



## **Five Levels of Listening**

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I work with all kinds of leaders. Ones that are in positions of influence. Ones that are natural influencers. Ones that are developing their skills and competencies. And there is one tool I share with all them. Below are listed the five levels of listening. It is the one tool that all leaders can further develop - our ability to listen better. Doesn't seem like a difficult task, but with all the distractions in our lives, it is the one skill we spend little time

### **Level 5—Not Listening**

Tuning someone out, thinking about something else, not paying attention. The “I’m sorry, what did you say?” syndrome.

### **Level 4—Listening to Tell your Story**

Not really listening to what the other person is saying; instead, taking that time to prepare your remarks. The intent is to share how your story relates to the other person’s for your own self satisfaction, not for their understand and learning. The “you think you had it bad, let me tell you what happened to me” syndrome.

### **Level 3—Listening for Judgment**

Making assumptions and conclusions before you hear the whole story. Once you reach a “judgment” you no longer listen. The “here’s your problem” syndrome.

### **Level 2—Listening for Application**

Being able to listen to understand what you might take away from another’s comments. Requires the suspension of assumptions and judgment. Requires us to listen harder. Very useful in groups gathering to learn from each other.

### **Level 1—Listening to Understand**

Listening to just understand. Not to judge or apply, rather to understand the “what’s it is like to walk in your shoes”. And appreciating that by that active listening, not only is the other person heard, we as listeners are improved. This one takes practice, practice, practice.