

Resonant Listening

Evolving from Active to Resonant: Upgrading the Way We Listen

“Active listening” in recent years has been institutionalized as the gold standard of communication to be used in life and in the workplace. It’s often an important upgrade from what most people are already doing — pretending to listen.

Let’s be honest: most people aren’t listening to you, and neither are you listening to them. We’re listening to ourselves about what others are saying; filtering words through our own internal commentary, judgments, and meaning-making. We don’t really hear people. The attention we give is to the narration in our heads while they speak - and then we call that communication.

Is that really communication?

Active listening tries to fix passivity (and that’s a good start), but it falls short. It’s action-oriented: trying to understand, take notes, paraphrase, nod; a technique^[1]. But it doesn’t answer the most important question:

“At what point do I know that I’m actually listening?”

“Am I REALLY listening to this person?”

There are various well-meaning cliches such as “*all that people want is to be heard...*”, but the truth is that nobody actually cares about being heard. What people *really* care about is knowing that their communication landed over there where you are. Whether they were “*gotten*”. And that distinction changes everything.

People Don't Want to Be Heard. They Want to Be Gotten.

Getting someone means more than hearing their words. It means receiving their communication from their world exactly as they meant it.

What they said (X):

I want my kids to eat healthy = I want my kids to eat healthy.
And nothing beyond that.

What the emotion is when they said it (Y): ^{[2][3]}

In this example: Concern, importance, love and caring.

What they are committed to underneath it all (Z): ^{[4][5]}

A mother says that she wants her children to eat healthy, but her underlying commitment may be that she wants to be a good mom and know herself as someone who has done the best she could possibly do for her children.

**Note: The example above is made up - in an actual conversation the mother saying the exact same words might have felt or been committed to something else completely.*

When you can resonate back what they said, what the emotion is behind what they said, and what the commitment is behind the communication — in your own words, with your own presence — a firework goes off. A deep connection is subconsciously made. They say, “Yes. *Exactly.* You got me.” That’s not active listening. That’s resonance. ^{[6][7]}

Introducing: Resonant Listening

In physics, resonance occurs when one object vibrates at the same frequency as another. You strike a tuning fork, and another one that is not connected in any way to the first— if tuned to the same note — begins to magically vibrate on its own. The frequency of sound waves travels through the air and causes the other fork to reverberate the same sound. Resonant Listening is the human equivalent.

It's when one person communicates and the other doesn't just hear it — they reverberate it. They receive the full signal emotionally, intellectually, energetically. When doing this successfully it is often a somatic experience. This is when communication becomes real. This is when human beings stop passing words between them like a ping pong ball and start transmitting deep and valuable information.

The Business Case for Resonance

In organizations, the ability to listen resonantly isn't just a personal superpower. It's a performance multiplier across every level of business.

1) Sales Are a Function of Resonant Listening.

The best closers don't sell — they resonate with the buyer's intention, priorities, constraints, politics, and underlying fears. They create space for the buyer to feel gotten, not pressured. And that's how trust is built.

A salesperson who resonates with their buyer transforms them into a champion inside their organization — the buyer becomes a leader who sells the solution on your behalf, which shortens the sales cycle and drives internal alignment.

2) Resonant Listening Diffuses Frustrated Customers.

Frustrated or angry customers are often not mad about the problem itself. They're mad that their original intention was violated — and nobody actually listened to them about it. When a company rep simply apologizes or offers a credit, it may fix the transaction, but it doesn't restore trust. ^[8]

When someone resonates — when they get what the customer was really committed to, what mattered to them — it's like cutting the red wire on a bomb. Click. Disarmed. ^[9]

3) Internal Team Performance Depends on Resonance.

Most internal conflict doesn't come from malice. It comes from misattuned listening. People mostly talk past each other all the time. They assume, interpret, react — without ever aligning - especially when they have a history together.

But when teams resonate – when everyone is tuned to the same frequency, work becomes frictionless. Collaboration becomes intuitive. Performance goes through the roof. And, yes... the possibility of work becoming fun suddenly becomes available again. ^{[10][11]}

It's Not a Technique. It's a Paradigm.

It's not about being polite or checking boxes. It's not about eye contact or clever paraphrasing. It's about becoming the kind of presence that another human being's communication can actually land in safely. *Land in safely?*

Imagine that communication is like an airplane that took off from one person with the intention of landing over with the other. The communication comes in for a landing but if there is no safe landing strip to land on, it will try to circle back around and come in for another attempt - this is why people repeat themselves all of the time - they were not able land their initial communication.

If after a few passes the communication still couldn't land, it will either fly back home and not return (this is often why people disappear, stop sharing, don't call back or give up altogether) or they will drop a bomb on your airfield (this is why people raise their voice and start fights). In the end, at the source of it all is that the communication never had a place to safely land. Those practicing Resonant Listening take responsibility for that.

Seeing oneself as an airstrip in which anyone's communication can safely land is a shift in the paradigm of how we currently listen to each other. Being that kind of human being is what has people experience being gotten. Until someone experiences being gotten, things don't move. Not the deal. Not the team. Not the relationship. Not the overall human experience.

Is it possible to land every single plane on the first attempt?

Perhaps not 100% of the time. However, anyone committed to performing highly will strive to land every communication that comes their way. When you attune your intention to the other person's intention, the probability of causing the impact you want to achieve is significantly expanded.

Final Thoughts

Active Listening says: “I hear you.”

Resonant Listening says: whatever the speaker intended you to get. Pristine communication.

One is transactional. The other is transformational.

In a world overflowing with noise, speed, and shallow talk - Resonant Listening might be the most underutilized leadership tool on Earth.

When frequencies are not attuned to each other, we call that sound “noise”. When frequencies resonate and reverberate with each other, we call it harmonious music - the kind of music that people in the organization want to congregate around and sing together.

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If this article resonated with you, it's only the tip of the iceberg:

SPHERA trains managers to implement Resonant Listening and other powerful performance enhancing distinctions as their go-to operating system — not as theory, but as a practical skill that becomes part of how they lead. Reading rarely impacts behavior, but engaging in our experiential workshops that shift paradigms will. If you're interested in implementing Resonant Listening into how your team does business, let's have a conversation to explore how we can launch you and your team into your next sphere of performance.

Reach out to us at:
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Credits and Citations:

The concept of Resonant Listening and this article has been developed by drawing upon the many brilliant works of the various researchers and acclaimed experts in the fields of business, neuroscience and communication listed in the bibliography below.

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