



BY RICK MCCORMICK

# The Path of People: Listening

Master the art of intentional and active listening and watch it change the outcome for you and your customers.

*“People are more apt to buy when they’re talking, [rather] than when you’re talking.”*  
– Ron Willingham, Integrity Selling

**The one ingredient that is missing many times in our efforts to help our customers is the simple skill of listening.** We all love it when someone listens to us. The more we are listened to, the greater our response. We love people who listen to us — we vote for them, and we buy products from them. The developed skill of listening is one of the most powerful efforts we have available to us. Here are just three principles that will improve our ability to better understand the people in front of us each day.

## SHUT UP!

Many of us were trained on memorizing countless “word tracks” and carefully worded “closes” that supposedly could make almost anybody instantly successful in the F&I office. The belief was that if we utilized a proven F&I presentation and practiced our pitch until we had it down pat, we could win this verbal battle of wits with a customer. We could then manipulate the customer into a situation where they had to say, “yes” and buy every F&I product. Today’s customer is much different. The problem with a presentation is that the customer immediately recognizes we are trying to sell them, not help them. So, they turn off, tune out, stop listening, and stop buying the products they really need. Some even end up buying similar products from a TV advertisement or mail solicitation, only to find out they are more expensive and provide less coverage than what we offered. A top priority of everyone selling invisible products, is to ask great questions that lead to the customer talking 70% of the time with us. And then, listen.



## DON'T INTERRUPT!

The most offensive thing we can do is to interrupt a customer when they are talking. It tells them to stop talking, what we are about to say is much more important and we don’t want to listen to them, and then we wonder why they don’t see value in our products. They don’t see value in us when we interrupt, and anything we want to discuss after the interruption has no value either. Bite your tongue, is advice I often heard growing up, because I was a big talker. I always received notes on my report card, “He talks too much in class.” I have had to learn again to bite my tongue and let the customer talk. We have been coached more on what to say than how to listen. Creating a listening environment in every conversation will allow customers to feel like they have been heard. When that happens, we are trusted, liked, and embraced. Now we can help them.

## DON'T PLAN YOUR RESPONSE WHILE THEY ARE TALKING!

Stop what you are doing right now and raise your hand, admitting that you, like all of us, are guilty of this. We have so much to say, and it is great information they need to know before they make a decision about a product or coverage. But, we must employ the power of the pregnant pause. After the customer answers a question from you, take a few seconds and pause. They know you are thinking about what they said, and what comes out of your mouth next will conform if you were listening. Responding with a pause and a relevant statement afterward will move a resistant customer to open up and have a conversation with you. That’s what we want, an honest and open discussion about their needs and our products that can help them. It is that easy. Master the art of intentional and active listening and watch it change the outcome for you and your customers. ■