How To Increase The Power And Connectivity Of Your Leadership Language

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See how you can increase your leadership power ICLIPART

By Dianna Booher—

A recent survey by Zety, a career service firm, of more than 1,000 US workers found that 79 percent say they feel "taken for granted"

by their manager. Here are other startling percentages from the survey—all related to how, when, and if their managers communicate with them in a consistent, productive way:

- One-third of the respondents say they rarely or never receive praise from their manager.
- Only 16 percent say they often receive praise from their manager.
- Roughly 65 percent say they prefer to get regular feedback (including areas for improvement) more than receiving only praise.
- Given a choice, 55 percent would choose doing meaningful work over earning a lot of money.
- These workers seem to understand their weaknesses: Easily giving up (33 percent). Being overly sensitive to criticism (30 percent). Unwillingness to learn (28 percent). Reluctance to take risks (28 percent).

These feelings and facts elevate the critical importance of leaders to use the power of language to motivate, inspire, and grow these same employees to greater achievement. Let me get more specific about the do's and don'ts.

The Do's

Delegate With The Appropriate Authority

Nothing makes employees feel as useless as delegating them a project without giving them any authority to accomplish the goal. They need to know critical components upfront: The goal. The deliverables. Any required steps to follow. Deadline. Budget.

Cautions about pitfalls ahead. Once they have the key information, turn them loose and let them shine.

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Communicate How They Contribute

Those top performers most visible at the leading edge of a project or outcome typically feel needed and appreciated. But what about those behind the scenes in your division?

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They also need to know how their efforts contribute to the successes of the organization.

Observe how well the sports commentators for football and basketball share the love: "It's Jones up for the assist on that basket." "Blake Haskell threw the block that allowed the receiver to go straight up the middle and then to the left." "Both Williams and Henderson were in on that tackle."

Likewise, your team players need to feel that you recognize how they contribute toward meaningful accomplishments. Give credit

where credit is due—not only to the actors on stage, but also to the maintainers working behind the scenes.

State Objectives And Expectations Clearly

Avoid vague words and phrases. As you state initiatives, elaborate with examples, illustrations, and analogies so that team members get the complete picture of the end game and your expectations about their performance. These statements will come in handy: "We don't expect you to do X, but what we do expect is blah, blah, blah." "The initiatives, of course, will vary from department to department. For example, the audit team may decide to do X, while the marketing team will need to go further by blah, blah, blah."

Beta-Test Directions

We can all recall trying to follow unclear instructions: "Turn the knob to the right, and depress the blue button." Does this mean two separate actions? Or is this the meaning: "As you turn the knob to the right, depress the blue button." Or how about this: "Turn the knob to the right, thereby pressing the blue button."

Rather than waste time for trial and error, when you give directives or relay procedures, test your message on a few people to make sure they understand completely. Otherwise, you're creating frustration and an influx of time-consuming questions or errors.

Ask Questions To Lead And Gain Buy-In

Top-down communication can be efficient––but highly demoralizing. Often, starting with questions about how something could or should be done results in a more successful outcome and better buy-in.

Demonstrate Concern When Employees Are Going Through Hard Times

Showing that you care about hardships in a worker's life builds a strong relationship. How well are they recovering from an illness? What adaptations are their family members making to care for an elderly parent? Is their child being bullied every day at school? Are they involved in a custody lawsuit after a divorce? Has their spouse lost that second income after a layoff at another organization?

Of course, workers may not appreciate prying questions. But if they let you know something difficult is going on behind the scenes, an empathetic voice can encourage them through the difficult period.

The Don'ts

The demotivators need no explanation to leaders who intend to motivate, inspire, and grow their employees.

- Don't think group praise is enough to motivate all individuals. Individuals do the work.
- Don't assign all the good projects/tasks to your favorite workers.
- Don't share vision statements in platitudes.
- Don't overpromise when hiring and onboarding.

Leaders control much more than a paycheck to inspire their employees to do their best work. The power of their words significantly affects people and profits.

Dianna Booher is the bestselling author of 50 books, including *Communicate Like a Leader*. She helps organizations communicate

clearly and individuals increase influence with a strong personal presence.

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