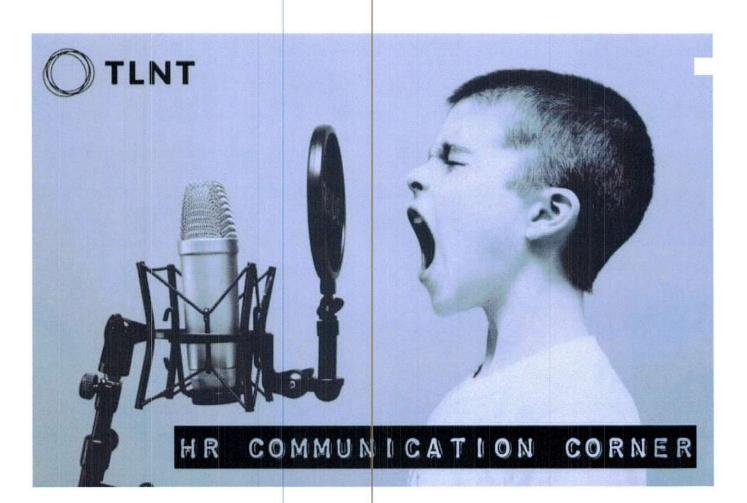# The Hoarding of Information

By DIANNA BOOHER   FEBRUARY 14, 2022

In sports, when the competition gains the lead, a player gets rattled, or the tension mounts, the team typically huddles to talk things over. What changes do we need to make? Do we need a new strategy? What plays aren't working? What else should we try?

Just the opposite often happens at work. When problems surface and tension mounts, people stop talking. They start to hoard information. People crouch behind their computers and, if forced to communicate, they send flaming emails. Instead of fixing problems, they try to hide the gaffes from the co-workers in the next department.

Instead of asking for feedback, they fear straightforward discussions. Instead of brainstorming for solutions, they distrust the colleague around the corner to assess a concern fairly.

Let's face it: We as HR professionals are known for tight lips. Granted, confidentiality is expected for the job — that is, for *part* of our job. But adopting that mindset in general can limit success in many other ways. Consider the following real comments from effective and ineffective leaders.

Effective Leaders Share Information

These examples make such leaders easy to spot in your organization:

"We have a senior project manager who supervises several teams, sits in on many teleconferences, and attends industry conferences frequently. As soon as he gets back to the office, he takes the initiative to email a list of summarized items of important information to the rest of his staff who didn't get to attend. His note simply says something like, 'Just in case you were busy and missed it…' He's very effective with his team and well-liked."

"Whatever the boss knows, she passes on quickly in a daily staff meeting with her direct reports. That makes it easy to plan our priorities for the day and to stay in tune with customers."

"The culture in the department where I used to work was this: 'Try to make your footprint look really small.' But my new boss doesn't buy into that. We've been the acquired company on several occasions. And he never 'hid out' in fear like others did. His attitude is always, 'We'd like to work with you, the acquirer, and share our information. We handle change well.' People always respect him for that."

Ineffective Leaders Hoard Information

Likewise, you can easily spot the frightened, the insecure, or the overwhelmed:

"We have a guy we call 'The White Knight.' We'll be working on a client project with, say, 10 steps. He'll tell the consultants involved only eight of them. Then when they can't get the project to fly, he comes in at the last minute with the missing information and 'saves the day.' He does this repeatedly — and has created huge animosity…. Many very good people are looking for other jobs."

"The president of our division eventually died of a heart attack — paranoid to share information. Being the only one with all the information put him in total control. He didn't even want us to meet without him. It got so bad that people wouldn't speak up at all. It cost the company millions of dollars."

"We had a senior engineer who'd never shared any of his experience. Our team would spend all this effort on a time-consuming study. And just after we'd finish and report the results, *then* she'd come forward to refute the study — with information that she'd had all along. Rather than contribute upfront, she wanted to prove that she was smarter than we younger engineers. It was a habitual attitude of hers."

How to Be a Hero When It Comes to Communication Habits

If you pass on key information quickly, consistently, and accurately, chances are, you're well on your way to becoming a hero.

Why? Those leaders who share information demonstrate competence in critical skills and attitudes:

- Strategic thinking
- Teamwork
- Self-confidence
- Maturity
- Common sense

Those who hoard information demonstrate:

- Limited vision
- Territorialism
- Poor self-management and organizational skills
- Pettiness and insecurities

Do you have a reputation for being the catalyst in bringing people together to share information? Calling a huddle consistently will rejuvenate your team and ultimately determine your success or failure as a leader.

Dianna Booher

Dianna Booher is the bestselling author of 49 books, published in 62 foreign-language editions. She helps organizations to communicate clearly and leaders to expand their influence by a strong executive presence — and often by their own published book. Her latest books include *Faster, Fewer, Better Emails*; *Communicate Like a Leader*; *What MORE Can I Say?*; *Creating Personal Presence*; and *Communicate With Confidence*. National Media such as Good Morning America, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, Bloomberg, Forbes, FOX, CNN, NPR, and *Entrepreneur* have interviewed her for opinions on workplace communication issues. www.BooherResearch.com @DiannaBooher 817-283-2333

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