

Becoming a Great Leader

Lesson 4-6: Effective Communication

Discussion Guide – Confidentiality Reminder

One Word Check-in

Update – Personal, Business, Leadership

“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” Colossians 4:5-6 (ESV)

“From a wise mind comes wise speech; the words of the wise are persuasive.” Proverbs 16:23 (NLT)

Effective communication speaks to others’ emotions and aspirations. Effective communication is not about perfect grammar or great prose. Great communicators are inspiring. Communication is a leader’s most powerful tool. It inspires and brings clarity to the purpose and goals of an organization. Stephen Covey wrote in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: “Communication is the most important skill in life.”

Let’s examine the basics for effective communication:

- **For people to want to listen to you, they must first trust you** (refer to Lesson 4-3, Trustworthiness).
- **Speak to an individual, not a mass of people.** Make the conversation like a personal, one-on-one conversation even though you could be speaking to a small group or hundreds of people. For this to happen, the communicator must know the needs and desires of the people being spoken to. The communicator must answer this question: “Why is this good for them and why is it good for the organization?”
- **Speak with empathy.** Leave your ego and arrogance outside. Empathy brings transparency and authenticity. Even difficult messages can be processed better if there is empathy and authenticity. Place yourself in the other person’s place to understand how your words will be received.
- **Be willing to listen.** People want leaders that listen to their needs and issues. People want to feel heard. Hopefully, this has been done prior to a communication event. If it has, there are great stories that can be incorporated into the presentation and difficult issues can be addressed upfront. This conveys to people that you have thought about how this affects them. After the event, be willing to listen some more.
- **Be competent in your subject matter.** It is obvious to smart, discerning people when someone is faking it and does not know what they are talking about. Make sure you learn everything possible about the subject matter.
- **Keep it simple and straightforward.** Ted Talks are 18 minutes or less. They have learned that the shorter your presentation, the simpler the message and therefore the more engaging it is. The longer a presentation, the more it becomes about the presenter rather than the receiver.

Shared Experiences:

- Please share some of the best communicators you know. What made them special to you?
- Can someone share about the effectiveness of communication in their organization? Would you consider it to be great, average, or below average?
- When is a phone call or face-to-face meeting more appropriate than sending an email or text?
- What is the best tool that you use to listen well whether it is to staff or customers?
- How well do you paint a picture of the future of your organization that is compelling to the people that work there?
- Here is a listening test to consider: What are the top three needs of the staff in your organization? How do you know this?

Bottom line: Communication is the most difficult task in organizations. Likely, many of the problems in a company are due to poor communication. Jesus shared the Great Commission in three verses using ten lines of text. He spoke using each of the points above.

One Word Check-out

Dig Deeper

Want to learn more?

- *Article:* [4 Communication Lessons I Learned From Real Top Gun Fighter Pilots – Elite fighter pilots are life-long students of communication and leadership](#) by Carmine Gallo Presented in Inc.com
- *Podcast:* [Steward your brand and your people](#) with Paul Varga, Former Chairman & CEO of Brown-Forman on How Leaders Lead with David Novak Podcast (Start at 23:45 minutes into the podcast.)
- *Article:* [10 Communication Secrets of Great Leaders](#) by Mike Myatt writing in Forbes, April 4, 2012
- *Blog:* [8 Essential Leadership Communication Skills](#) by Lauren Landry writing for Harvard Business School Online
- *Video:* [How Great Leaders Inspire Action](#) by Simon Sinek speaking at Ted event (16 million views)
- *Blog:* [10 Communication Problems and Mistakes We All Make](#) by GoodTherapy.org Staff
- *Book:* [The Leadership Challenge](#) by Kouzes and Posner, Chapter 5 – Enlist Others (This book is consistently being updated. Make sure you get the current version.)
- *Book:* [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#), by Stephen Covey