3 reasons why active listening is a must-have skill

Whether in social or work environments, we don’t just want to be heard – we want to be truly listened to. Active listening can play an important role in helping you get ahead in your career, and is a skill that can be acquired and developed with a little patience and practice.

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So what is active listening? It’s a way of paying attention. It’s fully concentrating on, engaging in, and absorbing what someone else is saying to you. It’s displaying the obvious and genuine signs such as eye contact, and reinforcing responses, such as nodding, agreeing with “yes,” and asking related questions for clarification.

If you’re a manager wanting to build your leadership skills or a professional looking for a promotion, here are three reasons why active listening should be the number one skill you develop further.

1. **Earn the trust and respect of your peers.** The workplace can often be fueled by stress and pressure, and every person deals with this in their own unique way. Needless to say, most people appreciate having supportive and understanding peers at work.

   Whether you’re a manager or colleague, others will find great value in having a person around who reaches out and shows understanding. For example, knowing and acknowledging some of the work-related or personal issues that face your team, will make them feel valued, and likely inspire confidence. And it’s respected, self-assured teams who accomplish great things.
2. **Understand issues and formulate better solutions.** When you’re actively engaged and listening to your peers’ concerns or wider business issues, you can gain a better understanding of the problem and subsequently formulate the most optimal and accurate solutions.

We’ve all been in the situation where our thoughts have gone off on a tangent while sitting in a meeting. If you were required to action something in response to the meeting, you’d find gaps in your knowledge and you may not be able to offer a solution that best reflects your professional ability. That’s why active listening can help you work efficiently, display a sharp intellect, and save time and money for your company in the long run.

In this instance, active listening can be employed by active and constructive note-taking. Jotting down just a few meaningful notes throughout the meeting enable you to stay engaged and connected as key issues are presented. It also means you’ve got a record of the meeting, and can provide valuable feedback and follow-up questions long after the meeting has concluded.

3. **Active listening can help you diffuse conflict.** There are times in the workplace when you may have to deal with conflict. Although you may not always agree with others’ opinions, it’s important to be open to the experiences and perspectives of your peers, and the best way to demonstrate this is through active listening.

Conflict between two parties can make people defensive, but if a person feels that their concerns are being listened to and taken seriously, the chances of landing a resolution is high.

And, if both parties feel that their point or stance is clearly understood, the resolution is likely to be longer lasting. It may also encourage workers to speak regularly and openly about conflict, resulting in a more transparent workplace generally.

As well as the benefits listed, being an active listener conveys good character, care and commitment, which all contribute to great leadership skills and career advancement.