

# The Don Hutson Report

Global Expert on Sales & Negotiations

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## Are You Really Listening to Me?

Part 7 of an 8-part series on “Negotiations”

**That is the question so many people would like to ask you** from the other side of the table in a negotiation or sales encounter. Here’s a tip to prove to them that you are. When you ask a question, listen carefully to their answer. Then ask another question on the same topic that probes deeper. They will know you are fully engaged in the conversation!

**We don’t tend to think of listening as a *power activity*** because in and of itself, it has historically been thought of as a passive behavior rather than a proactive one. Now is the time to change that. As my good friend, Harvey Mackay, said in one of his recent articles, “None of us can learn anything when we are talking”. When you are conversing with a client, prospect, superior or even a family member, clarity of communication is critical. Being a skilled listener is not only a respectful activity, it will improve your efficiency in negotiating with others. It will also help you be more convincing and build trust that can facilitate desired outcomes.

**Here are 7 tips to help you become a better negotiator by asking insightful questions and maximizing your power listening skills:**

1. **Vow to concentrate on what the other person is saying.** Maintain eye contact. Take notes when appropriate, and remember that first and foremost we must discipline ourselves to always listen for context and understanding.
2. **Seek clarity on the topics you present to assure that effective communications is taking place.** To do this, ask concise questions regarding the topics being discussed based on what you have heard and noted. This verifies to them that you understand their position so far. Probe for detail when appropriate and you will gain enhanced understanding.

3. **Remember that open-ended questions will get you more in-depth answers than closed-ended questions.** An example of an open-ended question might be: “Based upon what you have told me so far, what are the two or three top outcomes you and your company are hoping to achieve?” (This is a great place to refer to the notes you have taken!) Conversely, a closed-ended question could be along these lines. “Are you hoping to get a solution in place before the end of the month?” (This could elicit a one-word answer.)
4. **Repeat key ideas you have identified from the conversation so far to confirm to your customer that clear communications are taking place.** Restate some of their thoughts and conclusions so that you can take the dialog to the next level. As you extrapolate their thoughts into an advanced understanding of what they want, all of your customers and prospects will be impressed with your skills and pleased with your action-oriented spirit.
5. **Confirm what your resourceful responses to their ideas will be going forward.** They will respect your demonstrated ability to truly understand their position. This can soften the often confrontational spirit of many negotiations.
6. **Perform the promised function or actions with timeliness and expertise and you will be in the minority of great communicators.** Your customers will appreciate your on-time follow up and conscientious approach. That builds trust!
7. **Check back to confirm that actions agreed upon have been taken,** what the results are so far, and how their expectations going forward are being addressed, so that your next steps will be clear. Your customers will always respect and value your proactivity.

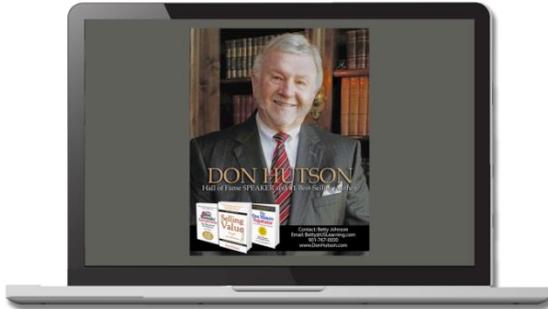
**Ask great questions and engage your power listening skills, and you will enjoy more successful negotiations and greater achievement than ever before!**

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