

# Focused Attention is the Key to Effective Networking

By Brian Hilliard

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The following is an excerpt from our book, Networking Like a Pro!

Have you ever wondered why most people are better speakers than listeners?

Or noticed when you were talking to someone, you can tell by their response that they were only “half listening” to what you were saying?

Well if you, or someone you know, is looking to become a more effective networker, then Focused Attention is a great listening technique to help you achieve that goal.

Fact: The human brain, on average, can think at a rate of 400 to 450 words per minute; the average person, however, can only talk at a rate of 100 to 150 words per minute.

Let's say you're at a networking event, and you're listening to a really fast talker, somewhere in the neighborhood of 150 words per minute. And while that person is talking, let's say your brain is thinking at a rate of 400 words per minute.

So if you're thinking at a rate of 400 words per minute, and the person you're talking to is speaking at a rate of 150 words per minute, then what you do with that “extra” capacity (400 words minus 150 words per minute) is going to determine how good a listener you are.

Focused attention says to concentrate 100 percent of your attention on the message the other person is communicating.

Where is your attention focused?

Are you planning your response while the other person is talking, or are you understanding their point and making a few mental notes to help you process it?

Are you scanning the room to find the next person you want to meet, or if someone walks over, do you stop and devote your full attention to this person?

The reason most people aren't very good listeners is because during most discussions, they're spending their “extra” intellectual capacity (those extra 250 words we were just talking about) on everything other than the conversation at hand.

And in today's email-typing, pager-answering, voicemail-checking world where "multi-tasking" is very much en vogue, everyone seems to be doing two or three things at once.

Recommendation: At your next networking event, make it a point to "block out" everyone else in the room and focus your mental attention on what this person is saying.

A friend of mine once told me that he met somebody who went a step further than that: Whenever someone walked into his office, he physically removed whatever documents he was working on from his desk, and redirected his attention to that person. Wow! Now that sends a powerful message.

Imagine if you could send that same message to someone else in your life. It could be your spouse talking about their day at the dinner table, or a person at work trying to get your opinion on an important project they're working on.

Concentrating 100 percent of your attention on that person is a surefire way to make them feel their message is valued. And at the end of the day, isn't that what being a good listener is all about?

Brian Hilliard is a motivational speaker, and author of the book *Networking Like a Pro!* If you're looking for new business or looking for a new job, this is the book for you.

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