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The Project Reformer's e-Tip of the Week

012: Listen Generously

Project breakdowns can often be traced to mis coordination. Coordination of all types involves communication. That calls for good listening. I'd bet that the majority of miscommunication is a function of poor listening.

Let's start by distinguishing hearing and listening. Hearing has to do with the functioning of the ear. Deaf people can't hear. But can deaf people listen? Maybe. Listening has to do with where one has his/her attention. There's plenty for people to hear at any moment...the whirring of the disk drive, the gurgling of the air conditioner, the low din of the TV in an adjoining room. But we normally don't notice those noises even though we can hear them. Why? We have our attention on something else. When we listen we focus our attention with a care for the interests of others.

We can avoid mis coordinations when we place our attention and care on the speaking of the other rather than on the 'little voice in our head'. You know the voice. The one that chatters non-stop. We are not listening when we have our attention on the chattering rather than on the interests of the person speaking. Miscommunication and miscoordination result.

Try this: Ignore the chattering. Instead, place your attention on what it is the speaker cares about. And be generous with your listening. None of us speaks our concerns clearly all the time. Be patient. Ask questions. Be ready to take care of the speaker. Now you're listening!

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