

Jerome Deroy:

[00:11:35](#)

I'm going to go right ahead and introduce our two guests today we're talking about listening and leadership. This is part of our webinars series, our business series on storytelling in business. And I have here with us today. I've got Murray Nossel who's the Co founder and director of Narativ. And full disclosure, I am the CEO of Narativ. So Murray is my business partner at Narativ, you know, Murray works with leaders all over the world. He's also on the Faculty of the Narativ Medicine Program. He's an Oscar nominated documentary film maker and he's a performer of the critically acclaimed "Two Men Talking". He's a motivational speaker and he leads all of our training programs and he has a book out right now which is called Powered By Storytelling: Excavate, Craft, and Present Stories to transform business communication. So that's really a lot of what you're going to be hearing is, is taken from that book actually and, this methodology that very created a while ago, and I'm sure he'll talk about that and then second on your screen is Trace Cohen and Trace is the CEO of 214 which is a branding and creative agency. And that agency really gets to the heart of what a brand stands for, tapping into purpose to build and position brands people love. So really great to have Trace. We go way back. Both Murray and Trace are from South Africa and have known each other for a long time. And I've known Trace for awhile too, so I'm really thrilled to have the two of you here for this Webinar on listening and leadership and you may be asking or wondering why listening when we're talking about a webinar series on storytelling in business. Well, obviously for us, and this will be my way of kicking things off for discussion for the two of you, for us at Narativ, storytelling and listening are inextricably linked and, and they are in fact reciprocal. So if you can have, you can have a wonderful story to tell and maybe some of you have had this experience before. Maybe you're presented and you've rehearsed your presentation and it's going great and you feel like you're ready, but then you're walk into the room and no one is listening and you realize that your presentation has no impact because of that. And so it's the same thing with storytelling. If we can have a fantastic story to tell, but if no one is listening, it won't have any impact. So we're going to take things a little bit deeper in this conversation and really explore listening as the basis of all communication. So I'm going to go ahead and say that and I'd love to kick things off the web. We're going to structure the next 20 minutes or so I'm going to be guiding a conversation between Murray and Trace really along the lines of why listening in the first place, why do we need to pay attention to that in business and then how do we actually create ourselves and make ourselves better listeners or enhance our listening. And we've talked a lot about this notion of a listening organization. So I'd love to go into a little bit into

that and then would love to finish with some concrete steps that all of those that are listening and viewing right now can take home with them.. And then after these 20 minutes have passed, we'll do a q and a and that's when you can use your chat box here, which I have access to it, I can see at all times. So if you have any questions along the way, please chat to me and I'll keep those on the side and we can keep those for the q and a part which will be another 15, 20 minutes as well. Great. Okay. So without further ado, I'd love to kick things off and just asking the first place why, why listening and why do you feel? And maybe I'll start with you, Trace you know, as the person who sort of the brand expert right now, at this, at this table, what do you think is the benefit of, of listening and why? Why should we even pay attention as, as leaders of organizations are brand leaders?

Trace Cohen:

[00:15:35](#)

Great question. And as the leader of 214, which is a really awesome, I say it because of the people who are in it. I'm brand creative agency. We're located in Soho in New York City. And I say this in front of my team who I believe is listening in to this, to this talk today, is that Murray's work and Narativ's work in many ways has shaped how we listen and do business as an organization and my team through you has become familiar with the idea of this reciprocal relationship between listening and telling and that ultimately listening is a vessel. And you actually diagram that in your book, is that ultimately listening is a vessel that shapes the storytelling. It's a pretty highfalutin concept. It's something that takes a bit of tweaking to really get right, like listening shapes the telling until you really start to sink in and realize that if you're not truly listening, the story isn't landing literally like that. And so we'll definitely talk to. I think there are ways in my leadership style that I have learned to bring listening more successfully into what we do. I think for the, for the sort of, a way that, you know, impacts the organizations and impacts those around us, but very specific to the work. So as a branding agency, for example, one of the key roles that we play is first in what we call brand foundation organization, truly understanding what their brand purpose is and we look to get that as a description in five words or less to describe what it is that you do. So maybe like Google's brand purpose would be organizing the world's information or tasteless would be accelerating to clean energy. And so we run workshops where we get to that five word brand purpose. And prior to those meetings we've shaped a practice internally and it's very light, right? But it's really the idea that we're about to. We often work with startups there at the beginning of a new venture or it's an existing business and they actually don't know their purpose. They don't know what they stand for, they know

they know what they're going to do, but they haven't got to the higher order idea that really is their north star shapes their thinking and will ultimately shape the listening of their organization, their lens through which to filter all their actions. So we conduct a workshop, it's a five hour workshop, and at the end of that workshop you come out with that five that word statements. So for example, one of our clients is a brand called fluid. They recently launched a store. They're around, they're the world's first gender neutral retail experience. You don't shop by boys and girls, men and women. It's just you know, gender neutral. And they're at the forefront of this burgeoning revolution around gender neutrality essentially, which is very much what Gen z is bringing to the fore. We don't want to be labeled. We live in a nonbinary world. Rob Smith is the founder. We as an agency, don't come to a brand and say, this is what your purpose is. We facilitate a workshop where we listen for what that purpose is and we guide in that workshop and prior to that workshop we sit in a room as a team and say the people who are about to enter into this room, who are starting this business or who are looking to identify the purpose of their business, this is, this is a big deal for them. The today is a big day for them. They're going to come out having uncovered at the core, their north star, their brand purpose and our role in order to extract that or excavate that or birth that idea is to truly listen, not come up from a place of arrogance. Like we know that to come from a place of deep listening so that our listening is tuned in throughout that five hour period. And yes, we're doing our work and facilitating, but it's through listening that we can uncover that purpose statement. And so before, just to wrap this up, for example, rob company was fluid. It was around, you know, challenging this, notion of the, of this sort of binary, the purpose to, evolve to be challenging boundaries with humanity and it came out of the listening.

Jerome D: [00:19:49](#) So I have to ask what does it mean to truly listen? And maybe Murray, you want to talk to you or you can both have a discussion about that.

Murray N : [00:19:59](#) For me listening to something that's so in this moment, you know, and so when I think about listening, I'm actually thinking about listening right now in this moment and the fact that you are shaping my listening because you're sitting right opposite me. Jerome is sitting at a monitor and he is shaping my listening because he's in the room with me and I know that there are a lot of you out there who are listening. Some of you are in the UK, some of you are in Uganda. You know, for some people it's the afternoon, but some people it's the early evening. And so I'm aware of the fact that we are currently in a listening

environment. and it's a listening environments that is so quintessentially modern, right of this age. We're in a room in Tribeca in New York City. Somebody is in London, but someone's in Canada. So you're all with us at the moment. And your listening is for me something that I'm needing to trust. So as I anxiously sat here while we were getting set up and people were typing in, you know, that they couldn't hear us and then we were muted and I was anxious about it, or let's get this show on the road and you know, technology's always something you have to get used to. And at the same time it was kind of reassuring to know that there were people out there and that they weren't listening and that you are listening and that this is happening in very invisible ways at the moment. That our listening is constituting this conversation and that each person's listening, even people who are sitting remotely in their offices or at home are listening right now. And so for me, it's always begins by acknowledging the listening. So thank you for your listening. And thank you for your listening because without your listening, our words would be of far less significance. I would have thought less resonance. So for me it's always about firstly establishing the listening relationship. Jerome, would you repeat the question because I feel like I've gone off track.

Jerome D:                    [00:22:39](#)                    Trace mentioned that in your workshops what you facilitated, what you do first is that you truly listen. My question was what does it mean to truly listen well, what it means to truly listen is to, as I said, be completely present.

Murray N :                    [00:22:59](#)                    so the first thing is to establish your presence as a physical body in a physical space. So I think that's the first thing that I was actually doing there in the moment. And the other thing that it means to truly listen is that I need to be able to set aside all my own assumptions and preconceptions and judgments and all that inner noise that I've got going on that actually gets in the way of my ability to. This is a very tall order because we as humans are sort of are habituated to this kind of reactive way of being, you know, so you say something and instead of my sort of just taking in what you're saying, I'm already thinking of the next thing that I'm going to say and in that moment in time I lose my presence with you and all sorts of obstacles that arise in our listening. So the first step towards listening is to be able to be present with your body in a space and to have the self awareness to be able to identify and name these obstacles, obstacles to listening so that you can release them.

Trace C:                    [00:24:17](#)                    Totally. Can I add to that? I think one part that struck me Murray when you were talking about the kind of being able to put aside what is going kind of the lens through, through which

you might be listening. And I think that there's two areas just to kind of quick points. One is around like listening at a more personal level and another is the impact that that can have on business. And I think one of them is, again, is an exercise might be great for you to share with the audience around what it means to clear the listening and I'm not saying we do this 100 percent at 214 because we don't, but the idea of, you know, you do that as a consistent practice in terms of prior to any meeting, you know, carrying the listening so that you can kind of name what might be in the way of your listening so that you can then be totally present in the meeting. I noticed it yesterday. I had a call that sort of was a business. It was actually more of a kind of business personal call. It was very quick. Something happened that just sort of rattled me personally. I went into the next meeting and it just noticed that I just kept going back to this conversation. I wasn't able to be present, you know, and it just made it so clear to me how I had not cleared my listening because I was still stuck in this other conversation. And you know, that said sort of as a leader, that's a sort of consistent piece and there was a, there's a practice that, that we've done at 214. We don't do it consistently. It's this idea that we've spoken about. If you really knew me, you would know. And it's this idea of just kind of letting people know something that's going on for you in terms of this is what's happened. You know, an example is I worked with a young guy, at one point had lost a friend, a dear friend. There was the kind of crash of two war ships. The USS McCain was one of them, a bunch of naval officers lost their lives. And one of them was a dear friend that he had grown up with. And here was this guy coming to work every day showing up, quote unquote, doing his job until it was communicated to me on whatsapp. It seems like something's going on that he had lost a friend in this very extraordinary way where he had just lost his life and this traumatic way. And the conversation, we had to both allow him the space grieve to go for a walk and to take some time that day to be with his feelings and emotions around the loss as a way to be able to clear his listening because that was the only way to, you know, both show on a human level to, to want to endorse that. But on the other support that, on the other hand, you can't be affected. We can't be effective if you're listening is impacted. I'm just going to jump quickly into a second point, which is when you were talking about sort of the lens through which you listen. There's also this idea of a cultural lens through which you listen. And a lot of times, as we all know, kind of diversity is very much a, you know, is very much up for us as a country, as a nation in terms of creating more diverse workplaces. And the fact that, you know, hiring tends to happen through this lens of Sea of Sameness. You hire people because they look like you. They talk

to you, you know, they're hanging out at the same bars and go listen to the same music. And so what we have is we have, you know, we have a culture of Sameness in listening and yet the impact for business when you can, when you can embrace diversity, is not to be politically correct and do the right thing. It's about that you are going to get a better product because the listening people will be listening from a much broader cultural lens where they understand you're listening to product development from the lens of how would that impact the African American community, might construe it how the, how the Latina community might think about it. You're thinking more comprehensively and you're able to bring a much broader listening, to the improvement of your brand, your product, your service.

Murray N: [00:28:20](#) So what you're really saying the Trace is that listening begins with the individual in the company and in between the team, there's listening as well and that it radiates out from inside your company to your customers, to your clients. The listening begins within inside and that actually ends up having a ripple effect in the relationship that you have with your customers and the way that you radiate out your message into the world.

Trace C: [00:28:59](#) Absolutely. I mean, I look at, I look at an organization, for example, like Zappos who's mission is delivering happiness and that was one of the organizations that was breakthrough from the beginning in terms of Zappos became known less about shoes and more about making the customers happy, right? The story goes that a customer once spoke about how they were dying for a slice of pizza and Zappa, the customer service person, Mike had Pizza delivered to their doorstep and they are not in the business of delivering shoes like they could have just been in the business of delivering shoes, but now they've been able to expand much more broadly in terms of their offering in that they deliver happiness and delivering happiness comes from being great listeners. They differentiated from a customer service perspective hugely in that what they were able to do was truly listened to their customer needs and that improves offering service, product, broader experience because they're focused so intently on listening.

Jerome D: [00:30:02](#) so how does that impact, because we're talking about leadership here and I think there's a notion that leaders are people that are in positions of leadership, but I think we all find the three of us in this room anyway and perhaps people that are listening and viewing here, that's not really true. It's just a title. We're all leaders. We could argue and I would argue that it's not at Zappos. Somehow if that person, at customer

experience had felt like they had the permission to do that, to actually deliver a slice of pizza to someone because they felt like that was the mission of the company. How do we. How do we transmit that as, as people who are in positions of leadership, how does that happen? How does that trickle down or how does the ripple effect happening?

Murray N :

[00:30:47](#)

You know, I'd like to give an example from within our company where I'm a leader, I'm one of the founders of the company, one of my colleagues was going away to his house, which is far away and he said it's a very important for them to go there. It's a house in the mountains and it's a place where he's able to just recharge his batteries. He's in a situation where you have to be creative a lot of the time and recharging is batteries is really important for him. So he said, I'll be working from my house in the mountains and now he's someone that I talked to many times a day. Usually every time anything exciting happens, I text him what I actually can't believe what just happened because I'd had a very busy week last week with a lot of, you know, interviews and broadcasts and that kind of thing. I wonder to tell him what had happened after each one of them as I usually do, I walk out into the streets if I'm in the studio and I called him up and I couldn't reach him. I just couldn't reach him. But he said he was working from home, working from home, working from his house in the mountains. Well, it turned out that his house in the mountains doesn't have very good telecommunications and so we had just set up time to talk to one another. Well, a lot of things that happened for me last week ran overtime. You know, I had a meeting at McGraw Hill. I was giving a lunchtime lecture and then the executives took me out for lunch on a went on for two and a half hours and so I wasn't in time for the call, the call and it was like, well, why should I be in time for the call? You know, this is a work day, you know, and I got more and more worked up about this so that by the time he came back to the office yesterday, I could barely even face him to talk to him because I was so irritated and then I was upset with myself for being irritated and it was just like, well I shouldn't be able to just get over this. I mean, you know, is it such a big deal? But I wasn't very agitated and then because he's such an extraordinary human being, it's such an amazing colleague and he does such a great deal of good work. I was just like, I can't, I can't bring this up. I just simply can't. Now I'm the guy who wrote the listening clearing method. Right? And here I am in my own company having such as about doing it, but it's, I don't want to cause waves, but there's something I have to communicate and there's something structurally that has to change in our company in terms of if you're aware and you're remote, you need to let everyone

know just what this, what their restrictions are going to be in terms of communication. But I was afraid, but I realized I had to do it and I think this is what being a leader means is you have to talk the walk. You have to be who you say you are and that that's being a leader and it means taking a risk, that willingness to take a risk. You may upset someone. Well, I sat down with Sasha and I spoke to him and I said to him, this is what was there for me. Just hearing it from your perspective, from my perspective, for you, what was that for me? And he knows because that's the way that this, this principle works. He knows that he's only drop while I am saying what's up for me. In other words, what's an obstacle to my ability to listen to him? He's only job is to listen quietly and to get it. And then when some, once I'm finished, then he has a turn to tell me what's interrupting his listening now it takes a huge amount of skill to be able to do what he's doing because I could be saying to him, you know, you know, I couldn't reach you last week and he could just be thinking to themselves and what about those 20 hours a week I'd been working for the last six weeks and you just couldn't, you know, he could just be getting really resentful and annoyed with me for having these thoughts and having these feelings. So it takes such a lot of practice and discipline to be able to hear what the other person has to say even if they're being a total brat and get it. And that allows me to let it go. And of course one side said it, it was like a puff of smoke. It was just like out of the way. He just told me it was so important for him to have a retreat and that in some ways it really just helped him to be offline. I totally got it.

Trace C:

[00:35:34](#)

I just think through that because as I'm listening to that, I'm like going, okay, how can I do more of that with even just with my colleagues and the people that I work with, how can we bring more of that? So on the one hand you're talking about, you know, something that is, you know, an age old story, so to speak. Right? In terms of like listening is, its just like, it's the basic, it's the foundation. If story telling is that is the foundation of our sort of narrative as a, as a social species, then listening is as old as that. Right. And yet at the same time, the way that I'm hearing it now as well is that it's actually also very sophisticated modern technology in that if we can execute it the way that you've described, right. If that's true, what you say that I can, if you and I are in conflict, I get the opportunity to say blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. This was my experience and this is why I'm upset, pissed off, you know, delighted, et cetera, and then stop and then you have the opportunity to say through your lens why that is, what your experience was and will actually, what I was feeling Mary was that I had given you all of this time and here are wise, you know, finally taking time

to focus on what the work that really needed to be done instead of just being available to your whims, so to speak, right at a day, and then he communicates that. Boom. Are you saying then that that is literally all that is needed in a puff of smoke, that just everything is cleared?

Murray N :

[00:37:07](#)

Yes. That's literally all that's needed because you are in a business and you both want the same thing. You want your business to be successful. You are not doing this to have a therapy session with one another. This is not some kind of co-counseling. Yeah. This is quite literally a way to make sure that the business can carry on running creatively and smoothly and effectively and something has gotten in the way. No, I actually said to Sasha, I've got five obstacles to listening and I went through the categories that are written my book, firstly, the physiological obstacle to this, physical. Okay, now you know, Trace, because we've known one another for a long time that I love to swim and it turned out that I haven't because I've been traveling, I haven't been able to swim for a week well if I can't swim for a week it does things to me. It's not a good idea for me not to swim for a week. So that was the first thing. I mean I just literally had this kind of nibs attention to my buddy from the second level was internal obstacles. Lots of thoughts and emotions just running around. It doesn't even matter what they were, you know, so when you're distracted by the staff, you call that an obstacle. And as they often say, feelings are not facts. And I was just feeling stuff. I was resentful that I was feeling then I was feeling guilty about feeling resentful. It doesn't matter what the actual feelings. Then there's the obstacles, right? And the psychological, psychological obstacles, other obstacles that you make meaning of the thoughts and feelings that you have a right to giving them unnecessary weight, giving them a because you started interpreting them. I go, Oh, you know, he's, he's, he's trying to teach me a lesson is being aggressive and eye makeup pulled up that then I make up my own meanings about logical meanings. You know, I get into my family history and wonder why I'm thinking this way so you can see, you know, one. Then of course, did the environmental or external obstacles, which in this case his technology, he's a two hour time difference. So way he's cell phones don't work in the mountains, you know, and we've got to set up a specific times for talking. So time and technology and distance of time becomes an obstacle. And then of course there's the relational obstacle, right? My relationship with him, I really value my relationship with him. The last thing I want to do, so these feelings, the last thing I want is to feel angry and resentful towards him. He's just the most extraordinarily creative and collaborative and supportive colleague. How could I possibly be

feeling and yet I am and I know that unless I just clear the air, we are not going to be able to effectively collaborate with one another and we both want the same thing and if you are not both onboard or all on board with the fact that you are doing this to make your business a better place, then it will not work.

Trace C:

[00:40:15](#)

That idea that it's really talks to is certainly from an internal culture perspective, how it can be so effective with clients, et cetera. There are other ways, right? But in terms of saying that as a culture, you are truly aligned around the same purpose and you have the same goal and that if you're coming from that place and it's understood that the intent is, you know, that that is kind of set as the, as the purpose and it might be understood in various different ways, but then it's ultimately that you're coming from that place that you then are in a, in an agreement, right. And you can successfully have that conversation. I mean, I've had that conversation with my team, you know, when we, for example, with this exercise, if you really knew me, you would know. And at a certain point people enjoyed it for awhile and then at a certain point it was starting to feel to people. And I respected that, that it was this idea of like there was an expectation almost to be vulnerable. Like if I didn't bring some, you know, hugely kind of deep narrative about what was going on in my life personally. There wasn't room for me. Right. And, and people kind of introduced a new methodology for the Monday morning meetings, which was more around, hey, why don't we just ask each other questions around, you know, favorite comfort food or whatever we wanted to be when I grew up, or questions that would more give us more of a listening or context for understanding each other, but didn't necessarily put this kind of narrative is pressure on what the narrative needed to be. Because if you really knew me, you would know started after time to feel that way. The one push back that I did have on my team was just so, you know, I'm not doing this because I want to have some sappy, lovey dovey conversation with my team. And actually like, sure. It's true that it's about kind of having a, you know, is a deep desire for me in terms of like work and life on separate. That there is one in the same thing. And of course I want to be connected to the narrative of each person. And the Lens through which I was doing that in a business context was it allows us all to be a better team. It allows us to be more productive, that allows us to be able to get to conclusions and assumptions and, and kind of an understanding of where we're coming from. If somebody is putting a case in terms of, I think this is the brand strategy or this is Jared, who's my lead brand strategist, might be talking about, you know, here are some ways that I'm thinking trace and team about positioning x brand. Well, if we're more

connected as a team, everybody's going to have a deeper listening for jarrod understand where he's coming from in a way that we have deeper context of each other. We know what's up for each other and therefore we, I feel we can be more productive because we have you know, a strong listening within the culture.

Murray N : [00:43:05](#)

Yeah. And then people could also be more forthcoming about what they know because again, you know, every single person who works in an organization is an incredibly valuable asset. And what you want to be able to do is to tap into the knowledge's and you know, the special experiences and the particular insights of each individual. So if you are not setting up an environment where people can feel like they truly listened to, you're not going to be generating the kinds of special knowledge is. But you know, one of the things that's going through my mind at the moment and it's even becoming an obstacle to my listening, is I'm wondering what our. Listen to his timing. Oh, listen to this are listening to us, right? You know what effect is out speaking, having on the listening. So let's check in and see what else speaking is creating and the listening.

Jerome D: [00:43:58](#)

So I have sent a message through the chat box to actually ask people to send examples of obstacles to listening as well as any questions or reflections that they're having based on what you've been talking about it. And quite a few. So the first I want to go to is a Joshua who asking. Our sales process includes identifying an objective in quotes for each of the 64 unique calls per week. This makes it more difficult to clear myself for listening. How would, how would you recommend that I address this objective, the 64 unique calls, while at the same time I have to set aside, set things aside in order to listen more effectively in each of those meetings. Right? I'm going to interpret that question as how do you keep your listening fresh and how do you keep your presence when you have to go from one call to the next and it sounds like 64 unique calls every week. So in other words, people that you don't know, and keeps your listening fresh and be present for them every time.

Trace C: [00:45:01](#)

Yeah, I think, I think it comes back to this idea of the kind of common goal, right? And your, what we would, what we would define at 2:14 as being your brand purpose, right? Like what are you doing it for? So I think that if you can clarify each day what you're doing at four, let's just take Tesla for example, right? You know, assuming that that sort of purpose is threaded throughout successfully thread throughout the organization. If you come coming, coming from a place of accelerating the

world to clean energy and your focus is on is on, you know, kind of you know, impacting the environment for the better, right? Or if you are, you know, any brand that has a very clear purpose, then one way to really tap into those calls, yes they might be 64 different calls, but is there a way to be able to really come from that place of why? What is your purpose? Why am I doing this? Remind yourself what your purpose is and then listen through the lens of your purpose so that you're listening for something through that Lens. And I know Murray, you talk a lot about this idea of listening for that might be helpful to kind of identify and if not through the lens of listening for, I think we be great to hear from you from that same question, as Joshua,, on the one hand, like how do I, not only how do I, you know, listen for 64 different things and I'm saying come from a singular purpose but also in life. What does Joshua need today to clear his listening.

- Murray N : [00:46:42](#) Oh, for each goal. Yes. And that's what I wanted to get to as well, Josh.
- Jerome D: [00:46:51](#) Joshua is saying yes, exactly. Yes. Yes. So we're on track. We're on track.
- Murray N: [00:46:55](#) And then of course, Joshua, there's you as a physiological being of your body. It's reminding us, we all out, we all bodies in space. You know, when I was a psychologist, my supervisor once reminded me that I had a body not just to carry my head to work. So you're a whole body and you. The first thing that I think is really very important for you to be able to identify it because once you've identified that it's literally quite stressful on the body, on the physical body to have to do these calls and to be able to have to listen to 64 calls per week, so just knowing and reminding yourself, hold on a second, just take something and to remind yourself to keep listening to, to look at those physiological obstacles to listening like what do you need to be doing to be able to be fully present?
- Trace C: [00:47:54](#) What do you mean? Go for a swim. Then make sure that you're exercising, taking care of yourself.
- Murray N: [00:48:03](#) Well taking care of yourself. Definitely making sure that you are not hungry when you're doing it. That's a really, is it really like like a big obstacle? Listening if you're hungry or if you're thirsty or just your basic needs aren't taken care of. Then the other thing is just the breast and that yes, the idea I've still got 47 calls to get through can start to make you feel really breathless and you can start to feel like you're racing ahead of yourself. And so I think that even if it's a matter of taking two minutes just to

refresh your listening in between calls and just to make sure that you are present and fully grounded before you start each call, it just wakes up this developing muscle of listening and knowing that listening is an incredibly sophisticated action, not just something that you would have medically and passively.

- Jerome D:                    [00:49:00](#)                    So I have a few more that are trickling in now. Let's see. Ellen said early on about 10 minutes ago, how Upfront Murray mentioned a technique for clearing the listening before any meeting, any meeting. And then you, you mentioned the obstacles to listening very but, but can you explain what you do specifically and ask others to do before a meeting starts?
- Trace C:                    [00:49:24](#)                    And if you want to give an actual example, if you want me to, if you can maybe talk about how you carried your listening prior to this Podcast/Webinar.
- Murray N:                    [00:49:33](#)                    Exactly. So, so we sat down and we know at this point because it's become a standard practice that before we're going to engage in this webinar and because we know that your listening out there is a gift that we're receiving, you are making it possible for our ideas and our words and our knowledge to them that the least that we can do is to make sure that there are no obstacles to listening in this room. So what I did was we sat down and I said, okay. Or Jerome said, let's clear obstacles to listening. And I quite literally went first and I said, I think I had my eyes closed. And I talked about how, you know, just, just the first thing in my listening was how wonderful it was to work with you Trace. And I was kind of feeling kind of jazzed about it. You know, I was feeling excited and then I actually quite literally in that moment just close my eyes and took a few deep breaths so that I could actually in that moment, you know, reduce that obstacle, that being so jazzed and excited wasn't going to be really helping me to listen that much. So I wonder to take that and let it go. And by speaking it to you and to Jerome, it allowed me to identify it and then let it go. And then when I was finished you said thank you. And Jerome said, thank you. And then we went onto Jerome and then we came to you. So what was it like for you to clear your obstacles in that moment?
- Trace C:                    [00:51:11](#)                    Just really powerful. I mean, what it brought up for me, I was able to say stuff like, well, one of the things in my listening is that I'm not prepared, you know, and that I should have, you know, there was this one chapter in your book that I had had read the book, but there was another chapter that I wanted to reread last night. I didn't do that. So what was in my listening was feeling that I hadn't done the work and that I wasn't prepared and sort of, you know, the usual anxious narrative

that I might have about not being good enough or not being able to add enough value. And then we shifted even when we closed out on the listening. The next thing that you guys do is you talk from, it's clear the listening and then you speak about setting an intention and that's a beautiful combination, right? Because it's first clearing, the listening, getting those obstacles to listening out of the way and then setting an intention. And even from that space, I could then be, once I knew what was in my listening, I was concerned I hadn't done my homework. And then for I wasn't going to be a valuable contributor on the, on the Webinar, well then my intention became to add value. And the place that I've come from then allows me, instead of looking at a sounding good or sounding intelligent or whatever, ego, ego, ego, kind of the opportunity to be like, well, I'm really coming from this place where my intent at a true, heartfelt level is how to add value to the listening.

Murray N : [00:52:31](#) Yes. And that's where listening comes in. The intention is quite literally, that you have, when you have an intention of adding value, you're going to constantly come back to adding value. When those obstacles arise, a come on, my intention is to add value. The intention that I set, which was now going to shape, the way I was going to listen after clearing my obstacles was connection. You know?

Trace C: [00:52:59](#) Your world intention and listening for could almost be substituted. Setting my, my listening for in a social environment is to have fun or to connect deeply or in a business environment is to add value or to solve this particular challenge are listening for that.

Jerome D: [00:53:16](#) Yeah, and just to specify because someone was asking, did you verbalize those listening obstacles or just say them to yourself. You verbalize those. That's the whole point of the exercise is to actually speak to one another, what the listening obstacles are, so that we're each aware of each other's obstacles and that we can actually communicate in a much clearer way. That's a clear of those obstacles. That's, it's really a communication tool actually. Would you say so?

Murray N : [00:53:49](#) Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, for me, the whole. Now if we take the example that you gave earlier, Trace about the colleague who had just found out that a dear friend had been killed right now. Yes. This person could be saying it to themselves. This is an obstacle to listening. But nonetheless, the team was still looking at them and thinking what's going on with him? He doesn't seem quite present. So there are two things that, that I'm speaking of the obstacles were listening is actually off actually

serving. The first is that they are able to articulate it to themselves in a witnessed kind of way in order to let it go. And the other lets his colleagues know what's going on with them so that they don't think it's something that they did or said that's causing him to be in a subdued kind of space. So the articulation is incredibly important and every time you articulate an obstacle to this evening you are in, in fact, you're practicing, you're exercising that muscle of, of awareness related to listening. And I just wanted to also say the thing that you said, you know, like you, you, you, you're one of the obstacles that arose to you. If you. Do you mind if I refer to it as your obstacle? And so if I'm going to talk to anyone else about an obstacle that they spoke, I want to ask their permission to do it because you might've just released that obstacle already and you don't want to bring it back into, into the player game. So you're talking about judgment, right? Self judgment, right? I didn't prepare enough. I should have done more. That is one of the most pervasive, obstacles in business that I've found no matter where I go, whether it's tech companies or media companies or pharmaceutical companies, people are they particularly when the bosses in the room, you know, or they've been there or there's some kind of evaluative circumstance and not doing a good enough job. And so there's a kind of a culture of fear that you don't feel like you're doing enough. Right? And we're all very busy doing what we have to do and you fear that you, that you're not doing enough and this is a major obstacle to listening, just to be able to see that judgment, that self criticism, that aggression that is turned towards the self and realize there's not helping anyone to have yourself.

Jerome D:

[00:56:24](#)

Yeah. So something really related to this that Sylvie said, which is that as a freelancer, I have to frequently pitch story ideas to editors. I don't meet physically. Yeah. So it's hard to not take refusal personally and come up with theories about the reasons behind the non-answers or the refusal. This creates obstacles like self doubt, unnecessary shyness. Sometimes even an arrogance to compensate. So my question is how to clear listening in such a context question was amazing question. Just really love that. And, oh, and also someone to edit, which I think is kind of linked to this. Does clearing obstacles have anything to do with quote unquote putting your own ego aside?

Murray N :

[00:57:07](#)

Yes, it does have to do with putting your own ego aside, but it's a very tricky. You see if you in this situation that I mentioned earlier what Sasha, right, putting my own ego aside might have just meant Murray snap out of it already, you know, so you couldn't talk to him when you wanted to. So what you just being a narcissistic Brat, stop it. Okay. So that would've been me

being judgmental and harsh and aggressive towards myself. So yes, it's, it's, it's coming from my ego, but I am only sharing it with him as a way of releasing the grasp of my ego. And he's a trusted person. So I know that he's going to listen with kindness and compassion to what I'm saying. He's in on some level, we're going to realize it has nothing to do with them, so the same in your situation so you see it has nothing to do with you, but it's hard, particularly when you're a freelancer working on your own, not to take that kind of thing person and so I think that when you are a freelancer, it's very helpful to have a group of people, other people who are maybe in the same field as you or maybe not even in the same field where you can at least be meeting up once a week. Maybe creating these kinds of contexts where you can be talking about what's going on in your respect of single member businesses so that you have an opportunity to speak these things out aloud. So I would say it's important to create that kind of community even if there's one other person that you can have as your kind of action partner to do that with. And of course if you don't have that available, then just sort of sitting with your notebook and like writing it out. You know, these are currently my obstacles to listening. I do that. Let's say that I'm on tour and I'm, and I'm, you know, having to talk to a group of people in a strange city, and I don't have anyone to clear my listening and then I just write it up for myself and my intention for myself. But I think that you've really caught something really, you know, sort of powerful there in terms of the kinds of doubts that can start to creep in when you've had a few rejections.

Trace C:

[00:59:35](#)

Yeah. And the isolation that can come out of that and the fact that you then construct a narrative about what it means and then you live out of that narrative which isn't necessarily a truth. And then you kind of act and sort of compensate in behavior with that as opposed from clearing it and then coming each time from that place of purpose. And you know, part of my recommending that space was again, was that Sylvie was coming back to really why you're doing what you're doing and do the work in terms of knowing your purpose and then you know, yeah, sure. People get knocked down all day everyday. Any success story is about people have experienced a thousand rejections and one success, but if you can keep coming back to your purpose, why you are writing these stories, why you do what you do. I'm hoping that can give a filter or a lens through which you can. You can take both that sort of projections and the good news.

Jerome D:

[01:00:29](#)

So we have five minutes left, so I just want to let everyone know that if there are questions that we don't manage to get to

because now we've got quite a few that are coming in. We will endeavor to answer those. And we'll send you a replay of this Webinar as well. So it's possible that your question was actually answered through our answers to other questions, but I do want to add one more before we wrap up. So this is from Ozzie who says one major obstacle when listening for me has always been not liking a person personally. So as a leader, how can you put aside your personal bias so you can be a good listener with everyone in your organization.

Murray N :

[01:01:14](#)

Well, not liking. So I would say is that. Well firstly, yes, very good. You've realized now that you don't like this person. Okay. And so I would actually go more deeply into that question. Okay. So what is it about this person that is becoming an obstacle to listening? So not like is a, is a kind of an abstract term and it, it might cover a lot of bases. So what exactly are the obstacles that I'm constellate around not liking? Okay. So are they emotional obstacles? Do, do you have some kind of reaction to this person emotionally? Or they, you know, are there a lot of thoughts and judgments occurring? You know, and you may need to look a little bit more deeply into like how did this obstacle actually arise for me? So for instance, a person might not be responding to you very well when you talk to them, and when you have conversations with them and so you feel kind of frustrated, you wonder if they being aggressive and you don't like them. So what I'm trying to say here is get underneath the not like and sort of trying to see what else there is and then try to explore a little bit around what might even be the origins of that obstacle to listening to that person once upon a time. Do something that's sort of really annoyed you or ticks you off. Is there something you need to say to that person, you know, is there somebody else that you need to talk to about that person? And my experience particularly of being a in the old days when I was a clinical psychologist is I used to find that if I was really willing to listen to someone and held their perspective and their point of view, there were very few people that I actually didn't like ultimately couldn't sort of just be with. So I think that sometimes the onset to not liking someone as a leader is actually paradoxically to listen to them and to ask them what's going on for them. I'm not saying this is easy.

Trace C:

[01:03:33](#)

I think that's really powerful. As you say, to sort of identify what are the obstacles to your listening that have you not liked this person, like what's going on for you? And then I think that, you know, this kind of goes a little bit back to the ego thing. I think that this sort of imperative is sort of dangerous side of that to me of the not liking kind of often comes in what we have to watch out for. That becomes kind of, you know, if you don't like

someone and you have an opinion about it, then do you look to kind of gain the sort of, the following of others to align with your POV. And that can be, you know, we're in the client service business and there are things that we don't like. There is feedback we wish was more clear, there are clients that we wish would appreciate more. There is so many things that we, that we, that we could kind of put your guard up in terms of, you know, clients who straight up just don't like things and you get out of a meeting and you put in hours of work and they don't like anything, right? So they can start to become this lens of either like, and what you have to watch out for is not creating almost a herd mentality where one person doesn't like gets the other person, you know, account manager doesn't like. The copywriter then also doesn't like, you know, everybody starts to develop a mentality where we're all aligned now that we don't like this client and we don't like the communication that's happening. And then that creates really many obstacles for listening because then you're shutting down possibility for what's possible in terms of getting back to your intention and your purpose and creating great work. Building brands from a place of heart. Really kind of, you know, being how you really to be in the world, which is doing great work, not creating obstacles and resentments.

Jerome D: [01:05:22](#) You have one minute.

Murray N: [01:05:26](#) this is just such a wonderful point and it's really something that, you know, one of my intentions today, I had to intentions connection and discovery and the discovery that I've just made through listening to you, and this is how it works. Folks. If you are really listening, you will discover something. So what you just said, it's just like, wow, you're absolutely right now and what we're doing when we look to get others to agree with us about our judgment and our opinion, because that's what it is, right? Is that instead of allowing your.... that's not a clearing of the listening, that's not saying what you want to say so that you can release it. That's pouring fuel over the obstacle, making it much bigger. You're actually creating a bigger obstacle. And how often do we do that? When we're frustrated, we try to justify why we're frustrated rather than say, my frustration alerts me to something that's going on in the business and my job is to release it, not to hold on to it. So I just love that idea of the herd actually putting miracle grow onto the obstacle rather than working together to let it go, to fulfill what you call a purpose, what I call the why story, why now? It's the same thing. Yeah.

Jerome D:

[01:06:53](#)

Fantastic. Well, I, I just want to create a couple of parting words here. I'm showing on my screen at the moment, the details of 214, which is Trace Cohen's creative agency branding and creative agency, which is located right here in New York City. And I want to Trace, for participating in this and, and obviously her linkedin, the linkedin profile of two, one, four is there. So please go ahead and connect with them. Go to their website. I'm also sharing on this screen are at narrative, our company's website and how to get in touch with us, and the different kinds of areas that we work in. We work in sales and customer centricity. We work in leadership and team building. We work in onboarding and training. Don't forget that Murray Nossel, who's the founder and Co director and Co founder and director of narrative a has a book that's out called powered by storytelling, excavate, craft and present stories to transform business communication. That's really what we are in the position to do as leaders is to transform the way that we communicate. And so if you have any questions about that, about our process and how we might be able to support you or if you just have questions and reflections about this particular Webinar or have more questions that you'd like to ask, please don't hesitate. My email is there. It's Jerome at Narativ Dot com. You can go to our website and we also have this new nifty setup where you can actually set up a 15 minute call with me. Again, any reflections, comments, questions that you have, any challenges that you have that you'd like to get some insights on. I'll give you 15 minutes of my time and you can set that up with that last link on the, on the, on the page that you're seeing right now. So with that, I really want to thank trace a again for being here. I want to thank you, Murray for being here and your wonderful insights and please trace, go ahead.

Trace C:

[01:08:46](#)

Yes, I just want to say, our website is to 14 and our focus as we've spoken today is really around working with brands to amplify their why, to know your purpose and to create impact through that purpose, through design, branding, storytelling, and check us out. We'd love to hear from you. Great. And I thank you for your wonderful hosting this webinar. Thank you so much.

Jerome D:

[01:09:14](#)

And just in terms of acknowledgement, I'd like also to read from people here are saying great conversation. Thank you. Great Webinar. Thank you. I always find the conversation about listening fascinating. I really liked the connection with branding and leadership slash interpersonal relationships. Brilliant questions and thanks very much. Great Webinar. Thanks to Trace, Murray and Jerome. And someone else said loved Murray's book that was from Brian and loved it, very sincere

from Ozzy. Very powerful book says Jane. Okay. Well thank you very much everyone. Thanks for the acknowledgement and thanks to Trace and Murray and hopefully we will see you soon. Online or offline and maybe both. Thank you.