



4 Communication Keys

of High Performing Organizations
for New or Seasoned Leaders

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You have achieved your goal and find yourself a leader in your organization. Kudos to you, as this takes hard work. By developing a technical ability or excelling in your field, you have been recognized for your accomplishments. Leading an organization or department is a phenomenal responsibility, and the nature of a leadership position is probably very different from what you may have done before. Your skills got you a new opportunity, but how do you communicate so your people understand what you would like to achieve. It can also be very lonely at the top, and you may find yourself thinking, What now? Although you have done a great deal of work to get there, the key is to continue growing into the role.

Together, we'll explore what it takes to create an engaged team that is excited and working towards a common goal as well as the communication skills that are vital to effective leadership and high performing organizations.

KEY 1

Communicating A Vision

Vision is everything in leadership. No amount of communication skills can overcome a deficit of clarity. Your vision will be the bullseye where everyone in your organization is aiming. If you don't know what your aimpoint is, neither will they. If you can't communicate it clearly, your people won't know where to focus their efforts most efficiently.

First order of business is for you to get clear on your vision. Spend time observing the current state of your organization before making changes. What is working? What isn't? What are your ideas for fixing it? In 2 years, what kind of difference would you like to make as a leader? How will you know you've made that difference? How will you measure success? Once you're clear about where you want to go, bring in your leadership team. Use their ideas and expertise to refine your vision and create a shared vision that is aligned with the company. Only then can you begin to communicate this to your larger organization. You want a culture of excellence that propels

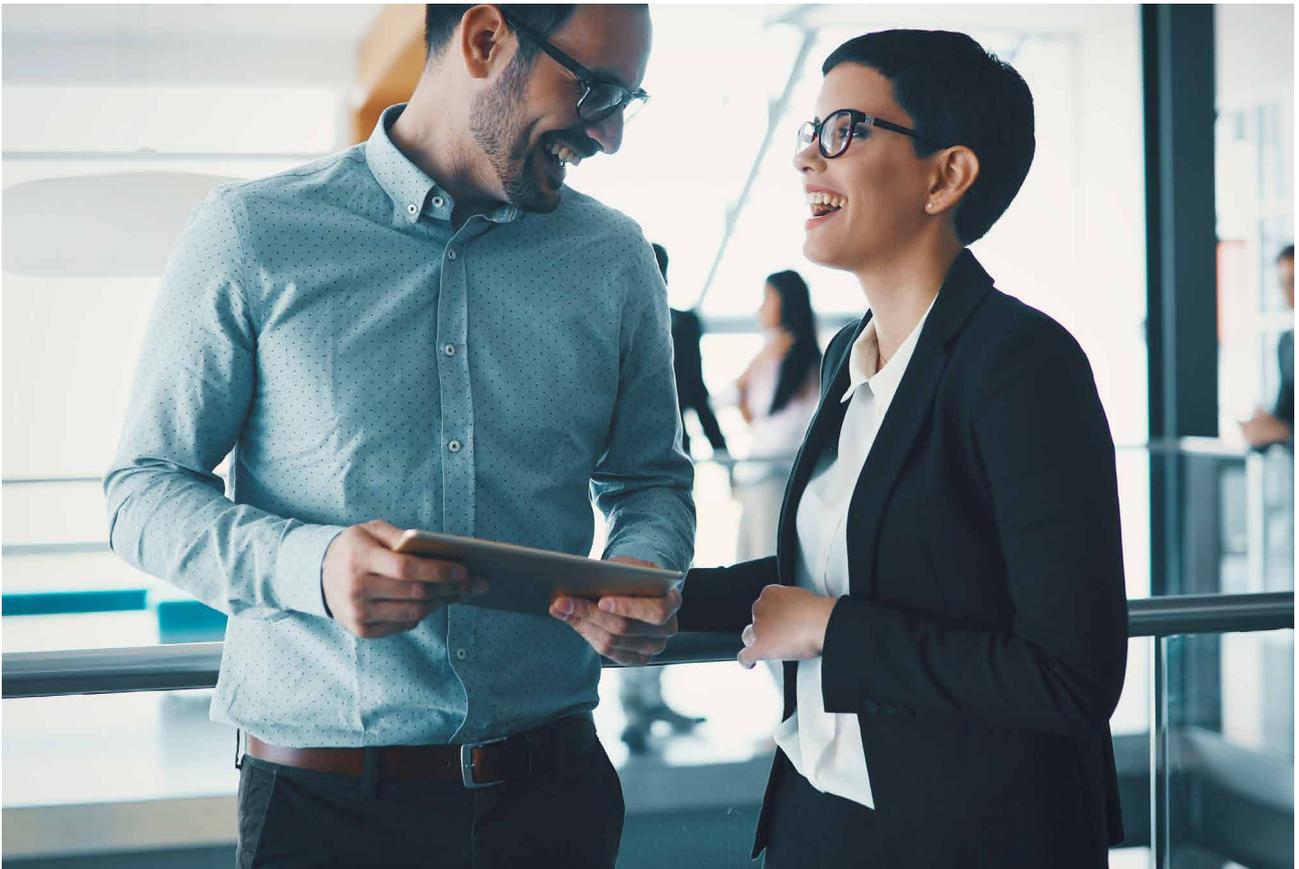
the business forward, so you need to create a process. To accomplish this, you must identify key behaviors, when done consistently throughout your organization, will develop a culture which supports your vision. To create consistency throughout your organization you need to develop a Strategic Communication process that consistently reinforces and helps your vision take form. That means understanding what communicates and how to utilize communication skills to birth the organization you desire. Your leadership team also needs to understand how to utilize communication to strategically aligns with your vision.

KEY 2

High Engagement comes from Consistent Communication

Your vision is the spark that lights your employees' fires. Consistent communication, however, is what builds that fire and keeps it burning through the low points that every organization experiences.

Consistent communication focuses your employees' efforts and keeps your vision in the forefront. It constantly reminds them what the aim is and helps them feel safe and guided. Yes, this can feel redundant, but communication is the backbone of supporting your vision and building it into a mighty force. This is why the Strategic Communication process makes it easy to provide consistency. Often leaders determine how he/she will communicate their vision only to have it fall on the back burner as day-to-day operations take precedence. Strategic communication looks at all facets of the organization from marketing, to hiring, departmental communication to daily communication practices and utilizes the strategy to communicate the same message numerous ways. Your communication keeps the focus desired behaviors which support the desired vision. Holding your people accountable to behave in manners which support your vision will help to integrate the desired behaviors throughout the organization. Consistent behavior changes over time instill the belief that this is how do business.



As a leader, your vision, although imperative, will not come to fruition if your employees do not understand their role in achieving it. The process begins once your leadership team clearly sees and supports your vision. Then it is incredibly important he/she helps their direct reports coordinate their efforts in a manner that aligns with your vision. Too often employees are doing tasks and have no idea how this helps the organization. People want to be part of something bigger than themselves. Especially your youngest employees want to feel he/she are making a difference, and a good way to engage them is to help them become clear about how their work impacts the world. Gallops research on engagement interviewing thousands of workers helped discover the importance of engaged employees. Their surveys found a direct correlation between how engaged your employees are and employee retention, customer metrics, productivity and profitability. With these outcomes in mind, do your employees understand how their work helps the organization succeed?

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KEY 3

Communication growth is Leadership Development



Of all the things I've noticed in my 25 years as a consultant for organizational transformation is that the best leaders all have one thing in common: they know how important communication is and they pay attention to the details of their interactions while continuing to develop their skills.

Every chief executive needs leadership at all levels to continue to develop and grow so that you, as the leader, can focus more on the future of the company. This means trusting your team to keep the company on track and growing.



Some skills I recommend for mentoring your leadership team:

1. LISTENING Hands down, the ability to listen is the most valuable skill you can cultivate, and this means listening to understand - not just respond. Your employees have something to offer and will feel respected and inspired when heard.

2. DEVELOPING Communication Expertise- This means understanding that everything you do communicates either verbally, non verbally or through your actions. That is why it is imperative that you continually improve your ability to communicate in a manner that engages, empowers and inspires your people.

3. MARKETING YOUR VISION

In essence, as their leader you are marketing your vision through communication, and teaching others how to market it as well. For this reason, the marketing rule of 7 comes into play which states people needs to see or hear your message at least seven times

before they act and buy from you. In this case the “buy” is buy in. Note that it says they need to see as well as hear, as your behaviors communicate more than your words. The key is to be consistent in your language and actions.

4. RECOGNITION AND PRAISE

One of the most overlooked ways to help employees understand they are on the right track is through communicating appreciation. All people want to know he or she matters and communicating an employee’s value is a low-cost way to motivate them.

The feedback should be meaningful and memorable for the employee. This also communicates to others what success looks like.

Without a strong, consistent communication process, your culture will not have the foundation on which to sustain evolution. Effective internal communication helps to ensure that all employees are working collaboratively towards a common goal. This develops a culture that enables your employees to to make decisions that are in alignment with your vision - which leads to greater productivity and improves your customer’s experience.

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KEY 4



Empathy A Communication Superpower

“Get the inside right, the outside will take care of itself”

– Eckhart Tolle –

A key component to engagement is your employee’s relationship with their immediate supervisor. Are your supervisors developed into leaders? Do they have the skills to:

- + Communicate clear expectation to their employees?
- + Know how to give recognition and praise?
- + Create an environment where their people feel safe to communication their ideas?
- + Do employees believe their opinions count?
- + Do they have the opportunity at work to learn and grow?
- + And finally, does your supervisor or someone at work care for them as a person.



Although the vision is developed by the leader, it is the **supervisors** that create cultural transition through their day-to-day interactions with their employees. Yet often, people are promoted and receive no leadership development. This key role which affects everything from productivity to turnover is not given the skills to succeed. Sadly, CEB Global found that 60% of new managers fail in the first 24 months and the key reason is the lack of leadership development. To create cultural change, it is imperative your supervisors are given the skills he/she needs to become great leaders.

Good internal communication means you've already listened or empathetically understand what your employees want and needs. Empathy is a big word for walking a mile in another person's shoes. And empathy is a **superpower** among the highly effective. It allows you, as the leader, to imagine others' experiences and to proactively address them before they become problems. It allows a leader or customer service representative to see a problem and fix it before it becomes a sore spot. It trains each person in an organization to take the initiative to fix things on the spot.

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Communication is Key to Sustainability

If you have good internal communication in your organization, you are 95% of the way to having good communication with your customers.

High performing organizations are a result of constant focus on the vision through communication. You've aligned your people and processes with your products and services. Your company's processes are designed to efficiently and smoothly provide a product or service that your customer's desire. Take care of your people and they will take care of the customers.

One of the reasons problems occur is because your employees are not aligned with your customer's needs. Work takes place with few results, and when things go wrong there's a flurry of finger pointing and excuses. The result is your customer is not receiving what they need in a timely manner and your employees are not feeling fulfilled in the process. Once again it is through communication that problems can be resolved, and your customers served, but only if the culture has a communication process which allows learning from mistakes.

For this to take place, people need to have a clear understanding of the customer and their needs, and their role in making it happen. Only with open and honest communication can your customers receive the attention they deserve. In addition, open communication needs to take place organizationally and not operate in silos which undermines productivity. To create communication processes which support productivity, your employees need to:

- + Understand how their work influences other parts of the organization
- + Communicate honestly for the good of the team
- + Develop the skills to have difficult discussions in a respectful manner
- + Hold one another and themselves accountable for the results which will help your team succeed
- + Recognize good work

For your team to be successful people need to trust one another. As Patrick Lencioni stated, “There is no one quality or characteristic more important than trust,” but for a high level of trust to be achieved, your people must feel safe to be honest. They need to feel it is okay to be vulnerable. Employees should feel safe to say they need help or to be honest that he/she made a mistake. Trust is the true foundation of teamwork, but again it takes leaders who understand the importance of developing the people side of their business. It is imperative that you, as a leader, work as hard at creating a trusting team aligned on the common purpose, as it is to focus on the bottom line. Only then can an organization truly become productive.

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- Patrick Lencioni -

While interviewing CEOs and Executives from Fortune’s Great Places to Work, one thing became very clear. Organizations which create a high trust culture and focus on their people ...

- + Enjoy 3 times the return on the stock market
- + Perform nearly 2 times better
- + Have significantly less turnover than their industry peers
- + Find there is a direct correlation between positive employee experience and financial returns

To create a culture of excellence that propels your business forward and improves the bottom line, you must align your team, through a strategic communication process. It is through this process you can become seen as an inspirational and well-respected leader.

Biography

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