

# LISTEN LEARNED

Most salespeople have great listening skills – just ask them and they'll tell you all about it. But there's more to effective listening than just being able to talk about it. In *Stop Telling, Start Selling* (McGraw-Hill, 1998), author Linda Richardson describes the nine keys that unlock the mystery of listening well.

## 1. The eyes have it

Good eye contact not only lets the customer know that you are paying attention, but it also helps you stay focused as well. If you're taking notes, jot down what you need and then look right back at the customer.

## 2. Give me body

The customer's body language and facial expression will reveal a great deal beyond what is being said. At the same time, your body language needs to be open and relaxed to put the customer at ease.

## 3. Laser listen

Richardson uses this term to describe listening to the messages behind what the customer is saying outright, then following up with pointed questions that get at the heart of how he or she feels about the topic at hand.

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## 4. Up words

What are the key words that the customer uses or that accompany an excitement or a light in his or her eyes? Use these words again when asking questions or describing your solutions.

## 5. You 'half' to be serious

It's OK to give 110 percent on a call, but that doesn't mean you do all the talking. Strive for an even balance, with you and the customer both speaking about 50 percent of the time.

## 6. No interruptions

Do not interrupt while the customer is speaking. Not only that, if the customer interrupts you, stop talking and listen.

## 7. All quiet on the selling front

Learn to use silence to your advantage. If the customer is thinking, keep quiet and wait. Bite your tongue if you have to. Silence has power – learn to master it and that power is yours.

## 8. Mirror, mirror, on the call

To put the customer at ease, adopt his or her tone and demeanor. This doesn't mean outright copying, but let the customer dictate the posture, speech patterns and volume in the room.

## 9. Check in before they check out

To ensure customers understand you and are still paying attention, it's good to stop and ask if they have any questions or would like anything clarified. This also communicates to them that you're more interested in their understanding than in hearing yourself talk.

