

# 5 Marketing and sales

- ▶ active listening techniques
- ▶ asking questions
- ▶ roleplay: discussion with active listening

## 5.4 Management skills Active listening

### Discussion

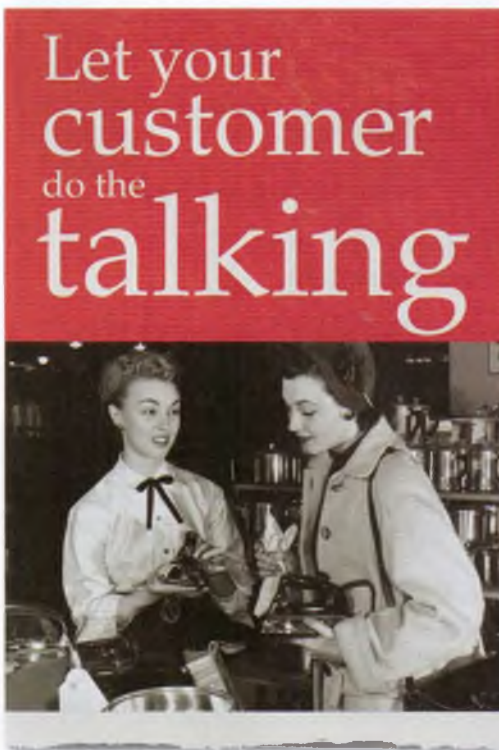
#### 1 Work in small groups. Discuss the questions.

- 1 What percentage of what we communicate do you think is transmitted by a) words b) tone of voice c) body language?
- 2 Think of some examples of good communicators. What do they have in common?

### Reading

#### 2 Fill in the spaces in the article with the words from the box.

closed leading multiple open supplementary trick



You know your product is the best on the market, but how do you sell it to your customer? Just stop talking, listen actively, and give your customer a chance to tell you!

Active listening is a life skill which can improve communication in all sorts of situations, not only on sales calls. Once you know exactly what it is that your customer, your boss, your co-worker or your partner needs, wants, thinks and feels, it becomes much easier for you to provide solutions.

The first step is to ask the right questions. There are a whole range of question types to choose from, and all too often, we don't stop to ask ourselves which ones are most suited to the task in hand. Most people will be familiar with (1) \_\_\_\_\_ questions which use words like *who*, *what*, *when*, *why*, etc. to invite the customer to follow their own agenda. They can often be followed up with (2) \_\_\_\_\_ questions, to focus on a particular point in more detail, or

to get the other person talking about their feelings. (3) \_\_\_\_\_ questions, on the other hand, require only a yes or no answer; they are useful for confirming what you have heard, and for redirecting the conversation.

Other question types should be used with care: (4) \_\_\_\_\_ questions can be useful to help a customer who is finding it difficult to express their ideas or feelings, but a barrage of options is likely to produce an unfocused response. (5) \_\_\_\_\_ questions encourage the customer to give a response that the seller wants to hear: later on, they can be a powerful tool in closing the sale, but remember, in the early stages, we want to elicit the customer's view of what they want, not to sell them our own convictions. Finally, (6) \_\_\_\_\_ questions are no-win questions: whatever answer the customer gives, they fall into your trap. This kind of question is very risky, and is probably best avoided.

#### 3 Match these sample questions with the question types in Exercise 2.

- 1 Could you tell me more about the opportunities you just mentioned?
- 2 What would you say if I told you we hacked into your IT system in less than two minutes?
- 3 How do you see your networking needs developing in the future?
- 4 I think that we should organize a demonstration – when would be the best time?
- 5 So, do you think you'll still buy off-the-shelf software packages in future?
- 6 Tell me about your IT staff. How do they feel about a change of platform? Do you think you can bring them round to the idea, and how long will it take?

### Simulation

2 Work in groups of three. Student A is a market researcher for an online store which sells books, music and software. Interview Student B about new products or services they might be prepared to pay for. Student C should monitor the question types used, and give Student A feedback at the end of the conversation.

### Brainstorming

5 With a partner, brainstorm examples of behaviour from your culture which shows you are *not* listening; think about body language in particular. Then write a checklist of recommended behaviour for active listening.

### Internet research

Search for the keywords *reading body language*. Report back to the class on your favourite findings.