

Do You Want to Impress Others? Then Don't Talk ...Listen

By Della Menechella

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Recently my friend Michelle was concerned about a professional conference she was planning to attend with her husband, a veterinarian. She has no background in veterinary science, so she did not think she would be able to effectively communicate with the people at the conference. I asked her why she thought she had to use technical jargon when she spoke to the other conference attendees. She responded that she wanted them to think well of her. Michelle is a warm, caring individual who is genuinely interested in others. I assured her that she could effectively relate to the people she met by asking them questions about themselves and their businesses instead of trying to impress them with her knowledge of veterinary science.

Many people, especially in business situations, are very concerned about what they say to others. Before an event, they might even think of things to say about themselves so others will perceive them in a positive light. They try to dazzle people with stories about their successes hoping this will impress them. What they may not realize is that most of us are not that interested in the accomplishments of other people. We are, however, very interested in our own achievements and we relish the opportunity to describe them (often in great detail) to anyone who will lend an ear. Unfortunately, we don't usually get the chance to do so because most people are more interested in talking than listening.

Listening is an under appreciated aspect of communication. When you carefully listen to others, you impress them in ways that talking can never accomplish. You are letting them know you care about them and they appreciate it. How many people have come up to you lately and said, "You're listening to me too intently. You're valuing what I say too much. You're making me feel too good, so stop it now!" I don't think you've had a long line of people with this complaint and I doubt that you ever will. People are starving for the attention that conscious listening can give. These people include prospects, clients, supervisors, co-workers, family and friends.

Most people are so unaccustomed to being listened to that when someone takes the time to do so, they are often amazed. My friend Sandy is a professional coach. She listens carefully to what her clients say about their fears, hopes, and dreams. When she relates back to them what they have just said, they will often respond "How did you know that? You're so intuitive. You have such great people skills." They attribute Sandy's comments to the fact that she must be a tremendously talented coach to be able to know them so well when, in fact, all she did was listen.

The key to being an outstanding communicator is not so much the words of wisdom that come out of your mouth, but how well you listen to the words of wisdom that come out of the mouths of others. As for Michelle, she listened intently to the people that she met at the conference and soon had

them eating out of her hand.

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