

Three Leadership Essentials

To be a leader one part of that mix of many attributes will hear the discussion will center around the that you may are:

- Clarity of message
- Asking meaningful questions
- Listening for the whole

Clarity of Message

It is the leader's responsibility to insure that they communicate in a way that can be easily understood and provide direction that is implicit and within the competency of the individuals being asked to perform the task. Here are six tips to improve your success:

1. Be clear, concise and direct....Often when communicating effectively, "less is more." Language is a powerful tool and yet few work with it to maximize the affect of what they want to say. **Meaning be on point.**
2. Avoid ambiguous words....All to often words without clear and concise meanings are used; words that are up to the interpretation of the sender and the receiver. Then what is delivered is not what the leader wanted and more time is wasted in arguing over what was heard versus what was meant.
3. Understand the power of silence....One of the most powerful tools in communication is silence; whether in a pause to give people time to catch up or a long drawn out silence to give them time to think. Silence gives others time to reflect and process information to understand more clearly the message being delivered.
4. Focus on what is important....All to often information is brought in that has no bearing on the current conversation. Stay focused on what is important and adds meaning to what is at hand.
5. Check for understanding....Keep your eyes on the people you are speaking with to see if they are getting your message. No comments or questions does not mean

that they understood what you said. This will be addressed further under “Asking Meaningful Questions.”

6. Demonstrate what you say... Your behavior, both in voice and gestures, is more important than the words you say. Sun Tzu, said it best, “What you do speaks so loudly, I do not have to hear what you say.”

Asking Meaningful Questions

A leader must acquire the ability to ask timely and meaningful questions. Appropriate questioning adds multiple benefits. Six steps to consider for asking questions follow:

1. Obtain and clarify information... There were many times when what has taken place looks obvious; however, a couple of well-asked questions can provide information on what has taken place and why it has taken place. For example, if someone has made a mistake, rather than asking them ‘how could that happen?’ one could ask, what were you thinking when you did that? You may be surprised to find out the exact cause of the problem rather than trying to place blame. All blame does to the people is gives them a reason to try and cover up their mistakes rather than getting to the root cause of the problem and making your organization run more efficiently.
2. Provoke thought... By asking appropriate questions you could literally get the advantage to think about a circumstance in a new way. You also allow people to learn how to solve the problem; this is significant only if you want your organization to grow and prosper.
3. Gain control of the situation... Let’s examine who has more control, the person asking the questions or the person answering questions? This will give you the ability to control almost any situation.
4. Promote your power of persuasion... Pose your question so others see the advantages of your position or the pitfalls you want to avoid.
5. Check for understanding... After you have explained what you want, it is always a good idea to have what you said paraphrased back to you. This allows you to understand if what you said was understood Become a better

listener...It is amazing that if we are focused and we specifically ask the question, how much better listeners we become. More about this in the next section.

Listen to the Whole Message

Effective listening has almost become a lost art. Active listening takes a tremendous amount of concentration and attention. There is more to it than just the words another person is saying. To be an effective listener there is a need to focus on the following five areas:

1. Notice your choice of words...If you listen to the words people choose, they will reveal a great deal more than they think they have. Even though words are a small part of anyone's message, the selection tells you a great deal about the conveyer.
2. Hear the intonation...Intonation provides a different meaning even if the same words are used. We have the message which can be defined by the dictionary definition of each word. Then there is the meta message which provides the meaning of what it actually says, for this relates to what is actually meant.
3. Observe facial expression...One must also hear with their eyes. Looking at a person when they are speaking is a very important part of hearing their message. If you remember growing up, your parents might have said they can see if you were lying in your eyes. This is so true; the eyes will speak very loudly. The whole face will tell its own story regardless of what the person is saying.
4. Watch body movement...The gestures a person uses from head to toe when observed properly will provide you with a very clear message of what was meant. Body movement is either in harmony with what is being said or it will contradict it.
5. Feel the emotion being conveyed...Do not forget to allow your emotions to give you critical information on what is actually being conveyed in the other person's message. One of my favorite poets and mystics from a long time ago named Rumi said "one cannot hear until the ear in the chest is open". One may call it gut instinct.

In my leadership training classes I use an exercise called "It is not what you say". I demonstrate this by controlling the emotion of everyone in the room, using the same phrase but changing vocal variety and body movement. The room starts on a high and within moments emotions go down. The amazing thing is everyone knows what is about to happen but cannot stop it.

To be an effective leader one must have command of critical communication skills. We have reviewed only three of them here. Master these and you will be able to motivate your team, solve problems faster and eliminate those that do not fit in.