

Performex® **LEADERSHIP**™  
Communication Model

**L**isten  
**E**mpathize  
**A**cknowledge  
**D**iffer  
**E**ngage  
**R**ecord  
**S**torytelling  
**H**elp  
**I**nspire  
**P**lan®



*Peak communication effectiveness relies on ten factors: listening, empathizing, acknowledging, differing, engaging, recording, storytelling, helping, inspiring, and planning. Each skill needs to be understood to eliminate conflicts and arrive at win-win decisions.*





## ■ Communication skills of top leaders

Contrary to popular belief, the importance of having superior interpersonal communication skills does not diminish as a person climbs the corporate ladder. In fact, top-performing leaders often tell us that their superior interpersonal communication skills not only played a large role in obtaining their success but also continue to be essential in their current jobs. Therefore, the question remains, how can people improve their interpersonal communication skills to become accomplished masters of the art of communication? Performex has developed the LEADERSHIP communication model to provide our clients with a competitive edge by developing their managers into leaders with excellent communication abilities.

## ■ How to use this model

Many of the techniques in the model are common sense or well known to even entry-level managers. However, rest assured that the poor communication present in most organizations shows that, while people may know the right things to do to communicate well, they seldom do them. We believe this happens because

1. while people strive to be understood, they seldom strive to understand;
2. people avoid structured communication when no one insists on following rules of order;
3. people don't plan or have a strategy for difficult or challenging communication;
4. organizations often reward and recognize people who are verbose or eloquent, especially early in their careers, which reinforces poor listening skills; and
5. while people practice giving speeches, they seldom practice their other, more essential communication skills.

To be more effective on the job, use the model and the related memory aids, also called mnemonic devices, to plan, practice, and structure your future communications.

# LISTEN | Listen for intent

## ■ The key to active listening

Active listening is most apparent when it is absent. When team members carry on more than one conversation at a time, interrupt one another, and jump from one subject to another, you can be sure people are not listening to each another. The consequences of this failure to listen range from vital information getting lost and ideas not being properly explored, to hasty decision-making and inadequate consideration of alternatives. Furthermore, morale and teamwork suffer because people realize that their ideas, beliefs, and convictions are not being heard and that, as a result, they cannot impact the decisions being made or actions being taken. You can easily see why the failure of people to listen to each other results in inefficient organizations. When active listening is absent, we tend to repeat ourselves until we feel we've been heard or we finally give up and just comply with a given decision.

Most of us probably spend more time listening than we do in applying all the other interpersonal skills and communication behaviors combined, yet listening is the skill we do most poorly and seldom practice at improving.

The lack of effective listening prevalent in today's organizations stems in part from the fact that we think far faster than we speak. The average rate of speech for most Americans is 125 words per minute, whereas the brain can process the language of our thoughts at five to six times faster than that speed. Consequently, because the words we listen to are processed slowly, our brains have time for other things. These "other things" include thinking up an argument to the speaker's position, creating responses that are aimed at impressing others with our mental acuity and intelligence, constructing a question that can't be answered, looking for hidden motives, or generally paying attention to something other than what the speaker is saying. Considering the complexities and difficulties of oral communication, it's a wonder it works at all.

However, much can be done to overcome the difficulties of effective listening. We can become effective listeners by first focusing on our own behaviors in meetings and one-on-one communications. What do we do when people say something that is counter to our own opinion? Do we focus on what they are saying and paraphrase it to acknowledge their point of view, or do we use the time while they are talking to formulate our response? If the latter is true, then understanding our own underlying motives and behaviors in these situations will go a long way toward learning how to modify our tendencies to become better active listeners.

Understanding why we do not actively listen and then committing to improving will help us move significantly down the road toward becoming more accomplished interpersonal communicators.

As a leader, you may find yourself with team members who do not actively listen. An effective procedure to use with groups that are experiencing communication problems is to temporarily require anyone who wishes to speak to summarize what the previous person has said, to that person's satisfaction. This exercise seems to create a mindset that encompasses the listening suggestions presented in the previous box. It also reduces the rapid shifts in subject that occur within poorly functioning groups.



## ■ Steps to becoming a more active LISTENER:

- ❑ If you often reload while someone else is speaking, understand your inner motivation for doing so.
- ❑ Be receptive to the speaker.
- ❑ Avoid rushing to judgment.
- ❑ Periodically summarize what has been said.
- ❑ Pay attention to your own nonverbal behaviors as well as the speaker's.
- ❑ Make eye contact.
- ❑ Visualize yourself as a gifted active listener.
- ❑ Adopt these new behaviors immediately.
- ❑ Practice them consciously and constantly.





Nonverbal communication goes well beyond just figuring out whether people are being sarcastic; it also can tell you how emotional they are and whether they are getting angry.

Your nonverbal behaviors are often more important than the speaker's. Perhaps the most important nonverbal behavior is eye contact. Everyone is told from an early age the importance of eye contact to convey they are interested in what other people are saying. Furthermore, the lack of eye contact conveys not only lack of interest but also a lack of self-confidence on the part of the listener.

Many people actually do a very good job actively listening, only to fall into the comprehension trap. The term *comprehension trap* refers to the inappropriate belief of thinking that, if you comprehend something, it will be successfully stored in your memory for future use.

Unfortunately, merely understanding what another person is saying in the here and now does not ensure you will recall or, even more importantly, act upon it at a later date. In fact, numerous studies have confirmed that less than 25 percent of what is heard in a conversation can be recalled only 24 hours later.

Use the techniques in the LEADERSHIP communication model to transform active listening to positive interaction outcomes. Remember to actively listen, test for comprehension, retain, and apply the information you hear.

### ■ The Comprehension Trap:

- ❑ Actively listen.
- ❑ Test for comprehension.
- ❑ Retain and commit the information to memory.
- ❑ Apply the information and put it to use.

### ■ Four activities to ensure we use our time wisely while listening:

- 1. Be open and receptive to the direction of the conversation.** Resist the urge to formulate a rebuttal. More importantly, take notes of what is being said. Ask yourself, "Could I do a great job summarizing what has been said up to this point?"
- 2. Objectively weigh the content being presented and avoid rushing to judgment.** Many people falsely believe the speed of their response plays an important role in communication because a quick reply says "I get it. See how sharp I am? Thus, there is no need for you to continue." Some people rush to judgment because they think doing so conveys a sense of agreement with the speaker, like saying "I agree, and I am way ahead of you." Unfortunately, just the opposite occurs. Have you ever noticed how people react to being cut off before they have finished saying what they have to say? It's certain that commitment does not come from being interrupted, nor does objective decision-making result from being less informed.
- 3. Be open and receptive to the direction of the conversation.** Resist the urge to formulate a rebuttal. More importantly, take notes of what is being said. Ask yourself, "Could I do a great job summarizing what has been said up to this point?"
  - ❑ "What you are saying is ..."
  - ❑ "I want to make sure I clearly understand your point of view ..."
  - ❑ "Tell me if I am properly summarizing your point of view ..." If you can't summarize the content, ask, "Could you repeat yourself? I am not sure I understood what you said."
- 4. Pay attention to the nonverbal as well as the verbal communication.** Nonverbal is at least as important as verbal communication in almost every culture. In some cultures, it is more important than what is being said. If you doubt this, think of how the context, tone, and inflection do not necessarily tell you whether someone is being sarcastic. You need to see their facial expression and body language to tell whether they are truly in agreement with or mocking something.

# EMPATHIZE | Empathize with the audience

Carl Rogers, an influential American psychologist, proposed that a key factor in poor communication is the tendency to critically judge and evaluate the speaker's expressions. The listener is not only indulging in selective listening, such as "I like this" or "I don't approve of that," but is also likely causing the speaker to feel he must justify, rationalize, defend, or protect his position. As a remedy, Rogers suggested listening empathically, meaning the listener listens to understand the speaker from the speaker's point of view. By listening empathically, the listener is able to pick up and remember much more of what the speaker is saying, and the speaker has little or no need to defend or protect, which will in turn lead to the speaker's being more likely to listen when it is the listener's turn to speak.

Listening empathically has the additional benefit of potentially giving you the insight to understand the motivation behind a particular behavior or position a person is taking. Putting yourself mentally into someone else's shoes can be highly illuminating. Furthermore, doing so often creates a bond between the speaker and listener that will be reciprocated when it is time for you to make your position known.

When employing empathy, keep in mind that it is different from sympathy. Sympathy goes beyond empathy to also encompass the feelings of compassion and concern for others and leads to the wish to see them better off or happier. Sympathy is close to pity, which is feeling that others are in trouble and need help because they cannot fix their problems themselves; it is often described as feeling sorry for someone. The key distinction is that, while empathy allows you to identify and understand the feelings of others, sympathy requires an action to relieve them of their pain, distress, or plight. As a manager, most often the only appropriate response is empathy because sympathy often involves forgiveness for or acceptance of what may be an unacceptable behavior.

## ■ When emotions are high

To some people, empathy comes naturally, and, for others, a more proactive approach is necessary. To increase your own capacity for empathy, reflect more on what others are saying. You need to understand and interpret what they are saying and draw them out by giving them a chance to elaborate further on the feelings they are experiencing. You can further demonstrate your concern for them by saying something like "I see this is upsetting to you," "You look a little sad right now," or "I understand how this change will mean a great deal more work for you and your team." Learn to use these phrases, and you will become more empathetic.

Merely having empathy with others' situations or positions will help the manager or leader understand them. Validating or justifying others' emotions helps to convey your acceptance and respect for the feelings they are experiencing, for example, "I can understand why you would be upset under these circumstances," "Anyone would find this difficult," "Anyone would have felt the same way," or "Your reactions are totally normal."

Of course, the opposite of empathy is to verbally and nonverbally invalidate others' feelings by belittling, diminishing, rejecting, or judging them or employing sarcasm.



## ■ Steps to becoming more EMPATHETIC:

- ❑ Listen to understand the speaker from the speaker's point of view.
- ❑ Put yourself mentally into others' shoes.
- ❑ Empathy is not sympathy.
- ❑ Learn the empathetic responses and use them with sincerity.
- ❑ Validate the speaker's feelings when emotions run high.

# ACKNOWLEDGE

## Acknowledge the point of view of others

There seems to be a strong tendency among many people when presented with a new idea to shoot first and ask questions later. We seem to focus first on what's wrong with something and then only later consider what might be right about it. Focusing on the negative first as well as having a general lack of support for people's ideas produces a number of effects that reduce team effectiveness. Good ideas go unrecognized. People become frustrated and develop a "what's the use" attitude. Being critical and cynical become the "in" thing to do. A defensive climate is generated in which individuals become preoccupied with their own security, rather than focusing on the growth and survival of the whole group. This often occurs in a boss-subordinate relationship when the boss feels he's supposed to be the expert or someone on a team feels she is the expert. Telltale signs are when you hear such things as "We tried that before ...," "Look, everyone knows that ...," or "Don't waste your time thinking ..."

Numerous studies on self-perception have shown that, when most people describe themselves, they use significantly more negative than positive descriptions. Perhaps this helps explain the tendency to focus on negatives; if we perceive ourselves in a negative light, we perceive others and their ideas in a negative light. Whatever the cause, the effects of lack of support are well documented. The Hawthorne studies, conducted in 1950 at Western Electric by Henry A. Landsberger, were among the first management experiments that demonstrated productivity was related to the extent workers perceived management as being concerned for workers' well being. Since then, numerous other studies have shown that supportive environments foster productivity and engagement.



In many businesses, innovative problem solving is directly related to the receptivity of upper management to new ideas. In one large automotive assembly plant, the general foremen and superintendents flatly refused to work on solutions to problems they themselves had identified because they felt 1) their solutions would not be accepted and 2) if the ideas for solutions were accepted, they would be responsible if things didn't work out. The plant manager often commented that he didn't want creative people around because all they did was "screw things up." This kind of attitude suppresses the very behaviors a manager needs in the highly competitive marketplace of today.

Effective communication requires the ability to acknowledge the specific merits of others' ideas and to build upon those ideas, for example, by saying "Hey, that really makes sense because ..." or "That's right, and, if we did that, we could ..."

The supporting skills require two specific mindsets. The first mindset is an assumption that other people's ideas have merit even though the ideas may not initially appear to be useful. The second mindset is to drop the idea that somehow it is better to be the originator of a solution than finding and implementing the best solution to a problem.

Supporting skills also require two different reinforcement techniques or actions. The first supporting action, *listening*, is the more crucial because the most supportive thing we can do for others is to pay attention to them. Then, having listened to their idea, we should endeavor to point out at least one specific merit of the idea.

### ■ Steps to effectively ACKNOWLEDGE and support the views of others:

- ❑ Assume the other person has useful ideas, information, or points of view.
- ❑ Remember that it is better to find and implement the best solution than to be the originator of an idea.
- ❑ Understanding doesn't mean agreement.
- ❑ Mention the specific elements that you find useful.
- ❑ Build on these useful elements.



# DIFFER | Differ to ensure you have impact

Some groups run into trouble not because they fail to support one another but because they oversupport each other and are reluctant to disagree in order to protect team harmony. An individual or two in the group might have serious reservations about something that’s being proposed and not voice concern because they feel that it might lead to conflict and shatter the group’s feelings of togetherness or slow the group down. This kind of oversupport is often called *group think*. The group inadvertently creates so much pressure for consensus that group members are hesitant to disagree with each other.

People often dislike having to differ with others because they don’t want to offend them, cause conflict, or create a defensive climate. This is unfortunate because differing, if done in the right way, leads to the most rational and creative solutions and produces the strongest groups—those who foster the greatest differences among themselves without those differences interfering with their respect and regard for each other.

The skill of differing is dependent on the use of the skills *listening* and *supporting*, which we discussed in prior sections. In other words, if you have carefully listened to another and mentioned what you feel are the specific merits of that person’s ideas, that person is going to be far more willing to accept the areas with which you disagree.

After listening and supporting, the next step in differing is to phrase your remarks in a way that suggests that you have a concern and does not suggest that the other person’s ideas are wrong. For example, after having listened and supported, you could say something like “What concerns me about this ...,” “The problem I’m having is ...,” or “What I’m having difficulty with is...”

Often, differences occur when people are talking about two different things. If you use a formalized problem-solving process, it is likely that, when you do differ, it will be over something specific. For example, team members using the problem-solving process for selecting a course of action may have numerous differences, but they would be related to very specific questions, such as “How is what you’re proposing going to overcome the obstacles we suggested and meet the goal?” or “How does your point support what we agreed we were trying to accomplish?”

The difference between differing and arguing is that, when we argue, we are saying “I’m right and you’re wrong.” When we differ, we are both right from our respective points of view, and we discuss our differences against a common goal or proposed action and examine the merits of both viewpoints. Of course, there are times when, as a leader, it is essential that you not only get your point across but also make and communicate a decision that is contrary to the options presented by others. In those situations, it is essential that you remain respectful and well mannered. Furthermore, you will be more successful if you can link your proposal to your customers or team’s mission [those who ultimately pay all of your salaries or determine the success of your group].

Losing your temper in these situations is highly undesirable. Remember that your state of mind when communicating is your choice and will be interpreted [or misinterpreted] by the very individuals you are trying to build commitment with.



## ■ Steps to effectively DIFFER for impact:

- ❑ Master active listening and supporting so you can be heard and acknowledged.
- ❑ Phrase your ideas and positions in a way that suggests a concern you have and does not suggest that the other person’s ideas are wrong.
- ❑ Avoid the context that “I’m right and you’re wrong.”
- ❑ Remain respectful and mannered.
- ❑ Base your position on and link it to the ultimate customer.
- ❑ If you have to make a decision that is contrary to the team’s consensus, make sure your team fully understands why.



## ENGAGE | Engage others by asking for their help

Engagement is a point of maximum agreement and commitment that ensures a given action takes place. Commitment is essential for full engagement; it means to bind, obligate, pledge, or dedicate oneself to a course of action. A 2009 Gallup study found that organizations that had employee engagement scores in the top quartile had 18 percent higher productivity and 16 percent higher profits. If engagement drives that type of tangible results, imagine the impact it has on turnover, employee morale, and creativity.

Engagement is seldom achieved by voting, imposing a win-lose outcome, dictating the conclusion without justification, or abdicating or giving in. Your communication style directly impacts your team's commitment and engagement. Engagement and commitment start with everyone understanding what the overall organization's goals and strategies are and how they relate to the discussion at hand. This is best achieved by a long-term effort on the part of the manager to link the team's or group's goals or mutual interests to the organization's overall goals. Good leaders keep their teams and colleagues well informed and involved. Engagement seldom occurs when employees don't understand the why behind what they are doing or do not feel they are part of something important.

Excellent leaders use interpersonal and group communication to enlist their team's best efforts. Ideally, to reach commitment, group members must freely share, discuss, evaluate, debate, organize, and prioritize ideas and then struggle to reach consensus over the best options to achieve a common goal. However, not all individuals will freely give their opinion on issues. To be a skilled communicator, you must often draw out employees to find out what is on their minds and what their ideas are. If you are drawing blanks, challenge them to find out whether they have ideas or alternative ways to achieve the unit's

objectives. Oftentimes, subject matter experts are not accomplished oral communicators and are relatively passive in getting their point of view across. Yet subject matter experts often have the best solutions and analyses. Keep in mind that, as a leader, it is your responsibility to ensure that your employees and peers feel respected and comfortable when they are expressing their ideas, regardless of their role or position in the organization.

Perhaps no tool is more effective in creating engagement than simply asking for an individual's help with solving a particular problem or implementing a new initiative. Not only will you generate better options and ideas, but you will also drive home the point that your employees matter because the organization values their opinions and ideas. Remember, people find it hard to resist a request for help but easy to passively resist a demand or imposed solution.

### ■ Steps to ENGAGEMENT and commitment:

- ❑ Ensure everyone understands the overall organization's goals and strategies and how they relate to the discussion.
- ❑ Communicate the link between the group's or team's goals and mutual interests to the organization's overall goals.
- ❑ Draw out team members to find out what is on their minds and what their ideas are.
- ❑ Make sure your employees and peers feel respected and comfortable when they are expressing their ideas, regardless of their role or position in the organization.
- ❑ Ask for an individual's help with solving a particular problem or implementing an initiative.
- ❑ Gain a verbal commitment by asking the question "Will you support this decision?" If not, ask "What can we [I] do to ensure you and your team will support it?"
- ❑ Reinforce their personal accountabilities.



## ■ Once a decision has been made

A good test of commitment for people who don't report to you is to ask the question "Will you support this decision?" If not, ask "What can we [I] do to ensure you and your team will support it?"

Finally, leaders need to use their communication forums to reinforce their associates' personal accountabilities in the execution of the group's game plan. Emphasize the point that employees are expected to give their best and will be held accountable and rewarded or recognized for doing so. If there is a good understanding, acceptance, and commitment [U/A/C] on the *common goal*, then differences in approach become much clearer and easier for the team to decide what makes sense.



## RECORD | Record and capture key action items

Meetings that have well-documented action plans are much more effective and efficient than those without. Whether you are the leader of a meeting or just a participant, make sure that someone tracks action items and identifies who is responsible for each item to be completed at the expected date. If you are not the leader, consider volunteering to take written notes. Items recorded on a flip chart or projected on a screen or monitor are preferable to notes on a notepad. Make sure everyone can see not only what has been agreed upon but also who is assigned to each action item.

Recording issues and the action items necessary to address them is always important but especially so if the issues are raised by a loyal opposition. This activity not only recognizes the issue but also ensures that it gets addressed, rather than pushed aside, which would deteriorate teamwork and respect. Succinctly recording decisions made in the meeting and then publishing them ensures clarity and prevents future misunderstandings.

Finally, organizations thrive on a sense of accomplishment and a feeling that things are under control. By taking formal notes and reviewing the progress of each item at the start of the next meeting, a team creates credibility for itself. Managers who ensure that meetings have a common goal and accurate published notes and then actively follow up on the list will quickly gain a reputation for their strong leadership skills.

### ■ RECORD and capture key action items

- ❑ Make sure that, 100 percent of the time, action items agreed to in a meeting are recorded and published.
- ❑ Items recorded on a flip chart or projected on a screen or monitor are preferable to notes on a notepad.
- ❑ Record issues raised by the loyal opposition and how they are to be addressed and by whom.
- ❑ Note taking is not only efficient, but it also boosts the confidence of team members because they see well-conducted meetings and plans that are efficiently executed.



## STORYTELLING | Engage listeners

Why do great teachers and most of history's greatest leaders use stories? Telling stories is an invaluable tool to communicate ideas and concepts in a highly impactful and meaningful way. Stories challenge the listener to visualize the settings, characters, situations, actions taken, and outcomes and to derive unique insights based on their own interpretations. Stories have this effect because they do not explicitly point out the ideas, solutions, or key insights the storyteller may be trying to get across. Instead, they paint a broad picture that encourages the listeners to fully concentrate on developing their own understanding and solutions. Gifted storytellers further drive the impact of their stories by conducting discussions, asking pertinent questions, and providing reminders that further facilitate listeners' growth and insights. The key is to avoid lecturing and spoon-feeding the solution to the intended audience.

### ■ Steps to accomplish effective STORYTELLING:

- ❑ Develop a repertoire of stories you can use to convey important ideas and insights.
- ❑ Paint a broad picture without specifically identifying the changes that need to be made.
- ❑ Encourage your team members to picture the new behaviors in their own minds.
- ❑ Encourage your team members to focus on their own insights.
- ❑ Facilitate discussions and activities that pertain to the goal.
- ❑ Regularly provide gentle reminders of their insights.
- ❑ Adopt these new behaviors immediately.
- ❑ Practice them consciously and constantly.

Psychologically, stories are powerful tools because they promote elaborate rehearsal; by the listeners focusing on deriving the meaning of information, it is encoded into their long-term memory more rapidly and permanently than just facts alone. The brain discards most stimuli before they have time to be recorded in long-term memory because the meaningful or emotional component is lacking. Stories tend to have all of these elements—meaning, emotion, and the process of problem solving—so their use greatly improves the likelihood of retention.

Numerous studies have shown that the basic operating system of humans is social. Over time, as we learn and begin to rely more on our reasoning, or analytical and strategic thinking skills, the less human awareness we have. If we are not aware, we are not tuned in to the present and thus not open to new ideas or concepts or the feelings of others. In fact, we often do not even hear what is being said. Consistently opening conversation with a story or vision or a focus and purpose before discuss-

ing hard facts or numbers, such as financials and metrics, can rewire the social neural networks of the brain, which leads to more human awareness [see "The Neuroscience of Leadership," an article by Rock and Schwartz, at <https://westallen.typepad.com/files/the-neuroscience-of-leadership.pdf>]. When coaching, developing, and leading others, utilizing stories will not only increase their knowledge and retention; it will also increase their engagement, focus, and commitment to the goal.

### ■ Do you have a great story to tell?

Think of the competencies and knowledge necessary for your team to do their jobs at an exceptionally high level. For each of the competencies, find real-life examples that you can easily turn into a story, and keep them on hand for discussions with your team. Even better, tell your own story about when you made a mistake and learned from it. Doing so will encourage engagement, commitment, and buy-in from your employees.



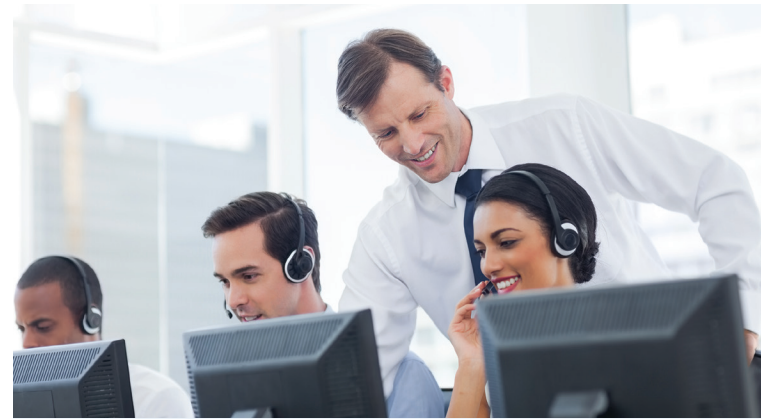
# HELP | Become a servant leader

One of the great quotes by Confucius states, “He who asks a question is a fool for five minutes. He who does not ask a question is a fool forever.” Unfortunately, many people do not seek help from their peers, colleagues, or managers when they have a specific need for assistance. Oftentimes, this is the result of personal pride, fear of being refused, fear of failure, or even embarrassment at not knowing all there is to know about their job. However, truly great leaders want to be viewed by others in the organization as invaluable resources who can comfortably be sought out when help is needed. This is the basis of the concept of servant leadership, a term coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in his book *Servant Leadership*.

An important step in mastering servant leadership is to actively support the good ideas of others. Doing so will reinforce not only their desire to produce results but also the sense of satisfaction they derive from contributing to the success of the unit. Being a servant leader means providing an excellent role model and encouraging your direct reports to come to you with problems, bad news, questions, and new ideas. To build great teams, you must not only coach but also delegate important work and decisions to your employees. Both of these important developmental tools become easier to employ when you are a resource for your employees so they will actively turn to you for help. To jump-start the process, you

must be proactive in providing unsolicited assistance when necessary. Personally providing resources and offering assistance will demonstrate that you can be seen as a trusted advisor when others need your assistance.

By creating a safe and positive learning environment, you can position yourself as a key mentor for your employees. Being a mentor for your employees will further foster the results you want to achieve because the added communication from your assistance will ensure everyone is on the same page.



## ■ Strategies used to HELP others:

- ❑ Become a role model.
- ❑ Actively support others’ good ideas.
- ❑ Provide resources.
- ❑ Offer assistance to encourage others to seek out your help in the future.
- ❑ Coach and mentor.
- ❑ Be seen as an invaluable resource.

# INSPIRE | Create energy in your team



A team that isn’t inspired will lose momentum and engagement quite rapidly. As a leader, creating meaning for your team and providing an exciting and fulfilling work environment start with you. Most of us respond best to leaders who are positive and dynamic and create excitement. More importantly, these emotions are contagious; people who are around exciting, positive people will begin to exhibit those traits themselves.

The key is to flex your communication style to be more inspiring. First and foremost, recognize the huge impact your nonverbal communication has on your team members. To be more inspiring, hone your nonverbal communication skills to exude a more positive outlook and confidence. Consider and, if possible, observe on video your posture, smile, eye contact, and mannerisms. Ask yourself, do

they exude confidence and a positive vibe? Here’s the big secret—great leaders do not let their personal moods, disappointments, stress, or personal issues interfere with their ability to project a positive attitude on the job. It’s a matter of mental toughness and dedication. A glass being half empty will inspire no one. Being passionate is also important. Many of the greatest leaders, such as JFK and Gandhi, inspired people through their passion by painting a compelling picture where outcomes are linked to personal interests. If people can envision the end result and all its benefits, they will be more dedicated in their quest for achieving that result.

Show your warmth and enthusiasm for the organization and the team. Take advantage of the abundance of videos in today's technologically advanced world. Observe yourself and evaluate your style and content. Avoid communicating in a monotonous way by ensuring your tone of voice is clear and energized. As Dale Carnegie said, "If you want to be enthusiastic, act enthusiastic." Lead by example, and inspire others to do the same. When your employees see you leading by example, even if it isn't normally your communication style, they will be inspired to do it as well. Everyone has positive and negative emotions, but some managers completely shut their emotions off in the workplace, which makes them appear cold and uncaring. Making an effort to show your positive emotions—even a little bit—will go a long way toward creating the human connections that drive full engagement.

### ■ Steps to effectively INSPIRE:

- ❑ Exude an inspiring leadership style.
- ❑ Be exciting and positive.
- ❑ Manage nonverbal communication to project warmth and excitement.
- ❑ Do not let your personal moods and issues interfere with your attitude as a leader.
- ❑ Paint a compelling picture with passion.
- ❑ Link outcomes to personal interests.

## PLAN | Even five minutes will improve results



People often rush into important conversations and meetings with no planning and minimal preparation. Studies show that 5 to 10 minutes of planning and minimal preparation will improve outcomes of conversations by 50 percent. Reaching the goal of the conversation quickly and efficiently is the product of proper communication planning. Take a few minutes to think ahead of time what it is you want to accomplish from the discussion in terms of the best possible outcome. Try to anticipate your and others' reactions, and decide the best way to handle each one. Be prepared for the issues that may arise so that you can address them more efficiently.

An important part of delivering your message successfully relies on being consistent. Your key points should always be the same so you can avoid confusion and inefficiency.

To excel at planning your conversations, you will need to be aware of your own communication tendencies. Everyone has strengths and challenges when it comes to communication abilities. During the planning process, you should plan to do your part by actively listening, avoiding unproductive arguments, and ensuring you try to maintain others' self-esteem. Finally, consider the other participants in the conversation. What are their likely positions on the issue, how do they like to be communicated with, and how will they react to the topic being discussed?

By spending just a few minutes planning each conversation or meeting, you will be able to more effectively and efficiently communicate to achieve your desired outcome.

Organizations that embrace the principles of the LEADERSHIP communication model enable their managers to become exceptional leaders and their employees to develop into high-performance team members. Managers have the tools they need to be effective leaders, and team members feel valued and own the changes they identify and implement.

### ■ What type of LEADER are you?

1. Do you maintain eye contact when listening to others speak?
2. Do you find yourself thinking about your rebuttal while others are still engaging?
3. When others are speaking, do you interrupt them, robbing them of the opportunity to make their point?
4. Are you able to quickly perceive the moods of others around you?
5. Do you more often than not put yourself in your employees' situation to develop empathy?
6. Do you usually take the lead with your team when presenting new projects to your boss?
7. Do your team members understand the why behind the assignments they are working on?
8. Do you actively engage team members to get their perspectives?
9. Have you created an environment where team members feel comfortable sharing their suggestions or opinions?
10. Are your meetings effective? Do the participants leave the session with clearly spelled-out assignments and deadlines and a sense of strong commitment?
11. Do you inspire others with enthusiasm and by telling stories?
12. Do you take a few minutes to plan important discussions and anticipate possible outcomes?

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