Being a ‘Good Communicator’ Isn’t Enough — and It’s Costing You More Than You Think.

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In the business world, you often hear how important it is to be a “good communicator,” but what does that actually mean? I challenge that concept entirely. Communication is not about being good or bad at it, but instead it’s either effective or ineffective.

Being an effective communicator does not always mean being well-spoken or charismatic. Effective communication stems from alignment between what was said, what was heard and what was meant. If those three elements are in sync, you’ll have effective communication that produces results.

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The impact of ineffective communication

Companies suffer when communication is ineffective, as it creates misalignment, unintentional conflict and uneasiness while triggering self-preservation behaviors, which can lead to high turnover and missed opportunities.

The myth behind “good” communication

One frequent misconception is that some people are just “naturally good” at communicating. Truthfully, communication is a learned skill, similar to financial literacy or leadership. If you lack the proper tools, you can’t be expected to communicate effectively. If you’re unaware and do not consider how others receive information, then even your most refined messages may fall flat.

This is especially accurate when you have diverse teams full of different communication styles. As some people are analytical and detail-oriented, and others prefer an overview or brief synopsis, leaders tend to communicate in the style they prefer, which can isolate certain people they’re trying to lead.

I refer to this as the Golden Rule and the Platinum Rule of communication. The Golden Rule is to treat others the way *you* want to be treated, while the Platinum Rule says to treat others the way *they* want to be treated. This is a game-changer that makes all the difference when it comes to communication with your team.

Communication breakdowns

As I work with companies across several industries, ineffective communication is almost always at the root of operational or cultural dysfunction. A recent example of this is when I noticed a client struggling to rally a team member for a weekend volunteer initiative. The owner looked at the volunteer opportunity as meaningful community involvement, while her team member viewed it as more unpaid work. The owner assumed her employee was lazy, while he thought his boss was inconsiderate. How did they each have such differing views?

She tried to motivate him based on what motivated her – not on what resonated with him.

This is at the heart of much of the conflict that happens in the workplace: people talking past each other and viewing the same situation through different lenses. While it is certainly possible for two people to have different perspectives that are both valid, without effective communication, those perspectives will collide instead of aligning.

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Emotional baggage

Emotions are another reason communication is often ineffective. Oftentimes, people interpret emotional meaning to what we hear – especially if the feedback feels critical. The emotional element can lead to misinterpretation and escalate conflict. It's crucial for leaders to keep emotions in check, accept feedback in the spirit in which it was meant and create a culture where both positive and negative feedback is seen as a gift rather than a threat.

Technology

Technology is a double-edged sword that has changed the way we communicate. On the positive side, it allows us to meet people where they are – some prefer texts, others Slack, and some appreciate face-to-face conversations or a phone call. Being considerate of preferred mediums is another way to apply the Platinum Rule.

The downside to technology is the noise. With the increase of communication channels – email, text, Teams, WhatsApp, DMs – it's much easier to lose track of conversations, miss key messages or create confusion. It can lead to team threads

scattered across apps with no clear follow-up or accountability. To avoid this potential negative impact, businesses need to be intentional about communication platforms and set expectations.

Building a culture of effective communication

To foster a team environment and culture of effective communication, businesses should start by creating an environment where no idea is a "bad" idea, and feedback is always welcome from any team member. Two practical strategies I tend to recommend are:

1. **"Yes, and…"** – Instead of "Yes, but…", which shuts people down, use "Yes, and…" to keep the conversation open and constructive. For example, "Yes, and I'd like to understand more about your perspective on the decision."
2. **DISC assessments and training** – Investing in emotional intelligence and communication tools for your team can make a world of difference. I use DISC assessments to help teams understand behavioral and motivational differences, which allows people to adapt their approach and connect more effectively.

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When communication is effective, it builds a team full of clarity, trust and alignment, along with a foundation where innovation and collaboration thrive. Most importantly, it gives everyone, from leadership to the front line, a shared language to move forward towards success together. The next time you're worried about whether your communication is "good" or "bad," stop and reset: *Is it effective? Is it being received the way I intended?* If not, it might be time to

readjust your approach.

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