

SEVEN KEY OBSERVATIONS:

A STRATEGIC CHECKLIST FOR HIGH-VALUE COMMUNICATION

*Listen First,
On Purpose,
With Purpose.*

THRIVAL CONCEPTS

WHERE DOES POOR LISTENING AND POOR COMMUNICATION DERAIL THE ORGANIZATION MOST?

Place your awareness on the act of listening, and begin to approach listening as a strategic business discipline that *fuels* the organization.

The *quality* of communication either powers or hinders every critical business system that a brand engages in, and virtually nothing advances in business without communication. In short, “quality” generates value versus creating waste, and *high-quality communication fuels leadership effectiveness, it directly impacts sales performance, and it is at the core of team productivity.*

Yet, as essential as it is to high-quality communication, *no one teaches us how to truly listen* in the same way we are taught, trained, and developed to intentionally use our voice.

How much are you leaving on the table as a leader and a brand because listening is an afterthought?

Teach yourself and your teams to listen intentionally and you supercharge all other strategic efforts — efforts to be heard, efforts to solve problems and innovate, efforts to connect and influence, and efforts to win the trust of clients and grow revenue.

Become aware of certain cognitive habits for how information is processed, then adjust and shift certain behaviors and actions, and *Listening Intentionally becomes a competitive advantage of modern leaders and brands.*

Here are seven key areas to observe and take note of across the organization and at the level of oneself. Use this as a thinking model to essentially audit the quality of communication throughout the entire business system, and identify strengths and weaknesses. Take inventory of how essential the act of listening is in your organization, where it’s being used to drive value and stay competitive, **OR** where key business efforts are being stifled due to poor communication and a lack of listening.

A NOTE ON "OBSERVING":

Either visualize each of these scenarios below and put yourself in the respective circumstances, or you can literally go forward in the coming weeks and observe first hand in real time each of these scenarios and capture insights. Either way, observe and inspect the interactions as an exercise. Start now with oneself. Then next, expand your vantage point outward to the various organizational levels of human relationships and interactions. Conclude with how the brand interacts with the market and its target audience.

(Print Pages 2 - 9 of this doc and go forth!)

#1

OBSERVE ONESELF

There's no better place to take a **thoughtful look**. Think of the act of listening as a habitual behavior or style. During your interactions with others, notice and observe whether you tend to have a bias to listen or a bias to wield your voice.

There's no one perfect way to listen, nor a magic ratio between it and speaking. Every situation may be different and could call for you to listen adamantly or to speak your opinion or expertise — simply become more aware of your tendencies.

To *listen intentionally, as a discipline*, means to have an awareness about yourself and your surroundings, and to thoughtfully wield both your voice and an open mind with composure and purpose.

OBSERVATIONS:



Ask yourself, *“During my interactions, am I actually listening like a discipline or just here-and-there when it’s convenient?”*

And then ask yourself, *“What is the impact of my current communication style?”* as you take note of the key business relationships in your career at this present moment.

Get really tuned in and take notice of what actually catches your attention and matters to you, *“When I am in fact listening adamantly, what kind of information in particular am I listening for?”*

#2

OBSERVE YOUR KEY TEAMS

Highly productive teams are fueled by trust and confidence in each other. Become aware of how listening or a lack of it is impacting how teams exchange information, how they set expectations, how they take action, solve problems, negotiate conflict, and how they make decisions.

Observe whether people operate and act more on assumptions or on aligned understanding. *How well do people set expectation with each other, and how dependable are they for each other?*

Note any and all of the distinct teams you a part of. Reflect on each of them and in your next actual interactions, observe the degree of listening that is taking place. *Step back, literally breathe deeply, and then watch your colleagues.* Notice how decisions are made on the team, potential biases or habits the team seems to have, and notice the degree of camaraderie that exists.

OBSERVATIONS:



Is the quality of communication fueling productivity of the team?

Are teammates asking follow up questions and inquiring with each other in a collaborative way?

Do teammates tend to support and propel each other, or stifle one another?

When people challenge each other, is it respectful and purposeful?

Who's voice is notable and why? Who's being left out completely? Who is listening on purpose?

Is communication-quality compromised in any way, and hindering business outcomes?

How are misunderstandings and conflicts being handled?

How much respect exists in every interaction related to teams and the communication that powers the team?

#3

OBSERVE PROSPECTS, CLIENTS, & PARTNERS

*Think of the people that represent your brand and your promise. Sales, account management, and client services all have a degree of urgency associated with them — close the deal, solve the problem, & build trust — and **it's easy to let our voices rule the interactions on behalf of well intended action and outcome for prospects, clients, & partners.***

However, a lack of listening is the fast track to no deal or a frustrated client.

*A top complaint buyers have of sales people is that sales people don't actually listen. Meanwhile, most sales people say they know how important listening is.**

So where is the disconnect?

Well versed people who listen first intentionally, distinguish themselves from the rest - it's wildly refreshing and it's the richest game in the long run.

OBSERVATIONS:



Does the sales team and every other client facing team have a bias to pitch and lead with their voice or bias to listen, discover, and uncover how to truly serve the client?

Also consider vendors and companies that make up your company's business partners. What are those relationships like? What is the nature of communication? Is it a formidable, respectful, value-add relationship for both sides?

*HUBSPOT ARTICLE

#4

OBSERVE THE HABITS OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a complex duty and critical responsibility that involves coaching and managing teams of people, managing information and making key decisions, charting and executing a direction or strategic action, and compelling others to join the endeavor with all their might!

Every habit, value, decision, and action of leadership affects the rest of the organizational dynamic.

What is the quality of communication (and level of trust and confidence) between the leadership team, & between leadership and the organization?

OBSERVATIONS:



At the various levels of leadership throughout the organization, how well are leaders listening to their teams?

How well is information being delivered and exchanged throughout the layers or levels of the organization?

For leaders who are in roles demanding decisiveness, what is the nature of those decisions and the process to make them?

Do people feel supported, inspired, and coached by their leaders and managers?

#5

OBSERVE THE CULTURE & COLLECTIVE ETHOS

Notice the *mindset, attitude, and relationship* people throughout the organization actually have with communication.

Is listening a strength of *everyone*? Or just a rare few?

Tune in and observe and people will often confess — directly or written between the lines — whether they feel heard, understood, valued and respected, the level of rapport that exists through out the organization, and how much they feel their voice matters.

What are the cultural habits, and what is the cultural mindset when it comes to communication being a tool for high-performance and success?

OBSERVATIONS:



How do teams or how does the organization actually think and talk about communication?

What's the collective mindset or perspective on communication? Is it valued?

What is the general level of trust, confidence, and productivity between people?

How aligned and focused are the people that comprise the brand?

How are failure, conflict, and misunderstanding handled?

Does the organization have a tendency to be more of speaking culture or a listening culture? What's the opportunity or challenge with either?

#6

OBSERVE TOOLS, SYSTEMS, & PRACTICES

What are the different methods people use to exchange information? Is poor listening compromising execution?

There are endless software platforms to exchange, store, track, and manage information, needs, and commitments. There are multi channels and mechanisms used to communicate every single day.

Consider the suite of tools your organization uses to communicate — internally and externally, with each other, clients, partners, and the market — and take note of each of them. Take note of your specific suite of communications tools that you personally use every day.

[As you observe, note whether the best-practices & protocols related to the tools being used are formally documented in writing & accessible to everyone in the organization.]

OBSERVATIONS:



How much of the processes and protocols associated with these comms platforms are left up to chance and interpretation, and how many have clear guidelines or best practices that everyone uses such that communication can thrive?

Or, are assumptions and inconsistencies causing unnecessary friction and tension?

How thoughtfully is time spent, especially in terms of meetings? When it comes to meetings - in real life, phone, or via video - do people show up on time, and how structured or agile are the meetings?

Are team members using the tools to truly listen to each other in order to build a better product, a better experience, and a better outcome for everyone?

#7

OBSERVE THE BRAND & THE MARKET

Organizationally, *as a brand*, how well are you listening to your customers and clients as part of your executive strategy?

The brand-consumer relationship can become more significant, authentic and win-win than ever before. *Every interaction (social media or real life) or any exchange of value between a brand and a client is an opportunity to listen and learn.*

There are technologies and strategies that allow brands to truly hear from the market and its client, and to capitalize on those feedback loops in order to stay competitive, innovative, relevant, and meaningful.

Are you tuned in and truly listening?

OBSERVATIONS:



Are you fully extracting the input of all your clients, customers, and users?

Are you seeking to continuously understand their challenges in the larger context of the market and the modern world?

If so, that can help innovate and improve on how you serve clients and evolve your offering.

Are you listening intentionally to remain competitive, relevant, and of service?

#8

BONUS: OBSERVE THE WORLD

Take on *an elevated awareness of the conversations and interactions across the country and our world.* Also, take a deep long breath.

Notice all of the ways that the world is exchanging information, opinion, news, art, value, and so forth.

Everyone and every brand wants to be heard. *Everyone seeks to be heard, but no-one wants to listen first.* Which is a paradox.

If we want to deeply connect with and understand others — friends, colleagues, prospects, or clients — *do we demand to be heard by others through our voice, or are we disciplined to listen first so that our eventual voice is heard and received with respect?*

OBSERVATIONS:



Are we really listening to each other to learn and understand?

Are we willing to take on the different perspective of another human being, as a fundamental exercise in humanity?

Are we genuinely curious and open to hear from others?

Are we listening to learn and expand our knowledge and comprehension of the world and what's at stake?

Do we have the courage to listen first, on purpose? It's so tempting to lead with our voice when there's so much at stake, so much pressure, and so much noise. This is the paradox of listening...

**TRUST
CONFIDENCE
PRODUCTIVITY**

*Listen First,
On Purpose,
With Purpose.*

It's almost ironic how simple it is; the quality and intentionality of one's listening can actually amplify one's voice and genuinely drive engagement and connection with those key relationships we all have.

Elevate how intentionally you listen and everything else is impacted in a valuable way.

The leaders and game-changers of the future are those that listen first, and listen intentionally as a discipline which results in trust, confidence, and productivity in their most important business relationships.

Wishing you the best in your endeavors!



**-Dave Momper
Certified Listening Practitioner
& Leadership Coach**