

ARTICLE REPRINT

DEFCON 1 Listening

The best definition of listening I have ever heard is: “*Listening is not doing anything that interferes with seeing.*” At first, this may sound strange, but if you’ll consider its implications, it is an extraordinary statement.

Our first article in this series on listening examined what you might do if you found yourself alone, in the center of a dark forest in the middle of the night. Imagine how you would listen intently, with every ounce of energy you could muster. You would be on high-alert, the equivalent of DEFCON 1, the military’s highest alert status. Nothing could distract your attention from your surroundings and your predicament.

This heightened awareness, in fact, would involve all your senses. You would listen intently to sounds around you and sounds in the distance. You would strain to see anything in your surroundings. Your sense of smell would alert you to any familiar or unusual fragrances. You certainly would feel anything around you that you touched, or touched you. Perhaps you would even taste danger!

Intensely aware and sensitive to your surroundings, you would be prepared to react instantaneously to any emergency or threat. This same state of readiness would allow you to seize an opportunity for safety or escape. Even a brief lapse of attention could mean the loss of a chance to respond to an emergency or threat, or to take advantage of an opportunity.

You would not allow distractions of any kind that might threaten your security. It’s not likely that you would let your mind wander. You probably wouldn’t, for example, think about gathering wood to build a fire, or picking wild blackberries for tomorrow’s breakfast. You would, instead, continue listening intently, employing all your senses for clues that might threaten or guarantee your survival.

Consider applying this behavior model to your sales interactions with prospects and customers. Instead of formulating responses in your mind as your conversational partner speaks, what might happen if you simply listened to the speaker, employing all of your senses to actually *see* him or her? What might happen if you allowed yourself to remain on DEFCON 1 alert status during your interactions with customers?

If you remember anything you’ve read here I hope you will remember this: “*Listening is not doing anything that interferes with seeing.*” In our next newsletter issue we will take a

look at the myriad of activities that not only interfere with listening, but actually prevent *seeing*.

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