

Leadership Tips - 5 Communication Mistakes to Avoid

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Communication is a core leadership skill. There are three main types of communication:

1. Writing
2. Speaking
3. Listening

Many leaders excel in one or two of these areas but many struggle with at least one area. So what are the 5 common mistakes leaders must avoid when it comes to communication?

Mistake 1: Using position power

When leaders focus on their position power or status when it comes to communication they may well be less effective when it comes to listening. Their desire to get their point of view across or to be in control becomes the focal point rather than communicating effectively.

Solution: There leader will always have to take the final decision but it is important to listen to and understand the different views and contributions before taking decisions.

Mistake 2: Not being prepared

Leaders often find themselves having to communicate in demanding or even stressful situations. They might have to communicate a new strategy or closure of part of the business for example. Alternatively they might be communicating with the media in response to a product recall or a major incident. In these situations it is vital that the leader is properly prepared not just in terms of their message but also for questions that will be raised. When a leader is not prepared, they can easily say or respond in a way that does long term damage to their reputation.

Solution: Make sure you are properly prepared for all significant communications and take the time to consider objections and questions that might be raised.

Mistake 3: Using the wrong communication type

Some types of communication are more appropriate than others. As a general rule where there is a major impact on one or more stakeholder groups, face-to-face communication will usually be the most appropriate way. For example, imagine you are about to make 100 people redundant. E-mail or even worse text messaging is not likely to be good way of communicating this to staff.

Solution: Choose the communication type that is most appropriate to the situation. If you are unsure, ask yourself how you would like to receive the communication if you were in the shoes of the other person.

Mistake 4: Not structuring your communication

Written communication whether it is a letter, e-mail, report or presentation needs structure. It is vital that you spend time when preparing a written communication to think about how best to structure it. If you fail to structure your communication, chances are that it will not flow or read as well as it could.

Solution: Make the time to plan and structure your written communications. Consider the best order of your content and the language that would work best.

Mistake 5: Losing sight of your audience

Every communication has a recipient (or audience). The recipients (or audience) are the reason for communicating in the first place. Every communication has a specific purpose. It might be to get buy-in, to get a decision, to collect views or to influence to name just a few. Lose sight of your purpose and chances are you will lose sight of your audience.

Solution: Whenever you communicate keep your focus on your audience and the outcome you want to achieve.

Bottom Line - Communication is a core leadership skill. So where do you excel or need to improve your communication to be an even more effective leader.