

Personal Listening Profile®

Individual Report



Respondent Name

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This report is provided by:

Performance Leadership Tools

1-877-367-9480

(585) 218-9350 Phone

(585) 248-2117 Fax

Info@PerformanceLeadershipTools.com

www.PerformanceLeadershipTools.com

www.ReachandAchieve.com



Overview

Personal Listening Profile®

Research shows that people listen with a natural or preferred style. The purpose of the *Personal Listening Profile*® is to help you identify your preferred listening style and to develop an appreciation for other approaches that may be more effective in different situations. With this knowledge, you will be able to develop more effective communication strategies for a variety of environments.

The *Personal Listening Profile* identifies five approaches to listening. These approaches are important because they reflect the focus of our listening. These approaches are:

APPROACH	FOCUS
Appreciative	to relax and enjoy the listening experience
Empathic	to support and understand the emotions of the speaker
Discerning	to gather complete and accurate information
Comprehensive	to organize information and understand the meaning of the message
Evaluative	to critique information and make a decision

We all use a variety of different approaches depending on the situation, but research suggests that each of us tend to use some approaches more than others. That is, we have a natural **Listening Style** that is comprised of one or more different **Listening Approaches**. The listening style that we use determines both the quality of the information that we gather and the reaction of others to our behavior. And although our listening style is the one that comes most easily to us, experience tells us that we can adapt our current listening approach to the needs of almost any situation with appropriate insight and motivation.

- [Page 3](#) includes a narrative description of your most natural **Listening Style**, which will give you a picture of your natural approaches to listening.
- [Page 4](#) contains a **Listening Approaches Graph** which indicates how inclined you are to use each of the five listening approaches.
- [Page 5](#) describes your potential strengths and possible growth areas.
- [Page 6](#) discusses your expectations of others as listeners.
- [Pages 7 - 8](#) include your **Communication Gap Analysis**, an overview of how your strengths or limitations in each of the listening approaches relates to the intended message of the speaker.
- [Pages 9 -11](#) contain a personalized **Action Plan** which will help you determine positive next steps for developing strategies that work.
- [Pages 12 – 16](#) include a detailed overview of each of the five listening approaches.



INSIGHT ORIENTATION

Sample, your two most natural listening approaches are **Comprehensive** and **Empathic**. Your comprehensive approach indicates that you focus on finding the underlying meaning within a message and organizing the ideas that are presented to you. Your empathic approach indicates that you also focus on understanding the feelings of speakers and supporting them as they talk through concerns. People with your listening style have an insight orientation to listening. That is, they strive to understand the complexity and depth behind what is spoken.

People with your listening style naturally look to understand the core of the message being communicated, both factual and emotional. You are likely to focus on the true meaning beneath the surface message, and you can probably figure out what people intend to say, even if they are not direct. You may often recognize what is hidden to others, such as when a person says one thing and means another.

This listening style suggests that you usually strive to organize information in your own mind so that you can recognize key points and main ideas. You are most likely motivated to find the relationship among ideas and use that understanding to elaborate and build upon the message. Others may, in fact, come to you to help them brainstorm and explore new ideas. In addition, elaborate processing often involves relating information to your personal experience and understanding practical applications of that information. You may be able to tell when someone doesn't understand what has been said, and you may even be able to re-explain the message more clearly than the original speaker.

As someone with this listening style, you most likely focus on the emotions the speaker expresses. That is, you probably want to understand not only the facts and theory of a message, but also the intentions, motives, and feelings that add color and life to that message. When listening, you recognize that both ideas and emotions comprise the whole of the message. Consequently, you may work to relate to the feelings of speakers and understand their perspectives.

Beyond the desire to understand the experience of the speaker, you may also work to communicate your concern to that person. At times you may ask open-ended questions or comments to help others express themselves and their ideas. You may reflect upon what you've heard and summarize important points to make sure you understand. At other times, you may remain silent without offering immediate solutions or advice. As a consequence, speakers probably sense that their expressions are not being judged, and they feel comfortable exploring ideas or emotions with you. They may feel that you are on the same page as they are and that you are on their side. Others may come to you to "blow off steam" or simply talk through a troubling issue.



Working with Your Listening Style

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Your Strengths as a Listener:

As mentioned earlier, one major strength of your listening style is your natural inclination to seek out the core meaning of the information being communicated, both conceptually and emotionally. As a consequence, you probably pick up on more than just the explicit message that is being communicated. Most likely, you are able to identify the unspoken, deeper message that gives meaning to the surface information. With this deeper understanding usually comes the insight to elaborate on the ideas presented and recognize their implications. This type of elaborate processing is routinely associated with better, long-lasting memory.

Not only does this listening style typically lead to deeper insights, but it also communicates concern and understanding to others. Your presence may provide a valuable, and often rare, environment where others feel safe to talk through their concerns and gain some perspective. Because others probably don't feel judged by your style, you may help them find the confidence to explore an emotionally complex and troubling issue that might otherwise be too intimidating to address.

Your Growth Areas as a Listener:

Your previous responses indicate that Evaluative is one of your least natural approaches to listening. This suggests that you may not be inclined to assess critically the validity of a message as you are receiving it. Although there are a variety of contexts in which this is a good method of listening, this inclination may also have some negative consequences. You may be tempted to accept a message on face value without questioning the speaker's intentions or underlying rationale. Trivial or superficial aspects of a message (e.g., the speaker's status, appearance, or confidence) may often persuade you. You may respond more to emotional appeals and passion when it is most appropriate to attend to facts and ideas. Because you may not actively evaluate while listening, you also may have difficulty making decisions or drawing conclusions in a timely manner. The process of narrowing down alternatives may be difficult or even overwhelming at times.

Appreciative is also among your least natural approaches to listening. This approach to listening reflects a person's inclination to find enjoyment or humor in a conversation. And although almost everyone likes to be entertained, some regard it as more important in an interaction than others. Because you may not feel that this is as necessary in conversation as some others, miscommunications may arise. Others may feel that you disapprove of taking a break to relax or may feel that you are too task-oriented at times. Those who are highly inclined to entertain during an interaction may feel slighted or ignored in their efforts. That is, they may feel that their humor or stories have gone unaccepted or unvalued and, on occasion, may misinterpret your behavior as distant or disengaged.



Working with Your Listening Style

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Your Expectations of Others as Communicators:

Because our listening styles reflect our unspoken values and motivations, we often assume that others will have listening styles that are similar to our own. When others do not share our style, the chances of a miscommunication significantly increase. Even more important, we frequently misinterpret the real meaning of this miscommunication.

Given your listening style, you may expect others to place as much value on emotional expression as you do. Consequently, you may assume that others are attentive to emotional cues and understand the unspoken feelings that you might be communicating as a speaker. When others do not acknowledge such cues, you may interpret their actions as uncaring or indifferent. You should be aware that those who have a non-empathic manner of interaction may demonstrate appreciation, trust, or affection in a more sober fashion than you typically expect. Further, because you are a highly comprehensive listener, you may assume that others are as focused on the big picture as you are. Consequently, your speaking and listening may gravitate toward the abstract or conceptual. If you expect others to be equally comprehensive in their listening styles, you may speak in a manner that some consider too theoretical or vague. They may be searching for concrete details while you are concerned with communicating the underlying ideas that give those details meaning.

Your Listening Style in Different Situations:

Experts estimate that people filter out or change the intended meaning of what they hear in 70 percent of communications. The biggest contributing factor to miscommunication is using a listening approach that is not appropriate for either the environment or for the message being communicated. Effective listeners consider not only their own intentions, but also the intentions of the speaker. Below are four common goals that motivate us to converse with another person:

Persuading: to convince the listener about an idea or course of action

Informing: to convey information and ideas

Self-Expressing: to share personal feelings, values, and experiences

Pleasing: to entertain, comfort, or bring enjoyment to another person

Because of your listening style, you tend to choose listening approaches that interact well with many of these communication goals. And like everyone, your natural inclinations may, at times, lead you to choose less-than-optimal listening approaches. The Communication Gap Analysis grid on the next page highlights some of the situations in which you may be a particularly good communicator and some situations in which you may benefit from improvement.



Your Communication Gap Analysis

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The Communication Gap Analysis grid below displays the interaction between different listening approaches and different message goals. The feedback in each box is based on the degree to which each listening approach is natural for you.

- The unshaded boxes highlight some of your greatest strengths as a listener
- The lightly shaded boxes indicate strengths or growth areas of moderate importance
- The heavily shaded boxes draw attention to some potentially important growth areas for you as a listener

		GOAL OF THE MESSAGE				
		Task-Oriented		Relationship-Oriented		
		PERSUADING	INFORMING	SELF-EXPRESSING	PLEASEING	
LISTENING APPROACH	Feeling-Oriented	<p>APPRECIATIVE Focus: enjoying the listening experience</p>	<p>This approach is probably not relevant for you in these situations.</p>	<p>On occasion, some might feel that you disregard the light-hearted interaction included with the factual message.</p>	<p>On occasion, speakers may feel that the spirit of their expression is not appreciated.</p>	<p>Some speakers may feel that you have ignored or dismissed their attempts to entertain or please.</p>
	<p>EMPATHIC Focus: supporting and understanding the feelings of the speaker</p>	<p>Speakers probably sense that you understand the emotion or passion behind their arguments.</p>	<p>Most likely, speakers understand that you are aware of the unspoken concerns behind message they send.</p>	<p>Speakers probably sense that their feelings and concerns are not judged, but rather are highly valued and understood.</p>	<p>Most likely, you communicate an understanding of the speaker's desire to entertain or please.</p>	
	<p>DISCERNING Focus: gathering complete information</p>	<p>Although you probably collect most of the relevant information, you may miss some important details necessary for decision-making.</p>	<p>You may miss some of the smaller details in a message and may have incomplete records of an interaction.</p>	<p>This approach is probably not relevant for you in these situations.</p>	<p>This approach is probably not relevant for you in these situations.</p>	
	<p>COMPREHENSIVE Focus: understanding the meaning of information</p>	<p>Most likely, you are able to identify and organize the important, core issues of the argument.</p>	<p>You are probably skilled at relating information to existing knowledge and processing the underlying meaning of the message.</p>	<p>You may be highly skilled at identifying the deeper, fundamental concerns that drive the expression.</p>	<p>This approach is probably not relevant for you in these situations.</p>	
	Information-Oriented	<p>EVALUATIVE Focus: critique information and make a decision</p>	<p>You may not critically evaluate the motives behind the message or challenge a speaker's claims when appropriate.</p>	<p>You may accept facts or ideas without questioning their accuracy or considering the speaker's bias.</p>	<p>On occasion, you may be persuaded by emotional appeals that others might regard as manipulative.</p>	<p>At times, you may be vulnerable to persuasive attempts that only appear to be pleasing in nature.</p>



Your Communication Gap Analysis

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Communication Gap Analysis Summary:

According to the Communication Gap Analysis on the previous page, areas where you appear to have the **greatest strengths** are:

- In situations where speakers are attempting to inform you, you are probably skilled at relating information to existing knowledge and processing the underlying meaning of the message.
- In situations where speakers are attempting to express themselves to you, they probably sense that their feelings and concerns are not judged, but rather are highly valued and understood.
- In situations where speakers are attempting to persuade you, you are most likely able to identify and organize the important, core issues of their arguments.
- In situations where speakers are attempting to express themselves to you, you may be highly skilled at conceptualizing the deeper, fundamental concerns that drive the expression.

Areas where you might face some of your **greatest challenges** are:

- In situations where speakers are attempting to persuade you, you may not critically evaluate the motives behind the message or challenge a speaker's claims when appropriate.
- In situations where speakers are attempting to inform you, you may accept facts or ideas without questioning their accuracy or considering the speaker's bias.
- In situations where speakers are attempting to express themselves to you, you may on occasion be persuaded by emotional appeals that others might regard as manipulative.
- In situations where speakers are attempting to entertain or please you, some speakers may feel that you have ignored or dismissed their efforts.

Based on the information above and throughout this report:

1. What listening approaches can you adopt or improve to better gather, understand, or act on information?


2. What listening approaches can you adopt or improve to strengthen relationships?



Your Action Plan


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Next Steps:

 As mentioned earlier, your results suggest that Evaluative is one of your least natural listening approaches. Factors that sometimes interfere with evaluative listening are a lack of knowledge about the subject communicated, ignorance of persuasive tactics, unclear personal values or opinions on a topic, or a tendency to turn to others when forming judgments. One of the best ways to integrate this approach into your listening style is to rehearse a variety of questions while listening to a speaker. These questions might include the following:

- Is that a fact or an opinion?
- What evidence does this person have to support that claim?
- What is the rationale behind this argument?
- Are there alternative explanations for the conclusions that are being drawn?
- How does this fit with my own personal experience?
- What unspoken motives might this person have that are biasing this information?

With some effort, questions such as these often help people become better critical listeners and thinkers. In addition, take time to separate a speaker's passion from his or her logic. Further, be careful that you don't assume something to be true just because an expert said it. As a listener, be mindful of the temptation to confuse confidence with competence. A speaker's self-assurance is a trait that is often independent of actual knowledge.

 Your results also suggest that Appreciative is one of your least natural listening approaches. Some factors that might keep somebody from using this approach when appropriate include a tendency to critique information too quickly, an inability to relax, or an overly task-oriented approach to listening. Those who readily use this approach tend to accept entertaining messages in an uncritical fashion and usually focus on finding humor and enjoyment within any interaction. This is, of course, a personal preference. You may, however, find that it is helpful to understand the expectations of others in this area, particularly in situations where the speaker is attempting to entertain or please you or your group.

- You may want to remind yourself that others may have a higher need for such diversions.
- When you are surrounded by those with a highly appreciative style of interaction, you may want to be sure that they are not misinterpreting your behavior as disapproval.
- Appreciative listening can be improved by attending to the general tone of the conversation and actively remembering that listening does not always need to be purposeful.

Based on the feedback you have received so far, what specific steps can you take to improve your listening and communication skills?



Action Planning Grid

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In the first column below, list significant people in your life with whom you would like to improve communication. Below each name, list that person's most natural listening approach(es). If you don't know a person's natural listening approach(es), use the descriptions on the following pages to estimate which approach(es) best fit this person. Fill in the boxes in each row to identify potential communication problems and solutions.

Your Most Natural Listening Approaches: <i>Comprehensive</i> <i>Empathic</i>	Areas where you might misinterpret the behavior of this person:	Areas where this person might misinterpret your behavior:	Specific actions that can help minimize or avoid miscommunication:
Person: Natural Listening Approaches:			
Person: Natural Listening Approaches:			
Person: Natural Listening Approaches:			
Person: Natural Listening Approaches:			



Appreciative Approach

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Description:

People with a preference to appreciate while listening want to enjoy the listening experience. Since these listeners like to be entertained, they are more likely to pay attention to others if they enjoy their presentation.

Appreciative Listeners listen for inspiration and prefer listening to speakers who make them feel good about themselves, which helps them relax. Appreciative Listeners are also more likely to listen if the speaker is enjoying his or her performance. Appreciative Listeners care more about the overall impression of the speaker than the details being presented.

Appropriate Environment:

- Enjoyment of a concert, conversation, or pleasurable event

Focus

- To relax and enjoy the experience

Motivation

- To be entertained
- To be inspired
- To enjoy
- To find humor in the situation

Behavioral Indicators

- Pays attention to the context and style of presentation
- Responds visibly to color, sound, language, and rhythm
- Finds the humor in the message
- Identifies with the pleasure of the sender
- Relaxes



 **Description:**

People with a preference to empathize while listening want to provide the speaker with a sounding board to offer support and reflection. Since Empathic Listeners are patient listeners, they tend to listen to the feelings and emotions that are revealed. They find it easy to relate to a speaker's feelings and may recognize what a speaker wants even before the speaker sees it clearly.

Empathic Listeners reflect what they hear others saying and let others know that they care about what has been said. As a result, Empathic Listeners are often approached by people who want to "let off steam." If asked for advice, however, the Empathic Listener will encourage others to decide for themselves.

Appropriate Environment:

- Counseling a friend, providing an opportunity for someone to "let off steam" or express their feelings

Focus

- To support the sender as he or she talks through concerns

Motivation

- To provide an opportunity for someone to express thoughts and feelings
- To accept the message without judging
- To learn from other people's experiences

Behavioral Indicators

- Lets the sender know they care
- Lets the sender do the talking
- Shows interest
- Asks open-ended questions
- Remains relatively silent, not offering solutions immediately



 **Description:**

People with a preference to discern while listening want to make sure they get all the information. They frequently take notes on what a speaker says so that they will not forget it. Discerning Listeners want to know what the main message is, and they focus closely on any presentation or conversation.

In addition to the message, Discerning Listeners usually remember the speaker's appearance, behavior, and voice. Discerning Listeners find distractions very annoying and will do their best to eliminate them. They will likely tune out if there are too many distractions at any time while listening.

Appropriate Environment:

- Learning, gathering information

Focus

- To get complete information

Motivation

- To determine the main message
- To sort out the details
- To decide what is important
- To make sure nothing is missed

Behavioral Indicators

- Takes notes
- Asks for clarification
- Concentrates
- Eliminates distractions
- Repeats to confirm accuracy



Description:

People with a preference to comprehend while listening relate what they hear to what they already know by organizing and summarizing. They are good at recognizing key points and links between one message and another, even when a speaker is disorganized.

Comprehensive Listeners listen for how a speaker develops the arguments, so that they understand the rationale of the argument. They may ask questions to clarify a speaker's intention and relate what they hear to their own experience in order to better understand the message. Comprehensive Listeners can generally figure out what people intend to say, even if the speaker is not explicit. They can also recognize when someone is saying one thing and meaning something else. Comprehensive Listeners can tell when an individual does not understand what has been said, and they will be able to re-explain it more clearly.

Appropriate Environment:

- Taking direction from someone, determining what to do

Focus

- To organize and make sense of information

Motivation

- To relate the message to personal experience
- To understand the relationships among the ideas
- To determine the rationale of the speaker's argument
- To listen for the main idea and supporting ideas

Behavioral Indicators

- Elaborates on what has been said
- Asks for clarification of the sender's intended message
- Brings up related issues
- Summarizes
- Explains the message to others in their own words



 **Description:**

People with a preference to evaluate while listening tend to look for the facts that support a speaker's comments. They do not accept something as true just because an expert says it. Evaluative Listeners listen for how a speaker develops the arguments in order to critique the message.

Evaluative Listeners try to figure out the speaker's intention before responding to the message and may mentally "argue" with the speaker. They will listen until they know what the speaker is saying, and then they will reply. If Evaluative Listeners do not like what a speaker is saying, they quit listening. Evaluative Listeners also tend to be skeptical of a speaker who is overly enthused about something. They think about how they would present the speaker's message differently.

Appropriate Environment:

- Making a decision, voting, drawing conclusions

Focus

- To make a decision based on the information provided

Motivation

- To relate what is heard to their personal beliefs
- To question the sender's motives
- To support the message with facts
- To accept or reject the message

Behavioral Indicators

- Actively agrees or disagrees
- Responds selectively
- Expresses skepticism
- Gives the sender advice
- Quits listening