**Best Advice: Listen More Than You Talk**

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*In this series, professionals share the words of wisdom that made all the difference in their lives. Follow the stories here and write your own (please include the hashtag #BestAdvice in the body of your post).*

In the past two years, I have shared some of the best advice I ever received from my mum and my business mentor, Sir Freddie Laker. This year, I thought I would share a simple tip from another person who had an enormous impact upon my life – my dad.

When I grew up our house was always a hive of activity, with Mum dreaming up new entrepreneurial schemes left, right and centre, and me and my sisters running wild. You were as likely to find me helping Mum with a new project as outside climbing a tree. Amidst all the fun and chaos, Dad was always a supportive, calming influence on us all. He wasn’t quiet, but he was not often as talkative as the rest of us. It made for a wonderful balance, and we always knew we could rely on him no matter what.

Within this discreet support lay one of his best and most simple pieces of advice for me: listen more than you talk. Nobody learned anything by hearing themselves speak. Wherever I go, I try to spend as much time as possible listening to the people I meet. I am fortunate to travel widely and come across fascinating characters from all walks of life. While I am always happy to share my own experiences with them, it would be foolish if I didn’t listen back.

It is one of the reasons why I always carry a pen and notebook, not to mention an iPad, to note my thoughts. You never know what you might learn from simply listening to the people around you. Whether it is an attendant on a train, an engineer beneath a spaceship of a customer service rep at a computer, I am endlessly surprised by what new and useful information I can gather just by keeping my ears open.

I sometimes come across people in business, especially if they have been fortunate enough to have some success, that are very fond of their own voices. After saying their piece, they visibly switch off from what others are saying, offering a perfunctory nod or fiddling with their phone, rather than making eye contact and really engaging. Conversely, the most successful entrepreneurs I know all have excellent listening skills in common.

I presume those who choose not to listen must think they have already learned all there is to know. Taking my dad’s advice visually, I like to think of a circle that represents everything we could possibly learn.

What I personally know would make up a dot so minuscule it couldn’t be seen. What humanity has collectively learned so far would make up a tiny mark within the circle. Everything we all have to learn in the future would take up the rest of the space. It is a big universe, and we are all learning more about it every day. If you aren’t listening, you are missing out.