



## Golden Nuggets of Networking Wisdom

By Bruce Libman

# Developing Better Listening Skills- A Prerequisite For Becoming A Power NETWEAVER

*“Talk to a man about himself and he will listen for hours.”*

When you were a kid gathered around a campfire, did you ever play the game where someone starts telling a short story and each person whispers what he heard to the person next to him? Remember how as the story completed its way around the circle so much changed, that you didn't recognize the original story when it returned to the beginning?

For most of us our listening skills are poor and our retention spans are pathetic.

A power NetWeaver must make a dedicated effort to become a better listener and concentrate on finding ways to retain and better categorize information. This ability is crucial if you are to retrieve information in a timely manner when the opportunity arises.

Here are 5 reasons why mastering listening skills is a must for the power NetWeaver:

1. When you're listening you're not talking so you are able to gather information.
2. When you're listening it shows you're interested in what the other person is saying. Since most people enjoy talking about themselves, especially about their accomplishments, they are automatically warming up to you as they talk. Consequently, they will be more willing to share their resources and their wisdom.



3. Listening as a power NetWeaver means learning to listen with a different set of filters on. You're listening for needs, problems and opportunities with which you can assist. You're listening for their benefit...not yours.
4. The better you listen the more interesting you become. Everyone can be your personal mentor.
5. The magic words that open up conversations are: who, what, where, when, why, how and how much.

So, how do you learn to listen better and retain the most important points?

1. Rather than listening to retain entire sentences, listen for key words and memorize them. After you hear a key word or words, repeat it (them) to yourself several times.

Memory experts suggest that the best way to remember a person's name after you meet the individual and hear his name for the first time, is to associate in your memory the person's face as you repeat the name five or six times. Association and repetition are probably our two most important memory tools.

2. Break down things you are trying to remember into groups of no more than three or four items. It's embarrassing, but for many of us our memory span only stretches to three or four items or points. Why do you think telephone numbers are divided into two sets of threes and one set of four? For example, 404-555-1212.

If you listen for key words and mentally group them into threes or fours you'll be able to retain much more information and take better notes during and after your meeting.

3. Even if you take good notes during a meeting, the sooner you rewrite your notes after the meeting the better and more thorough they will be. Failure to do so is the biggest mistake that people make. Some individuals carry pocket dictation recorders to facilitate retention.



4. Listen as if you are trying to determine what information will be included on your final exam.

In line with this, Bob raised a chuckle from Donna as he confessed how he had acquired his better-than-average listening and note taking skills. (Don't tell your kids this story.) When Bob was a sophomore in college, he made a bet with a friend that he could get by without buying his books that semester. He won the bet and went until his second semester during his senior year without buying his textbooks. Still Bob pulled close to a B average. Bob stresses that his studies were in political science, psychology and sociology, not math or science. Further, he would stay up the night before an exam and borrow someone else's books with which to review. But the lesson he learned is worth noting.

Bob went to *every* class and when he took notes, he was carefully listening for information that might become a good test question or a point that the professor would emphasize. That "selective" listening ability proved to be one of Bob's most valuable learning experiences of his entire college career.

5. Listen and at the same time search through your mental Rolodex for a possible strategic match. Also, by thinking of an association with what you just heard, you'll retain the thought or the resource person's name better.

As mentioned before, word and concept association is one of our most powerful memory aids. Individuals who can memorize fifty people's names (or more) the first time they meet use an association helper of some kind.

First, they pre-memorize a list of items in a *specific order*. Let's say they go through five rooms of your house and memorize ten items (in order) in each room. For example, in your living room: 1) couch; 2) big easy chair; 3) rug; 4) coffee table, and so on. As these memory experts meet the people, they associate their name and face with the pre-memorized objects—Jan Smith sitting on the couch, Fred Jones in the big easy chair, Ted Allen sitting on the rug, etc. The pre-memorized list gives you a handle on which you can attach things you're trying to recall.

It's virtually impossible to be a power NetWeaver without being a good listener. Study other books on listening and commit to developing and improving better listening and retention skills.



## NETWEAVING EXERCISE

### Developing Better Listening Skills

1. During the next conversation you have with a prospect or client, as you discuss their needs, problems, and interests, and after you are given a business card, write several key words on the back to help you retain important details you heard. Take another person's business card but, after a similar discussion, *do not* jot down any notes. After only a day or two, notice the differences in what you retain.
2. Repeat the first exercise but carry a little notepad (or voice recorder) and take a few notes as soon as possible after your conversation with your prospect or client. Do not take any notes from any other conversation you have. Wait a day or two and attempt to recall as much as you can about both conversations and then notice the incredible difference.

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