

## **Podcast #001 – The art of listening – and why you need to get good at it.**

Welcome to the very first episode of the Boss Hat – the podcast that helps you get the very best out of your team and yourself, and as today is the very first episode I'm really excited as this has been something that has been on my list to launch for some time now. So, in today's episode, I want to give you a bit of heads up into who I am, what this podcast is going to be about essentially, and also we'll also chat about something that'll really help you with communicating to your teams and improving your relationships...which I'll come on to that a bit later on.

So – let me get started by telling you a bit about me first.

My name is Barbara Nixon, and I'm here to help you get the very best out of your teams and yourself. In a nut shell what this means is I support you to be the very best boss you can be in terms of leading your teams, but also in terms of managing yourself and helping you to achieve what you want from your career. I do this by providing on-line resources like e-courses and webinars, I provide coaching; and workbooks. All dedicated to help you get the very best out of your team, and yourself. I also work in different organisations to develop their management and leadership teams. For more information come on over to [barbaranixon.co.uk](http://barbaranixon.co.uk) and take a look around.

But let me go back a step and tell you a little bit about my journey - you see I've always been interested in management and leadership. I remember my dad when I was little talking very highly of his boss. My dad was an electrician and his job was to ensure the maintainance of water treatment sites in the Yorkshire Dales. This involved him going out at all times of day / night and in all weathers. But did he ever moan? Nope. He loved his job, because he felt empowered by the person he was working for. Now, although I never met this man, I knew that he never forgot to send my dad a birthday or Christmas card which meant the world to him. This was my first glimpse of just how impactful a boss has on a person – even though I didn't realise this properly until much later in my life it was a memory that really had an impact on me.

Fast forward a few years and I was fresh out of university going into one of my first jobs. As it happened I didn't stay there long as I didn't love the way that I was managed. I went from being completely motivated and really excited to hating Sundays cos Mondays followed. Ever had that experience? Now, even though I had zero experience on managing a team I knew that there was a much better way, and I promised myself that if ever I got to that position I'd treat people differently. You see, I'd now started to realise that a boss can not only have a positive impact but a negative one as well. Cos – we all have to work so why should it be made much harder by someone further up the chain? I also realised that I certainly wasn't as motivated as I once was, so I don't mind saying I didn't put in as much effort as I would have done....again the power of a great boss. As a boss you have the ability to inspire, motivate, develop amongst other things and someone who is all of those things will move heaven and earth to get a job done. And...let's face it who wouldn't want to inspire, motivate, and develop someone else?

Anyway, I was so lucky that I found my next role quite quickly and this was in a training team of a large retailer, and it was here that I really got the development bug. Now, this came about because of the nature of the company and also I remember once incident which really stuck in my mind. I remember the chief exec talking to a group of new managers and he said something along the lines of – you’re all managers now. Someone will have helped you get to where you are today – now it’s your turn to help other people. And just like that I knew that I wanted to help other people develop, grow, and achieve their goals and potential and this is what has driven me ever since. So for the next 12 years I worked for 2 of the largest retailers in the UK in Learning and development, developing managers and leaders, and I absolutely loved it.

After which I spread my wings and branched out to work with different organisations developing their management teams and supporting managers and leaders online to give them the skills they need to get the most out their roles and grow in their careers, and I have been lucky enough to work with lots and lots of fantastic managers helping them to develop in their roles.

And this is what this podcast is all about.

In this podcast you will find practical hints and tips that you can use back in the workplace to make your life easier, and to get the very best out of your team. None of it is rocket science and I won’t drown you in theory. It’s not my style. Instead you’ll get a very practical perspective and things that you can use and will deliver for you.

I’ll also throw in the odd interview from a special guest that I think you’d enjoy hearing from, and some downloads that might give you a helping hand.

Now, I chose podcasts as something that I wanted to focus on as I know that as managers you’re a busy bunch. These podcasts are between 5 minutes and 20 minutes long and you can listen on the commute, whilst you’re cooking dinner, or even whilst you’re waiting for the kids to fall asleep (which was always my trick) so designed to not give you an extra thing to do, but something that you can listen to whilst you’re doing something else. In order to get this podcast launched we’re going to have 10 shows back to back every day from today and then we’ll switch to a weekly show. So, if you think it’s going to be useful you might want to subscribe so that you don’t miss an episode. I’ll also put some show notes back at [barbaranixon.co.uk](http://barbaranixon.co.uk) with a full transcription and any links or resources I’ve mentioned.

So, if you manage other people, and you’d love to learn how to be the best you can be, how to get the very best out of your team, and want some hints and tips to make your working life easier and if you’re also wanting to progress your management career stick around. A great starting point is to come on over to [barbaranixon.co.uk](http://barbaranixon.co.uk) and have a good look around.

Now, before I go on to give you today’s handy tip I just want to let you into what I’m like outside of work – cos this does crop up from time to time. So, out of work I’m a busy mum of 4. At the time of this recording my kids range from 19 to 7 (yep that means 3 teenagers!!) I know full well what it means to be a working parent, and all the trials and tribulations that go with that. What it feels like to juggle work and home, and what it feels like to push yourself. I also understand the struggles of what other people call work life balance but I just call getting into a rhythm (and I’ll talk about that at some point). I’m also married to the lovely Dave (who also crops up in my blogs and podcasts

from time to time) and I have an amazing dog that I love to walk every day. Apart from all this I'm just your regular down to earth Yorkshire girl. I love to have a laugh and I love hanging out with my family and friends...everything else we'll learn about each other as we go along.

So, now that you know a bit about me and the podcast let's dive into what todays show is really all about. Now, for those of you that have followed my blog or have attended any of my webinars you'll know I go on about this a lot – and that is listening - but by learning to listen – and practicing listening you're able to not only show someone that you value them. You respect them, and you're interested in what they say, you'll also learn so much about the person that you're speaking to and their world. Best of all – it's completely free. It costs absolutely nothing but your time.

The problem is very few of us have been taught how to listen and we're often just expected to listen or told to listen – but the very art of listening does take practice just like everything else.

So in today's episode we're going to be looking at 3 ways that you can show that you're listening; how to find out whether other people think we're good at listening or not, and what do do when someone interrupts you and you might not be able to speak to them right away. You know the scenario right?

You'll be working away at your desk, and you're really focused and into what you're doing when someone comes and interrupts you to either ask a question – or just to chat – and you really don't want to engage in conversation cos you just want to get done what you're doing so you could potentially cross it off your list...sound familiar? Right we'll come to that in a moment. But first let's have a look at the three things we can do to show that we're listening.

Right – well in my experience the best way to start with your listening practice is by showing the other person that you're listening. When I was learning how to listen this is exactly what I did – cos once you're showing the other person that you're listening – you're actually in the right frame of mind to really listen and focus and take in what the other person is saying.

So – how do we do this?

#### **Tip # 1 – Stop what you're doing.**

You might think that you're a wiz at multi-tasking and that you can actually listen and do your thing at the same time – but the problem is that you're not showing the other person that you're listening. So, you not only don't get any of the benefits of listening that I talked about earlier like the other person feeling respected, valued etc – but you're also not doing a great job of listening at all. You're probably only listening out for key words and phrases which will force you to look up – like...the building is on fire!! You're also sending another very clear message – and that's that you don't care enough to focus on them...which is not doing your relationship any favours. So, tip number 1 is – stop what you're doing. Yes there may be times when you don't have time to listen to them at that moment – we'll come to that later on.

#### **Tip #2 – Look at them**

Eye contact is so important as you're then connecting with that other person. By making eye contact you're saying to them. Yes, I'm here, I'm listening to you, I'm focused on you...keep talking.

As the listener there'll be times when their eyes wander as they speak to you – but make sure you stay looking at them so your eyes are there to meet them when they're ready. Also – don't aim to be creepy and maintain eye contact for ever as this can really invade someone's personal space – just aim to feel natural about it.

### **And Tip # 3 – Don't interrupt**

There'll be loads of times when you know what's coming, or you know the answer to their question or you can just skip to the end by jumping in and telling them what they need to know. It's really tempting to do this – but if you've committed to listening – just wait until they've finished before you speak. You might be afraid that you'll forget what you want to say – or that they'll never stop, but by practicing this you'll come across as a much better listener – and also really improve your listening skills. Just a point to make here before we go any further and that's to only interrupt if they really show no sign of stopping – so you're not there all day.

Ok – so just to go over those 3 tips again – tip 1, stop what you're doing. Tip 2, make eye contact and tip 3 don't interrupt. And if you want a download for this – go to [barbaranixon.co.uk/download001](http://barbaranixon.co.uk/download001)

Right then – let's go back to the scenario I mentioned earlier. You're busy beavering away at your desk. You're in the zone and really focused on your task when all of a sudden someone comes to your desk and interrupts you. What do you do, remembering that carrying on working whilst they're speaking and just telling them that you're listening is not an option as we've all had this done to us right – we might even have done this to someone else and it feels rubbish – so let's agree that this isn't an option.

So, what do we do instead?

Well the first thing to do is make a decision – do you have time to listen to them at that moment or not? If yes, stop what you're doing and listen to them. If however, you really don't then being honest is by far the best option you've got. Stop what you're doing, make eye contact and explain to them that you really need to get whatever it is that you're doing done, and could they come back at [and then give them a time] and then you can give them your undivided attention - and make sure you keep the time that you've given them.

This way you're minimising the time you've been interrupted. You're stopping the feeling of frustration that you might feel if you really want to be getting on with your work whilst you're listening to them, you're taking control of the situation and stopping them taking root at your desk, and you've still made them feel valued.

So – give this a try

Tips are also available on the download at [barbaranixon.co.uk/download001](http://barbaranixon.co.uk/download001)

So – these are my listening tips in this weeks episode of the Boss Hat. I'd love to hear your tips so come on over to [Barbaranixon.co.uk](http://Barbaranixon.co.uk) and leave a comment. See you next time and have a great week