



Don't Listen So You Can Talk, Listen So You Can Learn

Customer Service is *ALL* about listening. According to Bernard Ferrari, author of *Power Listening: Mastering the Most Critical Business Skill of All*, good listening is the key to developing fresh insights and ideas that fuel success.

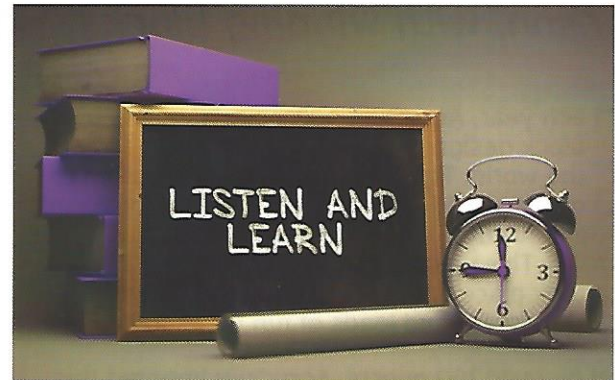
Organizations choose front-line employees for their social poise, their outgoing personalities, and their ability to communicate well... meaning their ability to talk. And they train them in what they can and cannot say and what to do to help the customer. Their performance is evaluated by how proactively they manage and resolve problems or calls.

It isn't hard to understand that organizations are also missing an opportunity for customer relationship building if they fail to choose customer service employees for their ability to **listen** and **empathize**. An opportunity is also missed if training doesn't include an explanation of why listening is important, and what can be done to become a better listener.

"You learn when you listen. You earn when you listen—not just money, but respect."

~Harvey Mackay

In my book, *Feelings*, I asked the question, "Do you listen to your customers, and honestly try to help them?" For example, when I go into a crowded restaurant and give my name to the host/hostess at the head of a long line, I don't want them to simply take down my name. I want to know a realistic estimate of how long it will be before I'm seated. If I get a casual reply of, "It won't be too long," I know my request has not been heard. On the other hand, if I am told a realistic time frame for my wait, I can choose to leave or to occupy my time doing other things.



Good listeners...

- Are genuinely curious about what's going on for you.
- Are patient and don't interrupt in the middle of your pauses
- Give their full attention
- Let you know they follow what you are saying by nodding in agreement
- Don't judge or criticize
- Don't relate everything you say to their own personal experience

Empathy and active listening are the golden rules of customer service. In order to truly connect to your customer and give them a reason to come back, let them know you've heard and understood.

Nowhere else is the art of listening more evident than at the Mayo Clinic. There, listening is a religion and you can tell the minute you walk in for your appointment. Everyone from the janitor on up is educated in looking for opportunities and chances to make your visit/appointment a good experience. For example,

- Everyone in this very large facility will help you with directions
- Everyone is super nice.
- You see large directional signs.
- Staff use flexibility in scheduling and testing
- Staff give you their full attention
- Staff treat each patient as special with special needs
- Contact with everyone on your team of experts

Mayo Clinic has once again been crowned the Best Hospital in the nation, according to *U.S. News and World Report*. Doctors, nurses, technicians, pharmacists, and other employees all are part of the communication process. They listen the minute you walk in the door. They are the "experts" at the art of listening, and you are embraced by a team that truly cares about you.

Things are good at Apple too: If you walk into an Apple store, you will be greeted by a sales staff member and you are NOT asked, "How can I help you?" Instead they ask, "What would you like to do today?" They go right to the heart of any technology user's question, a question that's always related to what the users want to do with the tech they're interested in.

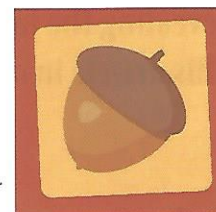
Once you explain your needs, they take care of it... on the spot in most cases. If you need more hand holding, they turn you over to the *Apple Geniuses*. By adhering to their basic principles of constantly offering great customer service and in-store experiences, Apple reported \$8.78 billion profit on \$45.4 billion revenue for 3Q 2017.

About the Author: John Tschohl is a professional speaker, trainer, and consultant. He is the President and founder of Service Quality Institute (the global leader in customer service) with operations in over 40 countries. John is a self-made millionaire traveling and speaking more than 50 times each year. He is considered to be one of the foremost authorities on service strategy, success, empowerment and customer service in the world. John's monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.



"The best way to understand people is to listen to them. How would you rate your listening skills?"

~John Tschohl



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SEWING DEALERS TRADE ASSOCIATION

The trade publication for the independent retailer
November 2017 | ISSUE 148 www.vdta.com

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