

Communicating with IMPACT[®]

A-Activate: Listen to Understand, Not to Respond

by [Patrick J. Donadio, MBA, CSP, MCC](#)

The message is more complex than it first appears. According to some studies, your words and the way you pronounce them can convey up to 80% of your message. To listen actively, you must involve your entire being, paying attention not only to the speaker's words but also to their posture, voice, eyes, and gestures. Peter Drucker once stated, "The most important thing in communicating is to hear what isn't being said."

In my "[Communicating with IMPACT[®]](#)" process, the "A" in the IMPACT process stands for "Activate." How do you actively keep you and your receiver engaged in the communication? The following active listening techniques will help you actively get and stay involved in the communication process to make a greater impact:

- **Internal summary** - Concentrate on what is being said and try to summarize the main points in your mind. This will help you overcome the gap between how fast you think and how fast the receiver talks. Remember, we can think about three times faster than the others can speak. Listen to understand, not to respond.
- **Restate** - For clarification, repeat what the person just said using their words. "Let me repeat this to make sure I understand...."
- **Paraphrase** - Restate what the speaker said in your own words to see if you understand the message. "So you would like me to..."
- **Minimize interruptions** - Do not try to take phone calls, read, or complete another task while someone is talking to you. Taking notes on key points is a good way to be an active listener.
- **Allow for silence** - Pauses may seem uncomfortable, but do not automatically interject your comments. People may need a little time to gather their thoughts. Silence shows strength.
- **Ask questions** - Encourage people to tell you more or force them to think through an idea by asking open-ended questions. "What do you think we could do?"
- **Watch non-verbals** - Look for eye contact, a change in voice, facial expressions, body posture, gestures, and so forth. Any mismatched signals could give you more insight. Remember, more than half the message is nonverbal.
- **Avoid prejudging** - Get all the facts before you draw your conclusion. People sometimes tend to see what they want to see and hear what they want to hear. Try avoiding phrases like, "That will never work...." "We tried that before..." "Stop, I know exactly what you are going to say."

As I tell attendees in my presentations, "Making a minor change can have a major impact on your results." Next time you begin communicating, try using some of these simple techniques, and you too might see a greater impact, such as saving time, increasing profits, or even improving the quality of your service.



*© Copyright 2023 [Patrick Donadio, MBA, CSP, MCC](#) Portions excerpted from Donadio's influential book [Communicating with IMPACT[®]](#) Patrick is a communication strategist, speaker, coach, and author. He helps leaders and their teams apply his [IMPACT[®] process](#) to communicate clearly, lead effectively, present powerfully, listen attentively, and enhance their bottom line. Patrick earned the highest designations in both the speaking and coaching professions, a distinction achieved by only a select few worldwide. Hire Patrick to deliver custom, high-value, engaging [keynotes](#), and practical [training at your next](#) conference, seminar, or retreat. Call 614-488-9164, email him at Patrick@PatrickDonadio.com, or visit www.PatrickDonadio.com. Go here to schedule a one-on-one [IMPACT Coaching Session](#).

