

Coaching Tip: Equality of Voice

One of the most important things you can do as a coach is listen. Books are written about the importance of listening and one of the previous coaching tips was entirely about listening. This particular coaching tip is about one particular thing to listen for: conversational privilege or equality of voice.

Being aware of a conversation's equality of voice is crucial in making sure that everyone feels **welcome, heard, valued, and respected**. It is also going to be critical in making sure that as many possible solutions and ideas are heard.

On your next call, begin listening for who talks the most. Why do you think they contribute the most? Is there someone that calls in every month but barely says a word? Be aware of who is talking and who isn't. Great ideas can be missed if someone is too shy, overwhelmed, or feeling unsupported.

Concrete ways to move beyond inequality of voice:

- Take notes of who is in attendance, that way you can keep track of a person who might not be talking.
- Depending on the person, put them on the spot by asking them for their opinion on an issue.
- Are one or two people monopolizing the conversation? Politely interject and ask for other thoughts.
- Sending out an agenda or talking points ahead of time can help those who are more shy or introverted prepare comments ahead of time so they can feel more comfortable raising their own points.
- Consider speaking to an individual one-on-one and ask them why they aren't participating as much as others.
- Listen to be sure that everyone is being respected and heard. Set ground rules if that is not happening.

Don't forget: be aware of your own conversational privilege!

You may be running the call, but you shouldn't be the most prominent voice. It is OK to let the call fall silent for a moment to prompt other people to speak.

Resources:

- Coaching Tip on listening
- [Appreciative Inquiry](#)