

What new skills can help you inspire, convince, galvanise others?

You don't have to lead a corporation or head a political party to be a leader. You can lead an SME, a team or a project. But could you do it more effectively if you change how you communicate?

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When we want to get something done, or make something happen, it involves convincing and inspiring others to join in and follow. That's when it's a matter of leadership, not just management.

And that's when it matters how you communicate, if you want the best and most efficient results.

Leadership communication

Whatever the project, how you communicate makes a huge difference to its success, how easily it is achieved – and, more importantly, how far (and how willingly) your followers cooperate.

Planning helps. Strategy too of course. But in implementing plans, communication distinguishes 'effective' from 'average'.

Inspire, convince, galvanise

I've learnt to combine communication and leadership through trial and error, in a long career including teaching, training, managing, consulting – and being a parent. (I'm not talking about public speaking here - that's for another day and another article.)

As a trainer, I must inspire delegates to make changes in skills and mindset.

And as an Executive Coach I have honed my communication skills over the last 10 years. Clients come to me because they want to make changes:

- in their organisation
- in their thinking
- in their behaviour
- in their skills
- in their confidence.

Each one wants to feel galvanised by their time with me; they want to feel inspired to take action, to implement the changes we discuss.

It's these skills that I want to share here. I have chosen four so see them as cornerstones and build

your leadership style on top.

Leadership communication cornerstones

If you don't see yourself as a leader, don't worry - they work for managers too.

1. Build greater trust

- Listen and take a real interest in your team. It takes time but builds trust.
- Keep your word
- Show integrity – play fair

2. Know what motivates each one

- Take time every month to have a 1;1 conversation with each
- Find out what frustrates them (this creates an appetite for change)
- Discover what motivates them
- Make sure their targets and tasks include a result they care about

3. Vary your style to suit them

- Discover more about communication preferences: one size doesn't fit all
- Use Psychometric Profiling (eg DISC) to quickly learn how people are predictably different in preferences, and how to adapt
- Be speedy for big-picture people, detailed with others, gentle with the risk-averse

4. Be the leader inside and out

- Think yourself into being the leader. Know your purpose in leading. Be really clear what you want to accomplish. This clarity and confidence will communicate itself through your body language.
- Does your posture show leadership? Check in the mirror how you look with chin up, shoulders back and compare to the opposite
- Do you look worried or stressed? If so, find a new facial expression!

Case-study

A team of data analysts were frustrated because their line-manager seemed not to value the high

quality of their research and the time they devoted to answering client questions. He was frustrated because, despite careful briefing before meeting clients, they gave excessive detail on process and stressed potential flaws over benefits. He wanted to lead a change in communication.

Through 1;1 conversations he discovered the team's frustrations, so was able to explain how a change in communication would benefit them, clients and sales.

We used DISC Psychometric Profiling for the whole team, managers included, and it quickly became obvious that the problem was conflicting communication styles and preferences. The clients and managers wanted factual, succinct recommendations in order to make quick strategic decisions. This ran counter to the analysts' preference for detailed examination of pros and cons as well as research processes.

By following the DISC system and communication advice, everyone was enabled to make changes. The analysts reduced the information they gave to customers, thus saving their own time and giving customers the succinct information they wanted. Customer satisfaction rose and was reflected in improved sales.

Plus, the managers have recognised they lead more successfully when they too communicate according to the preferences of others. With the analysts, they give more detail, allow time to consider pros and cons, and acknowledge the contribution made by their highly accurate work.

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