

## Listen Like a Trampoline, 'The Culture Code', (extract) – Coyle, (2018)

***Good listening is about more than nodding attentively; it's about adding insight and creating moments of mutual discovery.*** Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman, who run a leadership consultancy, analysed 3,492 participants in a manager development program and found that the most effective listeners do four things:

1. They interact in ways that make the other person **feel safe and supported**
2. They take a helping, cooperative stance
3. They occasionally **ask questions** that gently and constructively **challenge old assumptions**
4. They make occasional suggestions to **open up alternative paths**

As Zenger and Folkman put it, ***the most effective listeners behave like trampolines.*** They aren't passive sponges. They are active responders, absorbing what the other person gives, supporting them, and adding energy to help the conversation gain velocity and altitude.

Also, like trampolines, effective listeners gain amplitude through repetition. When asking questions, they rarely stop at the first response. Rather, they find different ways to explore connections that will enable cooperation.

*"I've found that whenever you ask a question, the first response you get is usually not the answer – it's just the first response," Roshi Givechi says. "So I try to find ways so slowly surface things, to bring out what ought to be shared so that people can build from it. You have to find a lot of ways to ask the same question, and approach the same question from a lot of different angles. Then you have to build questions from that response, to explore more."* (p162)

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### In Conversation, Resist the Temptation to Reflexively Add Value

The most important part of creating vulnerability often resides not in what you say but in what you do not say. This means having the willpower to forgo easy opportunities to offer solutions and make suggestions. Skilled listeners do not interrupt with phrases like 'Hey, here's an idea', or 'Let me tell you what worked for me in a similar situation' because they understand that it's not about them. They use a repertoire of gestures and phrases that keep the other person talking. ***"One of the things I say most often is probably the simplest thing I say," says Givechi. "Say more about that."***

It's not that suggestions are off limits; rather they should be made only after you establish what Givechi calls "a scaffold of thoughtfulness." The scaffold underlines the conversation, supporting the risks and vulnerabilities. With the scaffold, people will be supported. In taking the risks that cooperation requires. Without it, the conversation Collapses. (p163)