

for starters

[communication]

Leaders aren't making the grade

Even good leaders get poor marks in communication effectiveness from their teams. In a recent study conducted by Bluteau DeVenney and Company, employees said their leaders were only 63% effective in their communication. It's no wonder employee engagement is down, workforce productivity is declining, and client loyalty is lagging.

Although leaders were described as talking to their teams, listening to them, and communicating the company's vision, organizations are mostly disappointed and want more of a personal connection. The survey revealed several significant gaps:

- **Gender matters.** Female leaders were seen as better communicators than their male counterparts, with a substantial 16% gap. What works for women? Openness and inclusion. Women were also perceived as more involved and receptive to others.

- **Age is a factor.** Leaders older than 55 years were seen as less effective than younger ones, with a 15% gap. With a greater tendency to tell rather than include, older leaders were viewed as less open to ideas and input, keeping information to themselves, and not being receptive to feedback. Younger ones were viewed as more participative.

- **Position plays a role.** Surprisingly, CEOs, presidents, and executive directors were more likely to adopt a directive style as opposed to managers. Those in senior positions were also viewed as less self-aware, more closed to input and resistance, and less responsive to the feelings of others.

All levels of management must be able to communicate effectively. If not, it limits the company's ability to succeed, which translates into less money, less time, and more stress. Here are three fundamental shifts leaders must make to improve communication:

1. **Understand their own style.** Gain self-awareness through assessments to understand their communication approach and the impact on the audience, which will enable them to frame the best delivery.

2. **Focus on their audience, not themselves.** Use a question-based model to understand

their audience before communicating to ensure that the message connects.

3. **Adapt to their audience.** Match their communications with the audience's decision-making process to increase commitment. Leaders should treat

their audience as clients and focus their communications on creating value for the audience. — Michael DeVenney

To read Leadership Communication: The Power to Connect, visit www.bluteau-devenney.com/white-papers.



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