

5 Signs You’re a Leader Who Talks Too Much

Charles Stone/Church Central/July 2016



Healthy conversations should be two-way streets but science tells us that we tend to spend 60 percent of our conversations talking about ourselves.

And unfortunately, leaders can talk too much, not necessarily by monopolizing conversations, but by giving too many answers. So, how do you know if you are a leader who talks too much and what can we do to stop? Consider these indicators:

1. You do more than half the talking in staff meetings.

If you do, your staff may feel the meeting is all about you rather than about the team.

2. Staff and volunteers come to you for answers more often than to offer solutions.

This can indicate an unhealthy dependence on you to solve their problems.

3. You tend to rush conversations with others.

If you’re a quick thinker and get frustrated with time wasters, you’ll struggle with this one.

4. Silence in a conversation really, really bothers you.

Action biased leaders often view silence as another time waster.

5. While another person is talking, you're framing your response.

It's easy to slip into this one. When we do, we miss half of what the other person is saying.

I suggest these three solutions to help you stop talking too much.

1. Practice the art of the W.A.I.T.

WAIT is an acronym for this question, "Why Am I Talking?" In meetings and conversations with others when you sense you may be dominating, mentally ask yourself this question. I've found it helps me listen much more carefully and talk much less.

2. Use the AWE question.

In Michael Bungay Stanier's book, *The Coaching Habit* (which is a phenomenal book every leader should read) he calls the AWE question the best coaching question in the world. It stands for, "And what else?" When you think a conversation has come to the end, he suggests asking this question 3-5 times to get everything from the other person.

3. Ask "What do you think?"

This handy question helps when you sense someone wants you to solve his problem. You may immediately know the answer, but by answering it you may foster an unhealthy dependency on you. Often when I use this question with a staff person, he or she comes up with their own solution. The result? They buy in better to their solution and they learn to think better for themselves.

The Scriptures often remind us to listen more and talk less. These are my two favorites on this topic.

James 1:19, "Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry" (NLT)

Proverbs 18:13, "Answering before listening is both stupid and rude" (The Message).