

# Communication as a Tool for Efficient Leadership

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## What is communication?

This is the use of different means to transfer information. In the context of leadership, communication is the use of various media to pass viable information in ways that they are easily decoded and followed by desired actions from the receiver, usually colleagues, subordinates or followers.

The various media through which communication can be channeled include: Mass media, Social media, Print media, Public address, Interpersonal relationship, communiqué, E-mails, newsletters, bulletins, meetings etc.

From the various media used, communication is broadly classified as Verbal and Non-Verbal. Communication experts often express that over 70% of person to person interaction is non-verbal.

## What is Leadership?

Leadership is defined here as the ability to organize, coordinate, motivate and influence a group to make viable decisions. Leadership can be made efficient if basic communication tools can be utilized properly. This lesson will focus more on the two leadership styles - the relationship-oriented leader and the result-oriented leader - as categorized by Fred Fielder<sup>1</sup>, an industrial psychologist. Dear reader please note the communication patterns of these categories!

### 1. THE RELATIONSHIP-ORIENTED LEADER

A relationship-oriented leader depends mostly on interpersonal relationship with members of his group to accomplish his objectives. Personally, I'm obsessed with this leadership style. In this, a leader is very passionate and concerned about the welfare of the followers/subordinates such that he shows interest in their personal issues even when they don't directly affect their performance output.

A relationship-oriented leader engages his subordinates in several discussions personally and as a group. He also involves the subordinates in overall decision making. The relationship-oriented leader uses positive reinforcements to motivate his subordinates. E.g. if a subordinate regularly delivers late on assignments and on a particular occasion, he delivers in quick time, the relationship oriented leader will praise him specially and utter words like,

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<sup>1</sup> Fiedler, F. E. (1981) Leader Attitudes and Group Effectiveness, Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

*"Now I can see you are getting better",*

*"Wow! What an excellent job!" Etc.*

These words will sound so pleasurable to the ears and he will want to hear them more often. This will motivate him to do better or repeat the same feat. Such leaders prefer to critique than criticize.

The core advantages of this style are:

- 1.) Subordinates own the group decisions and work to achieve it because they feel "it is our decision", not "our leader's decision"
- 2.) Subordinates work without pressure as there are no rigid principles
- 3.) There is a lower probability that errors will occur due to reduced pressure and high motivated
- 4.) Accidents are reduced maximally
- 5.) It is relatively cheap and cost effective

This style does not come without its shortcomings however because humans are not infallible and can misinterpret close interactions for weakness. In this case, the leader should be persuasive and assertive.

## 2. THE RESULT-ORIENTED LEADER

This leader focuses basically on achieving results. He is very decisive and quick to initiate structures. The result-oriented leader clarifies the roles of everyone, sets individual and group targets, sets deadlines and holds everyone accountable for their work.

The result-oriented leader is less concerned about the personal issues of the subordinates, even if it may affect their efficiency ratios. He is quick to hire, and fire based on competency issues and issues relating to deadlines. This leader also institutionalizes sanctions for errors on most occasions as he is allergic to errors and non-performance.

Some of the advantages of this are:

- 1.) Even in extreme unfavorable situations, productivity will be certain.
- 2.) High efficiency ratios.

These leaders should however note that:

- 1.) Accidents and near misses may occur frequently due to mounting pressure.
- 2.) Productivity begins to diminish due to exhaustion and low motivation.

## Way forward for Efficient Leadership

It is imperative that leaders should take a leaf from both leadership styles and seek a middle course in between. As much as productivity is important in leadership, morale of followers should be held in high importance as this will define the team on the long run. Find below some of the attributes of an efficient leader:

1. An efficient leader should endeavor to communicate with followers in the way they understand most.
2. An efficient leader should avoid extreme rigidity in policy making and should allow followers to make input in decision making processes.
3. An efficient leader should watch out for non-voiced feelings like anger, sadness, displeasure disturbance, happiness, joy, satisfaction etc. in the followers and respond accordingly through actions that will accommodate the positive ones and mitigate/address the negative emotions
4. For an efficient leader, communication with people via any channel should not contain harsh threats as such threats are often ignored on the long run. Threats, if necessary, should be subtle and non-emphatic.
5. Efficient leaders should be active listeners to people. They should listen carefully to complaints, criticism, praises, blame etc. Doing this to understand the message and not just to respond.
6. Efficient leaders should make proper use of PR tools to disseminate information. Such information should be simple, easily understandable, timely, precise and contain the actions required.
7. Efficient leaders should always measure feedback after decisions and actions are taken. To avoid bias, independent personnel may be allowed to gather feedback and measure compliance.

The world requires such leaders who will prioritize communication in the discharge of responsibility and everyday life activities.

What kind of leader are you?

## Take a Quiz

- (1) It is ..... for an efficient leader to build relationships with his subordinates.  
(A) essential (B) absurd (C) playfulness (D) none of the above
- (2) The result-oriented leader is better at communication with his subordinates  
(A) Sometimes (B) all the time (C) never (D) I'm not sure
- (3) Without ....., the communication cycle becomes incomplete  
(A) errors (B) feedback (C) results (D) near misses
- (4) Efficient leaders should find an intermediate course in between being relationship-oriented and result-oriented.  
(A) true (B) false
- (5) Information from efficient leaders should contain all of these except  
(A) be precise (B) be actionable (C) be threatening (D) be timely