

Value Communication

It's key to your success

By Beth Noymer Levine



Can we agree on something?

Success, whether on an individual or organizational level, never happens in a vacuum. No one succeeds alone – *everyone must communicate* in order to collaborate, manage or lead. Communication is the common currency we all use to get things done – in our lives and in our careers.

Yet, if we agree on that basic premise, why is it that most organizations neglect to adopt and post values around communications like they do for operations.

Most organizations talk about their aspirations in an effort to build culture and support performance. Consider these: *Mission. Values. Excellence. Accountability. Productivity. Efficiency.* Words like these are rightfully part of the lexicon of organizations that strive to rally their employees to achieve greatness. But too often an important word is missing in the pursuit of a winning performance or a world-class

reputation: *Communication*. No one is making communication a part of the training regimen. That's probably because communication is assumed to be something people just do, like breathing. Yet it's not.

I view communication as the everyday currency of business; it's how we get things done. Our success is ultimately determined by interactions with employees, customers, communities, suppliers, shareholders, regulators, and other stakeholders. And while most organizations have a mission statement, and many articulate a set of core values—for how they conduct their business or treat each other and their customers—most overlook standards, goals, or guidelines for communication. Communication is actually the channel for executing a company's mission, its values, and its expectations for excellence, accountability, productivity and efficiency. How else could these be realized?

Communication is not just a path to excellence for organizations,



it is just as important for individual careers. Improving your communication skills, even if you are someone who is already proficient, is an easy and effective way to reach new levels of success. My five principles of communication will effectively help you in meetings, presentations, negotiations, managing employees, and even dealing with the media. Each principle exemplifies an important aspect of communication that directly impacts the effectiveness of what you say and the impression you leave in pretty much any scenario.

Audience-Centricity: When you get up to talk or take the microphone at an event (or even just speaking up in a meeting or talking to an employee), it is not, and should not be, all about you—not if you want to be effective, impressive, and memorable, that is. There is an unwritten, unspoken contract with your audience that you, the speaker, will entertain, enlighten, or energize them. An audience wait for something new, useful, beneficial, or fun. What’s at stake when the speaker skips over the audience’s sensitivities? There’s a risk of losing credibility and likeability— two pretty strong desirables for a speaker.

Transparency: The bottom line with transparency is this: If something is true and real and you’re thinking it, feeling it, or wanting it, then communicate it. When a batter squares to bunt, people know what’s coming. You might as well be the leader who also lets people know what’s coming. Be straight up with information as well as with your feelings and reactions. When faced with a crisis or criticism, call it out, tell it like it is, and own up, rather than being the Grand Master of Duck and Cover, Chief Whitewasher, or Captain Back-track. The discerning audiences you face will give you props for being up front, direct, and genuine. When you speak publicly, transparency applies to both your content and your delivery. Are you transparent in words and emotion? Do they match? What does your demeanor suggest about how authentic and trustworthy you are? Are you trying to spin the situation, are you holding back, or are you spilling it all out? And are you acknowledging your feelings?

“
Regardless of how brilliant or compelling a speaker’s material is, audiences get downright annoyed when speakers are long-winded or go over their allotted time. In these cases, even if the content is stellar, the takeaway is a less-than-stellar impression.

Graciousness: Graciousness is not about being humble; it’s about being generous, even—especially!—under duress. It’s about being your highest, best self and making the unselfish, alley-oop pass to the other guy, whoever that may be: Teammate, opponent, owner, or fan. Graciousness is just as important when things are going well as when they’re not. It’s about sharing the glory of scoring. It’s about showing leadership through generous attitudes and actions. Executives are often called upon to speak publicly and tell their company story, especially when it’s a success story. There are two ways to handle this, and you probably have seen both in action: One is to tell the story, hitting all the highlights and taking credit for the successes, and the

other is to tell the story, touching on the highs and lows and talking about how the team came together, how friends and colleagues pitched in, and how clients and suppliers have been phenomenal partners in the growth. Which approach do you find more appealing? Probably the latter, because the speaker’s graciousness in telling the success story is inherently more appealing.

Brevity: When was the last time you or someone you know complained because a speaker was brief? Quite the opposite, right? Like bling, brevity immediately gets our attention. It’s a quick way to be memorable and ensure that your audience retains your points. There’s nothing quite like brevity for making a lasting impression. And, just like a successful punt, getting the job done quickly can advance your game strategy and score points. Regardless of how brilliant or compelling a speaker’s material is, audiences get downright annoyed when speakers are long-winded or go over their allotted time. In these cases, even if the content is stellar, the takeaway is a less-than-stellar impression.

Preparation: Being prepared is just about the most audience-centric thing you can do. It confers a sense of importance and value on your listeners. It shows respect for their time and is arguably the least you can do in exchange for their attentiveness to you as a speaker. Plus, it ensures that what you deliver is actually received. Preparation shows—as does a lack of preparation. When a speaker or presenter is prepared, the audience notices. The speaker is on point, and the message is clear and relevant to the audience.

All of these principles are as important as they are interrelated. If you had to choose one, though, go for audience-centricity. Preparation for an important communication starts with the audience and what’s in it for them. Tone and content will likely call for some transparency and/or graciousness so that you are credible, trusted and liked. And finally, the most audience-centric way to execute on the delivery of the communication is to respect the audience’s time and attention – via brevity.

Look at these five principles as a starter set and then build on them for yourself or your organization. Communication is key. And success is often in the eyes of the beholder – your audience. **PE**



Communications coach **Beth Noymer Levine** is an expert in helping Fortune 500 executives, professional and world-class athletes, and other high-profile individuals effectively think about, prepare for, and deliver their messages to important audiences. The author of *Jock Talk: 5 Communication Principles for Leaders as Exemplified by Legends of the Sports World* and founder of Smart-Mouth Communications. She is a frequent speaker and workshop presenter at conferences and events nationwide.

Visit www.smartmouthcommunications.com
 Follow [@SmartMouthComm](https://twitter.com/SmartMouthComm)

Would like to Comment? Please Click Here.



Copyright of Personal Excellence is the property of HR.com, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.