

Effective Communication – A Leader’s Organizational Trip

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Communication can have tremendous positive and negative consequences. Successful leaders create a connection between themselves and others through the effective communication (both words and actions) of mutual understanding so they can focus on achievements or goals. True leaders can be identified by their ability to communicate clearly where they want their followers to go and how they will get there. Such valuable communication ability differentiates real leaders that people want to follow from positional wannabes that people go along with to keep their jobs.

Many people in positions of leadership are telling us what is, but are they communicating as leaders or as managers, and what is the difference between the two? Leaders communicate from the point of view of the present to the future while managers communicate from the past to the present. That is, managers focus on where we have been and tell us about where we are. Leaders, on the other hand, talk about a place to which we are going: it is like taking an organizational trip.

Effective leaders realize the power of communication as the coordination of thought into action, the glue that holds teams together, sets the course and instills trust and confidence. Peter Drucker the father of American management says that sixty percent of all management problems are the result of ineffective

communication. Because there are so many voices asking us to listen, we need to be discriminating listeners. Communication is not only talking, but also listening, and is the essence of leadership. The leader must be able to share knowledge and ideas with passion and a sense of taking us to a new understanding of thoughts and ideas that will influence us to take action.

Leaders understand the present but set and communicate a course of action to achieve future goals. Leaders are able to use communication to build confidence in followers to help them believe in what can collectively be achieved the future.

A leader reinforces and communicates six key areas: future goal, how we get there, when we'll get there, who we'll get there with, what we'll be doing and our progress updates.

- Leaders, on a daily basis, describe where the organization is, and clearly state goals and results the organization is looking to achieve. The destination needs to be defined, like driving from Pittsburgh, where we are presently, to Chicago, our goal destination. Other possible destinations may be discussed but clearly a leader presents why this destination, Chicago, is important. Leaders design and formally and informally discuss, in large and small groups, the plan to reach our destination. The establishing of a direction and communicating it is a leader's act of acknowledging the capabilities of all of the followers, assuming that the goal is attainable, and allowing for the reality of competitive edge.
- Leaders communicate the methods to reach the destination and may discuss other possible choices. We can arrive in Chicago

by car, plane, bus, train, motorcycle, horseback, bicycle or on foot. Leaders communicate options and explain why a given approach is chosen. Leaders ensure on-time arrival through continual updates, course correction and collection of input by listening. Leaders communicate the goal in terms that all understand, helping followers to know the measurable points through the goal achievement process of arrival at the chosen destination.

- Since we are driving, we will be able to have check points along the way so we will stop at Youngstown and ensure we are together, communicate our level of achievement to that point, and then continue to Columbus, onto Cincinnati through Indiana and onto Chicago. Communicating daily our achievement and corrective actions, if needed, is critical to the leadership communication of an organization. Given these check points, a leader could estimate, and re-estimate, time arrival to our goal.
- Throughout the trip, leaders communicate as to who is in the car with us and why. It is imperative that a leader be candid and differentiates the talent and ability of employees.
- What are the responsibilities of the people while in the car traveling together? We need to be taking the right actions during the trip so we will meet our goals.
- While traveling to the destination, effective leaders communicate by asking how followers feel moving toward the goal. This is an opportunity to build team relationships through leadership communication.



Imagine if you and your organizational leaders put these six leadership communication concepts into practice. How different would you be as a leader and follower? Are leaders communicating the right way? Measure yourself and your organizational leaders against these six key areas. Congratulate those that are incorporating these key measurements into their leadership styles, and, if possible, give developmental feedback to those that aren't. Use these six concepts and become the leader you want to be.