

## HOW TO BE A BETTER LISTENER: ESSENTIAL TECHNIQUES AND TIPS



In today’s fast-paced work environment, where everyone’s juggling tasks, meetings and deadlines, the art of truly listening can sometimes get lost. But active listening isn’t just a “nice-to-have” skill – it’s foundational to effective communication, building stronger relationships and creating a more collaborative and inclusive workplace. Whether you’re an employee, manager or leader, improving your active listening skills can lead to noticeable benefits that elevate both individual and team success.

Active listening results in increased productivity and innovation when executed correctly. When people use active listening skills, they can process information and ask questions that can lead to new perspectives, problem-solving and complete understanding.

A 2023 Active Listening Statistics and Trends Report by Gitnux found that 80% of all workplace complaints and conflicts largely stem from poor communication. The same report also found that:

- Managers who received training in active listening saw a 30% improvement in employee satisfaction
- Active listening increased collaboration and productivity by up to 25%
- Active listening improved sales performance by 8%

**ACTIVE LISTENING IS MORE THAN JUST A SKILL; IT’S A MINDSET, BUT THE REWARDS ARE WELL WORTH THE EFFORT.**

### Why active listening matters at work

When you actively listen, you’re not just hearing words—you’re fully engaging with the speaker. This means paying attention to their tone, body language and emotions and responding thoughtfully. In the workplace this can result in...

- Improved collaboration
- Stronger relationships
- Reduced misunderstandings
- Boosted morale
- Enhanced leadership

### Steps to becoming a better active listener

So, how can you develop this crucial skill? Here are seven actionable steps on how to be a better listener:

1. **Give your full attention:** In a world of constant distractions, giving someone your undivided attention is a powerful gesture. Put your phone down, close your laptop and focus on the speaker. This signals that you genuinely care about what they’re saying.
2. **Use non-verbal cues:** Body language plays a big role in communication. Nodding, maintaining eye contact and leaning slightly forward shows the speaker that you’re engaged. Avoid crossing your arms or checking your watch, as this can send the message that you’re disinterested.
3. **Don’t interrupt:** It can be tempting to jump in with your thoughts, especially if you’re excited or in a rush. However, interrupting can make the speaker feel dismissed or unimportant. Allow them to finish before sharing your input.
4. **Ask clarifying questions:** If something isn’t clear, don’t hesitate to ask for clarification. Phrases like, “Can you elaborate on that?” or “What did you mean when you said...?” show that you’re actively trying to understand their message.
5. **Paraphrase and summarize:** One of the best ways to show that you’ve truly listened is by paraphrasing what you’ve heard. For example, “So what I’m hearing is that you’re concerned about the project timeline. Is that right?” This not only confirms understanding but also gives the speaker a chance to correct any misinterpretations.
6. **Empathize:** Listening isn’t just about processing information; it’s about connecting with the other person’s emotions. Acknowledge their feelings with phrases like, “I can see why that would be frustrating,” or “That sounds like a great idea.” Empathy creates a deeper connection and makes the speaker feel validated.
7. **Stay patient and present:** Sometimes we rush through conversations, especially if we’re under pressure. Take a deep breath and remind yourself that listening is as important as speaking. Stay present in the moment, rather than thinking about what you’re going to say next.

### The long-term payoff

Active listening is more than just a skill; it’s a mindset, but the rewards are well worth the effort. Over time, you’ll notice stronger working relationships, fewer conflicts and a more engaged, positive work culture. Both employees and managers benefit from better communication – so why not start today?

### How Traliant can help

Traliant’s Inclusive Management: Managing Diverse Teams training (see [bit.ly/InclusiveMgt](https://bit.ly/InclusiveMgt)) highlights the power of active listening to foster collaboration, understanding and inclusivity. Our training emphasizes practical steps on how to be a better listener, equipping employees and managers with the skills to actively engage, reduce miscommunication and create a more inclusive workplace. By learning these techniques, teams can strengthen relationships, minimize misunderstandings, and build a supportive and dynamic work environment.

Source: Traliant, a PIA Partner specializing in compliance training, [www.traliant.com](https://www.traliant.com).

## BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### EVERYDAY MEMBER QUESTIONS



**My company is thinking of switching credit card processors and I don’t know what to do. Do you have a suggestion?**

As a PIA member you have access to excellent service from two PIA Partners: Mona Solutions ([www.MonaSolutions.com](https://www.MonaSolutions.com)) and BASYS Processing (<https://BasysPro.com>). A great first step would be to contact one or both of these companies and let them know you are a PIA member. Then ask them

to complete a complimentary assessment to identify any savings or service improvements they can provide for you.

**We have had many requests for something that explains the basics of the printing industry. Does PIA have something we can use?**

Your PIA membership gives you instant access to The Print University’s full library of on-demand print and graphic communications training videos.

Training is available for a broad array of foundational topics, including introduction to production printing, inside the print shop, print workflow and processes, and more. Plus, the average training is just 20 minutes – perfect for presenting concepts without being overwhelming. To register, go to [www.piasc.org/print-university](https://www.piasc.org/print-university). After you enter your PIA login information you will be directed to a page that lists the Print University’s courses. *Note: If this does not work, try using a different browser.*

## BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### THE DANGER OF PRE-SCHEDULING POSTS

On a recent drive home from visiting my mother, who lives about 70 miles north of me, the messaging on the big digital freeway signs caught my eye. These are the signs that the government uses to announce traffic problems, remind people not to drink and drive, etc.

As I was driving, about half of the signs were advertising “Transit Equity Day,” urging everyone to take advantage of free public transit that Sunday. The other half were warnings about a major incoming storm, urging everyone to “avoid traveling Sunday – Tuesday.”

Notice anything wrong here?

I’m guessing that the Transit Equity Day messages



had been scheduled weeks or months ago, when this event was planned. Then whoever programmed the message about the storm didn’t notice, think about or have the authority to change the fact that the two messages conflicted.

**Being able to schedule things in advance is extremely helpful**

I have always said that content creation is easiest when you can create content in batches. Get a bunch of content created at once, get it all set up and scheduled, and then take “content creation” off your To Do list until it’s time to create the next batch. Tools are available that let you get your blogs, newsletters, social media posts, etc. pre-scheduled way in advance of when they will be sent or published. Why not take advantage of them?

**The potential problem arises when something changes**

If you like to get your content “locked and loaded” in advance of the publication date, be aware that you may need to revisit this content before it posts. For example, any of the following can impact your pre-

scheduled content:

- New products or services
- Discontinuation of existing products or services
- New prices or pricing structure
- Website changes that affect the content or address of pages you have linked to
- Current events
- New legislation, regulations or court rulings
- Industry-wide changes
- Weather events
- Something that renders your content obsolete

**How can you avoid the dangers of pre-scheduling posts?**

The answer here probably depends on the nature of your marketing program. However, it couldn’t hurt to spend five minutes every two weeks reviewing the next two weeks’ posts. Double-check all the links and make sure the content is still relevant and accurate.

Source: Linda Coss, Plumtree Marketing, Inc.



# BILL’S SHORT ATTENTION SPAN SALES TIPS: CHECK IN. KEEP UP.

One of my greatest fears is letting something slip through the cracks. I lead an appointment-driven life. My calendar is full of meetings and activities, both business and personal. So I am constantly referring to the days and weeks ahead to gauge what’s coming up.

Another tool I employ is a simple spreadsheet. I call it my “Opportunities and Activities” file. It is here where I keep a list of projects, both live and potential. And it is here where I head on a daily basis to check in, check up and check to make sure everything is on track.

The layout is simple. In the far-left column I list each company, organization or activity I have going

on. Then, every subsequent column is a new week. I’ll write the next action item, and then note its completion. By playing leapfrog with sales activities, I keep all my potential profit makers moving forward and keep up with every project in play.

The other benefit of this spreadsheet is more visual. When I achieve closure in one form or another, I move that row down to the bottom of the page and shade the entire thing gray to indicate its completion. Just by looking at the spreadsheet, I can instantly tell if I have enough pokers in the fire or need to get

back out there and stir up some more opportunities.

If there’s one thing I’ve learned about my ADD, it’s the need for structure like this. I can balance many projects at the same time, but it takes hacks like this to keep them organized.

Gotta go. There’s a speech to write and a proposal to get out and a flight to book and ....

Source: Bill Farquharson, *The Sales Vault*, <https://SalesVault.Pro>



# ATTRACTING YOUNGER WORKERS TO THE PRINTING INDUSTRY



It’s no secret that the printing workforce is aging, and leaders are asking how to attract the next generation. To appeal to younger talent, some shops are now emphasizing the technological and creative aspects of the work, like digital printing, sustainability initiatives and design collaboration.

Using digital platforms for outreach can make a big difference in how the industry is perceived. Some printers are leaning into platforms like Instagram, LinkedIn and more detailed websites, to show the visual, technical and human sides of the industry. Highlighting opportunities for growth is also key. Internships, mentorship programs and partnerships with trade schools can help bridge the gap and bring in fresh talent that sees a future in print.

In addition, career pages and job descriptions that better reflect what today’s candidates value help give a full picture of what is to be expected. Clear growth paths, transparent pay ranges and inclusive language help build trust right from the first touchpoint with potential employees. Some PIA members have also found success by hosting open house events where potential hires can meet employees, tour facilities and get a sense of the company culture. These efforts help demystify the industry and create meaningful early connections that turn curiosity into long-term engagement.

Source: Jinji HR, <https://jinjihr.com>

# WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

**Beard Print Solutions LLC**  
Printing  
Van Nuys, CA  
(818) 324-7989  
[www.beardprintsolutions.com](http://www.beardprintsolutions.com)

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**PSA Print Group**  
Commercial Printing & Mailing  
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**BOOK ARTS: STENCIL SCREEN PRINTING**  
Saturday, August 30, 2025  
10:00 AM – 5:00 PM PDT  
International Printing Museum  
Carson, CA  
[bit.ly/AUG30-EVENT](http://bit.ly/AUG30-EVENT)

**PAPER SPECS LIVE**  
Thursday, September 18, 2025  
San Francisco, CA  
[www.paperspecs.com/live2025](http://www.paperspecs.com/live2025)

**SAVE THE DATE:  
23RD ANNUAL PAPER SHOW**  
Tuesday, September 30, 2025  
Irvine, CA

**MAIL PIECE DESIGN CERTIFICATION  
ONLINE WORKSHOP**  
October 21 – 23, 2025  
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM ET  
To register contact Karissa Melara at  
[karissa@piasc.org](mailto:karissa@piasc.org)

EVENTSCALENDAR

For full list of events, please visit [www.piasc.org/events](http://www.piasc.org/events)

**SPOTLIGHT EVENT**  
CAL POLY SAN LUIS OBISPO  
CAREER DAY  
October 8 – 9, 2025  
San Luis Obispo, CA

Don't miss this opportunity to showcase your organization to Cal Poly's Graphic Communications students. Meet and interview potential full-time employees or summer interns for your company. To register contact Kristy Villanueva at [kristy@piasc.org](mailto:kristy@piasc.org).

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