

TAKING THE TIME TO LISTEN



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Ever been in a trial and found yourself so concerned about your next move that you suddenly realize that you've heard nothing that was said for the last minute or so?

How about the times we have all experienced during an argument when we are so interested in driving home our next brilliant, winning salvo that we totally block out what the other person is saying?

Remember the days when you were cramming for that important law school exam and to your amazement and consternation,

you become aware that your mind had been on something else and you don't recall one word of your recent reading? Yes, the letters passed from the page to your eyes, but somehow your mind was otherwise occupied.

The common thread to all these times in our lives was that we had something more important (in our estimation) to focus upon than paying attention to what someone else was trying so hard to get across. Lest we think any of us is immune, just ask your spouse about this topic!

For those of us in a Bar leadership role, we have another temptation toward listening deficiency. We can get so sensitive to criticism or defensive of our positions that we miss out on incredible opportunities to listen closely to different viewpoints and thus improve upon what we do. That is why most of my time in the first few months is being spent listening to everyone who is willing to share their thoughts about the future direction of this Bar.

I have spent countless hours meeting one-on-one with each staff member and listening to their dreams for this Bar. It is my

privilege to have the chance to do the same with our Supreme Court justices, Bar leaders, members of the public, and most importantly, to every one of you who for whatever reason, have felt we really had our minds elsewhere.

In fact, it is my sincere goal to listen to anyone who cares enough about our future to take their time to give us input. We

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will spend this time in concentrated, respectful listening. As to be expected, not all suggestions will be consistent, but all will be heard, weighed, and responded to.

In upcoming articles, I will share with you the results of this listening time. The president of the Bar, Tom Ryan, and the leadership of the Bar similarly have expressed a total openness to forge a direction based on your needs and the needs of the public we serve.

Please help me in this process by writing me here at the Bar c/o "Voice" or e-mailing me at voice@mail.michbar.org If you see me, stop me and ask me to listen to your ideas. What programs and efforts should be ended, which kept, and what new services do you want.

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The process of emphasizing my "listening muscles" carries with it not only great potential benefits for this Bar, but for me personally. I will be able to do my job better, and with all this listening experience, I hope my wife, Barbara, will give me a passing grade on the home front. My next article will focus on how things are going on all fronts.

That's how I see things. What about you? ♦