



Communicate Like a Leader



Connecting to Inspire, Coach, and Get Things Done

Do you communicate with power?

Leadership is intertwined with communication. It's a critical skill and it's becoming more and more important in a world of social media and constant news cycles.

If you want to be an excellent leader, you simply must become an excellent communicator.

Dianna Booher is one of my favorites in the area of communication. She's the CEO of Booher Research and she's authored a staggering 47 books, including her latest *Communicate Like a Leader: Connecting Strategically to Coach, Inspire, and Get Things Done*. She works with organizations to help them communicate clearly and with leaders to expand their influence by a strong executive presence.

I recently spoke to Dianna about her latest work.

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Leadership Tip: Ineffective leaders communicate in one direction, by telling.

Signs of an Ineffective Leader

What are some of the signs of an ineffective leader's communications?

Ineffective leaders tend to place great trust in their own expertise and control. Their thinking seems to follow the old adage: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." So most of their communication is one-directional—telling. By contrast, more effective leaders like to put out from several trusted sources. They listen with an open mind and weigh facts and ideas before rushing to accept or reject these ideas as valid. The majority of their communication is collaborative.

Ineffective leaders often communicate with vague abstractions so as to avoid offense and blame on sensitive issues. More effective leaders, however, understand when an ounce of specificity is worth a ton of abstraction.

“Effective leaders understand an ounce of specificity is worth a ton of abstraction.” -Dianna Booher

While ineffective leaders may communicate directly and frequently (good habits), they often focus on controlling processes and people. Consequently, these leaders often come across as manipulative and uncaring. In addition to direct and frequent communication, more effective leaders are tactful, compassionate, and passionate
 35 SHARES it comes to people.



ough ineffective leaders would probably never see their communication lacking in any way, they focus on detail—the “how” of a job, doing things right. More effective leaders communicate the bigger picture—the “why” of a job. And communicating that to team members tends to inspire them to do their best work on the right things.

“What we’ve got here is a failure to communicate.” - Cool Hand Luke

What to Do about that Micromanaging Boss

Your book handles the dreaded micromanager. Why do people micromanage? If you’re being micromanaged, what do you do?

Micromanagement stems from several causes: 1) Low self-esteem and the need to lift one’s own ego by threatening someone else and making their life miserable, 2) Fear of losing control, 3) Distrust of others, 4) Insecurity in one’s own abilities, 5) Incompetence to manage or delegate.

If you're the victim of a micromanager, determining the cause for the problem will dictate your first step toward a solution. But assuming you can't decipher all the micromanager's motives, any or all of the following actions can improve the situation:

- 1) Work to establish trust in the relationship. Keep your boss informed about your plans, projects, delays, and any unusual actions.
- 2) Make your boss look good in front of higher-ups. Never surprise a boss in a meeting by bringing up things that you have not informed him/her of previously.

35 SHARES
 35. Ensure your boss of specific check-back points on a project before moving ahead or making a final decision so the boss feels there's a safety net without having to look over your shoulder before you "go too far."



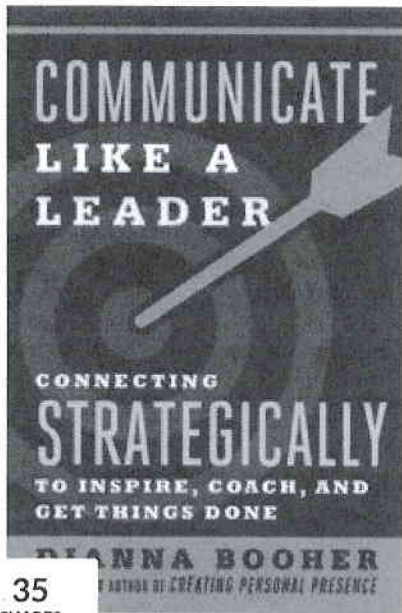
Ask about concrete deadlines, resources, and budgets when your boss delegates a task to you—even when your boss "forgets" to mention such details.

All of these actions demonstrate good intentions, build trust, and suggest to a micromanaging boss how to delegate properly.

“Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher sights.” -Peter Drucker

Coach versus critic: What's the difference and how do you help steer the critic to be a coach?

A coach focuses on the positive path to the goal—increasing or improving your strengths to reach a goal. A critic focuses on weaknesses—where your efforts fall short of the goal.



The first step is to get critics to realize they need a new mindset—that they’re responsible to develop their people, not just evaluate them. Sure, every person has to take responsibility for their own career development and job satisfaction. The Fairy Job Mother doesn’t wave a wand and place everyone in the ideal job so we all live and work happily ever after. But leaders, too, have to realize the cost of recruiting, hiring, training, and replacing their staffers.

Outstanding leaders realize that they’re being paid to

up their people and turn them into productive performers. So both leader and you have joint responsibility on the “coaching” assignment. Together, you

Identify strengths and make sure you’re in a position to use your strengths.

Agree on the specific goal and specific expectations for performance, and write

down the clear standards to measure success.

Identify resources available to help you grow in the job and accomplish the

mission. (training, experts to answer questions, access to data, access to funds or equipment)

Ask for clear feedback. What’s going well? What do you need to change?

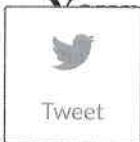
- Ask for support along the way (if your leader still hasn’t learned to offer encouragement).
- Let your leader know you’re interested in stretch assignments to gain experience and deepen your expertise.
- Celebrate your wins.

Gradually, somewhere along the way, your critic will understand that you are view him or her as a coach and will respond accordingly. It’s only natural that people support the projects and people in which they’ve invested time and emotional energy.

“Effective communication is necessary to management success.” -J.C. Penney

Respond Promptly

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My advice to respond promptly got my attention because it's something I can't personally advocate. Would you share a bit more about this one?



In an age of tweets that can go around the world in seconds, investors can dump your stock in minutes when the court issues a verdict, when your CEO resigns, or when your company launches a missile. With a text or email, customers and suppliers can halt a



process just as quickly as they can respond equally fast.



How would any leader make a colleague or staffer sit "on hold" 2-3 days wondering if a message was a "go," "no-go," or unread message? Yet that's exactly what happens if a management leader has not put in place "Standard Communication Practices" for the



management.

What if those "Standard Communication Practices" should be the expectations for routine response times. Is that within 8 hours? 24 hours? What topics can be handled by text? What's acceptable for email? What situations should be handled by phone? Face to face? How about what records should be retained? For how long? Standard happenings to be documented? All of these matters should be part of your "Standard Communication Practices" circulated to everyone.

“Power is nothing unless you can turn it into influence.” -Condoleezza Rice

How is communication linked with executive presence?

These two ideas are closely intertwined. Executive presence involves how someone

1. Looks (body language, dress, work space)

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2. Words (word choice, sentence patterns, vocal quality)



3. Skills (ability to express themselves clearly and persuasively under pressure)



4. Character (character traits, competence, behavior, reputation).



All of these things come across in your communication—especially the character traits



such as humility or arrogance, selfishness or compassion, approachability or aloofness, honesty or deceit.

“The art of communication is the language of leadership.” -James Humes

Conduct a Successful Meeting

Let's turn to meetings. What tips would you offer a new leader to increase the likelihood that he/she conducts successful meetings?

The two most essential things that leaders must do to conduct successful meetings is put together a functional agenda and learn to facilitate a group of strong personalities, leading them to analyze an issue and come to either a recommendation or a decision.

By functional agenda, I'm referring to one that's laser focused on a question, not just a topic. The topic agenda seriously obfuscates discussion and wastes time. Likewise, the facilitator needs to know how to guide a group through the various stages of problem analysis and decision-making handling problem members such as



facilitators or non-participants to get maximum input. That takes know-how. It doesn't happen by chance. If done well, it looks easy and

choice—from venue, to duration, to an effective cancellation system—contributes to a successful meetings. Just like hearing an engaging presentation or seeing a persuasive proposal, you know it when you see it! You'll know it when you walk out of a productive meeting.

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“Meetings are rather like cocktail parties. You don't want to go, but you're cross not to be asked.” -Jilly Cooper

The Characteristics of a Strong Communicator

What are some of the characteristics of a strong communicator?

Being a strong communicator is as much part of someone's "brand" as colors and logos that represent an organization. You create your personal communication "brand" day by day over time as you interact with your staff, colleagues, and executives within and outside your organization.

Strong communicators

- Tell the truth—always, avoiding all forms of deception.
- Listen for strategic opportunities and sidestep minefields.

35 SHARES read body language well.



Choose precise words—particularly for strategic messages.



Pay attention to the emotional context and back-drop for their messages.



Understand the importance of timing.
Understand how confidentiality aids persuasion. They avoid letting ego and grand-
standing cause unnecessary conflict.



“Strong communicators increase their influence because they are intentional and focused with their language.” -Dianna Booher

To sum up, strong communicators increase their influence because they are intentional and focused with their language. Their communication plays a key role in their overall success as a leader.

For more information: see [Communicate Like a Leader: Connecting Strategically to Coach, Inspire, and Get Things Done](#)

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