

***You must Listen to Others
If You Want Others to Listen to You***

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You must listen to others if you want others to listen to you. This favorite idea of Coach Wooden's reflects the way that he chose to interact with other people.

Coach Wooden was an extraordinary listener; in part, I believe, because he knew each time he listened he would learn something.

On a personal level, I am not a good listener, as I am usually thinking about what I'm going to say next while the other person is still talking.

One afternoon I was sitting in Coach's den with Coach, my wife and my mother-in-law, Nan Wooden (Coach's daughter); I had made my mind up that I was going to be a great listener that day.

After about a half an hour Nan asked me: "Honey are you feeling okay? You're awful quiet today." I proudly replied "Yes, Grandnan, I'm just working on my listening skills."

Coach laughed and motioned me to come over to his desk next to him. He leaned over and whispered this rhyme:

A wise old owl sat in an Oak.
The more he heard the less he spoke.
The less he spoke the more he heard
Now wasn't he a wise old bird?

Coach believed effective leadership starts with effective listening. In Wooden on Leadership, he put it this way:

In my opinion, being an effective leader – one who can build a winning organization – requires being an effective listener.

The most productive leaders are usually those who are consistently willing to listen and learn. Perhaps it stems from their understanding that success is more often attained by asking “how?” Than by saying “no”.

Coach also believed the key to maintaining success was continuing to listen after you become successful. Coach summed it up this way:

It is very easy to get comfortable in a position of leadership, to believe that you’ve got all the answers, especially when you begin to enjoy some success.

People start telling you that you’re the smartest one around. That’s one of the reasons it’s extremely difficult to stay at the top – because once you get there, it is so easy to stop listening and learning.

Coach liked to say: when you’re through learning you’re through. And when you’re through listening you’re through learning.

**Yours in Coaching,
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