

GREAT COMMUNICATION SECRETS OF GREAT LEADERS

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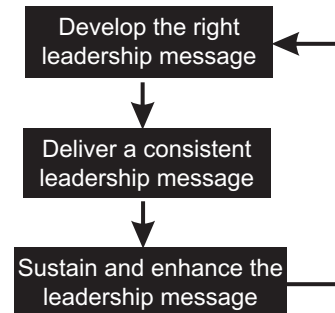
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MAIN IDEA

To be effective as a leader, you need to be a good communicator. This, however, is more than simply being a dynamic speaker. Good leaders intuitively understand communication has to be a two-way street in order to be effective. Not only do leaders have to become good at public speaking but they also have to enhance their ability to listen for feedback and then respond appropriately. As this is done over multiple iterations, whatever the leader is attempting to communicate will come into sharper focus for everyone involved.

Good leaders communicate effectively because they do three specific things well in an ongoing cycle (shown at right) which gets progressively more focused and more targeted over time.

The key objective, therefore, of any business leader who aspires to be an effective communicator is to start and then sustain just such a cycle. By doing so, leaders will convey their goals, gain support for those goals and demonstrate empathy for those whom they are responsible for leading. In other words, leaders who become better communicators automatically enhance their value as a leader.



1. Develop the right leadership message Pages 2 - 4

The main purpose of a business communication is to build trust. Before any leader gets too focused on communicating, they take the time to make sure the message they are planning on delivering is precisely what the organization needs. Developing the message not only involves thinking about what to say but also how to say it. The key points to remember in developing memorable leadership messages are:

- 1 Understand and specify your main purpose
- 2 Answer everyone’s unspoken question: “Why?”
- 3 Use the Four I’s: Inform – Involve – Ignite – Invite
- 4 Plan your communication strategies
- 5 Use e-Communication effectively and intelligently
- 6 Develop a great stand-up message

2. Deliver a consistent leadership message Page 5

Once the correct leadership message has been crafted, it then needs to be delivered consistently and repeatedly through a large number of communication channels. It is in the repetitive delivery of the same message that understanding and acceptance grows. They key points in this stage are:

- 1 Know your audience’s expectations and exceed them
- 2 Be authentic and connect to sell your message

3. Sustain and enhance the leadership message Pages 6 - 7

Communications is an ongoing process. Thus, when the presentation is over, an effective leader gathers feedback and uses that to further fine-tune the message. Great leaders make their message really come alive by matching it to the personalities of the people they lead. The key points here are:

- 1 Connect with people on a more personal level
- 2 Invest in others by coaching them one-to-one
- 3 Ensure viability by making certain the message sticks
- 4 Use storytelling to add context and character

4. Putting it all together Page 8

To implement these ideas and become better at communicating, there are seven action steps you should take. Following these steps will enhance your effectiveness as a communicator and as a leader.

1. Develop the right leadership message

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1 Understand and specify your main purpose

Messages from the leader of any organization have great significance for the people within the organization mainly because they set the tone for what people think, talk about and do. Since the communication will reflect the personality and philosophy of the leader, these messages also play a strong role in shaping the culture and values of the organization as a whole.

To be more specific, good leadership communications can achieve the following objectives:

- *Let people know where the organization is heading and what it stands for* – by affirming its vision and mission.
- *Drive change initiatives* – by explaining to people why change is needed and what that will mean.
- *Issue a call to action* – by introducing and popularizing a key initiative.
- *Reinforce the organization's strengths* – and make people feel good about current capabilities and capacities.
- *Create an appetite for change* – by providing the rationale for why change is required and what steps will need to be taken.
- *Promote a specific product, service or brand* – by affirming the link between that offering and the organization's vision, mission or values.

For example, Winston Churchill became prime minister of Britain in May 1940 just as the country was standing alone against Nazi Germany. He then went on to deliver some of the most inspiring messages ever crafted by a statesman. With his speeches, he rallied the resolve of the British people and gave them complete ownership of their own destiny. By crafting his messages to the urgent needs of his people, Churchill secured a place in history as one of Great Britain's finest political leaders.

"You ask, what is our aim? I can answer with one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival. Let that be realized: no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, and I say, 'come then, let us go forward with our united strength."

– Winston Churchill

2 Answer everyone's unspoken question: "Why?"

Before a leader can put together effective communications, he or she needs to understand what role they are attempting to play. As a rule-of-thumb, leaders can cast themselves in one of four general roles:

1. *As an expert in this field* – or the protector of the organization's culture. Corporate leaders who are attempting to be an expert will keep close watch on their human resources and constantly evaluate whether the right people are in place and how best to groom the next generation of business leaders. Experts always attempt to make rational decisions on the basis of facts rather than opinions.
2. *As a visionary* – whose passion is the main driving force in everything they do. These leaders speak from deep within to motivate others. People may doubt their conclusions but nobody will ever doubt their conviction or their passion.
3. *As a coach* – who wants everyone in the organization to succeed. These types of corporate leaders teach the fundamentals and do more training than anything else. They also attempt to provide a useable framework or formula for success.
4. *As a transformer* – with a mission to take the organization from where it is now to where it needs to be in the future. When these leaders communicate, they are attempting to sell others on the benefits of coming along with them.

Bearing in mind that leaders may choose to be the expert one day and a coach the next, a good leader always give some thought beforehand as to what they are trying to achieve with each communication:

- Am I attempting to provide enough information to explain something new?
- Am I trying to overcome the anticipated objections of my listeners?
- Am I trying to sell the people in the audience on my idea or a better way of doing things?
- Am I attempting to celebrate some notable milestone by what I say?
- Am I attempting to entertain in the spirit of having some lighthearted fun?

For example, Rudy Giuliani was mayor of New York City when the World Trade Center was attacked by terrorists on September 11. He used his public persona to inspire people, even as he attended funerals and other moving events. He symbolized the people of New York and attempted to inspire them in the face of tragedy.

"So what ties us together? We're tied together by our belief in political democracy. We're tied together by our belief in religious freedom. We're tied together by our belief in capitalism. We're tied together because we respect human life. We're tied together because we respect the rule of law. Those are the group of ideas that make us Americans."

– Rudy Giuliani

"People will ask me where do I get my strength? Well, it's really simple. My strength and energy comes entirely from the people of New York and it comes from a place like this, St. Paul's Chapel. This is a house of God and it's one of the homes of our republic."

– Rudy Giuliani

3 Use the Four I's: Inform – Involve – Ignite – Invite

To build trust, leaders must first and foremost be credible themselves. That credibility will then carry over to the messages they send out. To establish leadership trust and credibility:

- *Always tell people what the facts are* – and speak the truth. Don't beat around the bush. Be straight and up-front.
- *Don't attempt to hide bad news* – because bad news will always come to the surface later. Therefore, it's better to be candid right from the outset.
- *Never make promises you don't intend to keep.*
- *Walk the talk* – that is, do what you tell people you're going to do. Never say one thing and do something different.
- *Keep everyone up-to-date and on the same page* – so they know enough to make a meaningful contribution.
- *Separate the facts (which are neutral) from the passion (which will be highly subjective).* Good leaders know when to put forward their opinion and when to be silent and let the facts speak for themselves.
- *Be prepared to sell* – when the situation requires that the leader changes whatever is happening.
- *Keep the listening antennae going* – and listen to how the message is being received. This will allow you to better shape the message in the future if that becomes necessary.
- *Be prepared to acknowledge mistakes, apologize and make amends* – if things go wrong. Generally speaking, leaders who step forward and take the blame – even if the mistakes have been made by others or unwittingly – rise in stature and become more trustworthy in the eyes of their subordinates.
- *Try and incorporate a 30-second "take-away thought" which encapsulates the key point and your rationale* – and make this as clear as possible. Ideally, this is the lingering thought you want people to remember so this should be powerfully stated and concise. An effective message will be able to be summed up in one simple sentence. The greater the clarity and directness of your take-away thought, the greater the chances people will take note of and remember what you say.

On the strength of that base of credibility, a good leadership message will do generally do four specific things:

1. *It will inform people* – about what the key issues are and what they need to do about it, good or bad. The most effective leaders keep everyone very well informed.
2. *It will involve everyone* – and encourage people to come forward with their best ideas and suggestions. (This is enhanced if everyone has a stake in the outcome).
3. *It will ignite the imaginations of the people* – so they will start thinking about what actions they can take to make things better.
4. *It will invite everyone to participate* – thereby creating a win-win situation where people improve their own lot and collectively improve what the organization is achieving.

While every message a strong leader sends out will not necessarily try and do all four of these things at the same time, over an extended period all these elements will come into play. Once a leader has informed people, involved them in crafting a solution, engaged the imagination and then invited everyone to participate in executing the solution, the level of support for the idea will be very high.

4 Plan your communication strategies

Leadership communications never happen in a vacuum. Instead, good messages are carefully planned and structured in order to enhance their effectiveness and overall impact. Planning an overall corporate communication strategy involves these steps:

1. *Assess the climate* – and mold the message to meet the needs and concerns of the people within the organization. Good leaders know the needs of their people and develop a message that will address those needs precisely.
2. *Choose the right strategy* – that is, one which will reflect the vision, mission and business strategies of the organization. An effective communication strategy should:
 - Build trust between workers and managers.
 - Reinforce what the organization stands for.
 - Facilitate a two-way flow of information.
 - Create impetus for change and development.
 - Drive great results and enhancements.
3. *Select the appropriate communication channels* – which will usually be a mix between in-house communications, meetings, third-party messages and Web-based resources.
4. *Repeat the message a number of times* – so that people receive a consistent message in a variety of ways over time. That signals the importance of what's being said.
5. *Make certain the key people get reached* – that is, the key influencers who will dictate whether or not the targeted changes take place.
6. *Use good timing* – link the message to the events of the day in such a way that what's said gets noticed and ultimately acted upon. Releasing something new around the time of a crisis will be more useful than announcing it during the holidays.
7. *Make the message resonate with the people in the organization* – by including elements which have:
 - Emotion or passion.
 - A simple, direct and unambiguous theme.
 - Graphic demonstrations of the potential benefits available.
 - An interesting angle which will get people talking.
 - Some novel or original elements.
8. *Encourage feedback* – so the message can be refined and enhanced over time. Asking for feedback also shows the people they can and should contribute. In addition, asking for feedback is a call to action. There are several actions you can take to show your enthusiasm for genuine feedback:
 - Hold a meeting where people can express their thoughts.
 - Post the feedback you get on a Web site.
 - Get out and talk to people where they work.
 - Hold a question-and-answer session.
 - Run a Web chat where everyone can speak to leaders.

"I don't think you can ever communicate too much. Communicating to your organization is not something taken care of a couple of times a year in memos, or at the annual Christmas party speech. E-mails are great for speed, but they can never replace the face-to-face. Group meetings are fine for the camaraderie, but they can never replace the intimacy of one-to-one. Formal communication – the written word – gives weight, but all the more so when it is supported by spontaneous and informal contact. Above all, you can never walk the halls too much. You can never spend too much time with them."

– Shelly Lazarus, CEO, Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide

5 Use e-Communication effectively and intelligently

Leaders must be aware of and conversant with the technology of communicating electronically because this is the way most of the rank-and-file employees will communicate on a regular basis. When e-communications are used intelligently, two-way communication thrives.

The key elements of an effective e-communications strategy will usually be:

- *E-mail* – which will facilitate the bulk of the two-way communications. E-mail works best when your message is brief and to the point. E-mail can be used to provide individual feedback, strengthen the corporate culture, amplify the mission, recognize contributions and deliver one-to-one coaching as needed.
- *A corporate Web site or intranet site* – which can provide additional resources and an up-to-the-minute notice board. If developed well, a community will form around the Web site. If you make it a habit to consistently and openly communicate with everyone through the Web site, the growth of this community will accelerate. The Web site may incorporate:
 - Descriptions of leadership programs coming up.
 - Tools and self-assessment quizzes.
 - Stories of best practice examples.
 - Stories about the organization's heroes.
 - A posting board where people can map ideas.
- *Telephone, voice-mail or Web chat facilities* – which can be used to supplement what's happening on your Web site. A quick follow-up call after sending e-mail can improve understanding and cooperation immensely.

“Communication always makes demands. It always demands that the recipient become somebody, do something, believe something. It always appeals to motivation.”

– Peter Drucker

“The secret to building a successful e-community is to give people a reason to visit. This means keeping the information lively and pertinent. It also means giving people a reason to return again and again. This requires keeping the content fresh and up to date. The center of the e-community is the Web site.”

– John Baldoni

“A leader can use words to accomplish much. Words by themselves are bits of information. Words backed by the leader's character, conviction, and personal example have the power to communicate: to inform, to exhort, to cheer, to heal, or to inspire. Communications is a two-way process that involves both speaking and listening, and also checking for understanding. This is not easy. The ability to communicate is the leader's most effective tool. The capacity to construct a message, address it to another, listen for feedback, process that feedback, and continue to communicate in ways that are understood is one of the hardest things a leader will have to do. But it can be done. And it can be done by anyone who is willing to invest the time and effort to do it.”

– John Baldoni

“If I went back to college again, I'd concentrate on two areas: learning to write and to speak before an audience. Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively.”

– Gerald R. Ford

6 Develop a great stand-up message

Every leader at one stage or another has to make a stand-up presentation to a group. This is an integral part of being a good leader. To deliver a great presentation:

1. *Create your presentation* – by researching your topic, gathering applicable anecdotes and talking to colleagues who have the information you need.
2. *Develop an outline* – which will have three parts:
 - The beginning – where you tell them what's coming.
 - The middle – where you explain what you're saying.
 - The end – where you remind them of your key points.
3. *Structure your argument* – which will be a mix of logic, reasons and projected results of your suggestions. Your argument should be able to be expressed in one sentence and should be a mix of fact and personality.
4. *Specify your persuasive message* – what you actually want listeners to do after hearing your presentation. You need to have clear in your mind what actions you want people to take if you hope to be effective.
5. *Develop the first draft of your presentation* – while keeping in mind your answers to a few pertinent questions:
 - What is your central message?
 - Why are you giving this presentation?
 - What analogies are you using to amplify your message?
 - Which visual images are available to illustrate things?
 - What specific call to action will you close with?
6. *Revise your draft* – by rewriting it yourself or sharing it with colleagues and asking for their input. You may also give your boss a heads-up look at your presentation to make certain you're on track.

While developing your presentation, you'll also need to keep in mind how and where it will be delivered. Those factors will determine how formal or informal your presentation should be. Many corporate leaders do both – they have a brief prepared presentation which is of a formal nature and then open it up for questions-and-answers which will be quite informal in nature. The venue you will be using will also have an impact in this area, as will the size of your audience and the circumstances in which you are meeting.

“Organization is fundamental to an effective presentation. The presentation that rambles is the presentation that is forgotten not as soon as it's over, but while it is still going on.”

– John Baldoni

“One of the chief responsibilities of the leader-communicator is to persuade followers to adopt his or her point of view. Except in times of extreme crisis where time is of the essence, leaders must do more than say, ‘Follow me.’ They need to give reasons why people should follow them. And, during those crisis moments when the leader does not have the luxury of time, he or she must call upon the reservoir of credibility that he or she has established through consistent and repeated leadership messages.”

– John Baldoni

“Storytelling is an ancient art, and stories are often used to develop an analogy between the present and a recent or past event. At the conclusion of the story, be certain to include the action step: otherwise the story will lose its impact.”

– John Baldoni

2. Deliver a consistent leadership message

Once the correct leadership message has been crafted, it then needs to be delivered consistently and repeatedly through a large number of communication channels. It is in the repetitive delivery of the same message that understanding and acceptance grows. Their key points in this stage are:

1 Know your audience's expectations and exceed them

2 Be authentic and connect to sell your message

1 Know your audience's expectations and exceed them

Just as a leader has expectations about giving a presentation, audiences also have expectations about what they want to hear. Effective leaders who are attempting to be good communicators understand that, so they take the time to anticipate what the audience will most likely want in advance. In some cases, this may be as simple as asking the person who gives the assignment what outcome they are after.

Audiences expect a presenter to:

- Show up on time prepared and ready to go.
- Finish on time or preferably a few minutes early.
- Be intelligent and well briefed.
- Be current on the latest research about the topic.
- To talk to them rather than at them.
- Relate to them and empathize with their needs.

Part of preparing for a presentation is to anticipate what objections are likely to be raised, and be prepared to deal with those objections efficiently. The tips to follow in this area:

- *Do your homework* – and find out in advance what the most likely sticking points will be.
- *Acknowledge the objection* – and bring it out in the open rather than avoiding it.
- *Empathize with the audience* – and demonstrate that you are aware of this concern and that it is valid.
- *Remind those in the audience of any shared experiences you have enjoyed in the past* – and be honest about the benefits or the problems that you've encountered. Most likely the problems especially will be common knowledge, so use that to your advantage by being open and factual. This will boost your credibility. You should also dwell upon any common values you share with the audience, even if your approach to using those values differs from theirs.
- *Deliver your message* – emphasizing the benefits directly and openly.
- *Open the door for possible compromise in the future* – by focusing on your desire to be part of the solution. That way, your presentation can become part of the healing process rather than another problem to be addressed.

The good news is that if you handle objections well, you generate an opportunity to establish a new relationship of trust. This may take a little time, but every time you exceed your audience's expectations, your credibility is enhanced and the groundwork is laid for a good working relationship to evolve in the future. Note, however, to exceed your audience's expectations consistently, you do have to understand those expectations accurately in the first place. Take the time and effort to do that.

2 Be authentic and connect to sell your message

Unless a leader can establish his or her credibility, anything they say will be of little consequence. To enhance your credibility:

- *Always be yourself* – and be the speaker you are rather than trying to replicate someone else.
- *Take your message seriously* – but don't take yourself too seriously. Audiences love it when a speaker makes a joke at their own expense. This builds instant rapport.
- *Always reflect the mood of the circumstances* – that is, be serious when the chips are down and upbeat when things are going well.
- *Use your voice advantageously* – by avoiding a monotone. Inject some voice inflections to add interest. You can fine-tune this by recording yourself speaking and seeing how you come across as a speaker.
- *Use good body language* – by getting out from behind the podium and wandering about the stage. You should also pay careful and deliberate attention to maintaining good (but not overbearing) eye contact. And emphasize what you're saying by using appropriate gestures. Again, it may be helpful to videotape yourself in action and critique yourself.
- *Rehearse your presentation* – ideally in the same venue at which you'll be making your presentation. Get all the wrinkles out with a good dry run first.

In addition to increasing credibility, these suggestions also convey authenticity. A good leader-communicator will also be adept at selling their message and engaging the passions of the audience by:

- *Asking frequent questions* – to gauge interest and connect to the audience.
- *Using symbols, illustrations and metaphors that make the benefits come to life for the audience* – so they not only hear what you're saying but also visualize the benefits vividly and with passion.
- *Paying careful attention to grooming* – because that can have a direct impact on your credibility. For example, a union boss addressing a group of construction workers would never wear a tie because that is the symbol of management. There are loads of similar conventions to keep in mind.
- *Using music* – to remind the audience who they are as a people and what common values they share.
- *Respecting the power of silence* – to underscore key points, to show respect or to allow people sufficient time to reflect on what's being said.

In many ways, leadership messages are a form of theater. Great leaders arise to the occasion. They take their message from a logical level to an emotional level through the use of symbols and images that resonate with the audience. Leaders have a foundation of passion and commitment which comes through in everything they say. They then use a set of communication tools to convey that passion to others, along with an invitation to act accordingly.

“Real communication is an attitude, an environment. It's the most interactive of all processes. It requires countless hours of eyeball-to-eyeball back and forth. It involves more listening than talking. It is a constant, interactive process aimed at creating consensus.”

– Jack Welch, former CEO, General Electric

3. Sustain and enhance the leadership message

Communications is an ongoing process. Thus, when the presentation is over, an effective leader gathers feedback and uses that to further fine-tune the message. Great leaders make their message really come alive by matching it to the personalities of the people they lead. The key points here are:

1. Connect with people on a more personal level
2. Invest in others by coaching them one-to-one
3. Ensure viability by making certain the message sticks
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1. Connect with people on a more personal level

Most people tend to get so many messages thrown at them every day that it becomes difficult to break through the noise and connect with them on a more personal level. Yet leaders need to do this in order to sustain the message they are trying to put across. Connecting with people really comes down to three commonsense steps:

1. *Engage the intellect and the emotions of the people you're attempting to influence* – by knowing your facts, by using memorable and touching stories and even, on occasion, by getting the audience to take physical actions (like standing or coming to the front). In short, appeal to the intelligence of the listener.
2. *Create an ongoing dialogue with the audience* – by inviting them to stand and stretch, audibly answer questions you put to them, recognize individuals in the audience for special achievements or more. By engaging the audience in these or other ways, you melt the barrier between you as a presenter and them.
3. *Use whatever interactive tools are appropriate* – for example
 - A quick 5-minute game.
 - Mood setting music or different lighting levels.
 - Product displays, demonstrations or props.
 - An internet connection and a projection screen.
 - Props like a chair or some other piece of office furniture.

As with anything, finding the right balance between the message you're putting across and the staging is a challenge. There will be times when what you say will be enough in and of itself. On other occasions, more effort will be needed to genuinely connect with people and make them respond to your message. Boredom really is the enemy, and you need to do whatever it takes to banish boredom from your communications efforts.

“Good leadership communicators strive to reach both the head and the heart. They want to pitch ideas to the mind, where we figure things out with logic and reason. But they also work to reach the heart, our emotional side, where decisions are made. Leaders need to make a strong emotional case for a vision statement; they need their followers to see, touch and feel what the future will be like once the vision becomes reality. All too often, presentations appeal only to the intellect, ignoring our physical, emotional and spiritual sides.”

– John Baldoni

2. Invest in others by coaching them one-to-one

Good leaders also tend to be natural coaches and cheerleaders. They want their organizations to succeed, and to that end they work one-on-one behind the scenes to develop their people. Coaching not only helps the organization succeed at present but also helps shape and prepare the next generation of leaders.

At its heart, coaching is all about aligning an individual's aspirations and goals with the objectives of the organization. To become a better coach:

1. *Establish trust* – by demonstrating you have the individual's best interests at heart and want them to excel.
2. *Set high expectations* – make it clear what you expect that individual to achieve.
3. *Continue to teach* – provide the information needed and ensure that information is understood.
4. *Solve problems* – and work with individuals to help them develop and then execute solutions.
5. *Motivate and inspire* – by appealing to the person's inner desire to succeed. A good coach knows intuitively when to push and when to pull back a little.
6. *Provide discipline* – so that standards are maintained and there is compliance with the established rules.
7. *Recognize genuine achievement* – to raise the person's confidence and encourage them to keep going.
8. *Be a mentor* – who looks towards the future and provides guidance and wisdom.

Coaching is an integral part of the leader's job description, rather than something that is undertaken on an occasional basis. With that in mind, the best leaders:

- *Plan ahead* – and identify which individuals need coaching well ahead of time rather than on an accidental basis. Good leaders are constantly on the lookout for areas of weakness in the people who work for their organizations.
- *Take the time to discover what incentives will work best for each individual* – in order to motivate them. Some individuals respond well to money rewards, others like recognition or opportunities for promotion. Good leaders know what makes their people get up and go in the morning.
- *Give frequent feedback* – to let the people know how they're going and where they need to improve.
- *Identify solutions and then secure a commitment* – to put into action what needs to happen.
- *Follow up* – as frequently as the individual needs.

Good leaders tend to be coaching continuously, with the bulk of their efforts being informal and one-to-one. This is perfectly reasonable because the coaching behaviors and mind-set are also sound leadership behaviors. Good leaders tend to teach more by their actions than they do with their words.

“The character is man's greatest need and man's greatest safeguard, because character is higher than intellect. The new leadership is in sacrifice, it is in self-denial, it is in love and loyalty, it is in fearlessness, it is in humility, and it is in the perfectly disciplined will. This is the distinction between great and little men.”

- Vince Lombardi who started out as a physics, chemistry and Latin teacher and ended up as coach of the Green Bay Packers football team

3 Ensure viability by making certain the message sticks

To make a message stick, successful leaders take raw information and give it meaning by providing a context. Or put another way, good leaders make sure their people understand what to do with whatever they learn. How do they achieve this?

1. *Good leaders check for understanding and comprehension* – that is, they listen to what their people are saying to see whether or not they comprehend what was taught. This can be done by:
 - Asking the person to repeat things in their own words.
 - Designating a go-to source for further information.
 - Delegating the authority to solve any problems that arise.
 - Creating some simple feedback loops.
 - Staying involved in the issue at hand.
2. *Good leaders listen actively* – to what their people are saying and discussing with each other. This will provide many clues about any misunderstandings.
3. *Good leaders develop worthwhile leave-behind materials* – so people can study what you've suggested and let it evolve within their thinking.
4. *Good leaders echo their message* – by periodically returning to the themes discussed in the past and reminding people about them. Eventually, people will begin to take notice because you return to the same thought over and over.
5. *Good leaders transmit their passion* – so their people see they care about this issue rather than giving mere lip service.
6. *Good leaders ensure their people have sufficient tools and resources to do what's required.*
7. *Good leaders are good role models for what they say* – that is, they walk the talk and do what is being suggested themselves. You have to be able to lead by example before anyone will take you very seriously.

“Change requires even more communication than routine activities. Top leaders need to know what's happening in their field. Local units need role models to learn from the experience of their peers. Change can be chaotic without a way to communicate what's happening everywhere.”

– Rosabeth Moss Kanter,
professor, Harvard Business School

“There are four keys that ensure understanding: simplicity, consistency, repetition and demonstration. Simplicity emerges from a clear but simple message that is meaningful as well as understandable and motivational. Consistency occurs when all communications and all actions tend to reinforce the same message. Repetition is necessary because people never believe it the first, or even the second or third time. Demonstration comes when leaders use stories and examples from within the company to make the message concrete and tangible. People remember stories.”

– Rosabeth Moss Kanter

“Change is hard work. It takes time. We talk about ‘bold strokes’ versus ‘long marches’. Bold strokes are when leaders issue edicts – to open or close a department, say. But building and creating things of value – that takes long marches, and a lot of people volunteering to be followers. The issue is to create the conditions that enable companies to take advantage of the good ideas which already exist, by using the talents of their people.”

– Rosabeth Moss Kanter

4 Use storytelling to add context and character

Through storytelling, leaders can frame current challenges through the prism of context and character. Good stories, told well, can uplift spirits, inspire and motivate or even move the listener to tears. Stories serve as a framework around which a person can build their life's work.

Business stories come in eight different varieties:

1. *Cautionary tales* – of great woe which befell some organization who failed to do something.
2. *Reassuring stories* – where people made smart choices and went onwards and upwards as a result.
3. *Inspirational messages* – where people move from the valley of despair to the heights of great achievement.
4. *Stories about determination* – individuals who ignored the warnings of so-called experts and achieved something significant against the odds.
5. *Reflective stories* – which typically involve a journey of self-discovery for the story teller.
6. *Humorous anecdotes* – which are usually directed at bureaucracy, used car salesmen, the I.R.S., politicians or Hollywood types.
7. *Human interest stories* – which feature compassion, kindness to strangers or profound moral points.
8. *Stories about the best character traits* – like courage, vision, persistence in the face of looming disaster, etc.

Most great leaders are very good at telling stories because this is a powerful and universal way to communicate across an organization. Not only do stories uplift spirits but they can also act as a caution to the unwise. At other times, just the right story can provide an immediate boost to the flagging energies of an organization. Work hard to become a better storyteller and you'll automatically enhance your effectiveness as a communicator.

“I've been an orator really, basically, all of my life. Since I was three-and-a-half, I've been coming up in the church speaking. I've spoken at every church in Nashville at some point in my life. You sort of get known for that. Other people were known for singing. I was known for talking.”

– Oprah Winfrey

“Stories are fundamental to human character. In fact, they serve as frameworks for our character. They illustrate behaviors in ways that only stories can because they transport the listener away from the current situation to learn about another similar situation. This separateness creates distance, which ideally will enable the listener to draw a lesson from the story that he or she can apply to his or her own work situation. And it is for this reason that storytelling is so compelling for today's leaders.”

– John Baldoni

“Effective leadership, both personal and corporate, is effective communications. Leaders and employees need to be in synch throughout the decision-making and implementation process. Leaders and employees need to understand one another. Leaders and employees need to be able to exchange ideas in an open and honest way. These things can occur only through leadership communications.”

– John Baldoni

To implement these ideas and become better at communicating, there are seven action steps you should take. Following these steps will enhance your effectiveness as a communicator and as a leader.

To become a better communicator:

1. *Set clear, credible targets* – so everyone knows and understands where you want to take the organization. The ideal here is to inspire to action with an impressive vision of the future. Be careful not to promise what you cannot or should not deliver.
2. *Always gain a commitment from your key stakeholders before going to the masses* – so you're then able to enlist their help to engage the hearts and minds of everyone. Enthuse your people with the possibilities and then ask for their commitment rather than being vague or wishy-washy.
3. *Coach others intensively* – because you'll accomplish far more if you teach others what to do than if you attempt to do everything yourself. Make certain everyone has the tools, the resources and the training they require to do the job, and then get out of their way and let them get to work. Do give them constructive feedback but don't attempt to micro-manage every project.
4. *Lead from the front* – where you can be seen and heard. Model the behavior you want. It will give confidence and integrity to what you're saying.
5. *Issue specific calls to action* – and ask for people's support directly and unequivocally. Make it impossible for anyone to misunderstand what the organization is driving at achieving. Be inclusive.
6. *Teach others how to communicate well* – so people at every level of the organization have a greater sense of purpose and unity. You want everyone to be good at communicating, not just the senior management team.
7. *Walk the talk* – and live your message. Reinforce what you say by what you do and that will inspire others to do the same. Leaders who do what they say energize and enthuse their subordinates to follow suit.

"In the modern world of business it is useless to be a creative original thinker unless you can also sell what you create. Management cannot be expected to recognize a good idea unless it is presented to them by a good salesman."

– David Ogilvy

"The chief reason that CEOs fail to achieve there is not lack of ambition, lack of vision, or even lack of desire. No, according to a Fortune magazine article, the chief reason leaders fail is lack of execution. Three years later, Fortune explored why corporations fail. Of the ten reasons cited, four ('see no evil', 'dysfunctional board', 'fearing the boss' and 'dangerous culture') can be attributed to a failure of another sort – a failure of communications."

– John Baldoni

"It is easy to take communications for granted. After all, anyone who has the ability to climb into a position of authority over others can communicate, right? Wrong. Communications is seemingly the easiest of leadership behaviors, but experience tells us that it is often the hardest to carry out consistently. The reason people find communications difficult is that it takes so much commitment. Often leaders are so busy doing all the other important things related to managing systems and people that they simply run out of time and thus do not communicate effectively. And that's the reason so many leaders fail at communications. Communications requires discipline, thought, perseverance, and the willingness to do it again and again every day."

– John Baldoni

"Leaders need to do more than just stand up and speak. They need to integrate communications into everything they do as leaders so that their communications, both oral and written, emerge from who they are as leaders and within the appropriate cultural context. Leaders who fail in communications will fail to achieve their organizational aims."

– John Baldoni

"Effective leaders are always developing, delivering, and sustaining their leadership messages as part of their regular communications. The secret to good communications is to do it every day. Leaders who communicate regularly and frequently, both in good times and in bad, will improve organizational and individual performance, get results, and create a successful enterprise. And with each passing year, it seems, the imperative for good communications grows stronger."

– John Baldoni

"Presidential historian Robert Dalleck describes five key factors of a successful presidency: vision, pragmatism, consensus-building, charisma, and trustworthiness. Four of these factors depend heavily upon an ability to communicate on multiple levels. Presidents, like all leaders, need to be able to describe where they are going (vision), persuade people to come along with them (consensus), connect on a personal level (charisma), and demonstrate credibility, i.e. do what they say they will (trust). Even pragmatism depends on communications. Leaders need to describe the options facing an organization and make tough decisions about those options. It is then their responsibility to communicate the reasoning behind their decisions and the results of those decisions. So in a very real sense, leadership effectiveness, both for presidents and anyone else in a position of authority, depends to a high degree upon good communication skills."

– John Baldoni

"Just as there is no single way to lead, there is no single way to communicate – in fact, there are countless ways. What matters most is the willingness to do it, with a consistent message, a constancy of purpose, and a frequency of performance. In other words, leaders communicate all the time and do it willingly in order to convey their goals, gain support for those goals and demonstrate concern for all who follow them."

– John Baldoni