

Ian: 00:01 Hey, it's Ian Altman. My guest this week is Oscar Trimboli. Oscar's company. Deep listening is an organization where Oscar is obsessed with the commercial cost of listening. We're going to talk about the biggest mistakes when it comes to listening, the difference in the pace of how we think versus how fast we speak, how we can use deep listening in the workplace to get to the truth faster, and how with your clients and prospects, what you may be hearing isn't what you should be listening for. You're gonna learn a ton it is a fascinating episode with Oscar Trimboli.

Ian: 00:40 Oscar, welcome to the show.

Oscar: 00:43 Thanks so much and I'm really looking forward to listening to you today.

Ian: 00:47 Well, I don't know if you're going to be listening to me as much as I'm looking for brilliant insight from you, but I know that as an expert in the world of listening that, uh, I know where you're coming from on that, but can you start by sharing something surprising about you that our audience may not know?

Oscar: 01:04 Well in 2007, my wife and I went on a journey of training to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa, one of the more accessible peaks in the world. It's the largest mountain in Africa. And uh, we spent nearly two years training, but halfway through that we had a bit of a bust up. And, uh, my wife got a bit frustrated with all the training. We were doing it as part of a charity fundraiser with a group of other people. When she decided that my, well that wasn't the thing for her. And then she said to me, you know, I really want to do it. And I said, well, here's the thing, you're always wanted that dog. And if we summit Kilimanjaro together, you can get that dog. You've never seen somebody more focus on training from that point on. As my wife Jenny was, and she had shirts printed with a photo of the dog she wanted as our training shirts. And she had a different set of shirts printed when we were traveling to the airport. And everybody knew that, uh, Jenny wanted a cross between a Spaniel and a poodle, a spoodle. And our dog's name is Kilimanjaro

Ian: 02:12 of course. So dog would have to rename Kilimanjaro at that point.

Oscar: 02:17 Yeah. So people get confused because we shortened it to Kili. I think it's short for killer and he is far from a killer, that's for sure.

Ian: 02:25 Not that breed. Yeah, that'd bring to me people could be lik to death I suppose.

Oscar: 02:31 Yeah. And you'd have to be pretty small to be elected death by Kelli. He's only about a handful. No

Mama, no more than that.

Ian: 02:39 Well, we are, we are dog people here also. And though I don't have any story tying it to climbing Kilimanjaro or Everest or any other peak, um, she's a rescue dog that's just full of energy. So, um, I'm sure at some point in the podcast is a chance that someone could come near the building, in which case we could hear her. But that's a whole nother thing.

Oscar: 03:03 oh, that good Guard dogs, that's the shoulds. I protect that territory and they, and they own is really, really well.

Ian: 03:08 So though many of our audience may be interested in keys to motivate people to summit the tallest peak on a given continent. I wanted to talk to you about your expertise when it comes to the power of listening. So what's the biggest mistake that you see people make or maybe misconception they have about listening?

Oscar: 03:30 Yeah, most people listen in black and white, and I'm trying to get the world to understand that maybe you should be listening in color. Uh, the black is listening to what they're saying and the white is watching their body language. And that's great. The biggest mistake people make is they are listening for what people are saying rather than listening very deeply to what people are not saying. So if you remember this really simple rule, I speak at 125 words a minute, but I think at 900 words a minute. And so if I speak at 125, I think at 900 there's a one in nine chance that what I say is what I'm actually thinking. Uh, and the more mathematically inclined people told me, that's 11%. So there's an 11% chance of what they're saying is what they're thinking. Now, I don't know about you, but I'm at the stage of my life where I'm spending probably too much time seeing doctors and not enough time just enjoying life. And if a doctor gave me an 11% chance of, surgery, I'd be asking for a second opinion. Yet in the workplace and in selling, we never ask this next question to explore what else they haven't said. So Ian, if I would say there's a mistake, it's not listening to what's unsaid.

Ian: 04:49 I love that. And I feel like as an interviewer, I should now be saying, well gee, but what didn't ask her. Just say right there.

Oscar: 04:55 Yeah. So that's exactly what you should be asking right now.

Ian: 05:01 So it's, and it's funny because I think I think about in different scenarios. Um, there was a, there was a vacation property my wife and I were interested in, and so it was kind of a stereotypical sales environment, which is someone who

speaks, writes and teaches about sales. I'm as intrigued in the process as I am and whatever vacation property we might be looking at, and I remember at several times during the discussion, I would turn to the rep and say, so what haven't I asked for that I should be asking for? And each time they would give me a treasure trove of additional benefits and perks that I didn't know to ask for. My wife said, how did you to ask for that? I said, you know, it's just, I'm thinking this is something they probably haven't been trained to deal with, so they're just giving me their honest answer. My other question for you is that you said you think at 900 words for a minute and you speak at 120 words a minute. I don't know that I stink at a hundred at 900 words per minute. I may think much slower than that. So is that, does everybody think of that kind of pace?

Oscar: 06:11 So the, the bell curve is the average is 900 it goes right up to 1500 words per minute for thinking and down to about 600 at the other end of the bell curve and it plays out right now for you while you're listening to me, you're listening capability is 400 words a minute. So there's a gap between what I'm saying and what you're capable of listening to. So you're distracted because you're filling in the gaps. You're thinking about the next question. It's happening to you listening right now, you might be commuting between appointments and you're getting distracted about what you've got to do at the next appointment and all of a sudden you have to remind yourself that, hey, I'm listening to a podcast and distraction attention and focus are the biggest barriers to listening well. But if we come back to that one 25 900 role, I'd love to give everyone in the audience are really simple question.

Oscar: 07:04 If there's one thing you want it to take away from today would be this question. And if you want it to have one listening Ninja move, this would be the move. Um, please don't try this at home with your loved ones. They'll say straight through it. But in the workplace, this makes sense. Whenever somebody says something that's around a really complicated explanation, simply ask them this. I'm curious what else you're thinking about on this topic and don't say anything after that. And what you'll notice is a completely different change in their body, state and the energy. Most Times people draw in a really deep breath and all kind of sound like,

Oscar: 07:47 well actually what I should have told you was, or what they'll say is, you know what's really critical that we haven't covered off. Or they'll say, well actually the most important thing that my boss would say I needed to tell you was, and you hear these code words coming out. And what it means is they're speaking to what they mean rather than than what they're saying. And when we think about what matters to people, what matters to people more is what they mean. Then what they say. We were having a presentation in a, in a pharmaceutical company, stir all manufacturing is really important in this organization. And you could cut the

tension with a knife in this room. That was about 25 people in this room that I was presenting to. And I just paused and I said,

Oscar: 08:39 I, I tend to see, oh, I said, look, with your, with your permission, I'm going to ask something completely off script. And it said, and I said, is that okay? And he says, well I'm not sure I have a choice. I said, no, you'd do. Um, I guess it comes down to whether you trust me. And he said, go ahead and, and what have I got to lose? And I said, guys, this is something that I'd love to ask you because the tension in this room is really high right now. If you were to describe what's going on in your organization as a movie, what would it be? And the guys and the girls started to drop names, die hard with a vengeance, titanic, towering inferno, all these disaster movies. And in that moment, the tension got completely led out of the room and the CEO, turned to me and went, wow. Um, I would never have told me that. And if you listen for meaning, you can give people a permission slip to decide what I really think by using metaphors as questions rather than asking very transactional questions around why, what, and how.

Ian: 09:45 I love it. One of the, um, and, and getting into the science behind this, it's fascinating for me, one of the, one of the questions that I often encourage people to ask is when you get an answer from when, when someone gives you an answer, and oftentimes it's around a rather complex subject, it's just, well, that's really interesting. Can you be more specific? Or, Gee, you know, what, what might I be missing about that, about that answer? And it's probably the same principle of just giving them the opportunity to speak more about what was in their head that didn't come out of their mouth.

Oscar: 10:25 Yeah. And particularly when you're communicating complexity, metaphorical, analogous, anything that can draw a word picture that draws on the memory, something that's already there. So a simple example of this of washing machine will have at least two rinse cycles. And in your mind when you're thinking it's sudsy thinking, you know, and the minute you speak, that's your rinse cycle. So it gets the information out. But even a washing machine has to rinse cycles. As, a sales leaders, as people helping people solve complex problems in business, what we want to do is get as many rinse cycles out for those people who are speaking to us to help them think. Because it's actually not about you when you're listening. It's all about them.

Ian: 11:10 I'm, I'm curious, do you know  
Michael Bungay just on your

Oscar: 11:14 yes, I do. Yeah.

Ian: 11:15 Okay. Um, not just because while

you're, you're both from the, the lions. But um, so Michael, one of the, one of the things in his book, the coaching habit is when someone comes to you with an idea, he says, oh, and what else. He refers to as he awesome questions. Awe and what else? And, and it's, it's fascinating because as you're describing this, I'm thinking to myself, this is great because there are so many underlying concepts that I've shared with people that didn't really have any science behind it. It just seemed to work. And now you're connecting the dots for me, which is just fascinating in this area of deep listening. Um, so, so gimme gimme some examples of scenarios where, where you get that superficial answer and how this deep listening will really uncover the truth. Cause I'm guessing the key to deep listening is that we're not getting the superficial answer we want to hear. We're actually getting the truth.

Oscar: 12:18 Yeah. And this will liberate you if you spend a lot of time doing prep for discovery meetings. You know, that first discovery meeting, you know, a poll question might be, you know, what keeps you awake at night. If you have to ask that question, you haven't even earned the right to be in the room. Google will be your friend and you can already figure that out. And I'll give you an example. Um, and um, have this thing called dyscalculus, which means I have a poor relationship with numbers. So I transpose numbers. So instead of writing nine one seven on my write, seven, nine, one a, and which is quite hilarious because I started off life as an audit clock in an accounting firm, counting Spock plugs in a motor vehicle dealer and it took the 8 weeks to figure out that I was transposing or manual spreadsheets and all was going on a sales call myself, uh, about three years ago and I was referred into a group of actuaries and actuaries create very complex formulas that predict when you're going to die or predict the pay out on life insurance or predict payout on auto accident insurance and things like that.

Oscar: 13:26 They're the smartest kids in the room. They paid attention at maths, then I probably could teach the teacher maths. And they really love their models. They all about coding their thinking into software. So when I walk into a room with a bunch of actuaries, my subject matter expertise is negative. In fact, I'm at a loss. So that we'll explaining this model and this model that we're trying to do. And I was struggling with getting it discussed in the organization and optimized. And I simply said to them, you know what I'm most curious about is what you guys haven't put into your model. And three of them looked at each other like a lightning bolt had hit them and went, well actually it's this that and wait, it's broken because of the, and they were chatting to each other for at least 10 minutes and writing formulas on the board.

Oscar: 14:20 And the formula was literally in Greek and you know, Co sign, all these kinds of things. And they turned to me and they said, how long have you been working in the

insurance industry? This is an amazing breakthrough we've just made. And I said, 8 Minutes. 10 minutes. my insurance industry expertise is the net sum of this meeting. But you speak like you've been in the industry your whole life. And it was that moment where they could explore their own thinking and I them permission to go what's not in the model. And as a great book written by Cathy Nail call weapons of math destruction. And she talks about the ethics of Algorithms, which is quite timely now whether you're in selling or not, you should know something about the ethics of big data and machine learning and artificial intelligence because every business will be attacked in some way around their revenue and cost model for the organizations you're selling into. So as a result of this, and I now have a very substantial business, were very smart actuaries keep referring me to, he's the listening guy, this guy, here's what we actually say. And, and I have no idea what they're saying. And a lot of us in selling get hung up on knowing the content. If we can create a context where they can discover and solve their own problems, we are a trusted advisor and that transforms our relationship. They never asked me for a price I just sent in a proposal and know why they went.

Ian: 15:53 If you want to learn how companies go from 20% to 90% of their team hitting their numbers or how companies grew from 17 million to over a hundred million in three years, then get your preorder copy of same side selling. In fact, if you go to same side selling that calm, you can see a number of bundles that will get you a bunch of bonuses. If you preorder right now, just go to same side selling.com to learn more. That's exactly it and it's something that I think gets lost in a lot of people and I want to tie this back to some concepts. They're going to be familiar for our listeners, which is this whole notion of the single best person to overcome any perceived objection is the person who raised it. And the easiest way to do that is with great questions where to your point, you're listening for the things they're not saying.

Ian: 16:48 So for example, we often teach in same side selling this principle of having a mutual understanding with the clients about, what the results or success should look like at the end. And one of the questions that we encourage people to ask, which scares the heck out of many executives is you ask them, so what would make it so that you don't get those results? And everyone's petrified. And I said, so would you rather know that up front or each other, find out after you don't achieve success and how comfortable is the client going to feel if you asked that question up front when no other vendor asked a question, anything like that? And if you want to be perceived as the most trusted, most valued person in the room, it's probably going to be based on the questions you ask, not based some brilliant statement that you made.

Oscar: 17:53 And to take it a step further, uh, people often say. You know, the best salespeople are really customer

centric. And I say, look, that's really interesting, but it's not powerful. It's not potent. It's not what world class sellers do. I think the difference between a worldclass seller and a recreational seller when it comes to listening worldclass sellers don't listen for their customers' problems. They're listening for their customers, customers problems. So if you can help connect those dots together, y'all listening in a place that's going to have a massive impact.

Ian: 18:26 Yeah, absolutely. It's, it's the, it's the questions that we guide people to. Someone says, oh, we're having this problem. Well, what happens if you don't solve that? Because for some organizations that's just kind of a nuisance. For other people it's actually really big deal. How about for you? Oh, well we have visited. It's a pretty big deal. Really? Why? What else have you done to try and solve this? And then we're actually getting to the truth and it's the, it's the risk of the, the trap or the risk of scripts is that there's so many, before we got on the air, we were talking about it a little bit, which is when people have scripts, the person hasn't, the question tends to focus on the next question instead of listening to the answer. That might take you in a totally different direction.

Oscar: 19:12 Yes, it's super true. I mean scripts are a hangover from the industrial economy where people were task driven in a factory and we just transpose that today. We are either in the information economy or the imagination economy, depending on which, whether you're selling into professional services or or fixed product organizations and, and if, if I was to provide a framework rather than a script and it would be trying to avoid the why-based questions and try and explore what and how-based questions they are so much richer. Why based questions actually trigger us to when we were six years old and we did something wrong and our parents screamed at us and said, why did you do that? And when we ask why questions, a lot of people, you won't notice it unless you're listening deeply that actually triggered and I get very defensive now, don't get me wrong, there's a place for why-based questions, but it's usually not part of your first discovery meeting and why based questions have their place in methodologies. There's a methodology called the five whys. There's a methodology called six sigma. There's a methodology called root cause analysis that go and explore heavily why based questions but for a lot of B to B selling scenarios, how would this business case be socialized beyond this decision?

Oscar: 20:35 What are the things you see is getting in the way of this business case, these questions again and we'll elicit much richer responses from the prospect that helps them think about how they're going to sell the business. Earlier on I said the worldclass class sellers think not only about their customer, but I think about the customer's customer. The other thing they do really well is they are world champions at helping sell the business case to

the solution rather than beating the competition. If all you do is get fixated on beating the competition, you'll lose out to toilet paper. I've got brilliant example of that where a client of mine in New Zealand was in the last quarter of their financial year selling contact management software into a very large organization in New Zealand and they got to where they were expecting the purchase order a week out from their fiscal year end and they were told, sorry we've had to delay the decision and they said, but we were the selected vendor and you said the budget set aside.

Oscar: 21:35 They said, well was but Kimberly Clark who or famous for making diapers but they also make toilet paper made a deal. The CFO couldn't refuse. If we bought a year's worth of toilet paper in advance, we would get a 75% discount and he put all the money for this contact center project into toilet paper. And if you are listening to the business case, one of the questions you would have been asking is what's the process the CFO goes through to approve this or the procurement committee? And you would have known that that's a possibility. But for most of us were just fixated on beating the competition and becoming the preferred vendor. Worldclass class sellers listen for the business case and not just the competition.

Ian: 22:17 Well it's when we, we'll, we'll often coach people to ask a couple questions. One being so compared to other things on your plate, how important is it to solve this issue right now? And then of course once someone gives that it's why is that? Which is a why question, but we're just trying to better understand is it, for example, if someone says, well we have to have to have this implemented by June 1st. Why is a great question in that context? Because it could be, well we just figured we couldn't do it by may one so I just arbitrarily picked June one that makes June one not a real date. But if someone said, oh, because all these things happen later in June and if we don't get it done now, it won't get done for another year. Well that now tells you as the seller that you need to be proactive because if the client feels there's any jeopardy in that June one date, it's not going to happen for another year.

Ian: 23:16 And it's those sorts of insights that you get by asking the secondary and tertiary questions that I think many people overlook. And I, I love this whole notion of that comparison of people speak at 900 words per minute, but they are, they think at 900 words from her that they speak at 125 words per minute tells us that look, there's a lot of stuff that isn't being said and if we're not asking those questions, we're missing something. And here's the beauty of it. The person who was speaking would probably love to share some of those other things, but they feel like, no, no, I'm done. I've had my turn. And if you give them the turn to keep going, you'd be fascinating. How much more comes out of it. I often hear from my clients where they'll have a relatively new rep and the rep says, why don't really understand our technology well enough?

Ian: 24:05 And often say, well, Gee, Ian's here doing this keynote. Do you think he could handle this meeting? Well, he could. Yeah, but he doesn't know our stuff. But He already knows which questions to ask. Aha. Okay. So now, now we're getting getting to something, which is if you ask the right questions, the subject matter experts will become, um, they'll, they'll, they'll rise to the surface and you obviously you have to have enough familiarity that you don't ask awful questions. Um, I remember we did a lot of work in the pharmaceutical industry in my prior business. We had a, one of my, um, one of my reps is coming up to a meeting, he was brand new and we were talking to this pharmaceutical company about their clinical trials and they were talking about their phase three clinical trials. And it's in the pharmaceutical industry. It's a very specific concept, which is the human trials before drugs get submitted for approval by regulatory authorities. And the last stage is the third, the third phase. And um, and, and the, this person on my team says, yeah, and in fact, not only can we handle the phase three, but I'm sure we could handle phase four and five to that was, um, that was one of those cases when sitting back and listening probably would have been a better choice.

Oscar: 25:22 And I think it will probably speak a lot in up in a western context and bird, I think we've got a lot to learn from high context cultures such as China, Korea, Japan, um, the, what culture of North America, the Maori culture of New Zealand, the aboriginal culture of Australia and the use of silence and being comfortable, high context cultures, a very nuance, the exact same word in a different setting can mean something completely different. If you say something to an Ldi, it has a different meaning is if you say to a p for example, but what a western people are uncomfortable with is just being in that moment. It's sitting with silence and a lot of people in my research group, I've got 1400 people in a tracking survey for my listening research. One of the, one of the things that comes up is I feel silence is awkward and a that's just because that's our orientation in the west.

Oscar: 26:24 We feel like the minute space is there, we need to fill it. And I think for all of us, if all we did was just count to one, two, three in our head as somebody pause to speak, we're transformed. The meeting are much more comfortable with silence. In fact, silence to me is, is uh, is a tool I can use with great power and elegance. But in, in these high context cultures, particularly Chinese, Japanese and Korean, the silence is used most potently by the most senior person in the room. And silence can go on for three to four minutes. And if you come from that context, it's okay. It's a sign of respect that gives everybody in the room a moment to connect with what they're thinking about. So if there's one thing we can learn from the east, it's salience is a ok.

Ian: 27:17 No, it's a brilliant insight. I know it was a professional speaker. When there are new speakers, they'll often say, so if you're trying to think of something, what, what do you do to fill the space? I said, why do you feel you have to fill the space? If you have a thought, just pause. And if you stay, if you maintain eye contact with the audience, there'll be right with you. And it's going to seem like forever. But if you're silent for five seconds, what do you think the impacts going to be on the next thing you say? You need to be hyper focused on that. But it's something that very often people in sales roles and even the executives have that challenge of, well, there's dead silence. I have to fill it. And I think what you're teaching us is you don't have to fill it.

Oscar: 28:06 Yeah, it's, it's quite natural. Um, it's kind of thing institutionalized in us from school and workplaces but again, further great relationships that you enjoy in your personal life. You can sit with someone in silence for two and three minutes and it's completely okay. It's, it's not a problem when you're in a great relationship silences and natural sidekick when you're not, you try and fill that space, the relationship one of all. So just, just explore how you silence or notice people who use silence well and a well timed pause before the question again, gives them more time to think about their response as well.

Ian: 28:51 That's fantastic. I mean, the insight you have around this is just spectacular. And uh, and I'm sure my audience is going to want to learn more. What's the best way for people to reach out and connect with you and learn more about what you're doing?

Oscar: 29:07 There's five myths of listening. So if you'd just go to [Oscar.trimboli.com](http://Oscar.trimboli.com) forward slash listening myths and you'll be able to download a double sided pdf that outlines the five myths. And on the other side of the pdf, they'll tell you exactly what to do about those myths. And one of those myths is focusing on what people are saying rather than to listen to what's unsaid.

Ian: 29:29 Absolutely. Brilliant. So I encourage everybody to go check this stuff out. Go Visit Oscar site. Um, I learned a ton, I know our audience has and a, I just can't thank you enough for sharing your wisdom. It's really been some fascinating content, so thank you very much. Thanks for listening.

Ian: 29:51 Oscar shared so much. Amazing insight. I was absolutely captivated. Let me give you a quick 32nd recap of the key information I think you can use and apply to your business right away. Remember we think about 900 words per minute and we speak about 125 words per minute. So we have to be listening for what's not said as much as what we're listening for, what is said. In

fact, maybe even more so. I love the idea of asking questions like, I'm curious what else you were thinking about that right now and questions like that that will really uncover the truth. And remember, the idea is that we want to draw on analogies, metaphors, memories versus words that can help spark true conversations and get to the truth in our discussions. Remember this show gets its direction from you, the listener. There's a topic I should have on, or a guest you think I should have on the show. Just farming a note to Ian and Ian altman.com have an amazing week. Add value and grow revenue in a way everybody can embrace, especially your customer.