

6 Ways Real Leaders Turn Insincerity Into Inspiration

(<https://www.tlnt.com/6-ways-real-leaders-turn-insincerity-into-inspiration/>)

The biggest barrier between leaders and followers is distrust. And the window dressing for distrust is insincerity. People put up with a lot of quirks in their leaders and coworkers just to keep the peace, but insincerity particularly grates on the nerves. It's like trying to satisfy hunger with cotton candy.

A good question to ask yourself periodically: What communication habits sound insincere, and how can I become more inspiring and encouraging? Here's a starter list:

1. From cliché greetings to personal greetings

You meet someone in the hallway. A typical exchange:

They: "Hi, how are you?"

You: "Fine. And you?"

They: "Good, thanks."

Although there's certainly nothing wrong with this exchange, it's certainly not inspiring. It's robotic, unthinking, unmemorable.

Recently, my husband had surgery and was at home recuperating for about 3 weeks. As he was out and about again, people greeted him with, "Hey, how are you?" He'd respond with, "About 85 percent." They'd invariably chuckle and stop to comment with something original, "Really? 85 percent? That must mean next Monday, you'll be 92 percent?" An original conversation followed.

Now, of course, you may not want to have a conversation every time you greet someone. But an original greeting ("Hey Charlie, how was your commute this morning?") communicates to others that you're alert, thinking, seeing them as individual people.

2. From pat responses to purposeful responses

You know a pat response when you get one. In a meeting, you bring up a difficult issue your team is facing, and someone responds, “Well, I’m sure you guys will figure out a way to handle it.”

Or you pass along an idea to your manager about a process that you think could increase productivity. Your boss responds, “Thanks. We always appreciate good ideas.”

Or maybe you’re expressing apprehension to a colleague about an upcoming client presentation. The coworker, never looking up from her keyboard, reassures you with, “Don’t worry about it. I’m sure you’ll do fine.”

Such responses communicate, “I don’t have time (or want to) focus on your situation.”

Here’s a more meaningful response when someone expresses concern about an upcoming presentation: “You may want to talk to Ken. He briefed that client two weeks ago. He may have some insights for you.”

3. From fake listening to active listening (<https://www.tlnt.com/four-essential-skills-that-every-manager-needs/>)

I’ve had way too many of these conversations at a trade show booth:

Me: “Can you please tell me if you have this book available in Spanish? And do you have them here at your booth or only by order?”

Agent: “Okay, just give me your card and we’ll add you to the list.”

Such conversations remind you of the TV interviews by satellite when the host asks a question and the guest has an earpiece that isn’t working. The response is totally unrelated. When that happens on TV, it’s a tech problem. When that happens in real life, it’s a listening problem.

4. From flattery to sincere praise

A sincere compliment is specific (<https://www.tlnt.com/another-way-to-motivate-employees-try-building-a-culture-of-praise/>). Flattery, by its definition, is excessive, exaggerated, and primarily of benefit to the one who gives it. A good test of how your praise comes across: Does the person seem pleased or uncomfortable with your comments?

5. From plastic smiles to pleasant expressions

Do you have the same smile for everyone all the time? Are the eyes involved? I recall someone saying to me once during a 3-day retreat: “You have the saddest smile today. Are you unhappy about what the group plans to do?” It was then that I became aware that, yes, I was wearing my plastic smile during that meeting because I disagreed with the direction of the group.

Insincerity may show up in a generic smile flashed the same way to everyone.

6. From empty offers to real help

“If I can help you in any way, please let me know” is the most frequent offer with the least heart. It communicates, “I’ve given no thought at all as to how I might help. But I want to look benevolent, so I’m going through the motion.” If you want to help, offer what you’re willing to do. If you don’t know what you can do to help, mention some options and let the other person select.

Sincerity in communication builds trust for the long-term and inspires the best in people.


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