

was sustained. He lost the second round last month when the legislature overrode his veto of a similar, yet more measured, tax cut bill. Now comes the third round. Instead of a single bill, Nixon is fighting a grab-bag of tax exemptions, tax credits and accounting changes in eight bills.

Some of the provisions are easy to understand. A motor fuel tax exemption for fuel delivered to a marina, for example. Or allowing the purchase of used equipment for wine producers to qualify for their tax credit.

Some are not. For example, there's new language to help corporations determine what portion of their income is taxable in Missouri. There's probably several accountants at big companies with their eyes widening at this, but for the rest of us it's hard to fathom the practical impact – except one assumes

that Nixon is going to play up between now and September when the legislature reconvenes to vote on his vetoes. He seems determined to attempt to embarrass Republicans as big spenders.

Speaker Tim Jones meanwhile has referred to the bills as “clarifications to our tax laws that will prevent the governor from exceeding his authority by unfairly collecting more taxes from our employers.”

Most of these bills had overwhelming support in the Senate. Three of the six passed without a single “no” vote, and two more with just one dissenter. All eight passed with veto-proof majorities in the Senate. That's not to say that legislators can't change their minds when presented with evidence from the executive branch about the wisdom of their vote. But in reality it means that the true battle over these eight vetoes will be

working the legislature. Therefore, it's not unreasonable to think that the lobbyists working on these various exemptions may be able to outmaneuver him.

However Nixon does have a good record of creating outside pressure. For example on the tax cut last year, he rallied the educational establishment to oppose the tax cut based on the likelihood it would ultimately decrease their own budgets. With these bills, Nixon has allied himself with the Missouri Municipal League. Their concern is that some of these exemptions of local taxes will create budget holes not at the state level, but at the local level. If that argument is found valid it could be a means for marshaling firefighters and police forces, popular groups with voters.

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## AT WORK AND AT HOME

# Listening: The key to leading



Bob Chapman

Chances are, you consider yourself a good listener. Most people do. After all, it's an inherent skill we learned when we were toddlers. It's not something we have to be taught; it just comes naturally. At least that's what I used to think.

When we launched Barry-Wehmiller University in 2008 to teach the principles of Truly Human Leadership, our university team suggested we begin by teaching communications skills. “Teach people to talk?” I asked. Didn't we learn this when we were young? And what does this have to do with learning to be leaders?

The course, while called communication skills, is essentially about learning the most powerful human relationship skill: listening. Graduates of this three-day course often tell me it “changed their lives.” Having now interviewed hundreds of graduates, it is evident that listening is the skill most needed in our world to create and affirm caring relationships. While we teach

this class in a business environment, 90 percent of the feedback is how the course impacts the class members' marriage, their parenting and their personal relationships. Regularly, I hear comments like this:

“I wish I had known this when I was young.”

“I now know how to raise my children.”

“The ability to listen, to be present, is the greatest gift I have ever given to my mother.”

What does Barry-Wehmiller gain from our investment in teaching our team members how to be better listeners?

Communication skills training has done more to perpetuate our people-centric culture than any other initiative because it allows us to connect as humans. Actively listening to one another to deeply understand our feelings and needs builds empathy. When someone listens to what we have to say, it validates our worth. The only way to fully realize the potential of our collective and individual gifts is by being an empathetic, caring, listening organization as this allows everyone to know they matter.

To me, however, the greatest value of our investment is seen when I hear comments like these: “Where I have really noticed a difference is at home. My teenage daughter now calls me and wants to talk” or “this class inspired me to become a better person – both at work and at home. I now stop and pause, especially with my family.” For many, the chance to repair relationships long damaged by an inability to effectively listen is truly life-changing.

This course has proven to be so powerful that we wanted to share what we've learned about listening. It is now being taught to members of the U.S. Air Force, church and community members in cities across the U.S. and a growing number of corporate executives.

As leaders, listening is one of the most important things we do. It builds rapport, it builds trust, it builds other people up. Developing the skills to become a more effective listener will make you a better human being.

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