

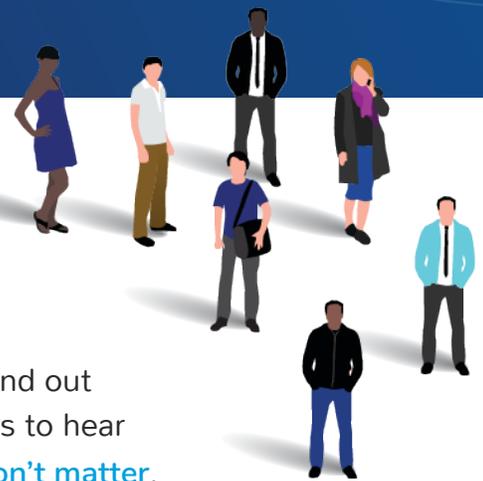


# THE BENEFITS OF AUTHENTIC LISTENING

How can curiosity be the key to reimagining your organization?



# LISTENING MATTERS.



What's not being said inside your organization can be far more dangerous than what is being said. And often, leadership teams find out the hard way. When you're not in the habit of making opportunities to hear from your employees, you are **silently** communicating that they **don't matter**. Complicating things, organizations who fail to listen create an 'unspoken' culture where there is hesitancy to contribute at best, and secrecy and mistrust, at worst.

So, what happens when organizations start to listen authentically? At **Vision Wheel**, we believe that authentic listening – that is the habit of **careful**, **curious**, and **consistent** listening – may just be the key to unlocking a new level of commitment from your employees. It's a leadership competency that is vital to effective decision-making, and it's a powerful team-building tool that can lead to more innovation, and improved employee engagement.

Organizations today cannot miss the next **big idea** because it's **hidden** from view, or risk mission drift because leaders are not keeping an ear to the ground. Make sure people can weigh-in authentically, so they can buy-in passionately.

Poor listening habits are at the heart of employee disengagement and are costing your organization.

17.5

the number of hours per week small-medium sized businesses spend clarifying miscommunication

\$525K

the amount organizations with 100 employees lose annually because of communication barriers



In September 1957, Harvard Business Review published one of the best-known and oft-quoted articles *Listening to People*. It was one of the first critical examinations of the impact of 'listening' on organizational success. Though much has changed – from technology to management theory – it still nails the essence of the problem. That people in general **do not** know **how** to listen. The authors go on to say “they have ears that hear very well, but seldom have they acquired the necessary aural skills which would allow those ears to be used effectively for what is called **listening**.”

Simple to understand, yet so complex at the same time. Because the issue is less about our ability, and more about our willingness. Organizations need to be asking these two questions: What is getting in the way? And once answered: What can we do remove those barriers?

We already know organizations that are good at listening are proven to have better workplace relationships, higher productivity and more engaged employees. So what is standing in the way?

# WHAT IS AUTHENTIC LISTENING?

Authentic listening is the habit of **careful**, **curious**, and **consistent** listening. It requires **dialing-down the multitasking** for a moment in a world where everything is coming at us at lightening speed. When you consider everything that's interrupting our ability to focus, it is no surprise that listening suffers!

The skill of listening in this new way requires taking time to learn and space to practice.



Authentic listening is a vital leadership skill, that transfers to teams. When leaders adopt these practices, it creates trust, loyalty and drives innovation.

## CAREFUL LISTENING

It's all about not jumping to conclusions or carrying on internal dialogues while in conversation, but giving full attention to the other person or group, while being mindful of personal opinions.

## CURIOUS LISTENING

Also known as active listening, it's asking follow-up questions, paraphrasing key thoughts, being open to learning something new, and staying present for the hard topics.

## CONSISTENT LISTENING

This is the pattern of listening habits that are needed for improved communication, such as being mindful of frequency, tone, receiving method and attention.

# LISTENING TO ENGAGE



Take advantage of every tool in your toolbox – but don't mistake the hammer for the scalpel.

Listening with the intent to engage people requires a continuous effort and the creation of a safe space where people can be real.

Make it a part of your routine to listen in a variety of ways. Each method, from surveys to focus groups to one-on-one interviews, all have a purpose and they all get different results. Take advantage of every **tool** in your **toolbox** – but don't mistake the **hammer** for the **scalpel**.

A large employee engagement survey, deployed annually, covering a wide range of topics does not check the “we've been listening” box. This hammer approach can be dangerous to leaders if they believe they're getting to the heart of matter. Most often, they're not. It's a survey – meaning a general overview – not a deep dive into some of the underlying issues. It's not a driver of engagement, but rather a measurement.

Listening more surgically – by finding the intentional moments – can be much more successful. Remember, on that important interpersonal level, poor listening leads to **damaged trust** and **insecurity**, leading to increased turnover, and saving costly errors because someone wasn't empowered to speak up.

Leaders who don't listen will eventually be surrounded by people who have nothing to say.



– Andy Stanley



# LISTENING CURIOSLY

Don't mistake active listening for genuine curiosity.  
You can't fake sincere interest.

It can be hard to start the conversation when you're seeking to listen with a genuine curiosity and desire to learn. Here are a few [starter questions](#) to get you going!

- “Are there any other options we could consider?”*  
to ensure nothing is missed
- “Does anyone have another perspective?”*  
to prompt creative thinking
- “What leads you to that?”*  
to go deeper with a line of thinking
- “Can you think of an example?”*  
to get to the heart of a concern
- “What do you think might happen if we did this?”*  
to explore outcomes
- “Tell me one thing I don't want to hear”*  
to give permission for speaking up

# WHY IS AUTHENTIC LISTENING THE KEY?

To listen with an authentic motive means giving space for discovery. Just a few hours a week or even a month can give rise to game-changing innovation. Consider how to extend listening habits outside your team, and the possibilities rise exponentially. By being open to new sources, you may trigger the next big idea!

Try on some new [listening habits](#) – and share them with your team to get them inspired:



## BROWSE BEYOND YOUR FIELD

Allow time to read and take in sources that are outside your line of business. What are the trends in other industries telling you?

## PRACTICE MENTAL GRAZING

Get out (physically out of your office) and let your mind wander in discovery mode. What are you noticing?

## LOOK FOR PATTERNS

Make notes of what's trending – and pay attention to repeated occurrences so you can connect the dots.

– Beth Comstock, Global Leadership Summit 2020

At [Vision Wheel](#), we've uncovered one of keys to accelerating innovation, building immediate and lasting trust among teams and propelling leaders to new heights. It's authentic listening. And we know this works, because it's something we preach and practice ourselves.

Bringing new habits to workplaces from the financial, telecom, government, education, consulting, and philanthropic sectors, and watching the transformation happen, is one of our many sources of inspiration. Seeing the pay-off on the bottom line is the proof.

[How can curiosity be the key to reimagining your organization?](#)

**START YOUR JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY TODAY.**





# VISIONWHEEL

Vision Wheel is an internal communications agency specialized in one-of-a-kind employee experiences, result-defining employee education and long-lasting employee engagement.

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