

Chapter 5

I.N.F. **L** *.U.E.N.C.E.*

Listen to Quiet or Unfamiliar Voices: Tuning into the Hum of Your Engine

“Find your voice and inspire others to find theirs.” —Stephen R. Covey, *The 8th Habit*

Are You Only Listening to the Squeaky Wheels?

The truth is that we tend to give attention to only what purposely attracts our attention. What might you be missing in your organization?

Are you only listening to the people who are loud or who demand your attention?

An exercise for your next team meeting:

Who are your idea generators?	
Who are your promoters?	
Who are your resisters?	
Who are the quiet ones who linger at the back?	
Who hardly contributes at all?	

Actions to take in your next meeting:

- Encourage feedback from all team members, regardless of their position.
- Open-ended, powerful questions or points regarding the different facets of an idea can often lead to another conclusion. In fact, the biggest innovations come from people who ask “What if?”
- Don’t accelerate from one goal to the next without listening to the group’s opinions. Stop shooting down ideas verbally.
- Watch your body language.

Allow Everyone to Honk Their Horns

- Engage your quiet, reluctant people in conversation.
 - Use comment or suggestion boxes to encourage honest and anonymous feedback.
 - Acknowledge the value of all suggestions even if you don't act on them.
 - If you do accept an idea, let employees know the action steps that will be taken.
 - Allow idea generators to be part of transformation teams that will bring their ideas to maturation.
 - Share your vision with your team and ask them to add to the vision.
 - Which of these ideas will you implement this month? By when?
-
-
-

Listen With More Than Your Ears

Practice Level III listening; which means notice the person's tone of voice, eye contact and body language. Try and figure out what the person is NOT saying.

Get to Know Your Staff

- The better you get to know your employees, the more easily you will be able to draw them out and find out what they need to be successful, as well as what they can contribute to create greater success for the entire company.
- When you listen to the quiet voices, something magical happens. You begin to release the potential of your people. Stand back and watch what happens then.
- Spend some time each week getting to know a member of your staff really well either formally or informally, use a tracker like this to record what you have learnt about them or keep adding to it as your go along.

Staff members name:	What I have found out about them:

FORWARD ACTIONS

Tuning into Your People

1. Ask, ask, and ask again until your employees understand that you really want their input:

- What do you think?
- If this was your project, what would you do?
- Where would you start?
- What would be the value to the company in doing this?
- How does this feel to you?
- How would this affect our people, our operation, our customers, and our bottom line?

2. Listen deeply for what is not said.

- Is this person very attached to the outcome?
- Is there emotion in this opinion?

3. Listen without reacting.

- When someone raises his/her voice, the person wants desperately to be heard. Honor that without rolling your eyes, slamming your fist down, acting like the idea is stupid, or proclaiming that you're going to do it your way anyway. (I have seen far too many Renegade Leaders exhibit these behaviors.) Instead, breathe!
- To be an inspired and inspiring leader, leave your judgment robe on the hook by the front door.

- Calmly take the idea, and, like a prism, hold it in the light, turning it all around to see every facet.
- Then, repeat number 1 again, asking powerful questions, and come to a joint conclusion. When you provide your team with all the information you have, more often than not, everyone will come to the same conclusion.