

The Red Carpet

Performance-Based Communication Skills®
for Leaders and Presenters

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Active Listening Goes - *Up in the Air*

Fact Check: According to experts, ____% of everything we learn is learned through listening. On average, a person retains and remembers about ____% of what they hear.

(Read on for Answers)

What is Active Listening...

Communication is a two-way street between a speaker and their audience. Active listening is the foundation of effective communication and a way for an audience to take in information and respond to a speaker. It's much more than simply making eye contact.

We have two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we speak.
-Epictetus

Why Active Listening...

It can allow for and improve mutual understanding between two parties. As a speaker, you can receive immediate visual feedback from your audience simply by looking at them and interacting with them in verbal and non-verbal ways. Success and failure of this technique can both be seen in the new Golden Globe nominated movie, *Up in the Air*. The success of George Clooney's character, Ryan Bingham, is predicated on active listening. Bingham fires people for a living. To be successful he must focus on their reactions and their needs before he responds. He utilizes active listening. The new girl on the block, Anna Kendrick's Natalie Keener, is far less skilled in this area. Instead of listening she allows her own opinions to impede her interviews. Natalie misses cues, does not ask pertinent questions, and is ultimately ineffective because of her inflexibility. Ryan's approach yields much more favorable results. *Up in the Air* is entertaining, poignant and contains a series of great examples of active listening. This places it amongst Pinnacle's top 10 movies for 2009.

Tips for Active Listening

It's easy to talk about the process and fun to see our favorite actors do it in the movies, but to help you focus on the details, here are some tips to help practice active listening and keep it at the forefront of your mind.

1. Be other directed - have empathy for the speaker
2. Acknowledge your emotional state and set aside opinions
3. Focus on the subject
4. Avoid distractions
5. Ask questions
6. Take notes
7. Use nonverbal communication
8. Paraphrase what you have heard

Keep these handy, especially before an important interaction to remind yourself to focus not just on your message but on the audience.

Some other great movies featuring examples of active listening:

The Informant
The Hurt Locker

Fact Check Answers: According to experts, 80% of everything we learn is learned through listening. On average, a person retains and remembers about 20% of what they hear.