

These 6 Communication Styles Should Be In Every Leader's Toolbox

AS A LEADER, one of the most critical skills you need to develop is the ability to adapt your communication style based on situational needs. When you're able to use the right communication tools, you're able to help your team reach peak performance. There's nothing more powerful than communicating in a way that truly resonates with your employees. Let's take a look at the six key communication styles that every leader should have in their toolbox.

Listening

Listening should be the most used form of communication for every leader. There's no ideal ratio of listening to speaking, but the scale should always tip at least slightly in favor of listening. Listen to not only what your team is explicitly saying, but what they're not saying as well. Listening between the lines allows you to uncover your team's hidden frustrations and challenges. When you're truly hearing what your employees are telling you, you'll have all the information you need to evaluate the situation and respond with the most effective method of communication.

Coaching

Coaching helps employees develop and build a broad set of skills. It's essentially a combination of teaching and advising, where you're laying out a framework for the employee to follow to reach their desired results. It differs from teaching in that you're providing a foundation but ultimately, it's the employee who's directing the plan of action. Giving them options and letting them create a path to follow to reach the desired outcome and results.

The best way to decide whether to teach or to coach is to evaluate the amount of time you have in which to resolve the issue. If it's an urgent or time sensitive matter and you need results immediately, teach. If time isn't an issue, coach. The two aren't mutually exclusive and often the best way to get things accomplished is a combination of both.

Teaching

The best time for teaching is when you see someone struggling with a particular skill. Teaching needs to hit on two key points – laying out a foundation of steps for an employee to follow, and explaining how and why it will be beneficial to them. Explaining why you're teaching a skill helps get buy-in from the employee, and they'll be much more willing to learn when they know the benefits.

Directing

Directing specifies the steps your team needs to take to move a project forward. A great example of providing direction is laying out an action plan or an outline of the steps a team needs to take to complete a project. Pay careful attention that you're directing and not dictating. The difference

is in the delivery. You should be providing a framework, not orders. Dictating should be used sparingly, as a last resort if providing direction didn't produce the desired results.

Advising

As a leader, you'll spend a lot of time in advisory mode. Think of advising as providing clarity on a specific situation or clearing up a misconception. When employees come to you with a question or challenge, you're advising them by way of providing a solution. When it comes to projects, the best way to advise your team is to take a bird's eye view of the situation and look at it from the outside. Provide advice that will help the team work through any roadblocks that come up or move beyond a spot where they've gotten bogged down and stuck on.

Motivating

Sometimes a team just needs a little encouragement. Know your team and their preferences – do they like to be hyped up or do they prefer a less enthusiastic method of motivation? Cheerleading doesn't work for everyone. A more subdued method like positive reinforcement is just as effective. In fact, cheerleading can actually have the opposite effect and frustrate teams rather than motivate them. It can feel patronizing, and make the leader seem disconnected. Sometimes the best way to motivate a team is to get in the trenches and work alongside them to overcome a pressing challenge. You know your team – figure out what motivation style works best for them and follow it.

In urgent or time sensitive situations, teaching, directing, and motivating usually work best. When time is less of an issue, coaching and advising are great. It's always the right time to listen. The key is knowing when to use each style of communication and when one will have more impact than another. Most situations call for a blend of communication styles. Analyze the situation to see which method of communication will work best by listening and observing. If you're unsure, ask your employees what they need and how you can best help them.

When you use the right communication style, you make the biggest impact. The most important thing is to be adaptable and change your style as needed to match the situation.

Article Written by Ashira Prossack | Jul 31, 2018, 10:21pm