

Is \$500,000 Enough Reason to Listen?

Are you really listening to your clients? If not, you might actually be doing harm, particularly if you're working at cross purposes with them.

A friend's father was recently moved into a nursing home and the family began the paperwork to get him enrolled in Medicaid. Over ten years ago the family had moved the assets of the family business into a trust and that trust set off warnings for the Medicaid officials who recently reviewed the documentation. When the attorneys who authored the trust were contacted, their understanding of the main purpose of the trust was different from what the family had asked for.

Were the attorneys listening to the family's total concerns? Would a few extra questions have avoided the potential threat of a suit? Is \$500,000 enough reason to listen that carefully?

My husband went to Sears to buy a replacement bag for our leaf shredder. They didn't carry the bags and sent him to the parts and repair center, a thirty minute drive away. At the center an employee stated matter-of-factly that the bags had to be ordered. My husband declared, "This is really frustrating! I just drove a half an hour on the advice of one of your stores and now I can't get them? These bags regularly wear out. Why aren't they stocked?" The employee just stared at him. My husband returned home and now swears he will never darken Sear's door again. (He gets a bit rabid about customer service.)

Sears had two chances to listen to him, one to assure that he was getting the information he needed and a second to create an empathetic bond over his frustration. Both would have required listening and hearing with full understanding. Is a good repeat customer worth listening to that carefully?

If you want to stand out in your market and have clients singing your praises, it all starts with being certain all staff who deal with clients have superb listening skills. What is a client worth to you?

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Szifra helps practices discover what their clients really are asking and what questions lurk below the surface. If you're ready to hear the full story your clients are trying to tell you, contact Szifra at 978-446-9600 or Szifra@BirkeConsulting.com.

Also, drop Szifra an email and let her know what questions you'd like to hear her thoughts on; she promises she will really listen to you.