



What Leaders Need to Hear

The Survey Results of Leadership Effectiveness for Atlantic Canadian Business Teams

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What Leaders Need to Hear **The Survey Results of Leadership Effectiveness for Atlantic Canadian Business Teams**

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1. Introduction and Executive Summary

There is a real irony in how business people see their leaders. From our survey of Atlantic Canadian business people as to how effective they see their leaders, on one side the respect for leaders was the highest rated factor. However, the overall ranking of leaders on twenty facets of effective leadership was only 70%.

Leaders are respected for delivering results but they are not doing well at providing communication that connects with their people.

Although open to team input, leaders are not open about decision-making and communicating with teams about progress and encouraging teams to work together on a coordinated basis. Leadership seems to be focused on the short-term.

What leaders need to hear most is to slow down. This may seem like an oxymoron in today's fast-paced and demanding world. All eyes seem to be on the leader to be decisive – and quickly so. Teams respect leaders but want to be involved and invested in delivering the results and doing it better and to do this they need time.

All winning sports teams have a post-game review. Whether the game was won or lost, coaches reflect with their teams on what worked and what could be better. This type of reflection doesn't often happen in business but it should.

Leaders need to take time to communicate and connect with their teams. Leaders have the respect of their teams, now they need to gain the investment of their teams.

The survey results show teams want to be involved and engaged together. From our survey, we see Atlantic Canadian business people wanting to work at their best together and are looking for leadership to help bring that about.



Participants in a survey of Atlantic Canadian business people provided a perspective on the effectiveness of leadership – what is working and where attention is needed.

Communication that connects with the employees and coordinates teams within the organization is what is needed most from leaders.

A leader's role is to remove uncertainty and communicate a bigger future – regularly and consistently. Leaders can get caught in the daily grind of delivering results and often defer and cancel these communications. Reflective communication is important but not always seen as urgent by the leader and the demands of today can take precedence – to the apparent disappointment and disillusionment of their people.

Participants of the survey ranked respect for their leaders as the highest attribute. Leaders were evaluated well on their openness to comments and insights from their people and their focus on delivering results. Effectiveness seemed best in terms of providing the outcome.

Overall, the ranking of leader effectiveness was a tepid 70% ... a B-! This is not really a glowing recommendation.

To be fair, high ratings were given to leaders investing to improve team effort, developing the team relationships and being open to input. But the follow-through on contribution and development didn't seem to be there. Given that annual employee turnover has grown by 20% since 2001, attention to delivering on internal results for employees should also become a priority for leadership.

Survey participants identified the underlying problem of leaders not investing time to reflect on progress with their teams. It is not just getting results; it is also important how you get them.

Leaders were seen as least effective in areas of internal communication:

- Decisions were not seen to be made in ways that were clear and understood and then these decisions were not communicated
- Evaluation of progress and feedback on how to improve was lacking
- Silos were permitted as communication was not there to coordinate departments and teams across the organization
- Action was not taken on poor performers, meaning that disengaged people were allowed to “quit and stay”, thereupon affecting team performance

The lack of timely and involved internal communication hurts employee engagement and limits the potential of the organization. Results may be realized in the short term but there is no building of sustainable long-term success.

Employee engagement is the lever of winning performance for leaders. A recent Gallup survey indicated that companies with disengaged employees have a 31% higher annual turnover rate. The Gallup survey also reported that 40% of all employees do not feel engaged.

Engagement is built from leaders communicating a bigger future that attracts investment and involvement in a common purpose. Leaders need to take time to not only clarify expectations for results and individual contribution but they need to reflect on progress, celebrate achievements and evaluate ways to grow further.

There are fewer fires with an engaged and invested workforce – leaders need to invest time to celebrate, evaluate and reflect on progress with their teams. Leaders need to focus on the journey and not just the destination.

2. Background and Mechanics of the Survey

In the Summer of 2007, Bluteau DeVenney and Company informally surveyed business people in Atlantic Canada. The objective was to assess how employees and team members assessed the leadership effectiveness of their organization.



The survey asked respondents to rank the level of success provided by their leader(s) across twenty (20) different aspects of leadership. For each statement, participants were asked to provide a ranking between 1 and 10 (1 being the least effective and 10 being the most effective) for the specific leadership success attribute for their leader(s).

Results were received electronically and confidentially. Participants ranged from professionals, salespeople, managers, supervisors and executives with participants from both the public and private sectors. The participants belonged to organizations that were both for-profit and not-for-profit in nature and comprised a diverse range of situations.

Respondents answered all questions and consideration was not given to age, gender, or size of organization. Responses were tabulated internally by Bluteau DeVenney & Company with no adjustments made to the participants' scoring.

3. Priorities for Leadership Effectiveness

Leaders received the highest assessment in terms of gaining respect from their teams. Survey participants clearly placed respect for their leader(s) as the most effective aspect of leadership success in their organizations.

Respondents to our survey ranked their leaders as being most effective in focusing the organization on the outcome. Leaders provided clarity of expectation and contribution, a path of development for team members and an open environment for team input. Leaders were ranked as effective in delivering results.

The five most effective aspects of leadership from our survey are outlined in the following table, (the rank showing the level of success as a percentage).

Area of Leadership	Rating
Building Respect for Leadership	78%
Openness to Comments and Insights from Team Members	77%
Time Invested in Developing Team Relationships	74%
Providing a Results-Oriented Team Culture	73%
Attention on Improving Team Effort	73%

However, the overall ranking of leadership effectiveness was only 70%. No rankings for any leadership attribute were ranked higher than a B+.



Respect does not also mean alignment and engagement. A leader can be respected for their success in delivering the numbers – achieving superior results. Leaders can be very effective at clarifying the outcome and focusing the organization on what needs to happen to get there. However, what can get lost in the translation is how to engage the team to get there as well.

The demands and pressures from various stakeholders and the very public responsibility for results put on leaders can naturally create a short-term focus. There is just not enough time to sit and reflect and think about what is really happening. The focus on delivering results can generate a narrow perspective – the full context of the situation may be missed. A narrow perspective limits potential and performance – fires occur regularly, innovation happens elsewhere and talented employees leave.

The paradox to the traditional approach to sustainable leadership effectiveness is to take time rather than succumb to the pressures of today's demands. A leader's time needs to be balanced between delivering in the short-term and building over the long-term.

Putting emphasis on consistent and reflective communication within the team and the organization is a key lever to sustainable leadership effectiveness.

To be engaged, employees need not only clarity about their contribution to the big picture and the expectations for their parts but regular feedback on progress and evaluation of how they are doing. Engaged employees want to grow and to realize their developmental goals, they need to have perspective of their progress and how all the pieces are fitting together across the organization.

For comparison, the areas of poorest leadership effectiveness from the survey are outlined in the following table.

Area of Leadership	Rating
Decisions Made Clearly and Promptly with Effective Communication	66%
Time Spent by Leaders Developing Teams	66%
Evaluation of Progress and Providing Path of Development	65%
Effective Communication Coordinated Across Departments	64%
Non-Contributing Team Members Resolved Promptly and Don't Affect the Team	60%

The ability of leaders to delegate and work where they should was also rated low, at 68%.

We don't just want to do the work – we want to be involved. We want to understand the impact of our contribution, assess our progress, celebrate accomplishments and enjoy the journey. We need to hear consistently how both the organization and we personally are doing and what is expected.



One of the first lessons in learning to ski seems almost opposite to common sense. Rather than leaning back you need to lean down the hill – which seems like you are helping yourself to fall but it helps you move better with the hill. The analogy carries over to leadership – leaders have no time but one of the best uses of their time is to invest in regular and reflective communication with their teams. Leaders need to slow down to produce better results.

4. The State of Leadership Today

There is a leadership gap in organizations today. It is not in the numbers of leaders or in the capacity of leaders, the gap exists in the effectiveness of leaders.

A study completed by the Center for Creative Leadership in 2006 reported that 45% of all new leaders fail within eighteen months of taking their position. Although leader turnover is increasing rapidly, the worst implication of the survey is that most of these leaders that are failing in their effectiveness **stay**.

An ineffective leader limits the potential of their organization – wasting time, wasting effort, wasting money and missing opportunity. The employees of an organization led by an ineffective leader become disengaged and turnover increases.

There are two things a leader is responsible for – achieving results and developing the performance of others. Leaders have been successful in the past by focusing on the first responsibility – they have often been promoted on their outstanding individual performance and ability to deliver results. To succeed as leaders, they need to make the shift to developing other people's performance.

The leadership challenge in today's organizations is helping leaders make the paradigm shift from individual performance to success by developing the performance of others.

The key requirement to developing performance in others is regular and reflective communication – one of the lowest ranked attributes of leaders in our survey.

The role of the leader is to make performance meaningful for everyone in their organization. Research shows that this is not necessarily happening. A global leadership study outlined that while 74% of leaders believed they provided a clear and compelling vision for their organizations, only 37% of their employees felt they had the motivation they needed from their leaders.

One of the challenges that led to this communication gap is the habit of leaders directing teams rather than empowering people. Many leaders have great intellect and superior technical knowledge. When faced with problem solving and goal planning, it can be very easy for leaders to simply tell people what to do – without meaning anything other than helping. What happens when people are told what to do – even with the best intentions – is that engagement and motivation are reduced. If employees resolve problems and capture opportunities within the right time-frame and for the right results, leaders need to let them do it even if the leader knows a faster or "better" way. A five percent "added value" from the leader results in 50% less motivation for the team.



As Peter Drucker said, "The leader of the past knew how to tell. The leader of the future will know how to ask."

Results today show leaders do not make performance meaningful by their charisma and overwhelming personalities, nor by their superior intellect or technical competence nor by command and control – performance is made meaningful for teams through collaborative communication.

Collaborative communication is the consistent and clear providing of interactive feedback and feedforward.

To be effective and have communication that connects with their employees, leaders need to do four things:

- Know and develop themselves – only by being authentic will communication connect
- Know and develop their business – clarifying and focusing on what is important and what are priorities
- Know and develop their teams – understand the natural strengths and help team members develop and grow
- Know and develop their communication – communication is a skill that can be improved over time

Collaborative communication is not just listening to team input, it is actually hearing what is said and acting on it.



For leaders to be effective in building an engaged workforce, communication must focus on building and developing relationships, providing honest and timely assessments of progress and performance, challenging people to be accountable and to improve, supporting winning performance and clarifying expectations for results.

A leader who regularly provides collaborative communication will build initiative, relationships and ownership. Simply using authority and control at best results in competence in teams – it will never deliver team engagement which is the true foundation for sustainable success.

Collaborative communication requires a regular investment of time by leaders. With the demands and pressures on a leader's schedule, investing time in communicating internally with teams sounds contrary to getting things done. This belief is false. Yes, there may be an initial dip in productivity when a portion of the leader's time is re-allocated to collaborative team communication. However, a surge of initiative will come that breaks through that ceiling of complexity that previously limited the organization's performance. Employees become more engaged and empowered; fires decline and the leader can focus on building that bigger future.

Leaders become most effective by providing their teams with assessment, challenge and support through collaborative communication. Even better, leaders actually free their time going forward by investing their time in the team today.

5. Where Leaders Need to Invest

We recommend that leaders invest about ten percent (10%) to twenty percent (20%) of their time in collaborative communication internally with their teams.

This communication investment is the regular weekly tactical meeting or the strategic blue-sky discussions. Collaborative communications are the pre-game warm-up and the post-game review focused on developing the performance of others.

Leaders need to focus strategically and work collaboratively.

The results of the survey of leadership effectiveness identified the need for interactive, coordinated and timely communication that provide feedback and focus needed for organizations to improve performance and win.

The pre-game communication helps people focus and build mutual commitment to the win. Sometimes, team members and departments are not even in agreement of what winning looks like. Providing a clear image of what success will look like enables employees and organizational units to align to the vision and see their roles.

- Define common goals that cross departmental lines and groups to focus people to work together to create results and be accountable for the success of the overall organization
- Clarify the contribution of each employee or area and the expectations for delivering results – what is wanted, from whom and by when
- Focus people on the priorities for achieving the goals – uncertainty and lack of clarity can allow distractions to take over some or all of the productivity, priorities focus energy and effort in the right places

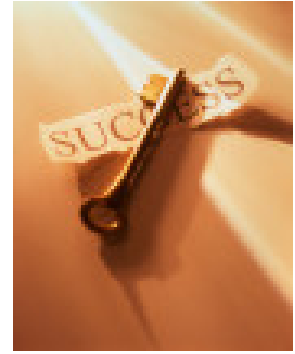
Communication is also achieved on an interactive basis. Goals, expectations and priorities are not simply told and directed – discussions are structured to involve people and ask for their perspective and input. The decision and direction are still the leaders but are based on the involvement and inclusion of the teams, providing a much higher level of alignment and engagement for the team.

In the post-game review – something many organizations do not place enough time and attention on – the focus is to assess, reflect and improve.

- Talk about the positive – look for opportunities first and then resolve problems and challenges. Some may call it luck, but most successful people look first for the positive and find ways to build on what is working best.
- Provide regular, constructive and honest feedback on performance based on a foundation of measuring the key actions and contributions to results. Discuss the game; whether it was won or lost and assess what worked, what didn't work and where to go from there.
- Take time to reflect – what are the trends, what are the greatest accomplishments, and what is out there? It is not just the push to achieve – organizations need to celebrate successes along the way, recognize milestones and enjoy the journey and focus on what is most important for growth and development.

Feedback and review is vital at both the individual team member level and also for teams and organizations as a whole.

Involving the team through collaborative communications for planning and assessing the business of the organization establishes a culture of success. It may seem politically incorrect but leadership is about winning. Organizations need to know where they are going, how they are doing and what they need to do to win. Collaborative communication is about real performance.



Collaborative communication which is based on clear and coordinated measuring of activities that directly contribute to success provides a sound basis for decision-making. Non-performers show up quickly and clearly and there is a tangible measurement to move people up – or out.

Investing time to communicate with teams on a collaborative basis will provide the greatest return of time and money for the leader.

6. The Next Steps and Taking Action

Knowledge in action creates results. The survey outlined the most important priorities for increasing leadership effectiveness. What are the next steps?

Five actions are recommended:

1. Set up a Success Scorecard for the organization, for specific teams or departments and for team members. The scorecard identifies the key drivers of success at each level (for overall success), the activities that support achieving results and measures to focus time, energy, and resources and show progress. Scorecards are developed interactively with the team – they are not report cards, they are game-plans.
2. Establish Criteria of Success Filters for team member performance which outlines accountabilities and also how winning performance will happen. The Success Filter builds on stories, which are the most effective method of communication that connects.
3. Commit to regular monthly progress meetings with teams to assess performance using the scorecard as the structure for discussion. Start with the positive focus, assess performance from the success measures, and reflect on what worked, what was learned and what was done well to decide on what's next.
4. Develop personal growth and development plans for all team members. Structure the plan on what each person sees as their greatest accomplishments and why, where they contribute to the success of the organization, where they want to see their career or position develop, what goals they want to commit to going forward, what they need to learn to achieve their goals and a tactical plan.
5. A template for collaborative communication should be developed to build the habit of asking and including rather than telling or directing. Simple questions can be put together to prompt the right conversation.

On a regular basis, leadership should communicate directly and openly with all levels of the organization to reflect on progress, talk over and over about the key priorities and celebrate the success to date. Focus on the positive, resolve the challenges and enjoy the journey – everyone and everything gets better.

For leaders, the first step should be to meet with your executives and teams to review the survey results and answer the questions for reflection in Part 7.

Use the Action Commitment form (included at the end of the report) to identify your key insights, outline the actions you will commit to taking and who you need to communicate with to proceed.

7. Questions for Reflection

Ask yourself – and ask your executive team and all your teams – the following questions:

1. What are we doing right in our internal communication now?
2. What does winning look like for our organization?
3. How will team members act to achieve that winning vision?
4. What is needed from the leader(s) to support those actions of winning team members?
5. What do team members need to hear about regularly to achieve their best results?



Even more important, ask your organization – do they want to win?

As a leader, you want people on your teams that are competitive and want to win. They may have different skills and varying reasons for winning, but a winning team has people who want to grow and build a bigger future.

8. Complete Survey Results

The following table outlines the results from all respondents to each of the twenty areas of leadership effectiveness. The areas of leadership success are listed in order of the ranking of effectiveness (measured as a percentage increasing with the level of success).

Summary of Leadership Effectiveness

Area of Leadership Success	Rating
Building Respect for Leader(s)	78%
Requesting and Welcoming Comments and Insights from Team	78%
Time is Spent on Developing Team Relationships	74%
Developing a Results-Oriented Culture	73%
Improving Team Effort and Working Together	73%
Providing a Path of Development for Team Members	72%
Recognition of Contribution and Accountability for Results	72%
Providing Clearly Defined Roles	72%
Open and Productive Process for Problem-Solving	71%
Clear Vision and Goal Planning	71%
Gaining Team Member Involvement and Commitment	70%
Team Conflicts Resolved Maturely, Professionally and Promptly	70%
Expectations for Each Position Clearly Communicated	70%
Delegation is Effective and Leader Works Where Should	68%
Providing Measures for Assessing Progress	66%
Decisions Made Clearly and Promptly with Effective Communication	66%
Time Spent by Leaders Developing Teams	66%
Evaluation of Progress and Providing Path of Development	65%
Effective Communication Coordinated Across Departments	64%
Non-Contributing Team Members Resolved Promptly and Don't Affect Team	60%



10. About Us

Our company:

Bluteau DeVenney and Company Inc. is a professional firm based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. We offer an innovative mix of coaching and consulting. First we help you identify problems, opportunities and strengths. Then we design solutions to resolve, capture and build – helping you to be more effective and achieve meaningful results.

Our Vision:

Our vision is to support achievers at all levels find and grow their natural and true leadership advantage to accomplish their best results.

Our Mission:

Our mission is to provide an innovative learning forum for established leaders to sharpen their edge and for developing leaders to find their path through practical and actionable coaching and training.

Clients access solutions with us through our three platforms:

- For Leaders Only – for personal leadership
- The Achiever’s Edge – for leaders and their teams
- The Hiring Edge – for finding the right people

Through workshops, retreats, conferences, analytics and newsletters we help leaders define their compass for natural leadership and stay on track for their best results.

Please visit our website at www.bluteaudevenney.com for further information.





The Action Commitment Form

Meeting & Date: _____

What are the key insights?

1

2

3

What actions do you agree to take from this meeting?

Who does what by when?

1

2

3

Who do you need to talk to/follow-up with about what and by when?

1

2

3

11. Acknowledgements and Disclaimer

Bluteau DeVenney and Company Inc. thanks all participants who responded to the survey.

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