We only need an ear to hear, but listening is a skill.

I have had the pleasure of working with hundreds of leaders across Canada and one thing I love to hear is how work relationships improve when a leader starts to truly listen to those around them.

When I say, “truly listen”, I mean the ability to listen to another person process their thoughts, ideas, values, concerns and so forth, without feeling the need to correct or manage the conversation for the sake of time.

This is a habit many of us have, and the intention with this article isn’t to say that form of communication is bad, but that simply, it can have a negative impact on engagement in the workplace.

We tend to rush the majority of communication in the workplace for the sake of time, and to make matters worse we rely heavily on things like email to communicate a lot of information and give direction.

In my experience written words have a greater capacity to be misinterpreted when compared to face-to-face communication, especially when the information being shared is emotionally significant or relevant to the other person.

If we are trying to be patient in a conversation when in reality we are very busy, there is a greater potential for our body language or tone to convey something much different than what your words are saying. Additionally we may have a tendency to try and process our responses, while the other person is still speaking.

We call this reloading, one of the issues with reloading is that it takes our attention away from the conversation and we are more likely to miss something that is important for the other person.

So this month I encourage us all to try catch ourselves when we are reloading and to make time for more face-to-face communication whenever possible.

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