

5 Ways to Be a Better Listener

Written by: Drew Koch, CM | August 11, 2017



[Even the best managers have room for improvement.](#) One way a lot of us can improve is by becoming a better listener. Think about the managers you have known during your career. Did they really listen when you talked to them? Chances are, the best managers genuinely wanted to hear what you had to say, while the worst just went through the motions.

For a manager, there is no downside to being a better listener. You might learn that there is another way of looking at things and change your mind. Even if you don't, you will reap the benefit of making sure everyone feels they have had their say and been genuinely heard.

With that in mind, here are **5 tips for being a better listener:**

1. Shut Off the Screen

Put that device down! Turn away from the monitor! Have you ever had a conversation with someone who spent more time looking at their phone than listening to you? Of course, we all have. I don't like it and I bet you don't either - so don't do it! Put your phone down and

engage with the actual live person to whom you are talking. Your email and texts can wait.

2. Talk Less, Listen More

If you are talking, you are not listening. It is impossible to do both at the same time. Have you ever had a conversation with someone who just would not let you get a word in edgewise? It is frustrating, to say the least. Don't do it. If someone wants to talk to you, chances are they have something to say. Remember that and wait your turn. There will be plenty of time for you to talk after you have listened to them.

3. Ask Questions

One of the best ways to show you are listening is to ask questions to clarify what someone is saying, or seek more information. Try to avoid interrupting, and save your questions until you've heard what the other person has to say. You might not even need to ask them.

4. Be Present, Pay Attention, and Show it

Non-verbal cues go a long way. Nod your head when the other person makes a good point. Say "ok" or "mm-hmm" occasionally. Remember, the other person wants to be heard, so show them you are listening.

5. Make Time to Listen - even if it's not right now

An open-door policy only goes so far, because sometimes you really are too busy to talk. If someone needs to talk and you don't have time, or can't give them your undivided attention, set aside time for them later. Make an appointment and keep it. Unless there is an emergency, it is better to wait and have a productive conversation than to have an unproductive one right away.

About the Author



Drew Koch, CM

ICPM Senior Director Drew Koch joined the staff in May 1998, after earning Master of Arts and Educational Specialist degrees from James Madison University. Drew is responsible for new business development, financial operations, staffing and leadership of the Institute. He also supervises ICPM's day-to-day operations and is responsible for exam development, question writing and review, exam security, and statistical analysis.