

Leadership & Communications

by

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Internal & External Communications

Last year the focus was on communications with *external* stakeholders outside of an organisation.

This year, I focus is on improving *internal* communications within an organisation.

Successful organisations achieve **both**.

Communications & Leadership

Inevitably, good communications is associated with leadership and its necessity for a good leader.

There is no single agreed definition of leadership. The dictionary defines a leader & communications thus:

- A **Leader** is someone who rules, guides or inspires others.
- **Communications** is the imparting or exchange of information, ideas or feelings.

Effective communications is therefore an essential element of good leadership: they go together.

What Makes a Good Leader?

- Character, Ethical, Integrity & Honesty.
- Principles: stand for something not fall for anything!
- Openness to new ideas, wherever they come from.
- Respect for others, whoever they are.
- An ability to communicate with others.
- Able to relate with others (people skills).
- Incisiveness (take decisions) & take responsibility.
- Strength & resilience.
- Knowledge?

Good Leaders...

- Take a long-term perspective (vision).
- Give direction, prioritise and delegate responsibility.
- Serve the people they lead (staff).
- Encourage the development of their staff (empower):
Build the people & the people will build the business!
- Focus on what is right for the organisation (not them!)
- Communicate their vision to all stakeholders.
- Will take responsibility but also give credit where due.
- Manage conflict (negotiate).

Styles of Leadership

- Authoritarian (formal)
- Informal (influential)
- Collaborative
- Principle Centred
- People Centred
- Objectives Centred
- Political

Psychological Maturity (1)

Good leaders require a high level of personal maturity and will welcome continual, ongoing psychological / personal development.

This provides them with an inner sense of personal power, focus and direction, that transcends temporary or superficial external distractions.

Psychological Maturity (2)

No one is perfect, but psychological maturity helps leaders to be:

- more accepting of their own limitations & those of others (forgiveness);
- open (listen) to new ideas (being approachable);
- willing to serve others (staff);
- confident to delegate (that's why they have staff!);
- give credit where it's due; and
- willing to plan their succession. (An organisation must last beyond its leader's departure.)

The Importance of Good Leadership

- Essential for any successful organisation.
- Establishes the direction & purpose of the organisation (vision).
- Sets the ‘culture’ of the organisation: builds a sense of belonging to a team striving towards a common purpose.
- Inspires & motivates those within the organisation to achieve their best for it.

Leadership is NOT the same as Management!

- Leadership sets the overall direction for an organisation. It involves ***vision*** for the future.
- It is predominantly creative.

- Management involves utilising the available resources (money, people, materials, etc.) within the principles and objectives defined by leadership.
- It is predominantly logical or scientific / mechanical.

Leaders think about the view from the top & check the ladder is leaning against the right wall!

Good managers climb the ladder of success efficiently.

Successful organisations need good leadership and management.

Communications

- Good communications are absolutely essential for effective leadership.
- It doesn't matter what you know, nor the message that you transmit. *What matters is the message that is received by your audience.*
- Effective communications must therefore focus on those receiving the message, not on those giving the message.
- Thus, focus on your audience and tailor your message to *their* needs not yours.

(Public) Speaking

- Public speaking can be a highly effective method of multiplying-up your effectiveness (one-to-many relationship).
- Most of your message is non-verbal: voice, facial expressions, deportment, gestures, language, space, etc.
- Make sure that your message is congruent with your non-verbal messages.
- You have less than 2 minutes to grab your audience's attention. So, give your opening impact.

Speaking Tips

- Keep the message simple (but not patronising): focus on no more than 5 key ideas / concepts / messages.
- Use easy to understand words.
- Keep sentences short.
- Use direct rather than indirect speech.
- Don't try to be someone else: be yourself.
- These are especially important if your presentation is not in your audience's native language.

Communications through the Media

- Used well, this is the most effective way to get your message across, but therefore also carries the highest risk.
- With **radio**, your voice is all the audience has to connect with you. Slight vocal over-emphasis is necessary to add impact.
- With **TV**, consider your background & what you wear: most people remember that more than your message!
- **Online & on TV**, attention spans are short: keep it brief & make your information easy to find. Know what is your key message (“sound bite”).

Written Communications

- The language and concepts can be more complex than for spoken media.
- Use diagrams, graphics & colours to grab the readers' attention.
- Tailor your message to the likely readership: think about your audience.

Developing Better Communication Skills

- Practice makes perfect, so practice!
- Don't be too ambitious: start small.
- Get feedback from your audience.
- Record yourself and watch it back.
- Start a local Toastmasters club.
(See www.toastmasters.org)