

SECRETS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION

GOALS:

1. To establish a shared understanding regarding effective leadership communication as the foundation of organizational success.
2. To list specific leadership communications (verbal and behavioral) that encourage, enhance, and support successful organizational outcomes.

Communicating verbally and behaviorally with others—we all do it. The problem is that we, as unique individuals, communicate *somewhat* differently.

Regardless, the leader's communication choices are vital to organizational success. The leader's communication is where organizational action begins, and effective organizational processes are sustained.

As an astute employee, the leader's verbal communication abilities are noted by watching the leader's behaviors and listening to the leader's words. Such intellectual awareness and scrutiny by employees regarding leadership communication

should remind an organizational leader of their immense communication responsibilities. This includes the need for leaders to be knowledgeable and thoughtful about all leadership verbal communications, behaviors, choices, and methods.

Effective or ineffective leadership communication behaviors/patterns are eventually mimicked by retained employees. It is this learned, commonly shared practice of effective organization leadership communication standards/behaviors that help with the ongoing stabilization of the organization's mission, purpose, and goals.

The message is clear--Effective leadership communication skills promote overall organizational success.

LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION SECRETS THAT SUPPORT LEADERSHIP SUCCESS

- Be an active listener and show appropriate employee concern and empathy.
- Give clear and appropriate feedback and direction after validating what was heard or seen.

- Share verbally the “why” behind each leadership decision.
- Have employees explain their perceived work *successes*; therefore, providing a leadership opportunity to appropriately praise and recognize an employee’s personally recognized successes and optimal performance.
- Speak/use a person’s name when addressing an employee or another person.
- Criticize an employee’s work or behavior in private, as appropriately required. Never criticize an employee in public!
- Use the “Sandwich Approach” if criticism or a private complaint of work performance is required. The “Sandwich Approach” (like two soft pieces of bread with the “meat” in the middle) is a regulated and intentional procedural process. The required leadership *progressive* communication process of using the “Sandwich Approach” involves the following leadership communication happenings toward an employee *within a private setting and in the following order*:

1. State appreciation for positive work behavior(s) by the employee.
 2. State criticism or a complaint privately (always).
 3. Allow the employee the opportunity to respond to the accuracy of the complaint/criticism.
 4. Reiterate and encourage compliance with organizational expectations/requirements.
 5. State an acceptable solution to the problem.
- Show personal and communal awareness, appreciation, respect, and gratitude for work compliance and a job well done. (i.e.---Having a retirement party, sending a letter of appreciation for service or activity rendered, providing a documented work recommendation, or special recognition at a gathering.)
 - Communicate clearly and effectively at all times.
 - Listen intently and clarify messages to confirm understanding of the message or problem.
 - Provide appropriate personal pride related to a successful leadership communication process.
 - Encourage a positive change in an employee's problematic behavior while maintaining (at the same time) the employee's human dignity and magnifying exemplary leader communication.

- Share verbally the “why” behind each decision.
- Provide the specifics and reasons for praise.
- If the answer to a question is not known, say so.
- Dress in the appropriate manner as a leader.
- Introduce yourself according to your earned academic or position title when performing in a leadership role. (i.e.—Doctor, Chancellor, Commissioner, Pastor, Professor, etc.)
- Require others to use the appropriate verbal and written use of a leadership-earned academic or position title/role. Even the otherwise appropriate title of Mr., Miss, Ms., or Mrs. denotes an appropriate leadership reference.
- Require an employee job description that has been signed and dated by each employee.
- Clarify, as needed, employee job expectations and the associated timeframes.
- Ask occasionally about an employee’s significant other(s) (i.e., wife, husband, family) to show recognition of positive familial work efforts.
- Comment on what you see, hear, or experience about the employee’s work behavior(s)--- increasing the employee's awareness of leadership awareness of job performance.

- Present a reason(s) for personal work-performance concern(s) in writing to the employee, when appropriate.
- Refrain from reprimanding or identifying an employee's fault(s) in public.
- Require employee compliance regarding their appropriately signed and dated job description.
- Commend and express the appreciation of exceptional employee performance in public, privately, and in verbal or written evaluations.
- Comment verbally, cautiously, privately, and without judgment to the involved employee as to what you (the leader) have heard or witnessed regarding negative employee behavior. THEN—allow or require the employee to judge his/her own behavior/situation according to the job description or other known employee expectations.
- Consider and use appropriately different leadership communication opportunities—i.e., small groups, recorded messages, electronic mail (e-mail), private conversations, public praise, commendation letters/cards, birthday remembrances, etc.
- Establish a board of interested and appropriate individuals to provide suggestions and

recommendations regarding organizational decisions. As an effective leader, the role is to accept and show appreciation for the board's suggestions/recommendations. Reminder: The final decisions (as an outcome of a board's suggestions and recommendations) are to be an outcome of a leader's/administrator's monetarily compensated, signed, and dated job description—not necessarily specific to a board's input. Such final decision(s) are determined and set in place because of effective leadership communication choices and is/are intended to promote the mission and goals of the organization.

- As a hired, paid, and job-described leader/administrator communicator of organizational happenings and decisions, communicate final leadership decisions with a presence and sense of leadership authority—always indicating the intention of the decision(s) and reminding others verbally or in writing that the decisions are to maintain and enhance the organization's mission, purpose, goals, and objectives—the standards of the organization).

IN CLOSING

No one ever intended a leader's effective communication within an organization to be easy! It is only intended that the performance of such a leadership role be thoughtfully determined and accomplished with intelligence. This required intelligence is recognized when leaders know and choose to actively practice relevant and proven theories/behaviors of successful and thoughtful leadership communication. Such a leadership communication role is not for the shy or for a person who hesitates from making appropriate, sometimes contentious, decisions. The effective verbal and behavioral leadership communication abilities stem from a leader's personal conviction regarding the guiding standards of the organization. Such are the recognized secrets of astute and effective leadership communication!

Carolyn Taylor, Ed.D. M.N. R.N.

Book Author of nationally and internationally acclaimed: NURSE POWER.