

WANT TO BE A GREAT LEADER? LEARN TO LISTEN



Summary: One of the most important and often overlooked leadership skills is listening. Follow this advice to improve your leadership skills.

“You aren’t learning anything when you’re talking.”

Lyndon B. Johnson said these words in perhaps the most prominent leadership role in the world as President of the United States of America. Leaders, take heed!

One of the most valuable skills to have as a leader is the ability to listen well, learn from both the words being spoken and from the way they are presented, and then take positive action. People want to know their ideas are valued and their problems are acknowledged. See [Improving Engagement & Well-Being through Focused Leadership](#) for more information. If you want buy in and engagement from your employees, then they will have to perceive you as a good listener. You will have to earn it. By being approachable and listening well, you show your employees that you respect and care for them, and they will reciprocate.

Listen actively. Listening is a skill that requires effort, attention, and practice. Put aside your other worries and distractions: your personal to do list, your email inbox, or anything else in front of you that could detract from your focus on listening.

Reserve giving out immediate judgment and solutions. In failing to do so, you can inadvertently shut down the person who is sharing and end your opportunity to actually hear what they have to say. There is more at stake than just a chat session. You may be losing the speaker's respect, their trust, and their comfort with coming to you when they have ideas or issues.

So much executive time is spent strategizing in meetings and through emails, that sometimes decisions are made with no input from those in the trenches. Your employees are the true experts in their fields. Be willing to ask them how a decision will affect their duties. Ask if there is a better way. Ask how you could better support them, and then listen. Pay attention to their frustrations and where they find pride in their work as well.

As you become a better listener, you will learn to be a wiser leader. You will be a leader with sharper tools for decision making. You will be more aware of your own strengths and areas for growth. Most importantly, as a great listener, you will earn the buy in from the people you are expected to lead.

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