



## *Sherpa Strength*: The Newsletter of Executive Coaching

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# The Conscious Effort To Hear

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I know as Sherpas we are very aware that listening is defined as "the conscious effort to hear". It is important for us to develop our skills daily. If we don't we will become lazy and miss an opportunity to address a situation at the right time with the right question, delivered in the right way.

I was talking with a team of managers concerned about lack of engagement at staff meetings. Their meeting room had a very large table in the center, surrounded by comfortable chairs. There were also chairs along the walls. When people entered meetings late, they would find a chair along the wall, or stand near the door instead of pulling a chair up to the table.



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How do we get to the bottom of this perceived lack of engagement? What questions do you ask?

You might ask about the people who show up late. Who are they? Why are they late? Is it always the same people? You might be tempted to ask about the structure of the meetings, the agenda, or even offer some suggestions about placement of chairs along the wall.

Here's what I asked:

- What is your definition of engagement?
- What does the table have to do with it?
- Does pulling up to the table mean you are engaged?

Those questions get to the bottom of the issue.

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What does engagement mean to this management team? They did not have a clear agreement about that. They did agree that they needed to talk about it some more.

Did sitting at the table mean something? What about participation and attention spans? Was the seating position a misleading indicator of peoples' level of engagement?

The management team was relieved, and happy they had asked their coach about the situation. They would have handled this all wrong. They needed to think some things through and discuss employee engagement with their executive team before they reached any conclusion or took action.

How did I know what questions to ask? I listened. We all need to make that 'conscious effort to hear' key words and real meaning in our client conversations.

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