

Jim's Profit Accelerator 101: A Hearing Checkup

Instructions about listening are older than dirt, so why am I adding to the din? Here are three reasons to read this article:

1. If you're a leader, survival depends on your listening skill.
2. Listening is essential for connecting with the people that you lead.
3. Hearing what another person meant is beyond difficult, even for professionals.*

**Full disclosure: my wife (my night psychiatrist) is a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, which means that she makes her living by listening to people. As an intensively trained listener, she says that hearing what people mean is one of the hardest tasks there is.*

You knew all this, and yet you're reading. (Admit it: listening is tough, even for you.)

SPEED BUMP: Leading mixes leader vision with people connection.

Leader vision is more than a picture of the future. It's a Sisyphusian drive that is focused within the leader. Sisyphus was the mythical Greek king of Corinth condemned by Zeus to roll a stone up a steep hill, only to see it roll down again. The essence of the myth is not the stone or the hill, it's excluding all outside influence to enable the task—ultimate individualism. Sisyphus had no connection with others.

The problem for leaders is that followers won't follow without some connection with the leader. The strongest connections feel personal. And yet leading like Sisyphus excludes the very others who will make the vision real.

SPEED BUMP: Are you leading like Sisyphus?

We know that everyone likes to be listened to, so doesn't it follow that the most powerful connection that leaders can make is in hearing what their people are saying and what they really mean?

In one of the companies where I worked, the CEO was remarkably articulate, with perceptive insights about the business. He was confounded by repeated instances where he clearly spelled out guidance for his top executives—only to find that they did something else! In fact, his insights were a bit of a stumbling block. He paid more attention to the quality of his insights than to how they were received and understood by his people. Expanded listening and questioning skills helped close the understanding gap.

Is there an easy way to become a better listener? Actually, yes. The technique below comes from an advanced seminar on listening. It was presented in Chicago in June 2016 at the mid-year meeting of

the American Psychoanalytic Association. This international organization is dedicated to improving various modes of psychotherapy, a proven technique for a remarkable array of psychological situations. The 300-plus attendees chose from nearly 100 seminars on topics related to their clinical practice. The technique looks simple:

Power Listening

Power up your listening by adding this unique middle step to your internal listening process.

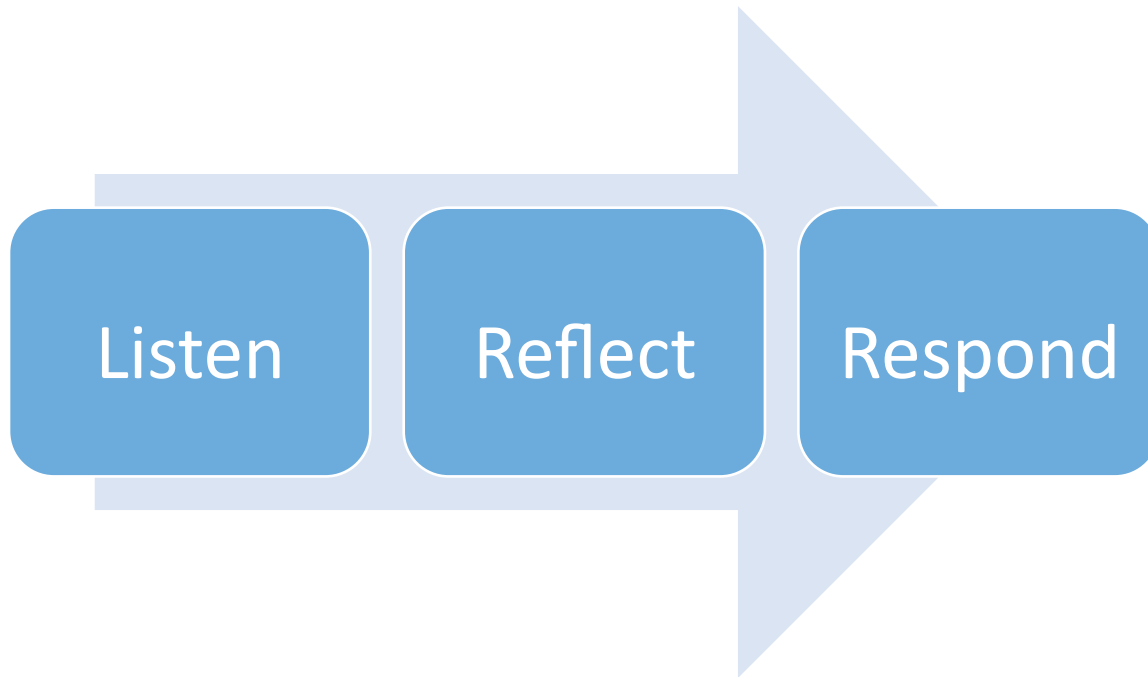
The usual listening sequence:

1. Listen.
2. Respond.

The Power Listening technique:

1. Listen to the other person.
2. Ask yourself what you heard.
3. Respond.

SPEED BUMP: Reflecting on what you heard is a listening essential.



The conscious act of asking yourself what you heard will slow your need to speak, clarify what you really heard, and perhaps enable you to hear more, connect more, and respond more effectively.

ACCELERANT: What did you hear?

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Jim Grew is an expert in CEO-level strategy and executive leadership whose clients refer to him as the Business Defogger and Accelerator. Jim helps leaders swiftly discover the hidden opportunities within their businesses and exploit them for dramatic results. Nearly three decades of success as a COO and CEO coupled with his experience running nine thriving businesses provide the foundation for his consulting work as president of the Grew Company. He presents regularly to industry groups, mentors business leaders, and shares insights on his blog, BizBursts.com: <http://bizbursts.com/>. He holds BA and MBA degrees from Stanford University.

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