and have the students guess their names.

Give the class a brief, simple description
of what **nonverbal** communication means.

Then ask different students
to speak two or three words,
giving them different meanings
by varying their voices, using gestures, etc.



For example, you might use the sentence,
"I want you".

One child might say it with a snarl.

Another might say it in soft, gentle tones.

Another might snap it out abruptly.

Ask the class to give the different meanings
the phrase acquires with each utterance.

Explain to the class
that what we hear is often affected
by senses other than hearing.

For each of these senses,
discuss how it might affect listening.

For example, with the sense of touch,
the discussion might develop around
how the feeling of a handshake
affects what we hear.

Ask the pupils, in pairs,
to interview each other on hobbies
or special interests.

After the interviews, talk about the possibilities
of learning by this method.

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages
of interviewing as compared to reading.

Ask three or four students
to prepare short talks on a favourite subject.

Tell the student speakers
that they may have to talk
under very difficult circumstances
that are being planned,
but no matter what happens
they should continue speaking
and not take personal offence.

Ask them to leave the room.

Instruct the class to listen very carefully



to what each speaker says,
until the class receives a secret signal from you.
At the signal,
the students are to stop paying attention,
perhaps to start to read books
or to look out the window.
Call the student speakers into the room,
one at a time, and ask them to give their talks.
When they are finished, ask the speakers
to discuss how they felt
when the class withdrew its attention.
Follow this with a class discussion
about the listener's responsibility to the speaker.

Select written material
that contains words unfamiliar to the students
and list the words on the blackboard.
Read the material aloud
after asking the students to seek out
the words' meanings
from the context of what is heard.
Read a story or play
and ask the class to plan a good stage setting
for acting out what was heard.

Explain the **precis** method of taking notes.
Select a short speech containing several points.
Read the speech,
stopping for about thirty seconds
after each completed point.
During this pause the students should write
a one-or-two sentence precis
of what they have heard.
Ask them to number each precis
to correspond with each pause.



Collect the notes;
prepare an oral critique of them
to be presented to the class.

Ask the students to make a list'
of what they like very much to hear
and what they dislike hearing.
Develop a discussion around the list.
Look for personal reasons
that make some material easy listening
and other material difficult listening.

Conduct a class discussion
on a subject of current interest to the students.
Make a tape recording of all the conversations.
Play back the recording
and then ask the students to discuss
the oral composition of what they heard.
Is it different from the way
things are written in books?
Are these differences
significant to the skill of listening?

Compose a short, argumentative talk
on a subject that is of concern to the students.
Among the ideas that strengthen the argument,
include a few ideas
that have little to do with the subject.
Ask the students, as they hear the talk,
to try separating
the essential and nonessential ideas.
Discuss the project afterward.

Ask the class members
to write down all the words they can
that affect them emotionally.



Compare the word lists and discuss them.
Why do certain words affect individuals as they do?
How were the words acquired?
Do their meanings, as understood by the students,
have a basis of fact?

Tape-record a short radio newscast
that presents facts without commentary.
Also record a news commentator
who broadcasts his own opinions among the facts.
Play the two recordings before the class.

Ask the students to point out
the differences between the two recordings.

**Can the students separate
fact from opinion** in the news commentary?

After they hear a classroom talk
on some subject such as geography or biology,
ask the students to **plan** a film strip
that might be used to illustrate the oral material.

Record a number of radio advertisements,
or select several from magazines,
to read aloud before the class.

When selecting the advertisements,
look for ones using
specific propoganda techniques.

Explain the propoganda techniques to the class
and then have the students
listen to the advertisements.

As they listen,

can they identify the **propoganda techniques?**

As part of any training in platform speaking,
include listening criticism
as well as criticism of speeches.



When a student completes a talk,
ask him to comment on his classmates' listening.
Was he distracted by anyone
in the audience? Why?
Did the attention of his student audience
vary from point to point in his speech?

Explain to the class
how a formal speech is organized.
Find or compose a speech
that is carefully organised.
Tape-record the speech,
leaving thirty-second pause
at each main point of partitioning of the talk.
Play it back to the class.
During each pause,
identify the part of the speech just completed'
and the one that will be heard in a few seconds.
Record another such speech,
but with no pauses,
and ask the students to identify
the different parts of the talk.

If no tape recorder is available,
this exercise can be practised
with the teacher reading the speeches aloud.

Obtain several spoken-word records of literature
and play them to the class.
After each record is heard,
discuss meanings that the students
might have obtained from the records
by "listening between the lines".
In other words, ask the students
to listen for meaning
that was not put into words on the recording.



Around the premise
that the students might strongly favour
(perhaps one for longer vacations)
compose a five-minute speech
with one-sided evidence supporting the premise.
Deliberately leave out evidence
that does not support it.
Read the speech to the class
and ask them to criticise it objectively.
Were the speech's ideas supported soundly?
Would the students want to hear more evidence
before reaching a decision on the subject?
How would the talk affect someone
who was not in favour of the premise presented?

Explain the two listening concentration skills
of mentally summarizing
and anticipating what we hear.

Read a short speech aloud to the class.
At a point, perhaps three-quarters of the way
through the speech,
stop talking.

Ask the students first to write a short summary
of what they heard
and then a brief statement of
what they were anticipating in the speech.

When the writing is completed,
read the entire speech through,
allowing the students to check their abilities
at summarising and anticipating.

Send six students
(we'll label them A through F
for purposes of explanation)
out of the room.

Read a short, dramatic passage from a story



to the remaining class members.
Call student A back into the room.
Ask him to listen carefully
as a classmate (one who remained in the room)
repeats the story that was read.
Then ask student A to relay the story
to student B as he enters the room.
Following the same procedure,
B tells C, C tells D,
D tells E and E tells F.
Student F finishes the relay
by reporting what he heard to the class.
Tape-record each version of the story,
including the one that was read aloud.
After the exercise is complete,
play back the entire recording.
Did the story change,
as it passed from student to student?
If so, what caused the changes?
Discuss the project,
giving special attention
to how emotions can actually change what we hear.
Repeat the experiment
in an effort to make the repetition more accurate.

When an assignment of student speeches
has been made for a class hour,
inform the group that after each talk,
one of the listeners will be asked by random choice
to arise and give a **two-minute critique**
of his classmate's effort.

The critique should focus
upon the content and organisation
of the speech given
rather than upon the delivery and techniques'



of the speaker.

All critiques are graded with the same importance as are the original talks.

After considerable practice with the above procedure, use the same routine except that the student critic must criticise the next-to-the-last talk given (the first two talks are given without interruption for critiques).

As still greater skill in listening is achieved, repeat the above routine, but with each critic required to criticise a talk after which there have been two intervening speeches (the first three speeches are given without any interruption for critiques).



8.7

TO IMPROVE YOUR SEMANTIC 'I. Q.'*

In section 4 we saw

some of the semantic barrier problems.

Let us see in this section how we may tackle them.

Say Le Roy Wilkie and Charles Vervalin:

1. WORK ON YOUR VOCABULARY.

This will help you quickly determine when a speaker has misused a word or concept. One way to develop a fine vocabulary is to read good literature in the humanities—philosophy, psychology, classical books, and plays. (It is assumed you already have a good storehouse of technical words, concepts and jargon). When you hit a word that "stops you cold," look up its meaning in a good dictionary. You may want to write the definition several times to firmly fix it in your memory. At the same time, think of other sentences, analogies or concepts in which the word could be used.

Check the writer to see if he has used the word properly. At the same time, determine if his meaning is literal or colloquial. Try to think of other situations where the word could easily be misused, or used colloquially.



* Ibid.

Reading good literature is not as fast a method of acquiring vocabulary as reading the many fine books that teach vocabulary, but it is a much more interesting and educational method. Also, words in books and articles are within a more meaningful framework of concepts, ideas, etc. Such words are thus more likely to "stick with you."

2. LOOK FOR HIDDEN MEANINGS.

When listening to someone talking, look for emotionally charged words—that is, words that may carry some negative bias for you or positive bias for the speaker.

When such a word or words strike your ear, ask yourself how they fit into the context of the speaker's subject.

"Did he use that word correctly?"

And if not, "What did he really mean by that?"

Remember, you are thinking four times faster than the speaker is talking so you have time to make these split-second evaluations.

But to do them well takes concentration, practice, and objective, clear thinking.

3. LOOK FOR MISPRONOUNCED WORDS.

The classic example here is the insurance company president who,



in a major policy speech,
told his executive staff that a certain policy
"would not be effected until May 20."
He actually meant to use the word affected—
but he pronounced it with accent as in "e".
In this true case, the company subsequently lost
an estimated \$20,000 in policy sales
on the assumption by this group of listeners
that the policy was not to be "effected."

Keep your ear tuned
for this common type of mispronunciation.
Most of us are painfully aware
the not all speakers are clear and articulate.
Some have heavy accents.
So here's where you will have to be
on your listening "toes" so to speak.

4. *LOOK FOR ILLOGICAL COMPARISONS.*

One product of shallow thinking is
the illogical comparison.
Many times we hear illogical comparisons such as:
"That's a large processing unit."
How large?
The speaker and listener may have
an entirely different idea
of what constitutes a large processing unit.
Or, the statement, "XYZ valves are scarce now."
Does this infer
that few are being manufactured now?
Or does it mean we'll have to wait a month?
Or does it mean XYZ valves must be ordered
from the wholesaler?



What about the statement,
"The company made great progress in 1990?"
Progress in what? And concerning what?
These are illogical comparisons,
and you'll have to train yourself to listen for them,
because they are made so often in speeches, etc.,
that by sheer habit (almost a conditioned reflex)
you may overlook them
and draw an incorrect conclusion.

Unfortunately, technical speeches and reports
are not always void
of illogical comparisons or non-sequitur
(non-sequitur means it does not follow).
You have heard statements like this:
"We have used alkylation for five years
and it is an excellent process."
The inference is that alkylation is a good process
because "we" use it.



9.

SPECIAL LISTENING SITUATIONS

9.1

LISTENING TO STAFF*

Everybody wants to get the boss' ear.
But the boss can't listen to everybody.

A good executive increases his effectiveness
when he is discriminating in deciding
whom he will listen to.

He pays attention to those who keep him informed,
lighten his workload, or save his time.
But he listens **also** to those
who argue with him constructively
and force him to sharpen his judgement.

With the focus more and more
on consultative management,

you can be more effective as a manager when you-

- Know the kind of people who try to get your ear.
- Recognize the situations
in which they try to reach you.
- Become aware of listening-proneness
and deaf-spots.
- Know how to pack more profitable
listening-consulting hours into each day.

* From an article: LISTEN TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE by
Nathaniel Stewart in *NATION'S BUSINESS* Jan. 1963.
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Commerce of the United States. Reproduced with
permission.

The manager's responsibility
is to harness the best brain power
for the most profitable actions.

Yet he is a busy man
faced with a corps of subordinates,
each of whom contends he is looking out
for the best interests of the company
and most of whom differ in their approach,
values, personalities, and motivations
as they try to reach him.

Whom the manager listens to
and confers with
is important for several reasons:

Many business problems are so complex
they cut across several departments
and call for multiple judgment.
The number of specializations
represented in companies
continues to grow, and so do the differences
which the manager must referee.
As companies tend to bring
more democracy into the business
through participative decision-making,
the manager has to develop
a better method of listening and consulting.

The president of
an automotive equipment company
remarked facetiously at a conference:
"A president seldom makes a mistake:
when he does
it's probably because he has listened
to the wrong people."



The fact is that this remark applies to every manager, whether he is a president or a supervisor.

For example, morale among salesmen in an office equipment firm was consistently low.

The director of sales and his immediate deputy regarded their own private conversations as the only kind of communication needed.

As friends of some 15 years who had come up via the same route, they had developed a fixed set of attitudes.

They insulated themselves, insisted that sales reports told others all they needed to know, and listened to no one else.

The company's operations and competition were quickly outgrowing them, but in their provincialism they could see only their own narrow sector.

The morale problem was cured only when both were fired.

In another case, the safety superintendent dealt exclusively with his company's safety committee, as his predecessor had done.

The committee kept beefing up safety promotion efforts, but frequency and severity of accidents showed no improvement.



The superintendent finally decided that the committee's ideas were not enough. Once he began to get around and listen

to the views of his safety inspectors
and first-line supervisors.

he discovered that the critical need
was not promotional efforts at all.

What was needed was

more concentrated safety education of employees
assigned to work in the new products operation,
and use of improved engineering devices there.

Once these were introduced,

each month showed a substantial reduction
in accidents and man-days lost through injuries.

The company's record for safety is now
among the best in its industry.

Just as there are hazards

in listening only to one's alter ego or

to a committee membership which has gone stale,
there are other hazards.

One has to guard against using one's secretary
as a communications sieve,

being dissuaded by technicians

who see only the details,

yielding to the expediency boys

who want to bail you out for the moment

and never think of the future,

or being trapped by glib-tongued persuaders

in the executive dining-room.

In the listening pattern of an executive,

both open-door and closed-door practices

can be carried to extremes.

He has to be wary of moving too far either way.

He should guard against overexposure—

the tendency to be available

too readily and too often

to listen to anyone who wants to see him.

He should also guard against overinsulation—



the tendency to cut himself off from
the sources of facts, judgements,
and warning signals.

PEOPLE TRYING TO GET YOUR EAR

Different kinds of people
have different approaches
and contributions to make.
Some will exercise a positive influence,
others negative.
Still others are eternal neutralists.
You may or may not get what you're listening for.

The **chartists** will be intent upon
getting your eyes, as well as your ear—
with chart, pointer, and easel as their instruments,
and statistical trends as the content.
You can depend on them
for skillful compilation of data,
good use of graphics,
and a fairly articulate interpretation of statistics.
Don't count on them for much more.
Generally a chartist will have nothing more to add
than mild enthusiasm
if the trend reflects good news
and serious caution if the trend is unfavourable.

There are also the **manualists**—
those quick to cite a paragraph
in the company's administrative manual,
office manual, sales manual, organization manual,
or any similar document.
They go by the book
and tend to lack resourcefulness or imagination.
The manualists will try to get your ear

as soon as they learn you're thinking about an action which goes against the rules.

Other bureaucrats include the idea-stiflers, the **status quo** advocates, the politicians, the logicians, the vacillators, and some specialists. If you're seeking reassurance that nothing should be done, you'll find it here!

At the other pole are the visionaries, the gamblers, the ambitious, the idea men, and the loyalists. **If you want a can-do backing,** these men should be in your listening orbit.

The philosophers will consume your time if you give them an audience.

They will reflect on how things used to be and otherwise shoot the breeze.

Nice fellows, generally, but of little value in assisting you with the business at hand.

The **mathematical model boys** are still another group.

They see all management in terms of the new tools of management-operations research, computer responses, linear programming, decision-gaming, and the like.

For long-range planning or testing a theory, give them a hearing.

But don't go overboard with them.

Don't succumb to having everything answered by the computer.



Use their tools along with other tools.
Hold them accountable
and mark them plus and minus on performance
as you do others in the organization.

A **motley group** which defies classification
also must be reckoned with
because of its members' persistent efforts
to get your ear.
They include the exaggerators,
the opportunists, the office politicians,
the gossips, and the chronic complainers.
Give them a minimum of time.
Develop the art of evading them graciously.
Instead, give your listening time
to your trusted trouble-shooters,
your line managers in charge
of the bread-and-butter functions of the business,
competent staff specialists
to whom special tasks are delegated,
and those who need your decision
because you are the only one able to make it.
Block out time to listen
and confer with another group, too-
fellow managers whose activities
are closely allied to yours
and where doing business jointly
is better than going it alone.

WHEN THEY TRY TO REACH YOU

The range of situations in which
subordinates try to reach the boss
is so well known that he often works artfully
at controlling the inroads on his time.



"There are times when the rate at which you're falling behind on desk work and other needs is such that you have to declare a moratorium on office visitors and listening."

Sometimes a critical question needs to be resolved before subordinates can move ahead.

At other times subordinates need your advice on unusual problems they encounter.

There are also situations in which key subordinates require an audience with you on co-ordination, control, scheduling and the like.

Situations concerned with gripes, personal clashes-and people, generally-warrant attention on a continuing basis. Grievances cannot be easily by-passed.

Technical problems should be handled at subordinate levels and, for the most part, should not eat into your time. However, where your experience and technical savvy are such that you can help without using too much of your time, consider it a valid part of your listening-consulting pattern.

Finally, there are situations which call for not one, but a continuing series, of talk-it-over sessions. These involve innovations or changes with real profit possibilities. They warrant your time and attention and that of your boss.



Be aware that in all situations you will be listening to more than facts and details. They may be distorted by emotions or hidden motivations. Your listening pattern, then, will have to involve some degree of screening, questioning, and pinning down, in addition to conventional listening and conferring.

Inevitably, too, you will have to spot those who are coming with decisions or recommendations for decisions and those who are coming in for decisions. Your effectiveness will be enhanced to the degree that subordinates are encouraged to make their own decisions. But, if listening to them provides an opportunity for you to do some informal coaching in decision-making or in making clear the nature of delegation or standards of performance, then consider it time well spent.

LISTENING-PRONENESS

Overexposure leads to listening-proneness. You need discrimination in whom you listen to and awareness of the situations in which people are trying to reach you, as well as screening procedures to protect your time. You need a **sense of balance**, of course, in being available and yet not falling victim to accessibility to all people on all occasions.



Probably equally significant is the hazard of **deaf-spots**.

Sometimes these are caused by ambiguity, jargon, or other influences which impede the clarity of the communication and result in the boss's not really listening. However, the more significant deaf-spots are generally attributable to the boss. These involve his prejudgement of a subordinate's intentions, emotional rejection of what the man is trying to say, misinformation, inability to separate fact from fiction, and other factors.

Deaf-spots are characterized by inattentiveness, lack of desire to understand, or use of platitudes,

There is little point in putting time aside for listening or hoping for a constructive outcome if you are subject to deaf-spots. It is unprofitable for you, demoralizing for the subordinate, and unproductive for your company. A manager has to make an effort to shake off his deaf-spots.

WHAT TO DO

To attain a proper balance in his listening, the executive first should recognize and tap the existing organization.

If it is orderly and accessible, he can count on a particular individual



being responsible for a certain function, with appropriate records and data.

In this traditional concept of line-and-staff management, he should be able to single out the most knowledgeable person and get his counsel.

"Above all," be sure in your listening not to express opinions or interpretations which will either conflict with or bind other executives elsewhere in the organization. Also, be sure you don't express views which compromise or usurp the authority or scope of action of your fellow executives."

But, there are times when a boss finds that some of his subordinates' abilities are limited largely to routine technical duties. The most knowledgeable people are not always the most resourceful people or the most articulate, or the ones on whom you can count for productive discussion. Then boss **has to exercise selectivity** in deciding whom he will listen to.

Talent is where you find it—not necessarily in the neat little boxes on the organizational chart. The executive can and should view his organization as a grid on which he can move not only vertically but also horizontally and diagonally.



He should, of course, preserve order by clearing with the supervisors as he dips into the organization to call on people below.

In this selectivity he can depart from the formal system and listen to, or solicit ideas from, any individual in whom he has confidence. Indeed, this selectivity can even extend outside his own unit if such seems desirable.

CHAIN-REACTION OF IDEAS

The discussion potential also has to be considered in trying to attain balance in listening. This is important, for as people confer, they see things not only as problems but also as opportunities. It leads to a chain-reaction of ideas and the potential may prove to be far greater than originally conceived and help bring you to the brink of decision-making.

Finally, perspective is essential. If the problem is complex, or involves divergent considerations, confer with people representing different interests and viewpoints. This provides you with enough perspective to reduce the element of risk. It can also enable you to get long-range as well as short-range thinking. As an executive you must avoid any tendency



to lose interest in facts, figures, and trends.
These are important tools in competition.
At the same time, however,
you should sharpen **your conceptual foresight-**
the ability to see a problem in such ways
that you anticipate consequences
and have not only the choice
of conventional alternatives
but also the creation of new ones.

Communication with the boss
is easy for some subordinates
and difficult for others.
The effective manager tries to make the path
constructive for other as well as himself.



9.2

LISTENING AT COMMITTEES*

*In a democracy, committees play a crucial role.
As a nation, we are spending
literally millions of hours daily;
and the quality of decisions depends
upon the effectiveness of the committees;
and the effectiveness of the committees depends
upon the listening skill of the conference leaders
or the committee chairmen.*

*The author uses the term **conference leader**.*

*We in India would call him
the committee chairman—
whether of a village co-operative society,
a high power national commission,
a factory canteen committee,
or a board of management.*

Many a conference leader
has lost his power to listen perceptively
simply by becoming personally involved
in the conference
to the point where it was strictly impossible
for him to "understand the situation."
He allows his thoughts
to outrun his ability to listen and,
as a result, suffers from the compulsion
to stop listening and start talking.
He expects, and is expected, to be heard
in order to protect his position of leadership.



* This is an extract from a perceptive article: "The Listening Spirit and the Conference Leader" by Ernest D. Nathan in *TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL*, Jan. 1964. Reproduced with permission.

The conference leader, especially the non-professional whose vocation is actually supervision, is likely to suffer from "**tunnel hearing**"- a malady which comes from having his mind so completely set on the purpose he has in mind that he cannot clearly hear sounds or sights or other evidences which point in another direction.

An even more ominous obstacle to perceptive listening is that the industrial conference leader is often equipped with a set of "**corporate blinders**" which make it impossible for him to see or hear anything except from a single point of view- the corporate line.

Haiman recognizes the limitation with the restrained phrase, "sanctions at the leader's disposal." When these sanctions are narrow and the conference leader is not well-disciplined, perceptive listening is almost impossible.

The non-professional conference leader is especially susceptible to the destructive effect of **emotional filters** on the listening process.

Nichols gives this description of what happens when the emotional filters are at work.

In different degrees and in many different ways, listening ability is affected by our emotions. Figuratively, we reach up and mentally turn off



what we do not want to hear.
Or, on the other hand, when someone says
what we especially want to hear,
we open our ears wide, accepting everything-
truths, half-truths, or fiction.
We might say, then,
that our emotions act as aural filters.
At times they in effect cause deafness,
and at other times,
they make listening altogether too easy.

Another cluster of obstacles

to perceptive listening
threatens the conference leader.
These obstacles are more of a problem for him
than for the individual
who is merely trying to perceive meaning
in a normal two-way conversation.
The conference leader is under a series of stresses
inherent to his position of leadership.
He has goals to reach,
individuals to contend with,
a set of limitations imposed on him from above,
and, more likely than not,
the pressure that comes
from the inexorable movement
of the hands on the conference clock.

This cluster of **obstacles** includes
prejudging, or jumping to the conclusion
that the other person's meaning is understood
before it is fully expressed;
ambiguity, or the possibility always present
that the idea expressed is open
to more than one interpretation;
and a central problem, related to both of these.



the illusion that effective communication has taken place, and that the leader and the group have arrived at mutual understanding. These obstacles are especially insidious because they are difficult to detect, and, in some instances, seem to reinforce the illusion of perceptive listening when, in fact, the opposite is the case.

The tendency to prejudge is present in all of us, whether or not we are in a position of conference leadership. Probably emotional filters are at the bottom of the trouble.

Nichols expresses it this way: If we hear something that opposes our most deeply rooted prejudices, notions, convictions, mores, or complexes, our brains may become over-stimulated, and not in a direction that leads to good listening.

We mentally plan a rebuttal to what we hear, formulate a question designed to embarrass the talker, or perhaps simply turn to thoughts that support our own feelings on the subject at hand.

When a conference leader yields to the temptation to prejudge the comments made by any member of the group, his ability to listen perceptively reaches an all-time low. Often, because of the density of the emotional filter involved, the leader does not know he is prejudging.



The fact is, he is suffering from **psychological indigestion**. When this kind of emotional involvement occurs, the group discussion gets out of control, reason flies out of the window, and the communication process breaks down.

The obstacle of **ambiguity** is also often difficult to detect.

Larry Samovar,

in his doctoral dissertation on ambiguity, as observed in the Kennedy-Nixon debates, shows that six passages from the televised broadcasts selected as ambiguous

by a panel of communications experts at Purdue, were susceptible to as many as 16 different interpretations by 70 householders interviewed.

Only 23%, or 16 out of 70, agreed on any one interpretation.

Perhaps even more amazing is that six passages selected for their clarity and classified as unequivocal by the experts were given six different meanings by the interviewees.



ILLUSION-

the most insidious of the obstacles in this trio- may be the product of the other two.

It is the conviction or the assumption that communication has been accomplished when this is not the case.

William H. Whyte, Jr., states it this way:

The great enemy of communication
is the illusion of it.
We have talked enough; but we have not listened.
And by not listening, we have failed
to concede the immense complexity of our society
(or of our conference group)-
thus the great gaps between ourselves
and those with whom
we are seeking understanding.

Once the assumption has been made
by the conference leader
that he has not only understood
about the ideas suggested by the group,
but understood with the members of the group
their feelings on those ideas,
when such is not the case,
his ability to listen perceptively is destroyed.
Very likely, the more intently and intelligently
he listens from this point on,
the farther away from the truth
his listening will carry him.
He is on the "wrong wave length,"
travelling with the speed of sound
away from understanding.



The obstacles to **perceptive listening**
discussed so far are only a fraction of the total.
Improper attitudes
on the part of the leader or of the group,
boredom, egocentricity, narrow-mindedness,
impatience, lack of sympathy, strong prejudices,
lack of interest and, often, fatigue,
are also arch-enemies to effective listening

by the conference leader.

GUIDEPOSTS TO PERCEPTIVE LISTENING AS A CONFERENCE LEADER

Experience with hundreds of conferences under test conditions as well as under the conditions confronting the average conference leader in industry suggest some practical guideposts to perceptive listening. They are easy to state and easy to understand- and **they are difficult to apply.**

UNDERSTAND ABOUT AND WITH.

Before the conference leader allows himself to make up his mind as to what the group member means, he should make sure he understands the facts being expressed and the ideas and feelings of the speaker in relation to those facts. He must understand **about** and understand **with** the contributor. To do this, the conference leader must give his entire attention to the words and actions of the speaker and then evaluate the remark for any doubtful aspects. Where doubt exists, he asks for further explanation, and restates the meaning so that the restatement is acceptable to the original speaker.



LISTEN TO THE SILENCE.

The skilled conference leader listens perceptively to the silence as well as to the words.

As Nichols points out,

"Silence itself must be accepted as an aural symbol."

A prolonged silence may indicate approval, disapproval, unwillingness to make a commitment, uncertainty, or, perhaps,

a period of mental gestation

preparatory to delivering an opinion.

Facial expressions, movements of the body, even shuffling of feet

may help the conference leader arrive at understanding of silence as an aural symbol.



When the silence occurs early in the conference, or immediately following the injection of a new thought or a new question, it is wise to allow a "strategic wait" while the minds of the group members mull over the proposition and prepare their replies.

DON'T GET INVOLVED.

One of the most difficult guideposts to follow, yet one of the most essential to perceptive listening, is to avoid the temptation to get personally involved in the issues and ideas being developed

in the conference.

This is especially true
when the conference leader is
the supervisory head of the group.



The moment he allows
his personal or corporate desires
to colour his thoughts,
his ability to listen
to the viewpoint and ideas
of the others in the group is impaired.
His degree of maturity and effectiveness
as a conference leader
will be measured to a considerable degree
by his ability to preserve
a "psychical distance"
from the ideas and opinions expressed
rather than become involved with them.
The skilled discussion leader knows
the value of teaching or preaching less
in order to let the group learn more.

ASSUME THE PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE.

The conference leader
who is listening perceptively
guards himself against the three evil sisters
of prejudging, ambiguity, and illusion.
To combat **prejudging**,
he assumes a professional attitude
and does not attempt to judge or evaluate
the other person's attitude or viewpoint
until it has been completely stated.
He listens the speaker out
and does not discount in advance
what he has to say.

"TELL US MORE...."

To dispel the danger of **ambiguity**,
he asks the participant
whose ideas are not clearly expressed
to describe his views more fully,
and to give examples of what he has in mind.

"Tell us more..." is often a good expression
to gain the necessary clarification.
The leader may find it helpful
to restate the proposition and say,
"Is this what you mean?"

To make sure that **understanding** is
real and not illusory,
the conference leader weighs the evidence gathered.
He makes repeated use of the question
to dispel illusion, and through perceptive listening,
determines whether communication
has truly been achieved.

Effective application of these guideposts
begins with recognition of the need for them.
With the need firmly established in his mind,
the conference leader, through continuous practice,
develops sensitivity to the feelings
as well as to the ideas of his group.

To achieve mastery of **perceptive listening**,
which is defined
as a conscious, cognitive effort
involving primarily the sense of hearing
reinforced by the other senses,
and leading to understanding,
the conference leader with Felix Holt
may well pray for "a listening spirit."



9.3

LISTENING AT INTERVIEWS*

In day-to-day life there are many interview situations, so many indeed that scores of book-lengths have been published on the subject. We are highlighting here the executive interview situations.

Any administrator responsible for staff must constantly relate their needs to those of the concern and review the organization of his department from time to time to see what demands it makes on those who work in it. This process of relating the needs of the individual to those of the organization is basic to almost any successful personnel interview.



Equally fundamental, however, is the need to understand the individual's point of view. Understanding another person means, primarily, being able to listen to him—not just recognizing the noises that proceed from his mouth but appreciating fully what he is saying or is trying to say.

* The passage is an extract from *THE SKILLS OF INTERVIEWING* by Elizabeth Sydney and Margaret Brown. Copyright (1961) Tavistock Publications (1959) Ltd.. London. Used with permission.

It involves a conscious recognition of the implications of the other's speaking tones, hesitations and choice of words, and of the topics he emphasizes or omits.

It involves a conscious recognition of any prejudices the other's speech may rouse in oneself, and an ability to suspend judgement until the other's point of view is thoroughly expressed and understood.

Listening in this sense has been called the lost art of our age. It is this type of listening, more than any other activity that can occur in any interview, that demonstrates the interviewer's respect for the person he is meeting.



Of course, in one sense everybody can and does listen very carefully. We are all far too dependent on the goodwill of others not to do so.

People set store by the most subtle (and tenuous) evidence from phrases, accents, and the like, to guide them in assessing the values and behaviour of others. But this resembles the influence of personal appearance-justified assumptions are muddled up with private prejudices and social stereotypes, and a person is most unlikely to be entirely conscious of exactly which phrases have led him to which conclusions.

On some of our courses, we have demonstrated the strength of these inferences by playing over tape-recorded speeches and asking course members to list everything they think they know about the anonymous speakers. The speeches may be concerned with politics, social issues, or technical matters; nevertheless, they have to be heard for only two or three minutes for most course members to discover they have formed definite opinions about each speaker's intelligence, education, and social origins, and about some of his attitudes. However, these opinions often differ and it is quite usual for two or three people to cite the same phrases as evidence in support of different assumptions. The subsequent discussions usually suffice to demonstrate how much everyone hears without listening, and also by what subjective and emotional processes we draw inferences from what we have heard.

A Manager or administrator who is responsible for other people is enormously handicapped if he cannot develop the ability to listen more accurately than this, and if he cannot attend consciously and conscientiously to the many meanings that may be conveyed by simple phrases.



DIFFERENT LEVELS OF MEANING

Every sentence we utter
says something about ourselves
as well as about the subject under discussion.
Something of our
background, education, and experience appears
in our accents, vocabulary, and sentence structure.
Some of our interests may be betrayed
in our choice of language,
and when we describe a past experience,
we describe our feelings
as much as the objective facts:

Comments about people or phases of experience
are never comments simply about events,
but always about events
as interpreted by the speaker.
Put in another way,
such comments always convey facts-and-feelings,
and the interviewer must set himself
to disentangle the two.
In their description
of the interviewing programme
that formed part of the experiments
at the Western Electric Company,
Hawthorne, U.S.A.,



Roethlisberger and Dickson gave
many illustrations of the way in which
people's attitudes colour their perceptions.
For example, one employee exclaimed,
'Between the bad luck at home
and the unfair treatment around here,
why I certainly would feel dumpy many a day.'
This man was undergoing
a series of severe domestic crises,

and he continued,
"Well, all the time I was having this trouble,
my superior—
a man who I worked with for twelve years—
treated me like a dog."

Later, the man said
that his superior was treating him well once more.
It seemed a fair inference
that he had not been commenting on his superior,
but that his unhappiness and frustration at home
had distorted his view of events at work.

DISTORTIONS OF MEMORY



A perceptive listener also discerns
in an individual's account of events
the way in which his attitudes and needs
have shaped his memory of them.

Only a small proportion of people
deliberately misrepresent the facts
when questioned in an interview.
But all of us to some extent alter them a little,
unconsciously modifying them
in response to complex mental and physical factors.
These modifications may be such
that two people can give what they believe
to be entirely truthful accounts of the same event,
which may yet bear very little resemblance
to each other.

A good interviewer listens in the knowledge
that he is hearing
about events-as-they-seemed-to-the-speaker,
never events-uninterpreted.

He is aware that human memory works along certain fairly predictable lines.

(i) *It forgets a great deal.*

Although some people remember more than others, and all of us remember some things better than other things, nevertheless, everybody forgets a large part of his experiences. We all forget the features that seem to us insignificant because they do not relate to our established interests, or because they conflict with our established views, or because they 'obscure' what seem to us to be the main trends of the event

(ii) *It simplifies experience.*

Our recollections tend to be tidier than real life and to reinforce more obviously those features which seemed to us important in any particular event.

(iii) *It often heightens the drama of events.*

Not only do we tidy up the plot, as it were, but we often add colouring matter, exaggerating some features and suppressing others.

(iv) *It works to protect us from change.*

We tend to remember the things that confirm what we already know,



strengthen ideas we already hold,
and favour those aspects of our personality
which we see as valuable
in gaining the goodwill of others.

These laws are demonstrated
in many studies of memory
and for the interviewer,
they mean that he can expect to hear
in a person's account of himself
both what experiences he has met
and what he values in himself
and expects of the world around him.



NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING

This **does not mean**
that an interviewer can confidently draw
inferences about a person from a few remarks,
any more than he can confidently infer
facts about a man
from his accent and vocabulary.
He can, however, legitimately listen to an account
for the attitudes and values it displays,
and then check the information he gathers
by further questioning.
Listening demands **the humility**
to continue patiently questioning and asking
until the listener is sure
he understands how things appear to the speaker,
and not only what he himself is sure
the speaker must have meant.

What, for instance, does a man mean when he says,
in the course of an interview with his manager,

'I suppose I'm not one of the bright ones?

He might mean many things.

He could be making a fair and balanced statement about his own intelligence.

Or he could be excusing some poor standard of performance.

He could be anxious for the interviewer to confirm that statement and so permit him to rest in a secure obscurity.

Or he could be waiting for the interviewer to deny the statement emphatically.

An interviewer might be tempted to assume he knew

which of these meanings was intended.

But he would be wise to lay aside the assumption, and encourage the speaker to explain himself again in words that would not permit of different interpretations.

Many conversations fail

because one party assumes too soon that he understands the other.

THE TECHNIQUES OF LISTENING

The ability to listen to people springs primarily from the listener's attitude.

An interviewer cannot really listen at all if he sets about it

as if he were exercising a kind of skill with which he could

influence and manipulate others.

It may, therefore, seem paradoxical to talk about the techniques of listening.

Nevertheless, people who genuinely wish to understand others



can still be impeded by a lack of knowledge about how to encourage them to talk. They may be betrayed by force of habit into responses that sound more like judgements than they are intended to be, which frighten the interviewee just as he is gaining confidence. It is therefore useful to study the way in which skilled listeners work, and the kind of remarks they make in helping a speaker to express himself.

The attitude of a good listener may be fairly compared with the attitude that any one of us brings to the study of a difficult subject in which we are interested.

A keen student learning, for instance, how to play the piano, or how to look after his car engine, asks his teacher many questions which typically begin

'Why do you do that?' 'How can I do this?'

'What's the reason for this?'

'You mean, if I do so and so, then this will happen?'

'How does this relate to that?' 'What is this for?'

'What does this mean?'

They are the **questions**

of a person trying to understand, to make sure he has acquired information coherently together.

Because a good listener is trying to do precisely this, his questions run along the same lines. 'You mean so and so...?'



'So the picture seems to be....is that right?"
Later, he may occasionally ask for information.
'When was that?' 'How did that happen?'
But supremely he seeks to appreciate
a point of view, and to be sure that
he understands precisely the other person's
feeling about his circumstances:

To understand in this way,
a listener must put aside
his own values and standards.
He must accept contradictions,
illogical statements,
misrepresentations of fact—
not as true in themselves,
but as conveying some fragment of truth
about the speaker's feelings,
and therefore valuable
in his struggle to express himself.
He must accept truculent, self-pitying,
sycophantic, and hostile remarks—
again not as applying to himself
or to the relevant circumstances,
but as indicative of the speaker's feelings
about the world around him.



He must see his job as one of understanding
why the speaker needs to express himself
in this way.

There are many ways of handling
this sort of remark:

'I don't seem to have got on very well in this firm.
Mr. Jones and I started off as apprentices together,
and now he's Works Manager
and here I am still a toolmaker
What have the others got that I haven't got?'

A supervisor

tackled by one of this subordinates in these term might explain what the others have got, with greater or less tact.

He might point out, for instance, that Mr. Jones took a degree at evening classes. Or he might see this as an opportunity to give a pep talk and help the man out of a rut. 'It's no use giving way to self-pity', he might say, 'Let's see what can be done about it.'

Or he might decide that a little human sympathy is needed and say: 'You do seem to have had bad luck.'

If he is trying to understand the man's point of view, however, he says NONE OF these things. He concentrates on finding out precisely what the man's worries and expectations are. He begins by stating the meaning he has gleaned so far, and asking if it is correct. Thus he says:

'You feel Jones has got on too fast compared with yourself?' or
'You feel you are just as good as the rest?' or
'You mean you feel you haven't had a fair chance?'



N.R.F. Maier gives several examples of interviews conducted on these lines.

Here is an extract from an interview between a supervisor(S) and a woman clerk(C):

- S: You and I had a talk some time ago and I was wondering how you are getting on now.
- C: Things are much better, but there is one thing - I don't know how to say it - but when Miss Aldrich (senior clerk) was on holiday they

always put me in charge. All over the company I know they always put the girl who is next in line, in charge.

S: You feel there has been some change?

C: Yes. I talked to Mr. Sullivan (Superintendent) about it, and he said because the senior clerk was only away for two weeks, he thought it was unnecessary to put anyone in charge. But that hurt me because I've always been in charge before and I thought I was next in line.

S: I can see your feelings have been hurt.

This supervisor is not trying to explain company policy or to justify Mr. Sullivan. He is content at this stage to reflect this woman's feelings and so to show her in the most practical way that he really wants **to understand**.



There are many phases in a selection interview when this may be the most appropriate technique.

Here is a part of a selection interview recorded by the Case Study Writers' Circle which shows the interviewer content in the main to reflect the candidate's views.

I: Yes, I see - and the flying went O.K.?

C: Yes, Sir. I wasn't one of the best I should say but I was a good average.

I: And you were satisfied with that?

C: Well, I did my best, Sir.

I: Yes and what happened then?

C: Well, then we went on advanced flying training and after that a jet conversion course. That was very exciting.

I: And dangerous too, I expect.

- C: Yes, Sir, but you didn't think much about it at the time. There's too much to do. Anyhow, as long as you don't go mad and see how fast the Meteors really will go, and as long as you do as you are told, you can't go far wrong.
- I: You enjoyed that, it seems.
- C: Yes, Sir, I did.
- I: And after training you went into the Squadron?
- C: Yes, Sir. That was rather dull, really. I hadn't long to go and I had left most of my friends. I didn't do much flying and I was quite glad in a way to get my demob.
- I: But you still felt a bit sorry to leave?
- C: Yes, I suppose I did. In some ways it was the best time I had had. I wondered very much whether I should star or not.

The interviewer who is listening to understand, finds that a great many of his remarks reflect what the interviewee has just told him, as if he were saying..

'This is what you mean, isn't it?

I have understood you so far?'

In fact, his comments often begin

'Does this mean....?'

'You mean...?'

'It seems as if....'

Other remarks may summarize the progress he has made in understanding a speaker:

'The general picture I have is....'

'This seems to have happened several times....'

again with the implied query,

'Is this so? Have I got it straight?'

He must continue patiently

with this kind of questioning

until he can state the problem in a way



that satisfies the interviewee;
until then he can be sure
that something important remains unsaid.

He can be sure, too,
that nothing important is happening
as long as the interviewee sticks to clichés.
The true problem has not emerged, for example,
when the interviewee asserts
that he ought to better himself
or that he is underrated
or that his responsibilities are excessive—
he must be helped to proceed
from these general complaints
either to specific examples
or to a new assessment of what he means.

One **danger** besetting the interviewer
who has learned to listen to other people
is that of running ahead of his interviewee
and interpreting behaviour
beyond the point of understanding
that the speaker has reached himself.
This is an insidious difficulty,
since it can arise
just because the interviewer is devoted
to the task of understanding the other person.
He may come to see
the general principles of behaviour
and the similarities underlying various incidents
before the interviewee does himself
and may then make the mistake
of expressing these patterns.
His interpretation need not be
inaccurate or unfavourable
for it to alarm the interviewee.



It may even involve pointing out that the interviewee possesses hitherto unrecognized talents or abilities. But if it is given before the interviewee himself has recognized these qualities, it will not sound like understanding. It will sound like an alien comment, even as criticism—

because it implies that the interviewee is different from what he feels himself to be and therefore that he could (perhaps should) act differently.

We have seen interviews destroyed in this way, by the interviewer eagerly voicing the design in the other's behaviour that has just become clear to him.

Whenever this happened too soon for the interviewee to tolerate the information, he took fright and relapsed into silence or into insistent repetition of what he had already said.

The manager who can demonstrate his ability to hear, sympathetically, precisely what is said without subtraction or addition, also demonstrates his ability to value another person, and encourages his interviewee to speak freely and frankly. The truth begins to emerge— and the facts that the manager must possess if he is to make a sound decision about any future action.



9.4

LISTENING AT UNION DISPUTES

*Particularly at a union negotiation,
listening proves persuasive.*

**Negotiation does mean disagreeing
and disagreeing need not be disagreeable.**

*If listening skill is given free play,
the disagreeable
and the consequent dissension element
is kept out;*

*and how to go about it
has been described with very great clarity
by one of the great management thinkers
in the accompanying extract.**

A FULL HEARING.

When a man states a point of view
on which you disagree,
there are two contrasting ways
of meeting the situation:

1. You can immediately bring in counter-arguments to show him that he is wrong.
2. You can express interest (not approval) in his point of view and ask him to tell you more about it. Why does he feel the way he does? What is behind his think?



These two moves lead in opposite directions.
The first move leads

* From *Pattern for Industrial peace* (pp 312-316) by William F. Whyte (Harper & Bros. 1951). Used with the author's permission.

to increasingly sharp disagreements,
marked by briefer and more rapid interchanges,
more interruptions, and rising emotional tension.

The second move leads to relaxed tension
and makes agreement possible.

The man does not feel under pressure
to get out his statement in a hurry
and prepare for counter-attack.

He is able to talk to the subject and around it,
in an informal, exploratory manner.

You are able then

to size up possibilities of getting together.

If we review the negotiation record in this case,*
we find many instances of this second approach.
That was Shafer's way
of meeting management's arguments.

For example, take the first argument
over rate arbitration.

Kaufman introduced the subject,
suggested that the union speak first on it,
but then opened up with a management statement.

After Novy had commented,

"That's putting it very mildly,"

Shafer came in with this remark:

"I am interested in Mr. Novy's statement.

He says, 'That is putting it very mildly.'"

Now here was the crucial issue of negotiations.

Management was opening up

with strong pressure on this issue.

It must have taken self-control for the union
not to rush in with a counter-attack



* Not reproduced here

at the first opening.
Yet here was Shafer sitting back
and simply asking management
to talk more fully and freely on the subject.
The result was that the management people
did go on at length
to lay out their position.
They got the satisfaction of a full hearing.
Only when they had their say
did the union open up with its arguments.
At that time Love talked at length
and management gave him a full hearing.

This brings us up against
the most puzzling problem
of these negotiations.
Somehow during the course of negotiations
John Gossett decided he could trust Jake Shafer.
When did it happen? We don't know.
Probably it was no sudden decision
but rather a slowly growing conviction.
Why did it happen?
No one point will give us the answer,
but this point seems to be
of considerable importance.

Gossett decided that Shafer had a sincere interest
in management's problems.
What did Shafer say to get that point across?
Was it enough simply to say
that he was interested in costs and productivity?
Hardly.
If union men could win the confidence
of management men
simply by saying,
"I am interested in your problems,"



the situation (for the union) would be far simpler than what we actually find.

That is what we see in research.

If I am discussing my problems with you,

I am not satisfied with a statement of your interest.

It does not matter

whether the statement is a short sentence

or a long and eloquent speech.

I will only feel that you are interested

if you **act** interested.

And you can act interested

only by encouraging me

to explain my problems to you.

I will only **feel**

that you understand me and my problems

if you help me to explain them fully to you

as I see them.

I am suggesting that, in negotiations,

listening is just as important as talking.

In part, Shafer won the confidence of Gossett

through listening to him,

through giving him a full and sympathetic hearing.

DISAGREEING WITH RESPECT.

Listening is not enough.

After you have heard the other man out,

if you still disagree,

you must have a way of stating that disagreement.

Here again there are two contrasting ways

of doing it:

1. You can say, in effect, "I think you are wrong. You are wrong for the following reasons:" and so on with a systematic "proof" of the other fellow's stupidity.

2. You can say, in effect,
"Well, I see why you feel the way you do.
In terms of the experience you have had,
that is a reasonable point of view.
But, on the other hand, our experience
has been different,
and we have different problems."
You can then go on
to describe your experience and problems
in order to show
why the proposal is unacceptable.

The first approach leads to people
trying to outsmart each other.
The "Winner" of such an argument
simply humiliates his opponent
in such a way as to make agreement impossible.

The second approach moves the argument
into a field where agreement becomes possible.
Relating sentiments to experience
is sound science as well as sound strategy.
We know that people at different positions and
with different functions in an organisation
have different experiences
which naturally build different sentiments.
We cannot expect the executive
and the union leader
to have the same body of experience.
But they can ask each other
how their experience can be reorganised
so that a given proposal will be acceptable
to both parties.



In effect, this was the pattern followed
on the critical issues in these negotiations.

The steps went something like this:

1. An expression of respect for the other fellow's position.
2. A discussion of the body of experience that makes it impossible to accept his proposal.
3. A joint exploration of the ways in which the proposal can be changed and/or of the ways in which the experience of the two parties can be changed, so as to make such a proposal acceptable.

When negotiations are conducted in this way, mutual respect grows, and the parties actually come to grips with the economic and human relations problems of the plant.

They do not get lost in abstract arguments over principles.



9.5

HOW TO LISTEN TO POLITICIANS*

*Addressed as this article is
to the American audience,
the facts and figures
do not fit our conditions.*

*To a student of listening skill, however,
what is important is the underlying thinking.
Hence its place here.*

You will be bombarded from now
until Nov. 8 (or whatever the date)
with the persuasive thunder of political oratory.
You will need to listen, sift and absorb.

To vote intelligently, you have to know
what the candidates have promised,
what they stand for and
in what direction they would lead the nation.

This won't be easy.

In addition to honest fervour,
the arts of make-up, dramatic training,
speech-making experience and professional writers
are usually supporting the candidate.

You won't have the benefits of such aids.

You'll be on your own.

*Although most of the contenders for public office
will try to debate the issues
and present their views simply,
the issues are complex,
the speakers, legitimately biased;*



Although most of the contenders for public office will try to debate the issues and present their views simply, the issues are complex, the speakers, legitimately biased; and men gifted in the use of semantics can inject new flavour into stale theories and spread tempting frosting on outworn cliches.

The political listener who wants to be informed rather than confused cannot listen to a political speech as he would listen to a TV Western. He must be ready to apply some tests of logic to the speakers' statements, especially when the discussion reaches such subjects as:

- 1. Money and credit.
- 2. Economic growth.
- 3. Unemployment
- 4. Public safeguards.
- 5. Reforms and progress.
- 6. National needs.

MONEY AND CREDIT.

From the moment the Federal Government prints your money, government actions and policies affect its value and availability. In political oratory this effect tends to be overplayed, underplayed or misunderstood.

No candidate will promise to bring about inflation or higher taxes.



Many, however, will offer new government programmes or services that will necessarily have one or the other of these effects.

....**A promise of aid** to any group of citizens is a promise of costs to somebody, probably including those who receive the aid. Either it will be paid for through taxes or through deficit financing which adds to inflationary tendencies and shrinks the value of your dollars.

Wise voters will, therefore, apply the test of realism to political programmes that propose to end individual worries by way of federal intervention.

The test of realism must be applied, also, to promises that **money** will be made cheaper or dearer.

A political administration could flood the economy with extra credit through deficit spending or through a kind of collusion between the Treasury and the Federal Reserve to depress interest rates artificially. But creating credit in this way would create more **purchasing power** which would drive up price levels, causing inflation.

If the U.S. held down interest rates, many people would try to transfer their savings to foreign banks where interest rates are higher. This could cause a wholesale exodus of capital to foreign lands.



ECONOMIC GROWTH.

A comparatively new term in political argument, "economic growth" has become a campaign strong centre.

The term is usually measured by how much more goods and services were produced in a given year

than were produced in some previous year.

Over the long run,

this growth has averaged

about three per cent a year.

But with economic systems,

as with everything else,

growth is not steady.

Some years it is much higher than three per cent.

Some year, it is much lower.

This enables a politician, or anyone else, to demonstrate that growth is rapid or slow simply by picking years that prove his point.

When orators use growth figures, the wise voter will listen carefully to the **dates** the speaker uses and ask himself why they were chosen.



Equally serious confusion about economic growth has been created in the argument over whether and how the rate should be increased. Many people declare that government should act to increase the rate to a particular percentage. Some would do this by increased government spending

for schools, slum clearance or welfare projects. Others will argue that these expenditures spur consumption while growth comes from increased investment. The increased taxes that would be needed to pay for more government consumption would dry up the funds that could have gone into new machinery, new plants, innovations, and have resulted in true productive growth.

REFORMS AND PROGRESS

Such words as "reform," "progress," "boldness" are heard often in political speeches and the candidates are always for them. Mostly these words involve change. Before giving wholehearted endorsement, the listener needs to know whether change is actually a reform; whether it does represent progress and, if so, towards what; and whether the new plan is really bold or merely foolhardy.

"Reform" will be heard frequently in connection with taxes. Tax reform is a popular objective. To the **listener** it may mean elimination of the basic weaknesses of our tax system—a revision of the rate structure to permit capital formation and a stronger competitive enterprise system. To the **speaker** it may mean the closing of what he considers "loopholes" in the tax system.



Whether these provisions are equitable
is also debatable.

Whether they represent tax reform
is also debatable.

But, with taxes as with other issues,
the listener needs to know
if the candidate's definition of reform
corresponds to his own.

NATIONAL NEEDS

Beware of the politician who charges
that his opponent is against
a worthy or appealing programme.
The opponent may only be
against **the means** for attaining the goal.
A candidate opposed to federal aid
to control water pollution
is not necessarily for polluted streams.
He may reasonably believe
that control should be
a local, not federal, responsibility.

A man may oppose a \$100-a-month pension
for World War I veterans
because he fears inflation
rather than because he hates heroes.

The careful listener will also consider
whether the need for which
the cure is proposed actually exists
and whether the proposed cure is a remedy.

What politicians sometimes see
most clearly as national needs



are the real or imagined needs
of specific voting blocks.
In the competition to look ahead,
there may not be enough looking back.
People are the same as they were
in Washington's or Jefferson's or Lincoln's day.
They want freedom, opportunity.
These are cliches, too.
But they are national needs
that people have wanted enough to die for.
Few voters are offering their lives
for an increase in the minimum wage
or a new federal Department of Urban Affairs.

A businessman who makes a product
that people don't want or don't need
goes out of business.
There are **no** certain market tests for needs
or for politicians' promises.
The payoff will be in sound government
if we make sure of the facts and the needs
that will be so boldly declared
from public podiums through the land.



* Extracted from an article HOW TO LISTEN TO POLITICIANS
in Nation's Business, Sept. 1960. Copyright, Nation's
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9.6

HOW TO LISTEN TO A SERMON*

A good listener is revered by everybody,
but especially by the preacher,
whose sermon is useless
if it falls on preoccupied ears.

To listen means to give attention
with the purpose of understanding.
Better listening invariably means
better preaching.

When I stand in my pulpit on Sunday,

I am aware of the people

who are really listening,

and it is impossible for me

not to speak more directly to them—

to the tired shopkeeper

who always sits in one corner of the balcony;

to a big, white-haired detective

who occupies a center pew;

to a man and his wife who sit up front;

to two or three college students

and a high-school girl;

even to a little old near-deaf lady

who listens with her eyes,

always adjusting her glasses when I begin

and watching my lips and my hands.

Preaching, which is only one facet of the ministry,

is a difficult and often quaintly amusing business.

Bishop Edwin H. Hughes in a recent book says:

"After I practised my first sermon on a cow,

* By CLYDE ROLLAND BOOTH in *Good Housekeeping* (May, 1944). Reproduced with the kind permission of the daughter of late Rev. Dr. Clyde Rolland Booth.

I went to a far more critical audience
in the church.
It made me tremble."
Every preacher well understands what that means.
I was abashed, during my first charge,
to find two old men drowsing Sunday after Sunday.
It threw me off to see them there,
lost to the world and my fine words.
I solved this problem
by appointing one to keep the other awake.
It was a belligerent method, but it worked.

One Sunday recently I noticed a small girl
with her hands over her ears
This made me justifiably nervous,
especially after her grandfather informed me:
"Barbara says her ears hurt
every time you get red in the face."
Barbara's hands over her ears provided
a mental stumbling block,
and I began to wonder
how to assume the dulcet tones of the dove
and still keep the rest of the parishioners awake.

I am always entertained by the lady gardener
who sits in her pew
regarding the flower arrangements
with either admiration or disdain.
I can see her saying to herself,
"Who in the world put those flowers together?"
Or, "Mrs. Smith's gladiolas
are not nearly so nice as mine."



Another of my problems
is the insurance man in the choir
who studies the congregation

and puts down his next week's prospects.
But he is nothing compared to the zealous teacher
who recently sent me a note that read:
"Could you please speak a little slower?
I have several shorthand students in the front row
to transcribe the sermon for practice."

Every preacher has an almost irresistible urge
to tell laymen how to listen to a sermon.
This may be because the occupants of the pews
are rarely inarticulate
on the subject of how to preach a sermon.
"Speak more clearly," they insist.
"Enunciate better."
Or, "Speak rapidly-
monotony makes me drowsy."
Or again, "Speak slowly-
I can't keep up with you!"
It's hard to know which way to jump.
The preacher knows that
when he is nervous, his tones are jerky.
If he is sick, his voice is poor;
and if he is tired,
his enunciation is unsatisfactory.
The preacher, like any other public speaker,
must be in trim
if the sermon is to be worth listening to.
And the congregation,
like attendants at almost any form
of public address,
must be in the mood.
Enjoyment of religious services
may be an acquired taste.
People go to great trouble
to learn to appreciate
music or pictures or the drama.



Appreciating preaching presupposes a little intelligent application of the same principles.

Naturally, a great deal depends on the Minister.

His sermon should be well in hand,
his voice in the best possible condition,
his necktie on straight,
his clothes clean and pressed,
and his heart on fire.

Hopefully, he should have something to say.
He should have ascertained in advance
that the church is in readiness-
plenty of, fresh air,

not too cold and not too hot.

A simple arrangement of furnishings
and ornaments is necessary.

The custodian has a great deal to do
with the quality of the listening.

The diplomatic preacher will arrange
to have Girl Scouts keep babies and small children
in the nursery during the sermon.

It helps the girls win badges
and it helps the preacher keep
the congregation's mind on his words.

The listener should prepare himself
with similar care.

You get out your Sunday clothes
and you dress up and make the effort
to get to church.

But your mind may be on the men for dinner
or even on some niggling, critical thoughts
about your neighbours.

The Minister practises the sermon.

The choir practises the anthems.



But the listener rarely practises listening.
If you practise listening to sermons,
and concentrate on them,
you will learn
how to concentrate on other things
at the proper time.



The best way to concentrate is
to look at the preacher.
If your attention is focused on him,
you can hardly keep from listening.

Suppose the sermon seems dull. Ask yourself:
"What would I say on that subject?
How could I improve on what he is saying
about that text?"
Give the sermon some personal application.

Say to yourself, "How does that fit
the particular problems of my life?"
You will find that this is an interesting exercise
which will furnish you food
for thought and conversation later.
The minister feels that he has preached
a successful sermon
when his hearers are able to take
some vestige of it home with them.

Here are a few rules for Sunday morning:

1. Don't kick the cat.
Don't get hot under the collar
looking for a lost collar button.
2. Take the cotton out of your ears.
Go a little early.
Get ready to tune in,
as if you were listening to the radio.

- Take the receiver along,
 as if you were listening over the telephone.
 Some people leave their receivers at home.
3. Learn to dodge the millinery in front of your.
 I have played peek-a-boo
 with many a worshiper.
 Overcome all hindrances.
 Bring your periscope to look
 around that fat man.
 But remember that he wants to worship, too;
 change your seat if you can.
4. Get comfortable, but not too comfortable.
 I know a man whose leg begins to twitch
 after he has sat still very long.
 If it seems too hot,
 remove your overcoat before the sermon begins.
 If is bad, just when I get a good start,
 to see several people peel off their coats.
 This spoils several other listeners.
5. Don't forget the cough drops.
 One woman has a peculiar cough.
 It gets worse in a crowd.
 Sometimes she coughs pretty loudly.
 It bothers me, and it bothers others.
 By this time she should know
 that my sermons are only three lozenges long.

The very word "sermon" may seem
 like a mental hazard,
 because it implies exhortation and pronouncement.
 Try to think of a sermon as a conversation,
 a communication
 between the preacher's mind and your own.
 If you make a sermon into a conversation
 by bringing up some point in it
 with the preacher later, he will be a happy man.



9.7

LISTENING AT PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSES

*In our country, even though not often,
we all listen to philosophical discourses.
To facilitate effectiveness in these sessions,
Mr. J. Krishnamurti used to make it a point
to discuss aspects of listening
before he gave his series of discourses.
The following excerpts are from his talks* :*

It is always rather difficult to communicate.
Words must be used,
and each word has a certain definite meaning,
but we should bear in mind
that the **word is not the thing**;
the word does not convey the total significance.
If we semantically stick to words,
then I am afraid that
we shall not be able to proceed much further.
To communicate really deeply needs
not only attention,
but also a certain **quality of affection**-
which doesn't mean that we must not be critical.
We must not only be alert intellectually,
but we must avoid **the pitfall of words**.
To really communicate with another
about anything,
there should also be a certain quality
of direct affection.



* Reproduced with permission from *Talks by Krishnamurti in Europe* (1965, 1966), U.S.A. (1966) and India (1966).
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a certain quality of exchange,
with full capacity to investigate, to examine.
Then only can communication take place.
Perhaps there will be a communication
with each other here,
because we are going to deal
with many subjects,
many problems during these talks.
We are going to go into them fairly deeply.
To understand what the speaker is saying,
there must be a certain **quality**
of attention in listening.

Very few of us listen,
because we ourselves have so many ideas,
so many opinions, so many conclusions and beliefs,
which actually prevent the act of listening.

To listen to another
is one of the most difficult things to do.
We are so ready with our own opinions,
our own conclusions.
We are likely to interpret,
agreeing or disagreeing,
taking sides, or saying, "I don't agree",
and quickly brushing aside what is being said.
All that, it seems to me, prevents
the act of actually listening.
Only when there is a listening
which is **not merely intellectual**
is it possible to communicate with each other.
Any clever person can listen
to a certain argument,
to a certain exposition of ideas;
but to listen with the mind and the heart,
with one's total being,



requires a great deal of attention.
To attend implies not only knowing
one's own beliefs,
concepts, conclusions, what one wants, and so on,
but also putting those aside for the time being,
and listening.

- - - - -

Really, **listening is seeing.**

To see something very clearly,
to see a flower, a tree, or one's own problems
very clearly,

one must look negatively.

A negative look implies looking at something
without the distortion of prejudice, of opinion,
of an experience of what you already know;
all of which keep you from looking.

To listen, several things are required.

First, one's own mind must be quiet;
otherwise it cannot listen.

If your mind is chattering, opposing,
agreeing or disagreeing,
then you are not listening.

But if you are quiet, if you are silent,
and if in that silence there is attention,
then there is the act of learning.



- - - - -

Listening is **an art**

and most of us do not really listen at all.

We listen to our own opinions,
judgments and valuations,

and we hardly have time to listen to another.

In any listening, which is really also examining,
there must be attention, not concentration,

an **attention** that comes easily

when we give our minds,

our hearts, our ears, everything

to understand something
that is a complex and important part
in our lives.

Most of us do not listen at all;
we have naturally ideas—
our own opinions, prejudices, conclusions—
and these become a barrier
and prevent us from listening.
After all, if one is to listen,
one must be attentive.
And there is not attention,
if one is preoccupied with one's own thoughts,
conclusions, opinions and evaluations—
then all communication ceases.
This is an obvious fact;
but unfortunately, though it is a fact
we rarely are aware of this fact.

One has to put aside one's own thoughts,
conclusions and opinions, and listen:
only then is communication possible.

If we listen as observers, as thinkers,
there is something
we are thinking about or observing.
It is different if we listen with attention.
Attention is not intellectual or emotional;
"I will be attentive",
then it's merely an act of will,
which again separates.
But if we listen with attention, if we attend,
there is neither the activity
of the fragmentary intellect
nor sentimental activity;
there is a complete attention



which is neither intellect, emotion,
nor purely physical.
Attention is physical, emotional and intellectual;
it's a total activity.

**So you give your whole mind, your whole body,
your whole nerves-everything you have,
to listen.**

How do you listen?

When you listen, you listen to find out
what the speaker is trying to say-
to find out, not to oppose or agree.
To find out for yourself means
to listen, to enquire, to examine-
not accepting, not saying,

"I hope he will come
to my point of view which is right."



We must listen, not only to the speaker,
but also to the whole problem.
The problem is very complex and
to listen and examine we cannot have opinions.
We can't say.. "I know and you don't know",
and stick to our opinions, judgements
and evaluations.

**A man who says he knows does not know,
and therefore is incapable of listening.**

You are not actually listening
to what is being said.

Actually, you have your opinions,
judgements, evaluations, conclusions;
you have certain ideas
about the reputation of the speaker.
You wait, you are expecting something to happen.

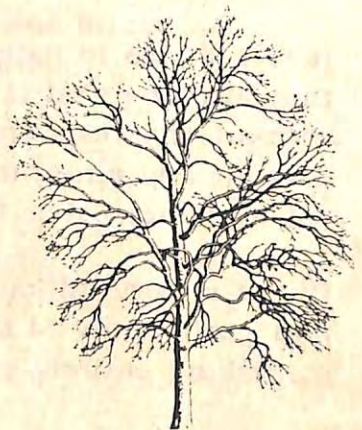
and that prevents you
from actually listening, obviously.
Of course that acts as a screen,
and so prevents you
from actually listening with all your intensity.
And it is only when you listen
in the sense of listening
without any strain or effort,
neither agreeing **nor** disagreeing,
but just observing and seeing the fact,
and not bringing in your opinion about the fact,
your conclusions, your intellectual concepts,
formulas about the fact—
it is only then, it seems to me,
that you can really listen quietly, easily,
and penetrate what is being said,
find out for yourself
whether it is true or false.
Rather one is trying to find out for oneself
the truth of the matter,
and therefore one has to listen
without necessarily accepting what is being said,
or rejecting it.
You know, when one does listen intimately,
as it were,
one gets much more out of it.



It is possible to listen to
that airplane that is coming back,
without any resistance,
without any annoyance or irritation;
you can just listen to it.

But it is very difficult to listen in that way,
and particularly to somebody who is saying
something entirely opposite of what you think

or what you want to hear.
To listen without judging, without evaluating,
without accepting or denying, but just to listen.
that is **one of the most difficult thing to do**;
for how can one listen when one is tortured,
when one is caught in the net of uncertainties,
when one is angry,
furious with oneself, with society,
with the environment in which one lives?
So it is extremely difficult to listen quietly;
and it seems to me that one can learn really,
deeply and profoundly,
only when one does listen quietly,
without any demand,
without asking a question
and waiting for an answer;
just to listen.



LISTENING: OUR HERITAGE

Ours is an aural civilization.

For centuries, things have been passed on through the spoken word,

one reason why most people in India are intelligent, though quite a few ^{are} illiterate. *low*

The place of listening has been highlighted in our classics.

We give below a few verses in Sanskrit.

श्रुत्वा धर्मं विजानाति श्रुत्वा त्यजति दुर्मतिम् ।
श्रुत्वा ज्ञानं अवाप्नोति श्रुत्वा मोक्षं च विन्दति ॥

Where can listening help us?

In getting useful knowledge.

In shedding dysfunctional thinking.

In taking to enriching behaviour.

In getting guidance to life divine.

सुहृदां हितकामानां यः शृणोति न भाषितम् ।
विपत् सन्निहिता तस्य स नरः शत्रुनन्दनः ॥

Danger awaits the man

who does not care to listen

to the points of view of friends.

He contributes to the glee

of his enemies too.



अप्रियस्य च पथ्यस्य परिणामः सुखावहः ।

वक्ता श्रोता च यत्रास्ति रमन्ते तत्र संपदः ॥

May not be pleasant

but can be highly fruitful:

Where such items are said and listened to there is success and prosperity.

सहस्र ग्रन्थ पठनात् चिन्तनात् व्यवहारतः ।

यो लाभः स मनुष्याणां मुहूर्तं श्रवणाद्भवेत् ॥

The benefit one gets by reading
and discussing a thousand books
one can get by listening with respect and attention
to an appropriate source.

We also give an extract from *Thirukkural*.

Thirukkural is held crystallised wisdom.

The great Savant Thiruvalluavar gives
in 133 sections of ten verses each
profound guidelines for **total wellbeing**.

The book is available in translation
in most Indian and foreign languages.

One whole section he devotes for listening.

We reproduce VVS Iyer's translation and the original.

We urge you to sit with someone who knows Tamil
and savour the spirit of the original.

Meaning is one thing and conviction is another
and no translation can convey the conviction

the way the writer does in the original

Hence this suggestion.



கேள்வி

LISTENING TO THE INSTRUCTION OF THE WISE

செல்வத்துள் செல்வம் செனிச்செல்வம் அச்செல்வம்
செல்வத்துள் எல்லாம் தலை.

The most precious of treasures is the treasure of the
ear: verily it is the crown of all kinds of wealth.

செவிக்குண(வு) இல்லாத போழ்து சிறிது
வயிற்றுக்கும் ஈயப் படும்,

Even unto the stomach some food will be offered
when there is no food for the time being for the ear.



செவியுணவின் கேள்வி உடையார் அவியுணவின்
ஆன்ருரோ(௫) ஒப்பர் நிலத்து.

Behold the men who have listened to much
instruction: they are the very Gods on earth.

கற்றிலன் ஆயினும் கேட்க; அஃதொருவற்(௫)
ஒற்கத்தின் ஊற்றும் துணை.

Let a man listen to instruction even though he hath
no learning: for it will be a stay unto him when he is
encompassed by difficulty.

இழுக்கல் உடையுழி ஊற்றுக்கோல் அற்றே
ஒழுக்கம் உடையார்வாய்ச் சொல்

The counsel of the righteous is like unto a strong
staff: for it keepeth those that listen to it from
slipping.

எனைத்தானும் நல்லவை கேட்க; அனைத்தானும்
ஆன்ற பெருமை தரும்.

Listen to good words though they be but few: even
those few will add to thee a proportionate dignity.

பிழைத்துணர்ந்தும் பேதைமை சொல்லார் இழைத்துணர்ந்(து)
ஈண்டிய கேள்வி யவர்.

Behold the man that hath meditated much in himself
and hath laid by a store of instruction by listening to
the discourses of the wise: he talketh not nonsense
even when in error.

கேட்பினும் கேளாத் தகையவே கேள்வியால்
தோட்கப் படாத செவி.

Deaf indeed, though it heareth, is the ear that hath
not been drilled by words of instruction.

நுணங்கிய கேள்வியர் அல்லால் வணங்கிய
வாயினர் ஆதல் அறிது.

Humility of speech is hard to be attained by those
who have not listened to the subtle words of the wise.

செவியின் சுவையுணரா வாயுணர்வின் மாக்கள்
அவியினும் வாழினும் என் ?

Behold the men that taste with the tongue but know
not the taste of the ear: what doth it matter to the
world whether they live or die?

While we in India score in why (thinking)
the West scores in how (doing).
Our literature has not done enough justice
to the how aspect.
Perhaps people believed
that personal example and guidance
can do it better.
In today's times, we need
information on all - what, why, where and how.
Hence workbooks of this kind.



The author is indebted to Pandit S. Narasimha Raghavan for the
Sanskrit and Tamil selections.

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- * Yates, Virginia *Listening and Note-taking* McGraw-Hill 1970
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RESOURCE GUIDE : JOURNALS

The following are some of the journals (from other countries) that carry insightful articles on this and related topics from time to time.

- American Dietetic Association
- Association of Communication Administration Bulletin
- Colliers
- Communication Education
- Communication Monographs
- Communication Quarterly
- Dun's Review & Modern Industry
- Elementary English
- English Journal
- Etc: Journal of General Semantics
- Good Housekeeping
- Harvard Business Review
- Hospital Administration
- Hydrocarbon Processing
- Journal of Abnormal & Social Psychology
- Journal of Communication
- Journal of Educational Research
- Journal of Speech & Hearing Disorders
- Journal of Speech & Hearing Research
- Journal of the Acoustics Society of America
- Junior Libraries
- Office Executive
- Personnel Journal
- Phi Kappa Phi Journal
- Psychological Record
- Psychological Review
- Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology
- Quarterly Journal of Speech
- Radio Research
- School Review
- Speech & Language in the School
- Speech Monographs
- Supervisory Management
- The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals
- The National Underwriter
- Training & Development Journal
- Wisdom



RESOURCE GUIDE : FILMS

TITLE	BRIEF DETAILS
A Message to No One	25 min. color
Do You Know How To Make a Statement of Fact	30 min. b&w
Listen Well, Learn Well	11 min. b&w
Listen, Please	10 min. color
More Than Words	12 min. color
On Listening	11 min. b&w
Person to Person Communications	14 min. b&w/color
Perspective of Management Listening	25 min. b&w
Power of Listening	30 min. color
Techniques of Management Listening	25 min. b&w



RESOURCE GUIDE : OTHERS

Education for listening has come of age. One proof is that we have now an **International Listening Association**. It publishes a journal and a newsletter. It holds annual international conferences. The current address of I.L.A. is :

- International Listening Association
Box 10090A
East Tennessee State University
Tennessee 37614-0002

Also available in the market are audiotapes, videotapes and facilitator's manuals. One source is Communication Development Inc. (25 Robb Farm Road, St. Paul Minnesota 55110) where Professor Lyman K. Steil's products are available.

- Please keep adding to this list from your rich experience

THE POWER OF LISTENING.

Do we realise that listening skill is an asset to an organization? Do we realise that a high level of listening skill will visibly influence our results, relations and reputation?

Do we realise our listening skill may be below par? Do we realise it **need not be so?**

For want of a good level of this skill, do we realise how much we are losing? in terms of personal satisfaction and job efficiency? Do we also realise that listening is a skill that can be cultivated? Do we realise further that every skill has science and art elements that can be learned? Do we realise that in skill development a **headstart** is basic?

This work book will provide the headstart and pointers to the **long journey** that any skill development means. It starts you an **awareness**, gives you **understanding**, and leads you to habits of listening through appropriate **practices and exercises**. It emphasises all the way that it is a tough but thoroughly **worthwhile** game. In fact, once you become **aware** of its value, its place, its possibilities and problems, you will **do** something about them.

Written by a specialist in **Executive Effectiveness** who has professionally studied hundreds of executives at work, this book has been slanted to the needs of the executive, irrespective of the nature of his function.

Since listening is a **personal skill** it can benefit the non-executive population as well, and special sections have been devoted for the needs of the teachers, the sales personnel **and** the committeemen.

In fact, we are all exposed to politicians on the one hand and propagandists on the other and absence of skillful listening could affect our **personal effectiveness**. That is why there are detailed sections on *How to Listen to a Politician* and *How to Listen to a Sermon*, besides a crucial one on Listening at **Union negotiations**.