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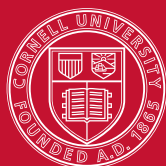
Fostering Service Excellence through Listening: What Hospitality Managers Need to Know

by Judi Brownell, Ph.D.

Cornell University
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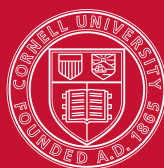
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judi Brownell, Ph.D., is a professor and dean of students at the Cornell School of Hotel Administration (jlb18@cornell.edu). Her research projects include studies on managerial listening behavior and the competencies required for global hospitality leaders. She has created tools to assess employee–organization fit and the communication of service values. Her current research focuses on listening as it relates to communicating and maintaining service quality standards in the international cruise industry. The author of several textbooks, she has published over eighty journal articles and serves on several editorial boards. She is also past president of the International Listening Association and has received awards for her research in this field. Among her training and consulting projects are the design of assessment centers for hospitality leadership development. As an administrator, she has served as the school's associate dean for academic affairs and as its director for graduate studies. She has also been academic area director for both the organization behavior and management communication disciplines.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Amid the "noise" created by increased use of computers and other technology, the ability to listen takes on increasing importance for hospitality employees. Listening is essential in the course of delivering personal, customized service. A survey of eighty-three hospitality managers found the highest agreement with the statement that effective listening is vital to business success. For hospitality organizations, that success is tightly linked to the quality of service produced by employees. At the same time, survey respondents gave their lowest agreement to the statement that most members of their organization listen well. Listening is the foundation of two organizational processes essential to service delivery, one involving the accurate exchange of information and the other facilitating the development of strong relationships. Employees who are good listeners have a willingness to listen and an awareness of their own listening ability (although that may be overestimated). While developing listening competencies is not easy, it is possible for managers to improve their service employees' listening abilities through modeling effective listening and offering training that is then augmented in the workplace—all the while improving service delivery. In addition to the rapid pace of the hospitality industry and interference from technology, one other barrier to effective listening is the diversity of employees and guests. Not only cultural differences, but also gender and age differences influence listening styles and effectiveness.

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Researchers and practitioners alike have long been interested in identifying the competency requirements of effective service delivery. Such information is particularly important for the insights it provides to hospitality managers seeking to select and develop hospitality talent and to create cultures that support best practices in service delivery. Considerable empirical research demonstrates that improved service is linked directly to improved business performance and therefore is the concern of every hospitality professional.[1]

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[1] For example, see: P. Coughlan and A. Harbison, "Service in Ireland: A Comparative Study of Practice and Performance," *Journal of Irish Business and Administrative Research,* Vol. 19/20, No. 2 (1999), pp. 35-53; J.L. Heskett, W.E. Sasser, and L.A. Schlesinger, *The Service Profit Chain* (New York: The Free Press, 1997); J.J. Parkington and B. Schneider, "Some Correlates of Experienced Job Stress: A Boundary Role Study," *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 22 (1999), pp. 270-281; and C.A. Voss and R. Johnston, *Service in Britain: How Do We Measure Up*? (London: London Business School Press, 1995).

Numerous competency clusters have been proposed as critical to service excellence.[2] While no two competency typologies are identical, most would agree that hospitality employees require a distinctive set of skills and personal characteristics to meet the industry's service challenges.[3]

In this report, I explain why listening is a core competency for service providers and explore research that has implications for a better understanding of listening and its role in service delivery. While managers model key listening behaviors, set performance standards, and reinforce desirable outcomes, all employees must be competent listeners to work effectively within hospitality environments. My focus here is on the importance of listening for service staff—not only in the course of service but also as a source of information about customers' preferences and their opinions about

how the firm fulfills expectations.[4] In addition, internal processes in support of service delivery can function smoothly only when employees' expectations and goals are aligned. Therefore, I am also interested in the degree to which service employees listen to other organization members.

Early efforts to understand listening behavior focused on commonsense heuristics. Practitioners, educators, and scholars alike developed listening principles absent any reliable evidence and with little consistency. Listening remained poorly defined, therefore, and nearly impossible to assess.[5] While many aspects of the listening process remain elusive, the following review of research findings provides insights to hospitality managers seeking to better understand the nature of listening in efforts to improve their employees' service delivery.

This report reaffirms the important role that listening plays in service settings by first reporting findings from a convenience survey of hospitality managers conducted through the Cornell Center for Hospitality Research. Listening competence is then discussed as it facilitates

[2] A. Barrett and J. Beeson, *Developing Business Leaders for 2010* (New York: The Conference Board, 2002); J. Conger and D.A. Ready, "Rethinking Leadership Competencies," *Leader to Leader*, Vol. 32 (2004), pp. 41-47; and J. Hayes, A. Rose-Quirie, and C. Allinson, "Senior Managers' Perceptions of the Competencies They Require for Effective Performance: Implications for Training and Development," *Personnel Review*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2000), pp. 92-105.

[3] J. Brownell, "Leading on Land and Sea: Competencies and Context," *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (2008), pp. 137-150; J. Brownell, "Meeting the Competency Needs of Global Leaders: A Partnership Approach," *Human Resources Management*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2006), pp. 309-336; C. Enz and .J. Siguaw, "Best Practices in Service Quality," *Cornell Hotel & Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (2000), pp. 20-29; J. Perdue, J.D. Ninemeier, and R.H. Woods, "Comparison of Present and Future Competencies Required for Club Managers," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (2002), pp. 142-146; and V.A. Zeithaml, L.L. Berry, and A. Parasuraman, "The Behavioral Consequences of Service Quality," *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (1996), pp. 31-47.

[4] R.L. Allen, "People—The Single Point of Difference—Listening to Them," *Nation's Restaurant News*, Vol. 31, No. 40 (1997), pp. 130-134; J. Bowen, "A Market-Driven Approach to Business Development and Service Improvement in the Hospitality Industry," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 9, No. 7 (1997), pp. 334-344; and A. Wolvin, *Listening in the Quality Organization* (Ithaca, NY: Finger Lakes Press, 1999).

[5] B.R. Witkin and W.W. Trochim, "Toward a Synthesis of Listening Constructs: A Concept Map Analysis," *International Journal of Listening*, Vol. 11 (1997), pp. 69-87; and A.D. Wolvin and C.G. Coakley, "A Survey of the Status of Listening Training in Some Fortune 500 Corporations," *Communication Education*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (1991), pp. 152-164.

EXHIBIT 1

Hospitality managers' views on listening
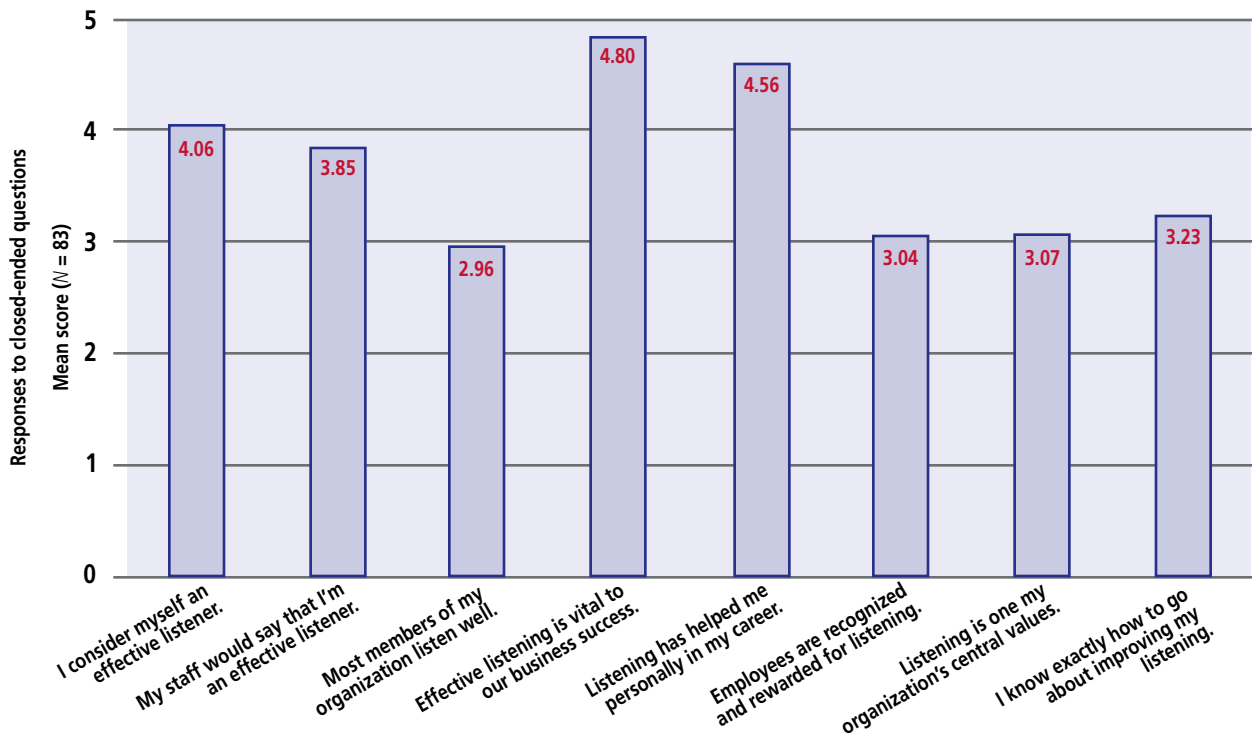
two key organizational processes essential to service quality: the sharing of accurate information to effectively accomplish tasks and the display of empathy prerequisite to the development of meaningful relationships. The nature of listening behavior is then explained in terms of the six-component HURIER listening model, which I developed.[6] I explore personal characteristics that affect service employees' potential ability to listen well. Those characteristics are attitude, listening style, and self-efficacy. Managerial considerations in developing and assessing listening competence are then highlighted with emphasis on assessment instruments, skill transfer, and listening authenticity. Finally, I examine the following three future challenges to listening in service settings: providing service customization, managing workforce diversity, and addressing the effects of changing, pervasive technology. Managers are viewed as catalysts who facilitate listening effectiveness in their organizations. Throughout this report, I emphasize research that provides insights into how listening competence can improve the service experience.

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[6] See: Brownell (2008), *op.cit.*

The Importance of Listening: Managerial Perceptions

Hospitality managers are becoming increasingly aware of the role listening plays in high performing organizations. To further explore this belief, a survey comprising both objective and open-ended questions regarding the role and importance of listening was sent via email to a convenience sample of hospitality managers who previously had expressed a willingness to participate in studies sponsored by the School of Hotel Administration's Center for Hospitality Research. I received eighty-three usable surveys within the eleven-day time limit. I must point out that these responses were intended to assess the level of support for findings from previous studies and to generate hospitality implications, and not to make independent generalizations or conclusions. Findings are presented throughout this report as they provide insights and enrich the particular topic of discussion.

The first section of the survey presented respondents with 5-point Likert scales and asked them to indicate the strength of their agreement with a series of statements about listening in their organizations. Means of responses to these questions are given in Exhibit 1. The survey's open-ended

questions examined listening challenges and best practices. Findings from this section of the survey are reported later in this report. (I do not dwell on the demographic information that also was compiled.)

Listening is vital. With regard to the quantitative portion of the survey, I found that the highest agreement was with the statement, "Effective listening is vital to our business success" (mean of 4.8 of 5.0). Similarly, managers strongly agreed that listening had helped them personally to advance in their careers (mean of 4.56 of 5.0). The third highest agreement rating was with the statement, "I consider myself an effective listener" (mean of 4.06 of 5.0). It is interesting to note that respondents did not believe their staff would give them as high a rating as they gave themselves. This is shown in the response to the statement, "My staff would say I'm an effective listener," with a mean of only 3.85 out of 5.0. Perhaps the most provocative finding, given the focus on listening for service delivery, was that the lowest agreement rating—a mean of 2.96 out of 5.0—was with the statement, "Most members of my organization listen well." These results send a clear message—managers believe that listening is important, but that service employees are not listening as well as they could.

Service Benefits of Listening

Research to date suggests that employees' listening ability supports two distinctive organizational processes: (**1**) the exchange of accurate information to accomplish tasks, and (**2**) the facilitation of strong relationships.[7] Both are critical to the delivery of effective service. Exhibit 2 summarizes several of the outcomes of each of these two parallel activities, which are discussed in greater detail below. These processes have implications for both the coordination of workplace activities and the customers' service experience.

Listening to Accomplish Tasks

Employees who listen well learn new tasks more readily and make fewer mistakes than their peers do.[8] Strong listening skills result in accurate information sharing where the focus is on the continuous transfer of knowledge. This process increases the resources available to solve organizational

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Ways in which listening enhances service

Listening facilitates task-related outcomes:

- Improves accuracy of communications with guests and coworkers,
- Encourages timely feedback,
- Increases frequency of employee information sharing,
- Encourages direct and clear communication,
- Reduces misunderstandings when tasks are novel or changing,
- Improves problem solving, and
- Increases employees' self-efficacy.

Listening facilitates relationship-related outcomes:

- Increases interpersonal trust,
- Promotes service customization,
- Increases guest satisfaction with service delivery,
- Reduces stress,
- Increases customer loyalty,
- Increases employee commitment and morale, and
- Increases perceptions of integrity.

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problems and make effective decisions.[9] Access to information increases employees' confidence and self-efficacy as every individual becomes a knowledgeable and valued team member.[10] Accurate and continuous information sharing also facilitates the coordination of activities and services across departmental boundaries.[11]

Effective listening also reduces costly misunderstandings that waste time and heighten anxiety. Employees become confused and guests become frustrated when requests and explanations are misunderstood.[12] Listening is particularly important when service challenges require independent problem solving. We know that the more novel and unpredictable the tasks, the more likely it is that effective listening

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[7] V.P. Goby and J.H. Lewis, "The Key Role of Listening in Business," *Business Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (2000), pp. 41-51; G. Hunt and L. Cusella, "A Field Study of Listening Needs in Organizations," *Communication Education*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (1983), pp. 393-401; R.L. Husband, L.O. Cooper, and W.M. Monsour, "Factors Underlying Supervisors' Perceptions of their Own Listening Behavior," *Journal of the International Listening Association*, Vol. 2 (1988), pp. 97-112; and M.H. Lewis and N.L. Reinsch, Jr., "Listening in Organizational Environments," *Journal of Business Communmication*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1988), pp. 49-67.

[8] J. Joyner, "Listening Increases Support from Co-workers," *Computing Canada*, Vol. 27, No. 22 (2001), pp. 31-35.

[9] S. Cornett, "Learning Experiences of Leaders in Developing Characteristics of Leadership Identified for Learning Organizations," The Fielding Institute (1998, 172 pages), AAT 9839177; A. Ellinger, K. Watkins, and R. Bostrom, "Managers as Facilitators of Learning in Learning Organizations," *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1999), pp. 105-126; and J.M. Sinkula, "Market Information Processing and Organizational Learning," *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 58 (1994), pp. 35-45.

[10] B.J. Braham, *Creating a Learning Organization* (London: Kogan Page, 1996); J. Frahm and K. Brown, "Developing Communicative Competencies for a Learning Organization," *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 25, No. 3/4 (2006), pp. 201-211; J. Henderson and R. McAdam, "Adopting a Learning-based Approach to Improve Internal Communications: A Large Utility Experience," *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, Vol. 20 No. 7 (2003), pp. 774-794; and P. Murray, "Cycles of Organizational Learning: A Conceptual Approach," *Management Decision*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (2002), pp. 239-247.

[11] R. Collins, "Knowledge Leadership: The Art and Science of the Knowledge-based Organization," *The Learning Organization*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2005), pp. 299-321; and Frahm & Brown, *op.cit.*

[12] H.S. Harung, D.P. Heaton, and C.N. Alexander, "Evolution of Organisations in the New Millennium," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (1999), pp. 198-207.

EXHIBIT 3

The HURIER listening model
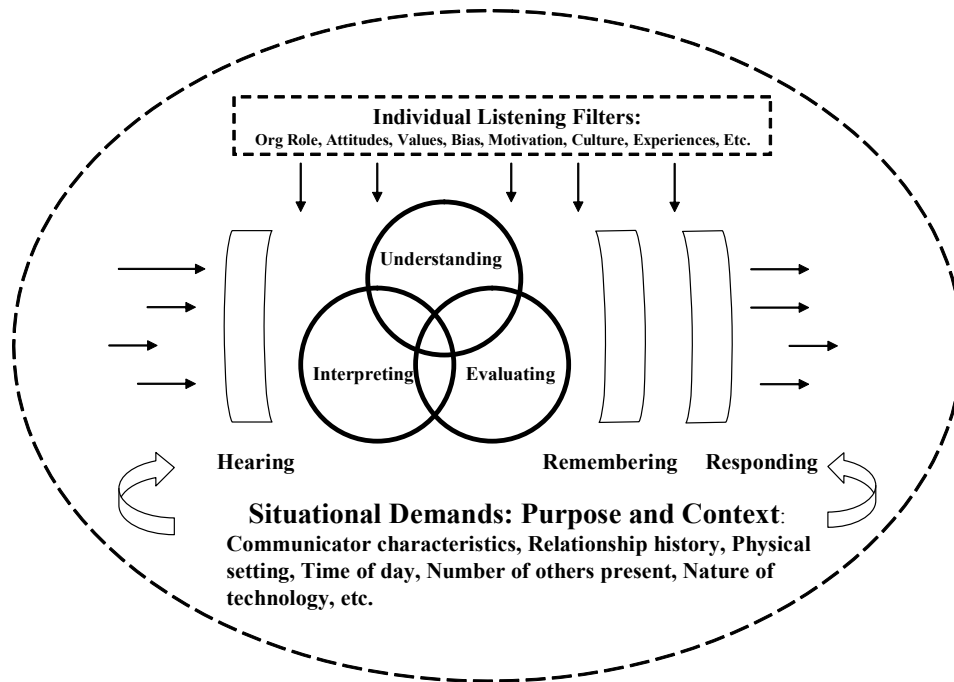
will promote successful performance of those tasks.[13] Employees empowered by high levels of listening competence enhance the service experience for guests through their ability to solve problems and resolve conflicts.

Listening to Build Relationships

At the core of all relationships, trust influences the nature and quality of interactions on the job. Several researchers have suggested that trust develops through a reciprocal process of effective listening.[14] Employees' mental health and sense of well-being are also related to their perceptions of whether their voices are heard by coworkers and supervisors. These perceptions, in turn, influence productivity; employees who feel stressed and isolated are less likely to provide quality service to guests.[15]

Interpersonal trust continues to emerge as a key to both guest satisfaction and customer loyalty.[16] Listening facilitates more personalized service interactions, which are therefore more satisfying; when employees respond with authentic and empathic communication, guests feel that they are cared for and that their needs are being addressed.[17] Service employees who seek to understand the customer's perspective and to fulfill their promises build lasting relationships and increase customer loyalty.

[13] M.G. Papa and K. Tracy, "Communicative Indices of Employee Performance with New Technology," International Communication Association Conference, Montreal, PQ (1987); and B.D. Sypher, R.N. Bostrom, and J.H. Seibert, "Listening Communications Abilities, and Success at Work," *Journal of Business Communication*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (1989), pp. 293-303.

[14] T. McCarthy, "Are You Listening?," *Lodging Hospitality*, Vol. 53, No. 10 (1997), pp. 9-14; G. Shea, *Building Trust in the Workplace* (New York: American Management Association, 1984); D.S. Sherwin, "Strategies for Winning Employee Commitment," *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (1972), pp. 37-47; and L.R. Kaiser, "Sensitive Managers Can Improve the Working Environment," *Hospital Financial Management*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (1982), pp. 12-17.

[15] J.T. Leonards, Corporate Psychology: An Answer to Occupational Mental Health," *Personal and Guidance Journal*, Vol. 60 (1981), pp. 47-51; and C.J. Lindley, "Putting 'Human' into Human Resource Management," *Public Personnel Management*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1984), pp. 501-510.

[16] B. Chung-Herrera, "Grooming Future Hospitality Leaders: A Competencies Model," *Cornell Hotel & Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (2003), pp. 17-26; T. Simons, "Behavioral Integrity: The Perceived Alignment between Managers' Words and Deeds as a Research Focus," *Organization Science*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2002), pp. 18-35; and M. Stine, T. Thompson, and L. Cusella, "The Impact of Organizational Structure and Supervisory Listening Indicators on Subordinate Support, Trust, Intrinsic Motivation, and Performance," *International Journal of Listening*, Vol. 9 (1995), pp. 84-101.

[17] L. Schlesinger and R. Balzer, "An Alternative to Buzzword Management: The Culture Performance Link," *Personnel*, Vol. 62, No. 9 (1988), pp. 45-51.

The Nature of Listening Behavior

Long overlooked and often viewed as a skill that "comes naturally," listening remains a critical component of nearly every service-related activity. Hospitality managers cannot fully capitalize on listening as a core competency for their service employees until they examine what exactly it means to listen. Further, managers should consider what are the key listening challenges faced by the service staff and what best practices are available to address them.

While the benefits of listening are clear, this key competency has proven difficult to define precisely. Most researchers agree that listening is a multi-stage process involving a number of cognitive and behavioral aspects.[18] While numerous listening models have been proposed, the HURIER framework, a six-component framework based on research findings in a hospitality context appears to be one of the most useful for managers seeking to improve employees' competence. I have explained the model in greater detail elsewhere,[19] but I review this framework here (see Exhibits 3 and 4). In past research, I've discovered that listening meant different things to employees in different departments and in different industry segments. The skills associated with listening clustered into six distinct but interrelated components that were integrated into a behavioral model, under the HURIER acronym: Hearing, Understanding, Remembering, Interpreting, Evaluating, and Responding to messages.

In the survey discussed in this report, respondents provided specific examples of how people in their organizations experience listening. It is not surprising that 84 percent of these examples fit readily into one of the six components of the HURIER model, with examples shown in Exhibit 4.

The HURIER model not only provides a comprehensive picture of the considerations involved in the listening process, but also helps identify essential listening behaviors for service settings. As is evident from Exhibit 3, the HURIER framework also accounts for personal characteristics that influence the individual service employee—such as attitudes, previous experiences, and biases—and considers contextual features that affect the service experience. For example, an attendant at a luxury hotel's front desk, a bartender at a pool-side tiki hut, and a valet working at a busy intersection

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[18] E.C. Glenn, A Content Analysis of Fifty Definitions of Listening," *Journal of the International Listening Association*, Vol. 3 (1989), pp. 21-31; S.W. Lundsteen, *Listening: Its Impact on Reading and the Other Language Arts*, 2nd ed. (Urbana, IL: NCTE/ERIC, 1979); and Wolvin & Coakley, *op.cit.*

[19] J. Brownell, Perceptions of Effective Listeners: A Management Study," *Journal of Business Communication*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (1990), pp. 401-416; and J. Brownell, "Building Managers' Skills to Create Listening Environments, *Cornell Hospitality Tools,* No. 11 (2008) Cornell Center for Hospitality Research, www.hotelschool.cornell.edu/research/chr/pubs/tools/tooldetails-14925.html.

Components of the HURIER model with examples from hospitality managers' comments

(1) Hearing—*Reception of the message, paying attention to the right information.*
"Managers need to know who to listen to, and when to listen to them." "Associates must be ready to listen when a customer approaches them—it's important to stop other activity to listen."

(2) Understanding—*Comprehension, accurately understanding what is said.*
"Conversations end with 'so what I hear you saying is' and 'what we have agreed on is' to confirm commitment and understanding." "Listening is paramount to being able to understand the diversity of the people I work with."

(3) Remembering—*Recalling what was heard at a later point in time.*
"I take notes. It's important to remember and act on what is heard." "Always make an action plan to follow up on items that need to be addressed."

(4) Interpreting—*Understanding beyond the literal words, using nonverbal and situational cues to determine meanings, and demonstrating empathy.*
"We need to make them feel comfortable enough to make suggestions and to complain and not just tell us what we want to hear." "Eye contact is especially important. Often, disgruntled employees and guests just want to be heard."

(5) Evaluating—*Remaining open-minded and assessing information objectively.*
"Gather as much information as possible; help the conversation to be objective." "Try not to react as if what was stated is a personal attack."

(6) Responding—*A reliable indicator of accurate listening is the individual's response. Response options are nearly unlimited; the listener's ability to respond appropriately demonstrates the quality of his or her listening.*

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would each find that their listening effectiveness is influenced by their diverse environments.

The relative importance of each of the six listening components, as you might suspect, also varies as situations and specific listening requirements change. A member of the sales staff, for instance, may need to develop a high level of competence in understanding and remembering the details a client provides, while a hostess in the bar might depend more heavily on her ability to interpret a guests' behavior, since the hostess must assess and respond appropriately to a guest's emotional aspect.

Understanding the components of the HURIER model is useful for managers as they go about the important task of selecting individuals with the potential to listen well, and as they pursue activities to assess the listening competence of their existing staff.

Managers who hear and understand individual employees' concerns can help them to perform more effectively.

Characteristics of Employees Who Listen

Research on listening behavior points to a number of key considerations in determining an individual's potential for listening effectiveness.[20] This section reviews three key dimensions that research has shown to be important to achieving the high levels of listening competence required for delivering outstanding service.

Attitude. Attitude is one of the most significant factors influencing listening behavior; a positive attitude is associated with motivation, or what has been called a willingness to listen.[21] Willingness to listen has a profound effect on hospitality professionals' service delivery. In fact, studies show that individuals who score well on listening tests do not translate their expertise to the workplace unless they are motivated to do so.[22] Consequently, the results of listening assessments conducted outside the workplace context have little predictive value. As with any aspect of a job, listening training, absent meaningful incentives, is not likely to result in desired outcomes.[23]

Listening style. An employee's willingness to listen is also influenced by his or her listening style, or preferences. The Listening Preference Profile identifies those preferences and translates them into one of the following four distinct listening styles: (**1**) a people-oriented style, which focuses on the emotional and relational aspects of a communication; (**2**) a content-oriented style, which centers on processing complex information; (**3**) an action-oriented preference for clear information delivered efficiently; and (**4**) a time-oriented style characterized by short, limited messages.[24] While most listeners demonstrate a combination of preference types, assessment results are useful in identifying individual differences and strengths. Hospitality managers may then determine whether there is a good fit of person to job. In many cases, listening style helps to explain on-the-job performance.

While the Listening Preference Profile captures many important variables, other personal characteristics also influence listening behavior. Managers are better able to predict an individual's listening potential by assessing such dimensions as cognitive style,[25] self-monitoring behavior,[26] and preference for message channel, such as aural or visual.[27] Personality traits, like extroversion and introversion, are also associated with specific listening preferences.[28] While extroverts are energized by the rapid exchange of ideas, introverts

[20] W.J. Glynn and T. Brannick, "The Listening Organization: A Segmentation Approach to Service Quality Information," *IBAR*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1999), pp. 55-83; and W.J. Glynn, T.B. de Burca, B. Fynes, and S. Ennis, "Listening Practices and Performance in Service Organizations," *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (2003), pp. 310-331.

[21] L.L. Pecchioni and K.K. Halone, "Relational Listening II: Form and Variation across Social Interpersonal Relationships," *International Journal of Listening*, Vol. 14 (2000), pp. 69-93; C.V. Roberts and L. Vinson, "Relationship among Willingness to Listen, Receiver Apprehension, Communication Apprehension, Communication Competence, and Dogmatism," *International Journal of Listening*, Vol. 12 (1998), pp. 40-56; and L.K. Steil and R.K. Bommelje, *Listening Leaders: The Ten Golden Rules to Listen, Lead, and Succeed* (Edina, MN: Beaver's Pond Press, 2004).

[22] M. Fitch-Hauser and M.A. Hughes, "The Conceptualization and Measurement of Listening," *Journal of the International Listening Association*, Vol. 14 (1992), pp. 1-13; and R.W. Preiss and L.R. Wheeless, "Affective Responses in Listening: A Meta-analysis of Receiver Apprehension Outcomes," in *Listening Behavior: Measurement and Application*, ed. R.N. Bostrom (New York, NY: Guilford, 1990).

[23] *Listening Behavior: Measurement and Application*, ed. R.N. Bostrom (New York: Guilford Press, 1990); and L.O. Cooper, "Listening Competency in the Workplace: A Model for Training," *Business Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (1997), pp. 75-84.

[24] K.W. Watson, L.L. Barker, and J.B. Weaver III, "The Listening Styles Profile (LSP-16): Development and Validation of an Instrument to Assess Four Listening Styles," *International Journal of Listening*, Vol. 9 (1996), pp. 1-13.

[25] S.J. Jenkins, J.C. Stephens, and A.L. Chew, "Examination of the Relationship between the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Empathetic Response," *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (1992), pp. 1003-1009; and S.L. Sargent, M. Fitch-Hauser, and J.B. Weaver III, "A Listening Styles Profile of the Type-A Personality," *International Journal of Listening*, Vol. 11 (1997), pp. 1-14.

[26] M. Snyder, "Self-monitoring of Expressive Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 30 (1974), pp. 526-557.

[27] D.C. Schnapp, "The Effects of Channel on Assigning Meaning in the Listening Process," *Journal of the International Listening Association*, Vol. 5 (1991), pp. 93-107.

[28] Sargent *et al., op.cit.*

are more reflective listeners, focusing and probing to clarify the facts and feelings expressed. Placing staff in positions that allow them to capitalize on their listening strengths not only results in greater job satisfaction but also translates into higher performance and a more positive guest experience.

Self-efficacy. Employees' self-efficacy regarding their listening competence affects interactions with both coworkers and customers. As mentioned earlier, it is not unusual for individuals to overestimate their listening abilities.[29] An inflated sense of listening competence may result in a reluctance to work hard on improving performance.

The other side of the self-efficacy coin is that listeners may be apprehensive or concerned about misinterpreting what guests or supervisors say to them.[30] Listening anxiety stemming from stressful interpersonal encounters can lead to distorted messages and misunderstandings.[31] Line staff members, in particular, frequently lack confidence when it comes to their ability to listen well. Stateroom stewards whose command of English is limited, for example, may find it stressful when passengers make special requests as they pass in the hallway. Listening is then affected by their anxiety as much as by language challenges. It is important for managers to recognize listening anxiety when it occurs and take steps to address this barrier to service excellence.

Developing and Assessing Employees' Listening Behavior

While employees possess varying degrees of listening aptitude, hospitality managers can promote listening effectiveness in service settings. The characteristics related to employees' listening potential makes it clear that improving service effectiveness is not an easy task.

One research study that provided a thought-provoking perspective described organizations according to their employees' general level of listening competence. This description included four categories: the completely deaf

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29 Cooper, *op.cit.*; and W.S.Z. Ford, A.D. Wolvin, and S. Chung, "Students' Self-perceived Listening Competencies," *International Journal of Listening*, Vol. 14 (2000), pp. 1-13.

30 J. Ayres, A.K. Wilcox, and D.M. Ayres, "Receiver Apprehension: An Explanatory Model and Accompanying Research," *Communication Education*, Vol. 44 (1995), pp. 223-235; and L. Wheeless, "An Investigation of Receiver Apprehension and Social Context Dimensions of Communication Apprehension," *Communication Education*, Vol. 24 (1975), pp. 261-268.

31 A.J. Clark, Communication Confidence and Listening Competence: An Investigation of the Relationships of Willingness to Communicate, Communication Apprehension, and Receiver Apprehension to Comprehension of Content and Emotional Meaning in Spoken Messages," *Communication Education*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (1989), pp. 237-248; K. Paschall and A.J. Clark, "An Investigation of the Effects of Receiver Apprehension and Source Apprehension on Listening Comprehension," International Listening Association Convention, Scottsdale, AZ, 1984; and Preiss and Wheeless, *op.cit.*

Respondents' best practices for fostering effective listening

- We reward employees for effective listening by acknowledging their specific service accomplishments.

- Our "best listening practice" is our weekly lunch meeting that is attended by our general manager and one employee from each of our departments. Topics discussed include guest surveys, departmental issues that need attention, employee suggestions, and other ways that our hotel can improve its customer relations and employee morale.

- With employees, it's "management by walking around" and talking to them and making them feel comfortable enough to make suggestions or complain. With members and guests, it's being visible so they feel comfortable talking to you and expressing ideas and concerns.

- We promote listening by holding "rap" sessions with each associate at least every quarter. We also have "REX discussions" (reality vs. expectations), which are documented after new associates are here ten days. This gives us feedback on the orientation process, and the "rap sessions" ensure we keep in touch with each of our associates.

- A major focus of our "Embracing Leadership Excellence" program is on "Listening Leadership."

- I hold roundtable discussions quarterly with department managers as well as with employees, seeking feedback and discussions. I hold monthly interview sessions with guests to receive their feedback.

- Open door policy, dedicated time for employee feedback, asking employees how they would "fix the problem" and actually using their suggestions, comment card usage and review, review of the benefits of active listening when situations arise.

- Annual training for all management team members on listening skills in formal sessions, and repeated coaching reinforcement to ensure understanding. Key that all conversations and meetings end with "so what we have agreed upon is…" to confirm commitment and understanding.

- People listen better if they are ready to listen. Ask your staff to be ready to listen when a customer approaches them. If they are busy with other tasks, be sure that the staff member acknowledges the customers and lets them know that he or she will be ready to listen soon.

- I strongly reinforce the rule in meetings that everyone has the right to speak up and that all should first listen and not interrupt. We hold regular meetings with all associates where the general manager has to listen to any issue brought forward. These meetings are held in small groups in every department.

- Give credit to the ideas of associates.

- We have a "manager on duty" in the lobby of our hotel. The MOD listens to our guests and takes that information back to our departments.

EXHIBIT 6

Managers' perceptions of listening outcomes

Listening is essential to:	Total respondents		Gender		Language	
	Mean (*N* = 83)	SD	Men (*n* = 69)	Women (*n* = 14)	Native English (*n* = 58)	Non-native English (*n* = 25)
Building employee morale	4.74	.470	4.71	4.93	4.82	4.56
Facilitating service customization	4.81	.448	4.82	4.80	4.87	4.68
Increasing employee satisfaction	4.59	.585	4.61	4.57	4.63	4.52
Decreasing misunderstandings	4.78	.445	4.75	4.85	4.72	4.80
Improving organizational performance	4.48	.741	4.45	4.71	4.56	4.32

Note: Means are based on a scale of 1 (highly disagree) to 5 (highly agree).

organization, the hard of hearing organization, the selective listening organization, and the total listening organization.[32] Managers can keep these vivid distinctions in mind as they assess their employees' current level of competence and plan a course of action toward improving their listening effectiveness. Such efforts will undoubtedly improve the organization's overall service culture.

Developing Listening Competence

Managers who hear and understand individual employees' concerns can help them to perform more effectively through such efforts as providing listening training or including listening effectiveness in performance appraisals. These activities increase employees' competence and motivation, which results in higher levels of guest service.[33] Appropriate recognition also leads to continuing high performance as managers select meaningful rewards and reinforce desirable outcomes. While managers may put any number of policies and procedures into place, there are few situations where "walking the talk" has a greater effect than when managers themselves model effective listening practices.

Over half of the hospitality managers who participated in this survey had not had any listening training themselves, but many had ideas about how to improve their employees' listening on the job. Representative suggestions on the question, "What are your best listening practices?," are presented in Exhibit 5 (previous page).

Notice that respondents' suggestions attest to their concern with fostering a free and open exchange of ideas and

information among all organizational members. This type of environment, which I have called a "listening culture,"[34] contributes to effective service delivery as well. Clearly, those managers who responded to this survey recognized the importance of effective listening in facilitating a number of positive organizational outcomes (Exhibit 6), and were already addressing the need for listening competence in a variety of ways. It also appears that excellence is achieved by employees who not only listen, but who are also heard and are given the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the organization's larger goals.[35]

Assessing Listening Competence

Survey responses are consistent with the general belief that managers are often unsure of how to assess their employees' listening competence. The eighty-three responding hospitality managers gave the item, "I know exactly how to go about improving listening," a mean of only 3.23 on the 5-point scale. As managers focus greater attention on improving listening effectiveness, they need to identify and put into place reliable assessment techniques. Let's examine the issues that make it difficult for hospitality managers to assess employees' listening behavior.

Assessment instrument concerns. First, there are relatively few standardized instruments that have proven reliable indicators of workplace listening effectiveness.[36] The

[32] L.L. Berry and A. Parasuraman, "Listening to the Customer—The Concept of a Service-Quality Information System," *Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (1997), pp. 65-76; Glynn and Brannick, *op.cit.*; and Glynn *et al.*, *op.cit.*

[33] P.J. Harkins, "Why Employees Stay—Or Go," *Workforce*, Vol. 77, No. 10 (1998), pp. 74-78; and C.L. Lobdell, K.T. Sonoda, and W.E. Arnold, "The Influence of Perceived Supervisor Listening Behavior on Employee Commitment," *Journal of the International Listening Association*, Vol. 7 (1993), pp. 92-110.

[34] Brownell, 2008, *loc.cit.* (chr.cornell.edu).

[35] P. Iles, "Leadership and Leadership Development: Time for a New Direction?," *British Journal of Administrative Management*, Vol. 27 (2001), pp. 22-31.

[36] S. Bentley, "Benchmarking Listening Behaviors: Is Effective Listening What the Speaker Says It Is?," *International Journal of Listening*, Vol. 11 (1997), pp. 51-68; W.A. Villaume and J.B. Weaver III, A Factorial Approach to Establishing Reliable Listening Measures from the WBLT and the KCLT: Full Information Factor Analysis of Dichotomous Data," *International Journal of Listening*, Vol. 10 (1996), pp. 1-20; and K.W. Watson and L.L. Barker, *Watson/Barker Listening Test* (New Orleans, LA: Spectra, 2000).

most frequently used assessment instruments have been designed for and applied in educational environments rather than business settings.[37] While employees may score well on memory tests when they are administered in a quiet testing situation, for instance, they may find it more challenging to remember special requests in the midst of a convention check-in. In addition, the competencies addressed by assessment instruments do not always correspond to the behaviors that are targeted in an organization's training sessions or critical to service encounters. I have also observed that written measures are too frequently used to assess what is largely a behavioral response.[38]

Skill transfer. Ensuring transfer of listening skills from training settings to the workplace remains a challenge. While employees may demonstrate target behaviors in the classroom, the workplace, as I said above, presents a challenge for those with newly acquired skills. Correlations between performance in training simulations and performance in subsequent service and workplace settings are often weak.

Moreover, merely possessing a particular listening competency does not make an employee effective on the job. Motivation, as discussed previously, is a major factor in determining the level and persistence of newly acquired behaviors (as well as performance on standardized tests). Employees must not only be motivated to perform well, but they must also demonstrate the social sensitivity required to take into account situational factors so that newly acquired listening behaviors are applied at the right time and in the right place. In that regard, a front-desk clerk who listens attentively to an extended guest monologue while a long line forms at the check in counter has not mastered effective listening behavior.

Listening authenticity. It's also possible that individuals who are perceived as effective listeners actually do not

listen any better than their colleagues do. Little research has been conducted to establish a correlation between those individuals who are perceived as listening well and the scores they receive on objective measures of listening ability. The fact is that service employees may display nonverbal behaviors associated with effective listening without actually paying attention to what is said. This issue comes into sharp focus because hospitality employees are frequently required to provide "emotional labor" as part of their job responsibilities,[39] as they greet guests with a cheerful and positive demeanor. Researchers and practitioners alike are challenged to determine the balance between "acting" interested and concerned and offering an authentic emotional response. This issue touches the essence of what it means to listen effectively in service settings.

Challenges to Improving Listening Effectiveness

Survey respondents also realized that changes in the service environment would present challenges to effective listening. The second, qualitative section of the survey asked managers to provide examples of what they perceived to be the most pressing listening challenges of the future (a number of respondents described more than one type of challenge). A content analysis of these responses revealed three general challenges. As identified by two trained coders, whose inter-rater reliability coefficient was .96, the challenges are: (**1**) listening for service customization, (**2**) listening in diverse work environments, and (**3**) technology's influence on listening. Each of these challenges is briefly discussed below.

Listening and Service Customization

Twenty-seven percent of respondents mentioned the challenge of service customization and the increasing demand for individualized service. As one manager noted, "…it seems that diners and guests are feeling more entitled than ever before and are very eager to tell you what they wanted and didn't receive." Another respondent suggests that "disgruntled guests and employees just want to be heard." In

[37] J.I. Brown and G.R. Carlsen, *Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension Test* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1995); M.M. Steinbrecher and S.C. Wilmington, *Steinbrecher-Wilmington Listening Test* (Oshkosh, WI: University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, 1997); and Watson & Barker, *op.cit.*

[38] J. Brownell, "Teaching Listening: Some Thoughts on the Behavioral Approach," *Business Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (1994), pp. 19-26.

[39] B.E. Ashforth and R.H. Humphrey, "Emotional Labor in Service Roles: The Influence of Identity," *Academy of Management Review,* Vol. 18 (1993), pp. 88-115.

addressing service customization, a third manager expressed the belief that "customized service comes naturally to an organization where everyone has developed a 'listening culture.'"

These and similar comments address the issue of providing service to a well-traveled, discriminating customer base. As line employees are called upon to master broader service expertise, managers find that not just anyone is capable of "delighting" customers—and not every employee listens carefully to guests' concerns and responds appropriately.[40] To succeed in this environment employees must develop what researchers call adaptive behavior—a response that depends on effective listening.[41]

Listening competence is at the core of adaptive behavior, facilitating service customization, and promoting customer satisfaction. Vilnai-Yavetz and Rafaeli studied adaptive behavior and suggested that it be understood as a distinction between skeleton and tissue.[42] "Skeleton" aspects of service consist of the essential content and behavior required to complete the process—what any service provider would do. "Tissue" aspects are individualized behaviors that either enhance or damage the relationship and service experience (examples of damaging behavior include "leakage" in facial expressions, sighs and other nonverbal signs of impatience, or long silences with little effort to put the guest at ease). Employees who are able to operate effectively at the "tissue level" were found to be strong in tolerance of ambiguity, self-monitoring, and service orientation.

Customizing service requires that those attributes which create value for a guest be identified, often in the course of conversation, and used to enhance the service experience.[43] It may be useful to think of guests as "100-percent diverse," with each individual posing special needs and requiring individual attention.[44] It becomes clear that listening is central to service delivery that seeks to increase satisfaction and loyalty through a better understanding of guest needs and uses that information in the service encounter.[45]

Listening in Diverse Hospitality Environments

Issues related to the challenges of listening in a diverse workplace were mentioned by 37 percent of all respondents. The qualitative responses invoked the dangers of missed communication due to language and cultural differences. For instance, one respondent noted: "The largest challenge in our work environment is the variety of languages spoken. …Unless the organization offers rewards for those who challenge themselves to learn another language…listening will be hindered." Another manager described the difficulties encountered with the "diversity of team members working in an international environment" without a strong company culture or consistent "house rules." Another explained that, in managing a multicultural workforce, it has been particularly difficult to "understand the different nuances and phrases even though everyone is speaking English."

While it is common knowledge that no two individuals share the same experiential base and that each person perceives the world in a slightly different manner, the profound impact of the substantial effects of diversity on listening behavior is not often addressed in the workplace.[46] The three types of diversity most likely to affect hospitality employees are culture, gender, and age.

Cultural diversity. When both employees and customers are culturally diverse, differences in values, beliefs, nonverbal communication, and norms of behavior can be profound.[47] From a service perspective, researchers have been particularly interested in an attribute called "warmth," which is communicated largely through the listener's nonverbal behavior.[48] While warmth encourages guests to approach and communicate with service providers, nonverbal sensitivity enables employees accurately to interpret what they hear by attending to guests' nonverbal cues. Clearly, cultural differences in the expression and interpretation of

[40] E. Torres and S. Kline, "From Satisfaction to Delight: A Model for the Hotel Industry," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (2006), pp. 290-305.

[41] K.P. Gwinner, M.J. Bitner, S.W. Brown, and A. Kumar, "Service Customization through Employee Adaptiveness," *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2005), pp. 131-148.

[42] I. Vilnai-Yavetz and A. Rafaeli, "Organizational Interactions: A Basic Skeleton with Spiritual Tissue," in *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance*, ed. R.A. Giacalone and C.L. Jurkiewicz (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003).

[43] Bowen, *op.cit.*; P. Simos, "Delivering Personalized Service," *Restaurant Hospitality*, Vol. 91, No. 9 (2007), p. 24; and A. Yuksel, U.K. Kilinc, and F. Yuksel, "Cross-national Analysis of Hotel Customers' Attitudes Toward Complaining and Their Complaining Behaviors," *Tourism Management*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (2006), pp. 31-47.

[44] J. Dreachslin, The Role of Leadership in Creating a Diversity-sensitive Organization," *Journal of Healthcare Management*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (2007), pp. 151-155.

[45] J. Bowen and S. Shoemaker, "Loyalty: A Strategic Commitment," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (April 1998), pp. 39-49.

[46] S. Ting-Toomey, *Communicating across Cultures* (New York: Guilford, 1999); and H.C. Triandis, "The Many Dimensions of Culture," *Academy of Management Executive*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2004), pp. 88-102.

[47] C.H. Dodd, *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication* (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown: 1987); G. Hofsted, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-related Values* (Beverly-Hills, CA: Sage Publishers, 1980); and M. Purdy, "Listening and Community: The Role of Listening in Community Formation," *Journal of the International Listening Association*, Vol. 5 (1991), pp. 51-67.

[48] T. Bruneau, "Empathy and Listening," in *Perspectives on Listening*, ed. A.D. Wolvin and C G. Coakley (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1993), pp. 185-200; and M. Reece and R. Whitman, "Expressive Movements, Warmth, and Verbal Reinforcement," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 64 (1962), pp. 234-236.

nonverbal behavior create the potential for misunderstandings and interfere with perceptions of such key qualities as interest, sincerity, and friendliness.[49]

Gender diversity. Gender also introduces differences in employees' nonverbal communication. North American women, for instance, are more likely to smile, make eye contact, and display nonverbal behaviors that indicate interest and empathy than are their male counterparts.[50] Women who do this are frequently evaluated as being better and more attentive listeners.[51] In addition, women are generally more accurate at interpreting nonverbal cues than men are.[52] While researchers have identified clear gender-related distinctions in listening behavior in nearly every culture, most conclude that the majority of these differences can be attributed to social influences and not biological predispositions.[53]

Age diversity. Hospitality professionals will increasingly confront age as a source of communication differences, as the number of older employees and travelers increases.[54]

Research on listening demonstrates that the behaviors associated with competent listening change with a person's age.[55] Young adults and seniors report different listening needs, different listening goals, and different listening strategies. This finding becomes particularly useful when interacting with guests or clients who are older adults, as advanced age often leads to changes in hearing, memory, and other listening functions.[56] The need for patience and empathy when listening in service encounters is consequently heightened, and anticipating the needs of older adults in service settings will become increasingly important.

One factor that creates a challenge in intergenerational communication is that listeners can process what they hear nearly four times faster than the normal speaking rate.[57] This considerable "gap"—the difference between speaking speed and thinking speed—opens the possibility that one's attention may wander. If your youthful front desk employee asks a question of an older guest, the gentleman may need to reflect and contemplate a response. During this time, the multitasking front-desk attendant might be tempted to check the weather, file receipts, or perform some other task that takes his focus away from the guest. Those who have become accustomed to the high-speed digital world find maintaining attention under these circumstances even more of a struggle.

Listening Influenced by the Use of Technology

The pace of activity in hospitality organizations—often the result of increasing applications of technology—directly

[49] D.L. Jones and K.W. McCleary, "An Empirical Approach to Identifying Cross-cultural Modifications to International Hospitality Industry Sales Training," *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (2005), pp. 65-81.

[50] D. Borisoff and L. Merrill, "Gender Issues and Listening," in *Listening in Everyday Life*, ed. D. Borisoff and M. Purdy (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), pp. 59-85; and J. Brownell, "Creating Strong Listening Environments: A Key Hospitality Management Task," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1994), pp. 3-10.

[51] J. Brownell, "Women In Hospitality Management: General Managers' Perceptions of Factors Related to Career Development," *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1994a), pp. 101-117; and D. DeVoe, "Gender Issues Range from Salary Disparities to Harassment," *InfoWorld*, Vol. 21, No. 44 (1999), pp. 78-79.

[52] P. Emmert, V. Emmert, and J. Brandt, "An Analysis of Male-Female Differences on the Listening Practices Feedback Report," *Journal of the International Listening Association*, special issue (1993), pp. 43-55; and K.W. Watson and S.C. Rhodes, "Gender Roles, Biological Sex, And Differences In Listening Comprehension And Emotional Perceptivity," International Listening Association convention, Jacksonville, FL, 1991.

[53] L.P. Arliss, *Gender Communication* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1991).

[54] Dreachslin, *op.cit.*

[55] C.G. Coakley, K.K. Halone, and A.D. Wolvin, "Perceptions of Listening Ability across the Life Span: Implications for Understanding Listening Competence," *International Journal of Listening*, Vol. 10 (1996), pp. 21-48; and K.K. Halone, A.D. Wolvin, and C.G. Coakley, "Accounts of Effective Listening across the Life Span: Expectations and Experiences Associated with Competent Listening Practices," *International Journal of Listening*, Vol. 11 (1997), pp. 15-38.

[56] W.A. Villaume, R. Darling, M.H. Brown, D. Richardson, and S. Clark-Lewis, "The Multidimensionality of Presbycusis: Hearing Losses on the Content and Relational Dimensions of Speech," *Journal of the International Listening Association*, Vol. 7 (1993), pp. 111-128.

[57] M.J. Beatty and S.K. Payne, "Listening Comprehension as a Function of Cognitive Complexity: A Research Note," *Communication Monographs*, Vol. 51 (1984), pp. 85-89.

Influence of technology on listening: management challenges

- "I am so busy that when I am interrupted I often listen with one ear and continue with the task at hand. I am afraid I will miss some important detail when this happens, and it happens often."

- "A future challenge will be the younger generation who spend so much time 'texting' and using shortcuts in both text and language. My biggest fear is that we're creating a generation of individuals who are losing the ability and willingness to write and speak correctly."

- "Listening is made more difficult because of information overload. Automated phone calls, phone referral systems…exacerbate the overload. Critical communications are relegated more to reading via e-mail and log book entries (rather than listening)."

- "We pollute ourselves with often unnecessary communication through emails, IMs, and phone calls and are exposed to information overload. Future listening challenges will be the constant improvement of communication devices that do not necessarily help listening."

- "E-mails and the PC in general. Too much time is wasted in front of your screen and this interferes with listening."

- "We are always in a hurry…not taking the time to listen…too much dependence on technology."

- "We are expected to multi-task. That can be hazardous to good customer service, especially when a staff member is on the phone or computer taking a reservation."

diminishes listening effectiveness. The highest number of survey respondents, 62 percent, indicated that time and technology were critical concerns to them as they strive to listen in the workplace (sample comments from managers in the survey appear in Exhibit 7).

The internet now connects customers, suppliers, and the workforce in ways that have dramatically changed traditional roles and added to employees' stress.[58] Given the volume of available information, service employees must be trained to determine what is important and what can be trusted. What has been called the "human factors gap," the difference between the information-processing capacities of employees and the machines they use, often has the negative consequence of reducing listening effectiveness.[59] Employees

become stressed by information overload in their efforts to determine the importance and relevance of large quantities of information. In addition, employees are tempted to focus their attention on the technology rather than on their interaction with the guest. One thought-provoking proposition is that younger generations are actually bonding with machines as computers become the medium through which experience is accumulated, knowledge increased, and business contacts maintained.[60]

Despite the challenge of electronic media, such technologies bring managers, employees, and customers in the service chain together in a real-time, interactive process.[61] As one author notes, there will always be a difference between being "plugged in" and actually "connecting." While achieving a balance between high tech and high touch has never been more challenging, listening will always be a key competency that creates quality in the service experience.[62]

Conclusion

It seems clear that listening competence is a central but often neglected aspect of service excellence. Service employees who listen to their colleagues and to their customers not only reduce errors and solve problems more effectively but also develop strong relationships which lead to increased trust and loyalty.[63] Not all employees have the same potential for listening effectiveness and managers would do well to consider those intangible and difficult-to-assess characteristics that determine a strong service "fit." In addition, hospitality managers themselves have a responsibility to demonstrate a high level of listening competence in their daily activities. As coaches and mentors, they must support listening practice and improvement organization-wide.[64] In a future certain to require even greater levels of listening competence, managers would do well to focus on and foster this key service skill. ■

[58] D. Tapscott, D. Ticoll, and A. Lowy, *Digital Capital: Harnessing the Power of Business Webs* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2000).

[59] D. Pottruck and T. Pearce, "Listening to Customers in the Electronic Age," *Fortune*, Vol. 141, No. 9 (2000), pp. 318-322; and J. Storck and L. Sproull, "Through a Glass Darkly: What Do People Learn in Videoconferences?," *Human Communication Research*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1995), p. 197.

[60] A. Brown, "Listening to the Luddites," *USA Today*, Vol. 131, No. 2688 (September 2002), pp. 26-28; and Tapscott *et al., op.cit.*

[61] J. Walther, "Computer-mediated Communication: Impersonal, Interpersonal, and Hyperpersonal Interaction," *Communication Research*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1996), pp. 3-11.

[62] B. Gunn, "Confident Listening," *Strategic Finance*, Vol. 85, No. 4 (2003), p. 13.

[63] W.E. Halal, "Leaders Who Listen," *Executive Excellence*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1998), pp. 13-15.

[64] G.E. Allenbaugh, "Coaching: A Management Tool for a More Effective Work Performance," *Management Review*, Vol. 72, No. 5 (1983), pp. 21-26; and M.J. Papa and E.C. Glenn, "Listening Ability and Performance with Technology," *Journal of Business Communication*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1988), pp. 5-15.

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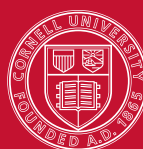
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Index
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Vol. 8, No. 6 Questioning Conventional Wisdom: Is a Happy Employee a Good Employee, or Do Other Attitudes Matter More?, by Michael Sturman, Ph.D., and Sean A. Way, Ph.D.

Vol. 8, No. 5 Optimizing a Personal Wine Cellar, by Gary M. Thompson, Ph.D., and Steven A. Mutkoski, Ph.D.

Vol. 8, No. 4 Setting Room Rates on Priceline: How to Optimize Expected Hotel Revenue, by Chris Anderson, Ph.D.

Vol. 8, No. 3 Pricing for Revenue Enhancement in Asian and Pacific Region Hotels:A Study of Relative Pricing Strategies, by Linda Canina, Ph.D., and Cathy A. Enz, Ph.D.

Vol. 8, No. 2 Restoring Workplace Communication Networks after Downsizing: The Effects of Time on Information Flow and Turnover Intentions, by Alex Susskind, Ph.D.

Vol. 8, No. 1 A Consumer's View of Restaurant Reservation Policies, by Sheryl E. Kimes, Ph.D.

Cornell Hospitality Reports Index (continued)