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Your Leadership Style: Does It Communicate What You Think?



By: Dianna Booher, author of [WHAT MORE CAN I SAY?: Why Communication Fails And What To Do About It](#) (Prentice Hall Press, 2015)

If you follow the daily news, you may get the impression that [leadership](#) is in crisis.

Headlines around the globe remind us daily about mismanagement, moral lapses, and malaise at the top of corporations and government bureaucracies. The result is a sense of distrust that has come to pervade our culture.

This style of leadership is often committed by the same people who bemoan the lack of respect and trust from others. So what does your own leadership style reveal about your [communication](#)? The following filter questions may help you evaluate what you may -- or may not -- intend to communicate as a leader:

Do You "Take People Along"?

Good decisions can turn into nightmares when communicated poorly. Often leaders go through all the A-Z reasoning, argue the pros and cons of an issue, walk through the entire execution of a plan -- in their head -- until they are absolutely convinced their decision is in the best interest of everyone concerned.

Then, finally convinced and committed themselves, they fail to [communicate](#) the reasoning to all the other people who have to come along with them -- those who have to implement the decision.

Rethink your Leadership Style: To have others trust you means trusting them with your reasoning behind decisions, details, and data. In doing otherwise, you're asking them to follow you blindly -- perhaps over a cliff.

Are You Confident, Hopeful, and Optimistic?

Coaches of sports teams do it. Commanders during wartime do it. Corporate leaders do it. To persuade people to do their best and keep moving ahead despite the odds, you have to instill confidence that they can achieve the goal before them.

Rethink your Leadership Style: Optimism and confidence are contagious -- likewise, their counterparts: pessimism and uncertainty. When budgets get cut, when projects stall, when mergers become tough, do you rally the team or do you rail against them?

Do You Communicate Consistently and Repeatedly?

Silence breeds distrust and rumors. Openness increases trust. Even unbelievably outrageous, vicious, and just plain inappropriate messages can unfortunately be persuasive, if you deliver them often and consistently. Social media prove this to be true. Political campaigns and their results prove this to be true. Repeat a message -- wrong or right -- over and over and over and it gradually sinks into the psyche.

But consider this: When the consistent [communication](#) uplifts, encourages, enables -- and is delivered in a culture of trust -- the message is even easier to accept.

Rethink your Leadership Style: Strive to provide regular affirming and positive communications that help drive out paranoia, and increases your trust and influence as a leader.

Does Your Body Language Say You're Approachable?

Your [body language](#) may be communicating to your team much more than your words:

- Leaning away = boredom or dishonesty
- Feet pointed away from the person you're talking to, as if trying to escape = boredom or dishonesty
- Averting eyes (except in some Latin American countries and Asian cultures, where this is a sign of respect for one's elders) = lying, deception
- Touching the mouth or nose = lying
- Arms folded = closed mind, defensiveness
- A forced smile, no eye involvement = insincerity

Rethink your Leadership Style: To be approachable, maintain eye contact. Use open gestures above the waist. Sit or stand in a relaxed, comfortable, but attentive posture. Look at people when they speak. Smile naturally.

Do You Demonstrate Trust to Gain Trust?

An atmosphere of trust is created by the leaders of an organization. If team members feel that they must "win at any price," then that's the game they play every day they come to work -- with their boss, their customers, their suppliers. When leaders penalize employees for mistakes, people tend to hide them. If leaders allow others the freedom to take risks, fail, and try again, people will thrive in doing their best to succeed.

Rethink your Leadership Style: Incorporate some common signs of trust:

- Provide trial products and loaners

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- Establish credit approvals immediately
- Trust your team members with inside news
- Forgo the signing of non-disclosures for minor discussions
- Allow overtime work and report hours without supervisors present

The first filter for those who want to expand their influence and leadership style is to ask, "Do I trust this person?" Communication fails when distrust sets in; communication succeeds as trust grows. After people trust you, they'll decide their level of commitment to follow you – to consider what you have to say or what you want them to do. Never fail the first test.

Nothing reveals your thought processes and showcases your leadership style like your communication. That's your most fundamental role as a leader.



Author Bio:

Dianna Booher is the bestselling author of 46 books, published in 26 languages, with nearly 4 million copies sold. She writes, speaks, and consults on leadership communication, executive presence, and productivity. Her latest book is [WHAT MORE CAN I SAY?: Why Communication Fails And What To Do About It](#). National media outlets such as *Good Morning America*, *USA Today*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Investor's Business Daily*, *Bloomberg*, *Forbes.com*, *CNN International*, *NPR*, *Success*, and *Entrepreneur* have interviewed her for opinions on critical workplace communication issues. For more information visit [BooherResearch.com](#) or [WhatMoreCanISayTheBook.com](#).



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