Every effective and successful leaders necessarily must also be an effective listener. Studies have been done to measure how our days are divided in different types of communication. The average day breaks down as follows:

TALKING: 30% WRITING: 9% READING: 15% LISTENING: 46%

Some find it counterintuitive to include listening as a form of communication. On the contrary, it is most likely our most important form of daily communication. If you do not learn how to listen well you are missing a critical element in your leadership tool bag.

Tips for effective listening:

* Pay full attention to the other party
* Maintain eye contact throughout the conversation
* Let the other party finish his/her thought before responding
* Ask appropriate questions, if need be, to fully understand
* Paraphrase back what you think you heard and understood to clarify
* Ask about next steps if it’s an exchange that suggests action
* Expect the same courtesy in return
* Do not enter a conversation with a pre-conceived answer. LISTEN!

It also always helps to be sure the conversation takes place in a place conducive to listening. A quiet place away from distractions adds to the effectiveness. Nothing is more frustrating than to be engaged in a productive conversation only to be interrupted.

In this era of instant communication it is important to not forget face-to-face communication. Facial expressions and body language can’t be emailed to anyone – and they tell a story all their own.