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Importance of clear communication in leadership

Nabhita sharma

As rightly said by John C. Maxwell " People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. Your words must bridge the gap between your mind and their hearts." The most important part of being a leader is not giving out commands, or not exercising control over your subordinates. It is being able to communicate better in a way that people are able to grasp what you said and implement it properly. Effective communication is the cornerstone of leadership. It helps in building trust within the team, it helps in formulating the best of strategies and it improves productivity in general. When leaders are open and clear with their message, the message becomes credible. Teams are more likely to follow their instructions. A clear message avoids any kind of confusion between the leader and their subordinates. Sometimes subordinates have trouble implementing the policies because the leaders weren't clear enough, because when communication breaks down at leadership level, the ripple effects are felt across the entire organisation. Ambiguity breeds confusion, and confusion is the enemy of execution. Clear communication is the most effective strategy for team building. It enhances the trust within the organisation and it brings the team together. When team members trust one another they are able to come up with more innovative ideas. It enhances the total productivity of the organisation. Clear articulation of a vision unifies individuals. It ensures that everyone understands their role in the collective success. A compelling vision inspires people, but clarity in communicating tells them when to arrive at the desk on Monday morning. One thing which is important to understand is that clear communication is not a one way process. It must happen both top down and bottom up. The subordinates should feel comfortable enough to share their reviews to their leaders. They

must give out feedback which in turn benefits both parties. This is one of the ways in which the office can navigate change for good. With clear communication people engage more and take their work more seriously. When they feel that their voices are being heard, they feel like they too are important. They do their work more diligently and take more responsibility. When the leader is not clear citing the vision of the organisation and the subordinates understand it not well then success will fall astray. When teams do not understand the boundaries of their authority or the ultimate goal, they hesitate to make decisions. Innovation stalls as employees further await for clarification. People start feeling distanced from the organisation. Without any clear orders from above, a void is created. To fill this void, people start using their imagination and it does not end up well. It leads to even more distorted communication when they start sharing those ideas with their peers. Chaos renders everywhere. Now that we know what happens in the absence of clear communication, we need to understand how the leader can implement clear communication in the office setting. This can be done in a number of ways ranging from daily emails, presentations, and general briefing. The messages should be relevant to the situation or the question. They should be designed keeping in mind the receiver. Who is the target audience should be known beforehand so that messages can be structured in the manner which suits the audience. The leader should empower decentralized teams to innovate and execute autonomously in some situations. The language of the message should be very simple which can be understood easily. Messages which require more attention should be delivered in person so that any follow up questions can be answered right away. The leader should also avoid over communication. When we share more information than what is required, we create unnecessary confusion. A leader must share the core values and the strategic priorities multiple times if necessary, to allow the message to get entrenched in the company's culture. Clear communication is not just about transferring information. It is a deliberate practice of ensuring that the information is received accurately, understood and acted upon. Transparency is required for any organisation to work efficiently. Clear communication stands on three pillars. They are clarity of intent, simplicity of delivery and active reciprocity. These mean that the leader must be certain of the objective before delivering the message. He must be clear with his intent. If the leader is internally not clear with his intent then his external delivery will reflect that. Once his intent is clear then for delivering the message he needs to use simple language. And lastly, since communication is not a one way process, feedback loop is important. That is knowing how the message was received. With vague communication employees look for hidden agendas. They hide their mistakes to protect

themselves. True test of communication in leadership does not occur in times of steady growth, but it occurs during times of radical change or in crises. How you motivate your employees is very important during a crisis. Your words can either make the crisis less challenging or can break the confidence of employees during this time. The most important thing during this time is how much information you're sharing with the employees. If you share too much or too little information about the company's situation, restlessness can emerge. A good leader must stay positive in such times and should acknowledge that yes there is a problem that we are facing currently. The leader should not keep the employees in the dark. Then he/she should walk them through the solutions. Inform them of their next steps. Clear communication stands on who, what, when and why. The art of listening is the unseen half of communication. Everyone must listen to each other properly. To establish more open communication between the members, activities which involve team building and which relaxes the tense office environment are very important. Team building activities allow the members and their leaders to get to know each other better. When they participate in such activities, they build a stronger bond between each other. The trust grows and communication becomes easier. Clear communication is foundational to the growth of any organization. No company can grow if the higher ups are not clear with delivering the visions and messages, policies of the company. One of the key characteristics of a leader is ability to communicate more clearly. If the leader does not have any communicational skills then he/she is not a true leader. A leader is someone who can lead the people and how can the leader lead if they are not able to deliver their vision properly, or if their vision is not understood by the people. No one would follow a person who they do not understand. They cannot feel affinity towards the organization if they do not know what they are working for. What is their end goal, and what work is expected of them. Only a true leader can clearly answer all these questions. In a nutshell, clear communication stands for a fundamental mechanism through which leadership functions. It is the bridge between strategy and execution. It is the ability to deliver your message in such a way that it is well understood by all the members of the team and it catalyzes action. It is foundational in every work setting and is a technique which has been followed since history to enhance productivity. It is a technique which costs no money for any organization to implement, but it is the most essential and most effective of methods for any company to succeed. As Peter Drucker said, “ The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said.” This quote reflects the very heart of advanced leadership. Understanding your employees unsaid words is what sets a manager who processes data and a leader who

understands human beings apart. Most of the brilliant ideas and thoughts which can benefit the company greatly never come out in the open. This can be due to hierarchy and hesitation related to it in the workspace. Many personalities work together in an office. Some are extroverted, while others are introverted. Some people have no trouble speaking their heart out. They say whatever comes to their mind, but many people are not as comfortable in speaking their ideas to their superiors. A good leader must create an environment of open communication where everyone can share their thoughts and they feel safe sharing them. The leader needs to ensure that even their feedback is received well by the other members. Whether it is positive or negative. In the end the crux of clear communication is to listen with curiosity. Speak with honesty and act with integrity. The greatest problem with communication is that we don't listen to understand. We listen to reply. When we listen with curiosity, we don't listen with the intent to provide an instant reply to the person but to see what’s behind. To understand their intent and their vision.