



Don't Just Listen, Understand.

A Banach, Banach & Cassidy White Paper

People often listen, but they do not often understand. Effective communication requires both. And when that does not happen, communication doesn't matter.

Communication is a two-step process. Part one involves listening to your audience and understanding what they are saying. Part two is delivering an outbound communication — your message.

Communication and marketing professionals generally agree that listening and understanding—part one—is the most important element of the two-step process. Effective communication is achieved when your message—part two—is designed to address feedback from your audience.

People who don't listen rarely communicate successfully. Furthermore, those who listen but don't truly understand often experience communication failures and lose support from their audience.

So, why listen if you're not going to understand? Why move forward with a financial initiative—or any initiative, if you do not understand what people are saying about it?

A community may support a proposal overall but still have questions or concerns. If those questions or concerns go unaddressed, you may be listening, but you're not taking the time to understand the feedback you received.

If voters support the idea you're proposing but don't like the cost, work with them to explain and justify the cost. If they oppose your proposed plan regardless of the cost, it's time to reconsider the project and perhaps delay it until voters better understand the options, educational benefits, and costs.

When school leaders present a finance proposal, active listening helps identify what people like and do not like about it. Too often, school leaders hear what people are saying but don't take the time to truly understand. Some even dismiss feedback as coming from those who are “uninformed” or “don't get it.”. The truth is, any feedback is valuable information that can help shape your message. At Banach, Banach & Cassidy, we believe that feedback, even if it hurts, is a gift because it shows someone cared enough to give it to you.

In communication, resist the urge to get defensive during listening. Don't blame others for misunderstanding; it is a sign your message isn't clear. Instead, collaborate, clarify your reasoning, invite questions, and engage openly. This is all part of the understanding process. And, if people still disagree, step back and explore alternative solutions together before reengaging.

At Banach, Banach & Cassidy, we tell our clients: if your community isn't on board, don't move forward until you've listened deeply enough to understand and adapt to what you're hearing.

Otherwise, why listen at all?

***Banach, Banach & Cassidy does everything
that has anything to do with communication.***

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