

THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION IN LEADERSHIP

Executive Team member, Niamh Ní Bhéara – Managing Director for United Kingdom & Ireland discusses how important great communication skills are for leaders.



A leader cannot be truly powerful, inspirational or effective without excellent communication skills. In my consultancy work with leaders, I'm often asked to help solve the following kinds of problem – "My team just aren't behind me", "We're not meeting our objectives", "Our best talent keeps leaving us", "How can I possibly inspire or have an impact on everyone?" Full situational analysis obviously follows and - without fail - I'll see examples of poor communication or miscommunication making a significant contribution to the problem.

I work with leaders on a regular basis to help them nurture and develop their communication skills. Many a business problem can be unravelled or averted when a leader has the opportunity to speak directly to staff or colleagues – whether it's a team meeting or at a company conference. When communicating, the best leaders tell a clear and compelling story, they bring the audience with them on a journey, they stir up passion and, most importantly, they motivate people to act. I wholly support the thinking of Guy Kawasaki, Chief Evangelist for Canva and former Chief Evangelist for Apple, when he said of communication: "The goal is to provide inspiring information that moves people to action".

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A complimentary copy is available. Contact: Kim Winter (email: KimW@LogisticsExecutive.com) or Stefanie Moran (StefM@LogisticsExecutive.com)

A succinct and meaningful message will always be the most powerful. Even when telling a story, building a picture and developing rapport, the objective must always be to hold an audience’s attention by keeping things to the point. A leader’s credibility is enhanced by an ability to focus on the power and relevance of the message, delivered in a well-defined and convincing manner, rather than speaking for the sake of speaking.

As Plato once said, “A wise man speaks because he has something to say, but a fool speaks because he has to say something”. How many of us can relate to this statement? There is nothing less inspiring than someone in a position of authority who appears only to like the sound of his or her own voice. It comes back to how important the focus of the speaker is – it should be on the message and the audience and not on themselves.

When working with my senior clients on a one-to-one basis, I place as much emphasis on guiding them through the art of listening and how to show an audience that they are listening, as I do on the art of speaking with conviction and confidence. Successful leaders consistently demonstrate is the ability to listen completely and entirely to what people have to say, and just as importantly, the audience knows that they are being listened to. Understanding what others need, whether it is through questioning carefully or actively seeking feedback, allows an effective leader to respond to the audience in a positive and empathetic manner (which does not always mean agreeing with them!).

Here are my top five tips for great leadership communications:

1. **Think before you act** – Speaking well isn’t just about projecting your voice, the same way as

writing well isn’t just about choosing impressive words. It’s about really thinking about your audience beforehand and preparing well. Talk to your colleagues and listen carefully to their answers. Put yourself in their shoes – what issues are resonating with them right now? Understanding your audience’s motivation is just as important as your own motivation when it comes to getting your message across.

2. **Watch your Language** – One of the most important techniques in effective communication is choosing your language carefully – whether that is speaking or writing. Think about what you’re going to say and how it might be interpreted by others. Understand the power of using familiar terminology and language to build a connection with your audience. Use references and descriptions to help your audience see the picture that you are creating. Remember that, like all good stories, your communication needs a start, middle and end – allow your language to shape that path.

3. **Believe** – Not all leaders are natural communicators, but if they can clearly explain what they’ve done, what they’re doing and what they are going to do – and then get on and do it, they are well on the way to success. When leaders truly believe in what they are saying, it is so obvious when they are speaking – not just by the words they use but through body language too. Natural orators and leaders don’t need to think about body language; when someone truly believes what they are saying, all of their behaviours align.

4. **Common Purpose** – Inspirational leaders unite an audience with a clear, common purpose. Communicating well is so much more than delivering information – it enables a leader to

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4. it enables a leader to provide direction, empower people, and encourage a sense of connected intention. Encapsulate this common purpose in a clear statement, explain it well, and make sure it's a common thread in everything you say and do. Consistency in your message will encourage trust and respect.

5. **Build Rapport** – Great communicators are able to find common ground and build rapport with any audience. They do this by making individuals (in any audience size) feel there is a direct connection. Leaders I really engage with personally are people that make a connection with me: I feel like I belong, that I am valued and that they want me to listen to them. As a leader, you can change the direction of your

business by using that connection to make people believe in themselves. People who are motivated and inspired will overcome the obstacles, defy the odds and accomplish more.

Great communication should never be about the leader – it's about the message and the audience. It should always solve a problem and have a positive impact. It should motivate. It should make someone's day better.

By making your audience the priority and asking yourself what that audience needs from you, it's just as easy to communicate effectively with an audience of thousands as with an audience of one.

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Niamh, an Irish national, has almost 25 years experience in front-line through to Senior Management roles in the Aviation and Logistics industries. Having worked in positions with Global responsibility, combined with living in several European countries, she has gleaned a comprehensive knowledge of the operational, strategic and cultural challenges facing her clients. Specialising in Customer Service, Claims Consultancy and Leadership, she excels at bringing a practical approach to problem solving and focuses on delivering holistic solutions. In addition to her strong commercial acumen and passion for service and people, Niamh is consistently commended on her ability to work at all levels of an organisation and the high standards of coaching and development she delivers. Contact Niamh on email: NiamhN@LogisticsExecutive.com