Inspired Recruiter Webinars

Elite Level Listening

Key Points

FLAIR
business growth consultancy

Introduction

These notes are based on a webinar where we presented with Richard Mullender of The Listening Institute.

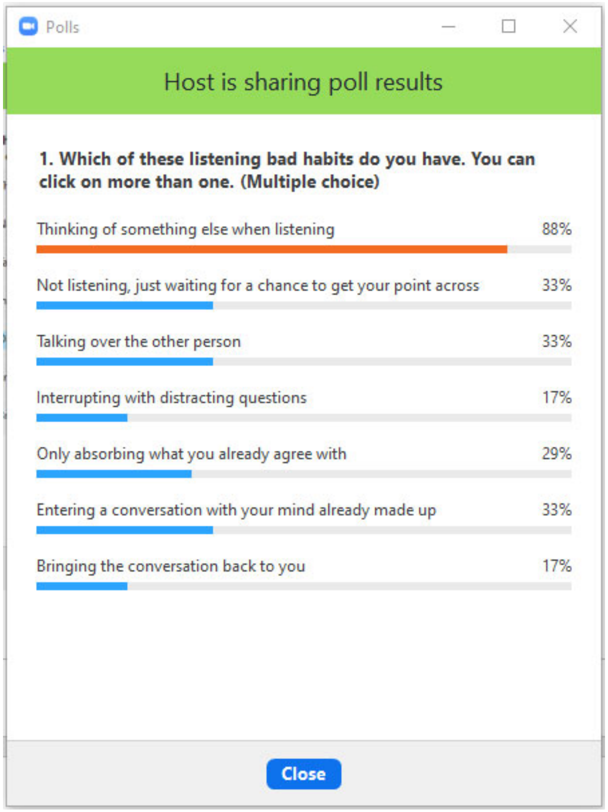
The goal of the webinar was to give recruitment business owners an understanding of how Elite Level Listening could help their team with their business development activities.

Elite Level Listening

> *Elite level listening is about connecting dots in your head, interpreting and coming back with a suggestion.*

Most of us are aware of active listening and consider it a soft skill that's helpful to have, especially in recruitment and business development. But knowing this doesn't stop many of us developing bad habits.

We conducted a poll during the webinar and the results were not overly surprising, it seems many of us already know we need to improve this skill. Some of the most common listening bad habits are:



All of us have been guilty of some of these bad habits to a greater or lesser extent, usually depending on the situation that we find ourselves in, either at work or when we are with our friends and families:

- We mostly interrupt by asking too many questions.
- Going into a meeting and listening only for what you want to hear, to get the information to prove your case by adopting a confirmatory listening mind set.
- Entering a conversation with your mind already made up.
- Imposing your experience on someone who has experienced a similar event and making it about you.

You should enter every conversation, especially in a business situation, with a defined outcome in mind and know what you are listening for.

Intelligence is identifying and selecting the right information that you can use for both the person you're listening to, and your, advantage.

1. What Is Elite Level Listening and why is it so important?

"At the moment you are standing and looking at a picture (the situation) and sitting behind that is a whole story and you have to unpick that story.

Why has this person come to you today to recruit?

What is the compelling event?"

Active Listening is less to do with listening, it mainly involves keeping the other person talking. Elite level listening is knowing what you are listening out for before you begin a listening situation.

The goal you want to achieve in a meeting will determine what you are going to be listening for.

There are 7 key points that you should be aware of:

Elite Level Listing 7 Key Points	➢ Facts ➢ Emotions ➢ Motivators ➢ Values ➢ Beliefs ➢ Currencies ➢ Benefits

At points during the meeting, summarise what you have been told by using these phrases:

- ***It sounds to me …***
- ***I get the impression that …***
- ***I'm not sure, but I think you're saying this to me …'***

2. Perfect Communication Structure

- Stage 1 - Listen
- Stage 2 - Interpret
- Stage 3 - Understand
- Stage 4 - Persuade

Be methodical and move through each stage in turn, do not be tempted to miss out any of the stages.

3. Situations Where Elite Level Listening (ELL) Is Useful

Business Negotiations

Business negotiation teams should apply ELL and begin to work more effectively as a team, rather than acting as separate individuals jockeying for position.

Towards the end of larger deals, a negotiation team is often assembled to help the salesperson get the deal across the line. These people can come from various functions such as Finance and Legal functions as well as the salesperson's boss.

The relationship with the potential client will have been built over time by the salesperson, but in many cases in the final stages of the negotiation the most senior ranking person steps in and takes over the lead in the negotiation, but this is usually not the best strategy, in fact:

- The salesperson should always remain as the lead negotiator, as they have built the existing relationship with the prospective client.
- Other personnel on the team should only provide input on their theatre of expertise.
- In an ELL negotiation team when their input isn't required, they shouldn't attempt to join in the negotiation conversation. They should simply listen attentively and make relevant notes during the meeting.
- Leave the salesperson to close with the negotiation.

10 Tips for the negotiators:

1. Decide on your team and who does what
2. Work out your opening lines
3. Remember what you want to achieve in the meeting
4. Every negotiation must have an objective
5. The second person is only there to listen and record the questions
6. Consider and interpret their demands
7. Keep the decision maker out of the negotiation if you can
8. Think of the things that you may be asked and have five answers ready
9. Take a deep breath and lower your voice by an octave it will slow you down and make you sound normal
10. Work as a team, you only win if you work as a team.

Sales Pitches

The sales cycle basically follows a route map with 5 stages:

1. Initial Meeting
2. Investigation
3. Proposal
4. Counter Proposal
5. Negotiation

Initial Meeting

The objective for the initial 1st meeting is always to get a 2nd meeting, in order to do that you have to get that person to like and trust you enough to invite you back to a 2nd meeting.

What you are listening for is to understand **'what is this person trying to achieve'** and also listening for the levers that you can use to help them achieve it.

A lot of people will chat a lot, basically a lot of small talk where they are telling you about their family, you might not see where you can use this as a lever, but family information can be massively important.

Do as much research as you can online before the meeting and present yourself in a way that is going to appeal to the potential client. First impressions are very important so you should make sure that you dress appropriately. Dressing casually might not be the right thing to do and you can't afford to make that mistake. This also applies to Zoom and Teams meetings in modern times.

- Remember that you can't dress yourself up, but you can always dress down.
- Ensure that you have your opening lines ready.
- If you are met at reception by the potential client use this time wisely as basically your meeting has started at that point.
- Some people are very direct and want you to get straight to the point. Other people want to sit down and have a chat, you must be able to react to both styles accordingly.

Buying Styles

People buy in certain ways and if your selling style matches their buying style then it stands to reason that you will be much more successful. In an informal study conducted by Flair we estimated that this increase in the success rate was approximately 100%.

So, understanding these styles will enable you to craft your approach to each prospect to give yourself the maximum chance of success. The styles are:

- Charismatic – sees the future and are excited by it. They will ask questions such as: Can it do this? Would it do that?
- Followers – they want to know that your offering has been successfully used by others like them.
- Thinkers – you can't force the deal with this group – you have to deliver all the necessary data and documentation and then let them have time to weigh up the pro's and con's of what you are offering.
- Cynics – this group doubt most of the things presented to them. You need to win them around with proof and data.
- Controllers – you can't take charge of this type of buyer,> they really have to drive.

Whilst there are many such buyer characterisations we like this one because a) it works and b) it's possible to work out the buying style when you encounter people. No need for somebody to take a test to identify their buying style – you just need the right questions and a basic knowledge of body language.

If you didn't attend the live webinar but would like to attend a free deep-dive workshop on Buying Styles you should contact us on letstalk@flair.co.uk as soon as possible.

Buying Drivers

In addition to buying styles there are some common buying drivers that most buyers are influenced by: -

- Cost - always a factor but not necessarily the most important one.
- Quality - its importance depends upon the impact of failure.
- Timing - deadlines can often be the most important buying driver.
- Convenience - massively powerful because often buyers are short of time.

- Risk - this driver is more powerful when failure would reflect upon the buyer.

Your job is to figure out what the buyer's primary driver is and then demonstrate how your offering nails it!

Investigation Meetings

1. Stop asking questions! That is the biggest key. Get the first open question right and then **stay silent.** Finish that open question with a second question, e.g.:

    - ***So, tell me what it is you're looking for and why it's so important to you?***

    There you have it, the second part of the question will give you their values, their beliefs, their motivating factors and everything else you need to know. You are not simply listening to facts, you are listening and trying to work out what is driving this person and this will give you the opportunity to do that.

2. Consider using indirect questions as these can be more powerful than direct questions. People don't mind talking about things and giving their opinion. If you ask the question:

    - ***Who is the best salesperson you've ever worked with and why were they so good?***

    As the prospect gives you their answer, they are in effect telling you how you can effectively sell to them.

3. If you're in recruitment you should consider asking these types of questions:

    - ***Tell me about your best boss and why you liked working for them?***
    - ***Who is the best recruitment company you have worked with in the past and why did you like them so much?***

    By asking this question you will find out how they like to work, and this insight will tell you what you should do.

Practical Tips

Mirroring

A common mistake is that Mirroring, where you adopt a similar position to that of the person in front of you, is the best way for them to get them to like you, this is a fallacy. There is only one position that you should be in when you are in an important meeting:

- put yourself in the listening position and do not move. It's called the 'You paid how much?' position. Lean forward slightly and make eye contact.
- If you mirror anything mirror their energy, don't try to mirror their body language.
- If someone is shouting at you then you shout back, but it is important that you do this in the right manner – never lose your temper. Don't say "calm down". Calmly raise your own energy to match their energy level without getting angry.
- Show them that you assign the same level of importance to the item that you are discussing.
- Remember you are there to listen.
- Sit at a 10 to 2 position in the meeting room. Avoid being opposite them.

What do you do when someone doesn't have to talk to you?

Cold calling is very difficult – acknowledge that the person on the other end of the phone will be busy, ask when would be a good time to call back, don't be pushy and always ask if it's the right time to talk and if it isn't when will it be?

Most of us don't review success enough, we tend to focus on reviewing failure. If you look at what worked well and don't keep concentrating on what when wrong, you can make some dramatic improvements to your business.

Find out what works and do more of it. This is called Positive Deviance – you can read more about this here: https://www.flair.co.uk/positive-deviation-how-to-massively-improve-anything/

You work out what has gone right and then replicate it, massive benefits can be found by adopting this approach.

Excellence comes from success; it doesn't come from failure.

Elite level listening is moving to conscious excellence.

For example, Lewis Hamilton does exactly the same thing as you when driving his F1 car, changes gear, steers and applies the brakes, he just does it better and more consciously. He uses conscious excellence.

How To Prevent A Meeting Going Off Track?

Set up the meeting in the way that you want it to go. At the beginning tell them that you are not going to take any notes at the start, say something along the lines of:

"I'll listen very carefully to what you are telling me, but after 5 minutes or so I'll stop you and tell you what I've picked up to make sure I'm getting the right information. If I've made any mistakes please correct me. Then I'll make some notes and we can press on."

By summarising what they have told you will gain absolute clarity on the situation.

From here you then have the opportunity to say:

- ***"Go on, please tell me more"*** basically carry on from where you left off.
- ***"You mentioned earlier …… let's talk about that."***

The key is not to have a pen in your hand – put your pen down.

Do you believe in emailing a prospect an agenda before a meeting?

Under some circumstances this can be useful but do bear one thing in mind:

- If you do have to put AOB on the agenda, you should add it at the beginning.
- AOB is a hijack by the person who is introducing that item and nobody else will be prepared. Start the meeting with AOB and ask if there is anybody who needs a decision within the next 10 minutes.
- Be aware and careful of the way AOB is used in a meeting.

Richard's Top 3 Tips

1. Use a questioning funnel to steer the conversation

- Your first question is a very open question and it takes up half of the funnel. Ask a big open question, then stay silent, let them speak and listen carefully and let them talk. Summarise after 5 minutes.
- Then ask the probing question, on an area that you want to know more about. Again, stay silent, listen and let them talk.
- At the bottom of the funnel is the closed-specific question. This is the questions that they haven't answered e.g. ***How much money have you got for the project?***
- **Prepare all your questions before you go into the meeting.**
- You can plan an armed robbery in 5 minutes so you can sure prepare for a meeting in that time! Success almost always depends upon preparation.

2. Take more than one person to important meetings

If you can take 2 people to the meeting, (Richard used to have 4 people in attendance at his hostage negotiation situations: 1 person to talk and 3 people to listen).

1 person is there to solely listen, they can't talk, think of questions or ask questions. Their job is just to write down all the questions **you** are asked, **this is key.** These questions will show you what is most important to the prospect and where they are looking for benefits. Remember you walk in as a team, not as individuals.

> *Write down every question you are asked by the other team, that will tell you what the benefits are that they are looking for.*

Another benefit of taking a second person along is that if they recognise that you have missed an important point, they can make you aware. You will have to work out a 'get out' code between you. I.e. taking off their watch or their glasses. That action will let you know that you have missed a point and you should make an excuse to briefly leave the meeting and they can let you know what you have missed.

3. Know your outcome.

Be clear what you want to achieve from the meeting. Only in this way can you practice elite level listening as you steer the conversation to achieving your goal.

And Finally…

To recover from an error, keep it simple - say sorry, but don't offer a justification for your apology.

- ***I'm really sorry, I got it wrong.***
- ***It seems to me that I've upset you about this and I'm really sorry it's made you feel like that.***

> Bill Clinton over the Monica Lewinksi affair said:
>
> ***I'm really sorry for the upset this incident has caused the American public.***
>
> In making that apology he neither confirmed or denied that the incident had taken place.

The Listening Institute

Hostage negotiation skills for corporate success

Richard Mullender

Richard had a 30-year career in the police force, spending 25 years working as a CID Officer with Scotland Yard.

He spent the last 5 years of his police career as a hostage negotiator, working in the UK as well as Afghanistan and the Middle East. However, most of his work was for suicide intervention for the Metropolitan Police Force.

Richard was the lead trainer in advanced interviewing techniques and hostage negotiations, taking the communication skills from NLP and transactional analysis and using them to re-design the negotiation course and make it one of the best, if not the best, 3 courses on negotiation in the world today.

Richard also runs open courses all centred on the use of Elite Level Listening in various business situations.

For more information about these courses please email him at richard@listeninginstitute.com

Richard is also happy to connect with you on LinkedIn and answer any further questions you may have: **linkedin.com/in/richard-mullender-1b427910**.

He is currently in the process of updating his e-book on Elite Level Listening so if you'd like to be notified when it becomes available please drop him a message.