

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## Listening: I Hear What I Want to Hear

One of the best ways to persuade others is with your ears by listening to them.

—Dean Rusk (1909-1994)

U.S. Secretary of State (1961-69)

Still another very important source of sensory input to me is how I listen to people. I can choose to *hear* what someone says, or I can choose to truly *listen* to what someone says. I have found there is a big difference between the two.

Let me begin by offering you a quick quiz. Write down your answer beside each method of communicating.

Writing			
Reading			
Speaking			
Listening			

Here is the first question. What percent of time do you think people generally spend in each of these four ways of communicating? And keep in mind your answer should add up to 100 percent. Write your answer in the first column.

The second question is: How many years of formal training do you believe most people receive in each of these four ways of communicating? Write your answers next to the percentages in the second column.

Here is question number three. In the third column write down what you think is the average listening efficiency of most people—I will make this a multiple-choice question. Is it 15 percent, 25 percent, 60 percent, or 75 percent?

Based on my research for this topic the percentages of time most people spend engaged in each activity, and the years of training received for each of the four ways of communicating are:

Writing	9%	12 Years	
Reading	16%	6-8 Years	
Speaking	35%	1-2 Years	
Listening	40%	0 Years	Efficiency 25%

And here is the real kicker: the average listening efficiency of most people is *only 25 percent!*

Isn't that amazing? I spend such a large amount of my waking time listening, yet I was taught to read, write, and speak, but rarely to listen. In fact, it's said children's listening skills actually decline as they grow older.

Good listening really does take time, but I just never seem to have enough time to hear the whole story. Perhaps it's because I live in such a fast-paced world. It seems as though I'm always in a hurry. I often find myself self-talking and saying, "Get on with it. Please get to the point! I don't need to hear every detail." Of course the truth be known, I often inaccurately think I know the person's point. To make it worse, while I'm screaming in my mind, "Please get to the point," I'm missing the very point the person I'm pretending to listen to is making.

Also, most people think listening is boring. It's more fun to talk. In fact, for many people, the opposite of talking is not listening—it's waiting to talk. I think you will agree many times we just don't listen very well. It's the main reason many people have trouble remembering names.

Effective listening is a learned and trained skill. It is a discipline. I must always be willing and mentally focused to listen, accept, interact with, and absorb the information being imparted to me.