

PRAESTA PROMPT: LISTENING IS AN ART

Looking after your resilience

Working at top speed, and switching from one virtual meeting to the next, is there a risk you miss key insights? Have you sometimes looked back at a project that didn't go as well as you had hoped, and wished you had focused more on listening to what others were trying to tell you? How often do you experience meetings where everyone comes in with their fixed views and leaves none the wiser?

Listening is an art. It is about actively giving our attention to what someone else is trying to articulate. It makes us better informed; it leads to more trusting and effective relationships; and it is sometimes the key ingredient for a project's success.

When you want to influence stakeholders might it help to:

- Be curious about why they think as they do, and where your interests could be aligned
- Use open questions to explore what they care about, and ask for clarification rather than assuming you know what they mean
- Focus your attention on what you are learning from the other person, rather than what you are going to say next
- Be aware of your emotional reactions to others' body language or tone of voice, and then consciously set those reactions aside so you can listen calmly
- Remember that someone who feels listened to is more likely to listen back.

When seeking to draw the best from your teams:

- Don't make a show of listening, then press on regardless
- If you ask a question, give the person time to think before they reply. Avoid the temptation to fill a silence with another question.
- Try the question: "What should I be asking you about this, and haven't?"
- Listen for meaning, and with a genuine desire to understand
- Remember that innovation flourishes best where people know they will be heard.

We know a leader who worked abroad for a year, in another language. When he returned to the UK, he recruited one of the managers from the other country to join his UK team. The manager commented that the leader had been a better listener, and talked less, when he was operating in his second language, with the consequence that people felt more engaged and trusted. That was a wake-up call.

These ideas take forward the thinking in the Praesta Insight booklets 'The Resilient Leader' [click here](#) and 'The Resilient Team' [click here](#). For the accompanying video, [click here](#)