

Improve Your Listening, Improve Your Service

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Cornell Tool Shows Managers How to Be Better Listeners

Listening is an essential skill for managers, and not just because listening is a key way to gain information. Research has shown that effective listening is a key to excellent service. A new Cornell Hospitality Tool, 'Building Managers' Skills to Create Listening Environments,' by Judi Brownell, explains the elements of listening and gives managers an assessment tool that will indicate places for improvement. The report is available at no charge from the Cornell Center for Hospitality Research at www.hotelschool.cornell.edu/research/chr/pubs/tools/.

Both the assessment tool and suggestions for improvement are drawn from Brownell's extensive experience and research in managerial listening behavior. 'The research is clear that creating a 'listening organization' leads to improved customer service,' said Brownell, a professor at the Cornell School of Hotel Administration. 'The starting point for this process is a manager's desire to find ways to improve their listening ability. Managers who think they are good listeners may be surprised to find that their employees do not agree with that assessment.'

Based on her research, Brownell has divided listening into six interrelated skill clusters, represented by the acronym HURIER: hearing, understanding, remembering, interpreting, evaluating, and responding. 'Effective listening requires all six of those activities,' she explained, although different tasks depend more or less heavily on each skill cluster. Using the HURIER model, the new report includes both a self-assessment tool and a questionnaire for peers and employees. Managers can compare the results of their own assessment with that from others to identify specific areas for improvement.

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