

# **C.H.A.L.L.E.N.G.E.S., inc**

**Working with Families in Business**

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## **~FEBRUARY 2008 NEWSLETTER~**

***“Sometimes silence is the best road to understanding”***

### **RULE #4**

**Families in Business make better decisions when they have committed to the technique of “listening to understand.”**

How many times have you been in the middle of trying to get your point across when someone jumps in before you have finished? How many times have you been the person who has “jumped in” to another person’s conversation because you *assumed* what they were going to say? Be honest with yourself.

Yes, we have all done it at one time or another. Some of us don’t “jump in” verbally rather we “tune out” what the speaker is saying. We become *selective listeners* and *selective interpreters*. We hear what we want to hear and we make it sound like what we want it to mean. No wonder “words” can get us in so much trouble!

“Lack of listening” becomes a major issue when it is carried with the family into the family business. The natural tendency of children *NOT* to listen to their parents and the habit of siblings ignoring the “banter” of one another can turn most conversations into a competition.

In our October 2007 newsletter, we listed the need to “Communicate as Equals” as Rule #1. That rule **MUST** be followed if “listening to understand” is going to be effective.

Listening to understand what the other person is saying is the ultimate goal. Understanding does not necessarily mean agreeing but it does mean respecting the other person enough to hear her/him out and to really try to understand their point of view.

Imagine how much all of us could really learn if we made “listening to understand” the goal of our communication effort. How much better would business decisions be? How much clearer would communication and instructions be? How many assumptions will no longer be made because we actually listened to the entire point of view without interruption? How many relationships would still be strong if we just had practiced patient listening? How different would our lives and businesses be?

By listening more effectively we will have a much clearer understanding of what is being stated. Understanding allows us to respond in the appropriate manner without jumping to an emotional conclusion. Appropriate response improves the effectiveness of

communication while building interpersonal cooperation, fostering trust, improving family relationships, improving the timing of the right decisions and focusing on the success of the business instead of the old family communication habits.

The following are some “Listening Techniques” that you (or someone you know) can use to improve their listening skills and assist in turning the selective listening and selective interpretation into active listening and understanding:

1. When possible, listen with a paper and pen. Take notes. This can help you keep your mind focused on what is being said instead of “how you want to answer.” It also verifies your interest in what is being said.
2. Let the speaker know you are interested in understanding what they are trying to get across. After the speaker has finished the statement (without interruption) repeat back to them, in your own words, what your understanding is of their message. This is NOT for agreement or disagreement, it is for understanding.
3. Make sure you have received verification from the speaker that your understanding is correct.
4. Continue to listen to the next points in the same manner and let the speaker know his/her message has been understood by you, so he/she no longer needs to press his/her point. This will reduce the atmosphere of conflict and defensiveness. Trust can begin to take the place of them both.
5. NEVER interrupt until the complete thought has been stated. Restate the thought by paraphrasing. Then ask, “Is there anything you want to add to your thoughts?” before moving on.
6. After the speaker has presented all of his/her points and it is time for you to reply, do not discount all that was stated in its entirety. The words, “That’s just plain stupid” can obviously end a conversation, keep tension high and delay important decisions. Address each point individually and do not move on to the next point until there is total understanding of each point.
7. Set the “rules” upfront on how the communication is going to take place. You talk, I actively listen and take notes, questioning after each topic has been completely presented and when you are finished you give me the same courtesy!

40% of communication is spent listening, 35% talking, 16% reading and 9% writing (not sure where texting would come in!). So we need to do it right. In a family and in a family business the need to effectively listen is greater than ever. Let us show you how we can assist your family in business in improving overall listening and communication techniques.

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