

LIFETIME, INTERACTIVE BUSINESS GUIDE  
A TEN-BOOK SERIES ON TOP BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

# WIN @ BIZ<sup>®</sup>

Develop Effective Speaking  
And Listening Skills

KNOW WHAT THE WINNERS DO!

Growth & Business Coach

*David Gabbert*



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**WIN AT BIZ®**

**DEVELOP EFFECTIVE SPEAKING AND LISTENING SKILLS**

A TEN E-BOOK SERIES

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# DEVELOP EFFECTIVE SPEAKING AND LISTENING SKILLS

## Introduction

As the mantra goes, “It’s not what you say, it’s what people hear.” For a listener to receive information positively, you must deliver it positively. There are already so many places that communication can go awry. Therefore, in a business setting, where everyday words can have bottom-line effects, why would you do anything less than your utmost to speak and understand others with perfect clarity? In this e-book we will help you work toward that goal and avoid costly misunderstandings.

Dale Carnegie’s classic book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, presents some excellent ideas concerning positive speaking habits, words, and actions that create welcoming working conditions, how to best correct employees, and how to correct some common mistakes that may afflict our own communication habits. For instance, how many times have you told someone to make an improvement, but with no forethought about the best way to present the remark? If you say whatever comes to your mind, unfortunately, the information will rarely be received as you intended. How many times have you witnessed supervisors making the same spontaneous-speaking errors with an employee, achieving the same undesired results? Over time, not only will the improvements go unmade, but also supervisors lose their employees’ respect and their effectiveness as managers.

In many work environments, employees actually resent their supervisors. Their bosses create stress and unpleasant mental working conditions, mostly due to inappropriate communication. Ultimately these disenchanting employees will leave the company, increasing its turnover and operating costs. This e-book can help you stop communication errors in your company before they make a dent in your bottom line.

## Work toward a Pleasant Working Environment

Don’t we all want to be surrounded by a welcoming, fun, reinforcing, positive, atmosphere that makes us feel good about ourselves? Why would a manager ever think that creating a work environment anything other than this would be an encouraging atmosphere for employment? It is of critical business importance for leaders and managers to create a pleasant working atmosphere for their employees, and to make people feel good about themselves. The habits are simple:

- Always exhibit a positive attitude.
- Smile a lot.
- Exhibit sincere interest in the other person.
- Ask a lot of questions about the other person’s interests.
- Be a good listener.
- Use the other person’s name often.
- Make people feel important.
- Compliment people often.
- Act professionally.

Yet many managers do just the opposite. Unfortunately, there are people who are in the position of managing others who need to feed their own feelings of importance. They exert power by giving orders rather than listening for feedback. Because of their own self-interest, they make their colleagues feel unimportant, and sour the workplace with their bad habits.

Happy people are productive people. To create a productive workplace where employees look forward to coming to work, your focus should be on hiring, training, and developing managers that create a favorable work environment.

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## **Win at Biz Scorecard**

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- **A positive, respectful, enjoyable workplace that allows everyone to feel good about themselves increases productivity and retention. Do you and your managers create fun, pleasant working conditions?**
  - **Do your managers' spoken words make the employees feel important?**
  - **When is the last time you celebrated everyone's birthday with a pizza and an appropriate gag gift?**
- 

## **Effective Communication Begins with You**

How many times does communication fail in business? It can fail between leaders and employees, between a manager and an employee, between employees, or between employees and customers. Misinterpretation can cost a small business thousands of dollars. How can all the errors and misunderstandings between people be reduced? What would help is if everyone took responsibility for all the communication in which they were involved.

Responsibility begins with responsible listening. That's right: When you are in the listening role of the communication, it becomes your responsibility to make the communication effective.

Speaking and listening roles reverse many times in a dialogue, and communication will often break down as people mishear each other. What's happening is they haven't taken the time to develop the necessary discipline to really listen. There are an abundance of instructional classes and scores of hours spent on teaching people how to speak—nevertheless, communication will be unsuccessful if the listener is not doing his or her job.

Oddly, although we spend more time listening than we do speaking, most people fail at listening. We are deficient listeners because we do not focus all of our attention on what is being said, as though we not being willing to invest enough time to hear what we're being told, or to learn the techniques for doing so. We do not search for the real value in the message, and often rush to a conclusion before we fully understand the speaker's message.

You can probably recall a recent conversation where either we interrupted the speaker or we were interrupted by the listener with, "Yes, I know just what you mean..." The original message probably had to be repeated and then finished by the speaker because the listener interrupted, and was way off track with a premature interpretation of

the message. We are all guilty of doing it; we have all had it done to us. With knowledge, practice and discipline, however, we can all become better listeners and, as a result, better communicators.

Imagine all of the benefits a company would reap if everyone in the organization practiced good listening skills. There would be fewer errors that cost the company money; there would be higher productivity and better attitudes among the employees; and everyone would have more respect for one another. The workplace would be a happier place for everyone.

Much of the following material about developing appropriate listening skills is from the book, *Listening Leaders*, by Dr. Lyman Steil and Dr. Richard Bommelje. With the above goals in mind, we will begin by focusing on what steps you can take to stop making common mistakes and become a responsible listener. Then we will turn our attention to training ourselves as well as those around us in good listening techniques, and how to reap the rewards in the customer service area, as well. Finally, we'll look at two common communication scenarios that are most ripe for misinterpretation, and guide you through how to handle them.

To become an effective listener and a better motivational leader, you must be willing to learn new listening skills and exert the necessary disciplines to put your newly acquired skills into action. You, as the listener, have to take the responsibility for the communication to be successful. The speaker cannot possibly know if the listener truly understands the message; therefore, it is the listener's responsibility to do the due diligence, and completely understand what is really being said.

### ***The Pitfalls of One-Way Communications***

It is appropriate at this time to say a word about communicating by notes, letters, or any form of electronic contact that is convenient. These are one-way communications, and one-way communications fail. Remember, messages in any format are not a good conduit for effective communications; they are one-way statements that do permit an opportunity for complete understanding or for an immediate reply.

How many times have you left a message or sent a one-way transmission to someone, only to be totally surprised by his or her response? With further conversation you become aware that what you thought was a very clear message was interpreted completely differently from what you intended. This problem is becoming more pronounced in our electronic age and, as a result, the quality of communication is breaking down between coworkers, between management and employees, and between companies and customers. The poor quality of one-way communication carries with it misunderstandings that negatively affect self-esteem, morale, and the cost efficiencies of doing business.

Unfortunately, many one-way messages or instructions are misunderstood at some level. They are misunderstood in terms of the desired transfer of information, the attitude of the sender, and the emotional impact on the receiver. How can you possibly deliver an effective communication when the other person cannot witness your emotions, see your facial expressions, hear the tone of your voice, conduct an exchange of ideas, or ask questions and receive answers to communicate understanding?

If management hopes to achieve the desired results from its communications,

practicing the proper speaking and listening habits outlined in this e-book is imperative. Take the time to use proper speaking and listening habits with your most important assets face-to-face—and leave e-mail for mundane matters less prone to misinterpretation.

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## **Win at Biz Scorecard**

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**One-way electronic messages can be an efficient method to deliver generic information to a larger audience, but they are poor tools if your goal is effective communication.**

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### *Listening Is the Core of Effective Management*

To be an effective manager you must be sincere in your belief that listening is critical to your success. To be a successful listener, you have to truly value the viewpoints of others. If you are not interested in learning and understanding others' viewpoints, you will never be an effective leader or motivator. This requires the immediacy of a face-to-face conversation, or where meeting is impossible, then at least a live phone call.

The first principle of good communication is this: In order hear, you need to take enough time to listen. You can never be in a hurry. If you do not have enough time to listen properly at the moment, you should reschedule to a time when you can. Think about your own experiences as a speaker. Who in your life makes you feel special? When you speak to this special person he or she makes you feel important because the attention is on you. He or she probably also asks questions to probe your opinions and feelings about specific topics, knows how to listen intently to you, understands your viewpoints, and respects your opinions. This person knows how to make you feel important.

Contrast that experience with a person who enjoys listening to him- or herself talk, displays impatience when you speak, looks around the room, and interrupts you before you are finished speaking. Generally these people are more interested in rushing to offer their own contrasting opinions before they thoroughly understand yours.

You must decide which person you want to be. Do you want to be that special person in another person's life or do you want to be the person to whom people hesitate to speak?

Being a great listener will require you to focus all of your attention on what is being said. Here are some tips for doing so.

- When you are listening, lean forward toward the speaker and make eye contact to help you focus on what is being said. Your focused attention will demonstrate to the speaker that you are interested in what he or she is saying.
- Nor can you turn off your listening skills because you do not want to listen to negative comments. When you hear negative comments, rather than turning listening off, you have to listen *more* intently and try to understand the speaker's point of view. You must be open-minded, always searching for a learning experience.
- And in order to search for understanding, one has to ask a lot of questions. It's positive to let the speaker do most of the talking, as people love to hear the magic of their own voices. It is soothing and relaxing to them.

- When you are listening, always identify any distractions around you and take the time to eliminate them. You cannot focus on the content if you are not giving the speaker 100 percent of your attention.
- Many times it helps to focus your listening by taking notes. Taking notes can help you search for the main point to the message, more easily discovering those learning moments. As with the tip to lean forward, note-taking also sends a clear message to the speaker that you are interested in what is being said.

Always remember that everyone has something to teach us. No matter how poor the delivery or how uninteresting the subject, you must discipline yourself to focus on the content of the message. Practice not avoiding challenging listening situations; instead, you should welcome them as challenges to learn a new viewpoint. As an effective listener and leader, you must become a searcher and seeker of knowledge. Learn to focus on what Drs. Lyman Steil and Richard Bommelje call the “value moment of listening.” To find an ounce of gold you may need to go through 200,000 tons of rock. In other words, be patient. You sometimes must listen to a lot of useless conversation to seek out an ounce of valuable information.

As you are listening, search for that value moment. Do not get bogged down by the details of the speaker’s message. Instead, listen patiently and search for the central idea in the message. Next time you are listening to any public speaker, practice listening for that “value moment” when you will uncover your ounce of golden information.

Many times the biggest hurdle to practicing effective listening is when the speaker presents the material in a combative way or the subject matter is very emotional for you. In these instances it is tempting for listeners to have a knee-jerk reaction and to reply in an attacking frame of mind. The disciplined listener will not allow himself to retreat to an emotional response, but will instead rely on his developed listening skills. If you dare, bring up some emotional political or religious subjects to discuss at your next family get-together. This is an ideal setting to practice your listening skills. Observe how a conversation can deteriorate when people do not practice good listening skills, and instead react with emotional verbal responses.

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## **Win at Biz Scorecard**

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**Do you practice these key listening skills?**

- **Be patient; it requires time to listen effectively.**
  - **Give the speaker your full attention; make him or her feel important.**
  - **Listen intently and search for a learning experience.**
  - **Take notes.**
  - **Refrain from emotional, knee-jerk responses.**
  - **Never interrupt or rush to a response.**
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## Speaking: The Other Half of Effective Communication

The skills involved in successful, motivational communication involve not only proper listening skills, but also the ability to convey a message. As we'll discuss in more detail later, effective messages have a structure (i.e., small talk, emotional transfer, information, and finally persuasion). As you might guess, then, effective speaking requires planning.

You must confront many challenging conversations in the course of business. From unhappy customers to problem employees to major changes that affect everyone, the situations that thousands of businesses face every day nevertheless can trip up the most skilled communicators. That is why you must do all you can to minimize costly mistakes and keep workplace morale high.

To achieve motivational communication, you will need to present the information in a manner that allows for it to be received well. Proper preparation often involves a written outline containing a review of what is functioning efficiently, plenty of positive recognition, education about the problem or issue at hand and how it is affecting the company, as well as a list of questions to solicit corrective ideas and feedback. Once you deliver your message, you shift back into effective listening mode.

In this section we'll cover two of the most common challenging communication situations, and see how to put our effective speaking and planning skills into practice.

### *Correcting Employees*

How do we point out to employees that their work or behavior leaves something to be desired—without ruining their morale? Let's consider some effective language in this case. We'll focus on an approach that *motivates* corrective actions and *delivers* the desired outcomes.

When delivering your message, do your planning. Never say outright that the employee is doing something wrong. He or she will feel threatened and become defensive, and will probably attempt to defend his or her actions or beliefs. Also, do not try to convince the person that your point of view is the right one. People generally have more faith in their own ideas. Nor should you try to argue—because if you win, the person who loses will resent you. They'll resent you, too, if you give direct orders. Finally, and most important, never say anything that diminishes a person's self esteem. Remember, it is not what you think of a person that is significant. What is important is what the individual thinks of him or herself.

How would your significant other, siblings or children react to you if you used inappropriate language to correct what you considered to be a wrong action? Quite probably if you approached the matter with unsuitable language, you would get a very uncooperative, knee-jerk attack response. Likewise, when you belittle, argue, cajole, or bully an employee, he or she will have the same reaction—but probably hide it because you are the boss. Just because an employee reacts politely to your negative, corrective comment does not mean that he or she agrees with you. In the end, you will probably fail to see an improvement in the situation; and gain only resentment for your trouble.

So what's a manager to do? In order to change behavior willingly, one needs to approach the subject with the correct language.

The following are the recommended steps for attempting to motivate employees to alter their actions. Remember—take the time to prepare some constructive notes for yourself prior to the meeting.

1. Start all conversations with a drop of honey, a touch of friendship, a kindness, an expression of common interest, a compliment, or some honest praise and appreciation.
2. Discuss points you agree on to get the other person saying “yes” several times. You want to achieve a positive attitude from the start.
3. Educate the employee about how the problem is affecting the financial welfare of the company.
4. Do not talk much. Your job is to ask a lot of questions and find the reasons behind the way the person thinks and acts. You have to be sincere about listening and visualizing from the other person’s point of view. Remember, the individual may not think he or she is wrong, so you need to be open-minded as you listen. You may be surprised and discover information that leads you to believe their thinking and actions have merit.
5. Humble yourself when you present ideas about how an employee can improve the outcomes for which he or she is responsible. For example, when you present ideas, give examples of your own past mistakes and how you had to correct your own actions before you were able to move forward to a better outcome. It is important to deliver information neutrally so it does not induce knee-jerk, combative reactions by the listener.
6. Your next challenge is to get the employee thinking and offering ideas on how he or she can improve his or her actions. Because people will only act on their own ideas, your goal is to make them feel that the idea you are endorsing is their own.
7. When you are going to present an idea, many times props and examples will help to clarify your communication. Anything visual is a lot more interesting and improves retention. When props or visuals will not work, use a paper and pencil to write down key points. Creating a visual focal point is going to be more effective than invisible words. Think about how difficult it is to sell a product sight-unseen. Visuals have impact!
8. Once the new actions have been decided upon, let the employee proceed with the new actions and ideas with his or her own form of self-expression.
9. Always allow the person to feel important. Motivate by appealing to his or her nobler side, giving him or her the tools and support needed to excel. Remember to give plenty of feedback and encouragement.

The following are two examples of a corrective conversation with a customer service rep who was experiencing difficulty with an angry customer. A poor approach may sound something like this: “Karen, I was listening to the conversation you had with that customer, and it didn’t sound like you handled it very well. If you handle every customer like that, we are going to lose a lot of business. Why don’t you try not to be so argumentative?”

How do you think Karen will react to the manager’s comment? Do you think that type of instructional language will achieve a lasting change of behavior and a happy,

productive workplace?

As a contrasting example, this instructional language may sound better. “Karen, I couldn’t help over hearing the conversation with that customer. It sounded like she was being very difficult and giving you a terrible time. Don’t let it upset you. Let’s get together today when you have a moment, I would like to develop some new ideas with you.” You’ve demonstrated to her that you will make an effort to see the situation from her point of view, and sympathize with it. She will enter the meeting more open to ideas on how to avoid the situation in the future—because if she’s like most people, the less often she has to resort to arguing with customers, the happier she’ll be.

Later, in a private meeting you could say, “Karen, I would like you to help me develop a plan to deal with those angry customers. You do an outstanding job in building positive relationships with our other customers; and you are a real asset to the company. When I started doing customer service work, I dreaded talking to the difficult ones; I thoroughly understand how emotionally draining they can be. It wasn’t until I took a great course on how to disarm them that I finally improved my skills. Once I developed an effective plan for myself, I didn’t get upset talking to those angry customers, and I’m sure the customers were a lot happier, too.”

Now would be the time to ask your prepared list of questions and listen carefully to the answers. “How does it make you feel when a customer starts yelling at you? Do you think they are mad at you personally? What is your first impulse when they start yelling at you? What is your goal for how you want the service call to end? Do you get personal satisfaction in resolving customer complaints? Would you like to offer some ideas to help develop a plan to make your job less stressful when you get these calls?”

Together the two of you can develop a written plan for handling service calls from angry customers that will achieve the desired outcome. List the ideas physically on a sheet of paper. Of course, you already have a master plan in your mind as to how you would like Karen how to proceed with her customer service calls, and you could have simply handed her a written copy of instructions—but you know that in order to get the results you want, she must contribute her own ideas in the development of the plan.

When the plan is complete you might say, “Karen, I am confident that with this new plan you have created, you are going to be turning a lot of angry customers into our best customers.”

So, given these two scenarios, which language approach do you think will create a lasting change in behavior, obtain the desired results, and allow the person to walk away feeling good about him or herself?

That’s what I thought.

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## **Win at Biz Scorecard**

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**When correcting the wrong actions of an employee, educate and give them an opportunity to express their ideas. Employees will only act with enthusiasm on ideas which they believe to be their own.**

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## Win at Biz Scorecard

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**If you expect to correct an employee's actions and achieve desired results, you must devote time to prepare.**

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### *Informing Employees about Change*

How do we inform employees of change without negatively affecting their morale? Management in companies of all sizes make decisions every day that are handed down to subordinates in one-way communications that have devastating effects on morale. When people have not been given the opportunity to express their ideas and be heard, they will generally not be as receptive to change.

In these situations, management must first be willing to devote the time to educate people about the current business situation, along with the problems and challenges that demand the company to adapt. Not only can employees offer valuable input, but just the fact of your effort to educate them tells them that they are important. Your transparency and openness to feedback will engage the employees around the challenges and rally everyone around an ultimate solution. This team approach allows people to support the solution as a positive change enacted in the best interest of the company.

When you are about to discuss business problems that affect subordinates, proceed according to the following steps.

1. Disclose the problem and supply employees with all the necessary information that will allow them to offer educated ideas.
2. Provide a vision of what the company must look like after the change.
3. Share all ideas that have been considered.
4. Invite the employees to share their own ideas.
5. Conduct a caring and respectful forum where these ideas can be heard.
6. Inform everyone why the ultimate solution was chosen.

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## Win at Biz Scorecard

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**In order for people to accept change willingly, they must be involved in the planning process and given an opportunity to be heard.**

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### **Training for Effective Communication**

In addition to the key speaking and listening skills offered above, you can continue your practice by expanding knowledge throughout your company, and incorporating key skills with the strategies that we'll cover in this section. You and everyone around you can start practicing a comprehensive system of good communication—and it is even more imperative for those who supervise other employees to complete this kind of training.

Habitual, winning, listening and speaking habits do not just happen. These habits must be taught. You cannot expect managers to use motivational language and listening skills if you do not teach them how. Written training programs that coach employees in

effective communication need to be developed; and these training programs need to be incorporated into the company's larger framework of systems. Great communication starts with you, both in the example you set with your own listening and speaking skills, and also with the processes and training you implement in your company as a best-practices standard.

The key word is *practice*. Any good training program should incorporate role-playing to be effective. Many times very specific dialogues can be established in advance for a training program in which a host of scenarios can be anticipated and prepared for, such as correcting employees who are often late. You can develop a dialogue for communicating in any difficult situation so that your entire organization can begin practicing great communication no matter the scenario.

In this section, we will cover a foundation for such a training program: the four purposes of speaking, and the four steps of good listening.

### ***The Four Purposes of Speaking***

It is easier to understand a message if you know why you're hearing it. In other words, get into the habit of asking yourself, "Why does this person want to talk to me?" A speaker's purpose can be divided into four categories.

1. *Small talk*. Relationships are built by investing listening time and patience into small-talk conversations. Most meaningful conversations cannot take place without first developing some type of a relationship through small talk.
2. *Emotional release*. This could be either a negative or a positive emotional release.
3. *Transmission of information, data, and knowledge*. All communication contains some type of information; however, sometimes it is the speaker's primary purpose.
4. *Persuasion*. When communication contains persuasion, the listener will need to employ a higher level of critical thinking to determine their agreement, disagreement, or possibly a course of action.

Knowledgeable listeners are aware that these steps build on one another. Before being persuasive, the speaker must first develop a relationship through small talk, receive a positive emotional release by the listener, and allow for the effective transfer of information. Effective persuasion usually cannot begin until all these steps have happened.

### ***The Four Steps of Listening***

Once you have identified the purpose of the speaker, you can sharpen your listening skills by developing an awareness of the four steps to improve listening. As you read them, you'll understand why the principles of total attention, lack of hurry, and mental calmness are so important.

Premature interpretation, evaluation, or response are common reasons that communication fails. Each of the following four steps must be completed in sequence.

1. *Practice paying attention to your senses*. You must listen to what you see, not

what the speaker is saying. What does the body language tell you? Look into his or her eyes, listening to the tone of voice. Identify the purpose of the communication and listen to what is NOT being said.

2. *Practice interpretation.* When you have taken mental note of your senses, you may then move on to interpreting the message. Your goal during this step is to correctly receive the speaker's message. The listener's interpretation of the message must match the speaker's intention. In order to achieve a complete understanding of the speaker's thoughts, attitudes, and feelings, the listener needs to probe by asking follow-up questions. It is common for a speaker to not word his thoughts properly in the rush to communicate a thought. As a result, it usually takes a series of questions by the listener to give the speaker several opportunities to clarify his or her message.
3. *Evaluation of the message.* When both you and the speaker have confirmed an understanding of the message, you can proceed to step three. It is critical that you do not begin to evaluate the message until comprehension and understanding is 100 percent complete! Most listeners err by evaluating and responding to a speaker's message too quickly. Be patient; take time to probe with questions until you have enough information to evaluate the message. Be aware that when the purpose of the speaker has been identified as a strictly emotional release, you will never move to the evaluation or response steps. People will generally solve their own problems if they simply have someone who will listen.
4. *Response.* The communication is incomplete without a response. The speaker will not know that the message has been successfully transferred if you do not verbally confirm this is true. Always consider the speaker's purpose before responding. During the response step, you first need to question, clarify, and paraphrase the speaker's main points. Through your response, reassure the speaker that you comprehend the speaker's thoughts, opinions, feelings and attitudes.

By using the listening and speaking skills discussed in this book, you should be well equipped to build effective training programs and establish them as one of your business processes. In order to build a team of motivated individuals working toward a common goal, it is imperative to keep morale high. This can only be accomplished when individuals in supervisory positions know how to speak and listen effectively.

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### **Win at Biz Scorecard**

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**Establish a training program today to teach effective speaking and listening skills. Establish predetermined dialogues and incorporate role-playing into your training programs.**

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## **Use Effective Communication to Satisfy Customers**

As you broaden your circle of motivational communication from yourself to your employees, the next logical step is to your customers. Unhappy customers spread aggressive word-of-mouth advertising: the bad kind. Yet every customer whose complaint is handled well will produce several times more word-of-mouth advertising than a customer who has never had a complaint at all. Even so, in any training program you design for your company, your customer-service staff must understand that their company incurs a cost with every customer lost. Proper listening skills can prevent these costs, and gain the profits of good word-of-mouth advertising.

As a business owner, you should know exactly what it costs to obtain one new customer. You probably already know that for customer you lose, you must increase your advertising expenditures to buy one customer to replace the unsatisfied one you lost, and one for growth. There is value in keeping customers happy—it's common business sense.

Effective listening skills are the cornerstone of customer service. Customers who complain and are taken care of properly are good for your business—but the proper care depends on well-practiced communication skills and plenty of role-playing behind the scenes. The steps listed below will offer you a good starting point when developing a written customer service training program. While you can't expect customers to practice good communication skills, you can train your staff to handle any complaint with grace and efficiency.

### ***Winning Communication Techniques that Satisfy Customers***

1. First and most important, use the key listening skills taught in this e-book. Listen intently for the content of the message.
2. Never interrupt the customer no matter how tempted you may be. Your goal is to let the customer talk and allow time for the customer to release all of his or her emotions. Interrupting the customer will only feed the fire and make matters worse. Your discipline is to listen, take notes and uncover the pertinent points of the message.
3. Only when the conversation has gone silent should you speak. An appropriate response could be something like this, "Thank you very much for calling us to make us aware of your concerns. Did you have anything else you would like to tell me?" The objective is to exhaust the customer's emotions before you speak.
4. When the customer is finished speaking, it would be appropriate for you to review the message aloud. The goal at this point in the conversation is to confirm that you have interpreted the message and the problem accurately.
5. Once you have confirmed that your interpretation is accurate, you should review with the customer what should have happened if everything had gone smoothly.
6. Before you propose a solution, you should ask for ideas on how to satisfactorily resolve the problem. Once you have the customer's reply, you can agree on a course of action.
7. Customer satisfaction will be easiest if you can solve the problem

immediately. If the corrective action requires several days to complete, take the initiative to keep the customer informed about the progress.

8. Once the problem has been solved, ask the customer if he or she is pleased with the manner in which the complaint was handled. It may be appropriate to give the individual something extra to create some additional goodwill.

Role-playing these scenarios will increase retention and skill among your customer service staff. The *Edward Lowe AT&T Website* is a source for additional customer service training ideas.

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### **Win at Biz Scorecard**

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- Do your customer service people understand the financial effect of lost customers?
  - Do you have a training program in place to teach your customer service people how to listen effectively and solve customer complaints to the satisfaction of your customers?
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## Win at Biz Checklist

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- ✓ Do you practice the proper speaking habits outlined in this chapter to make the workplace more fun and enjoyable for everyone?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Do you have a structured, written training program in place that teaches appropriate communication skills through role-playing?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Do you require all new supervisors to complete the training program before they begin supervising others?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Do you conduct educational training programs with all of your employees about how to communicate properly with customers and with one another?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Do you instruct supervisors about the limitations of utilizing one-way messages in any format?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Have you been successful at creating a rewarding workplace where positive attitudes are built with the proper motivational language?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Have you created a rewarding environment to work where people feel wanted, respected and good about themselves?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Do you take the time to practice responsible listening habits with your employees?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Have you established a written training program to teach responsible listening habits to your employees?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Do you require your managers to complete a listening training course before they begin managing others?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Do your customer service and sales people practice responsible listening with your customers?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Do you have effective, written training programs in place for your customer service people?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Do your customer service people understand the financial cost to the company when customer complaints are not resolved satisfactory? Do you role play with your customer service people to verify learning and retention?  Yes  No
  - ✓ Do you verify that your customer service people are delivering the desired results to your customers?  Yes  No
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## About the Author

# David Gabbert

Entrepreneur, business mentor and growth coach, David Gabbert helps business professionals, business owners, new startups, and students learn how to win at business. Self employed for forty-seven years, founder and owner of four million-dollar-plus businesses, and author of ten Win at Biz® business books, Dave offers free business articles about a variety of proven business strategies which compose the basic building blocks of starting and operating a successful business.

Free monthly e-zine subscriptions are available: [www.davidgabbertbusinesscoach.com](http://www.davidgabbertbusinesscoach.com)

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