

Reflective Listening *Glenn Shields*

All of us, by the nature of our jobs, are in the position of being problem solvers. A key part in our problem solving ability rests with our proficiency in dealing with others effectively. One method of doing this involves a process known as reflective listening.

A very cogent argument could be developed that there are 3½ billion different languages in the world. Each of us talks, listens and thinks in his own special language. Our personal language is shaped by our culture, profession, personality, attitudes and mood of the moment. The chances that even a few of us will share all of these "ingredients" in the same way at the same time is remote.

We recognize that to be an effective problem solver—for us to be good at our jobs—we must be effective communicators. To be an effective communicator one must be able to help the other person come to grips with and solve their own problems, especially as they relate to the work situation. During this exchange of information, it is important to keep the lines of communication open. Unfortunately, the tendency to charge in and solve another's problem, issue orders, sympathize or assume that we know exactly what the person means, is almost second nature to most of us.

The process of reflective listening reduces this problem. In the simplest sense, reflective listening is encouraging a person to talk about a problem without inserting the thoughts or ideas of the listener into the problem. Frequently, this process of reflective listening must be applied through many rounds of dialogue in order to determine what, if anything, the real problem is, and to permit the correct solution to emerge naturally. Reflective listening is especially useful in the process of problem definition. Many times in our dealings with employees, family and friends, determining the problem is the most difficult part of the final solution and the part most vulnerable to the roadblocks which can develop in interpersonal communication. The idea with reflective listening is to help people define their own problems. An important aspect of this is the ability to sense what the other person is feeling and feed these feelings back to that person. These feelings are transmitted verbally and non-verbally, i.e., through body language. To communicate effectively, one tries to "read" the psychological posture of the other person. By practicing reflective listening you can improve your problem solving and managerial skills and become more effective in communicating with your boss, employees, family and friends.

Benevolence *Mike Larsen*

Speedy recovery wished from the entire Mid-Atlantic membership to Dave Cammarotas' wife Cheryl Anne who recently had surgery, and Lou Rudinski now home recovering from another angina problem.



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