



2025 Fall Think Tank

Listening as Intervention: The Practice and Power of Listening in the Workplace

Tuesday, September 16th, 2025 | 1:00 – 4:00 PM CDT

A virtual convening for HERO members

1:00 PM

WELCOME

Karen Moseley, President & CEO, HERO

Wendy Lynch, PhD, Think Tank Chair and Senior Education Fellow, HERO

1:10 PM

Overview: The Power of Listening

Wendy Lynch, PhD, Lynch Consulting and HERO

Being heard is a foundation of engagement, belonging, performance, trust, safety, teamwork, and many other vital workplace outcomes. To kick off this Think Tank, we will explore the components of effective listening and highlight its implications.

1:40 PM

Actions Speak Louder Than (listening to) Words

Diane M. Bergeron, PhD, Center for Creative Leadership

We will explore the critical role of listening in leadership and its impact on employee voice and employees' intentions to speak up with ideas, suggestions and concerns. Employee voice is positively related to organizational effectiveness, learning and better decision making. Listening is more than just hearing words; it is an active process that involves sensing, processing, and responding to what is being communicated. We will examine research showing the relationship between listening, psychological safety, manager responsiveness and employee voice. Listening makes employees feel valued and understood. However, listening alone is not sufficient. It must be coupled with action to demonstrate that employees' voices are genuinely heard and considered. Rather than making an 'in-the-moment' assessment of listening, employees often assess listening months later based on whether anything changed as a result of speaking up. In fact, depending on the context, taking action can often be more important than 'good' listening skills. We will delve into what action really means and highlight the array of strategies that leaders can use to show they are listening.

2:20 PM

BREAK

2:30 PM

Unlocking Performance Through Presence: The Role of Active Listening
Sonya Looney, MAPP, MS, Grow the Good Institute

Feeling valued, seen, heard is a powerful catalyst for increased performance. We will explore how mattering, especially through the experience of being listened to with presence and intention, drives motivation, psychological safety, and sustained productivity. When individuals believe their voice truly matters, they engage more deeply, take creative risks, and remain resilient in the face of challenges, leading directly to higher individual and organizational performance. Drawing on research from positive psychology, organizational behavior, and coaching psychology, active listening is positioned as a foundational skill for cultivating a culture of mattering that leads to measurable results. By prioritizing practical, evidence-informed approaches, organizations can strengthen trust and unlock meaningful, lasting improvements in both performance and well-being.

3:10 PM

Ways of Listening
Rita Patel, MPH, CWWPM, Hylant

Listening in workplaces often happens through surveys, exit interviews, or pulse checks — data-driven snapshots of sentiment. But what if listening could be more alive, more creative, and more embedded in the everyday rhythms of work?

We will explore fresh, human-centered approaches to listening that support dignity, agency, and hope in the workplace. Supporting these basic human needs is essential because they foster psychological safety, motivation, and resilience. When people feel respected, empowered, and optimistic, they're more engaged, healthier, and better able to contribute meaningfully to their organization and community.

We will move beyond compliance-based feedback systems to consider listening as a cultural practice — something that can be playful, visual, embodied, and even restorative. These creative approaches help build *weak ties* — the often-overlooked connections that strengthen our sense of belonging and trust. Case examples, artistic methods, and experiential tools will showcase unique ways of listening that open space for empathy, inclusion, and innovation. When we choose to listen, we choose to be open to change. Together, we'll explore workplace rituals that center attention and care while supporting meaningful transformation.

We will engage in reflective exercises and leave with adaptable methods for our own organizational contexts. Whether you're building a wellness strategy, shaping culture, or rethinking engagement, this session will expand your toolkit — and your imagination — for what listening can look and feel like at work.

3:50 PM

CLOSING
Karen Moseley, HERO

4:00 PM

ADJOURN

Listening as Intervention: The Practice and Power of Listening in the Workplace

Intentional, sustained, and active listening delivers profound benefits for organizations and the people within them. Listening isn't limited to gathering input through intermittent surveys—it also involves the interpersonal skill of paying close attention to others in ways that help them feel heard, acknowledged, and valued. In fact, employees with managers who listen effectively *feel* better, *perform* better, *achieve* more, *stay* longer, and *enjoy* their work more than those whose managers don't.

Despite its power, few organizations treat listening as a core capability. In a recent survey of our Think Tank members, fewer than half reported that their organization prioritizes active listening.

Join us on September 16th for our Fall Think Tank—an informative and interactive session exploring how organizations put active listening into practice. Participants will hear real-world examples of how effective (and ineffective) listening affects employee and customer retention, employee health, and more. Practitioners will share insights on how to foster a culture of listening, and attendees will leave with practical strategies to embed listening into their own work environments.

Learning Objectives:

After attending this Think Tank, participants will be able to:

- Understand the impact of listening on coworkers and direct reports.
- Develop an awareness of the barriers to good listening.
- Understand the safety-efficacy calculus that underlies the relationship between listening and employee voice.
- Identify specific actions that make employees feel listened to.
- Explain how creative listening practices differ from traditional feedback systems and their role in promoting employee well-being.
- Identify at least two innovative listening strategies that foster dignity, agency, and hope within workplace culture.
- Develop practical next steps to implement intentional listening techniques into their own teams or workplace settings.
- Define mattering and explain its role in driving individual and team performance.
- Explore how active listening serves as a key behavior that fosters a sense of mattering.
- Examine the link between psychological safety, felt significance, and sustainable high performance.
- Learn skills of specific listening behaviors that enhance motivation, engagement, and trust.