

## Effective Listening - Part 2

### Guidelines for effective listening (continued)

#### 7. **Hold your fire**

Over stimulation is almost as bad as under stimulation and the two together constitute the twin evils of inefficient listening. Learn not to get excited about a speaker's point until you are sure that you understand it thoroughly.

#### 8. **Listen for ideas**

Good listeners focus on central ideas, rather than trying to memorise every fact. Learn to recognise the language in which central ideas are usually stated.

#### 9. **Ask questions**

The best way to confirm your understanding of what a speaker has said is to ask questions – to clarify and amplify. In the case of clarification, you ask the speaker to repeat or re-phrase their remarks. In the case of amplification you ask for additional information. An intelligent question indicates interest. Politeness is paramount and ensure that your timing is right.

#### 10. **Make sure you understand**

If you are unsure that you understand a speaker correctly, briefly restate what you think they said, asking "Is that what you mean?"

#### 11. **Capitalise on thought speed**

People talk at a rate of about 125 words a minute, yet we can think quite effortlessly at a rate of 400 words a minute. The difference between talking speed and thinking speed can create a tremendous barrier to effective listening.

The good listener uses his excess thinking time to advantage, rather than allowing private thoughts to intrude. It is not difficult to develop techniques for using spare thinking time to aid effective listening. You can anticipate what is going to be said, mentally summarise what has been said, mentally question what is being said, or listen between the lines by giving attention to tone and volume, facial expressions, gestures and movements.

#### 12. **The rewards of listening**

- Add to your knowledge
- Encourage people to open up
- Improve your personal efficiency, saving time, energy, even money.
- Improve interpersonal relationships
- Facilitate the identification of problems and grievances

By going out of your way to expose yourself to difficult listening situations and topics which are strange to you, you'll gain valuable practice in listening.