

ASHA Leadership Academy

Quick Reference

LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is a foundational leadership function and a vital characteristic of a competent leader. Given the unique role, leaders play in driving change and leading others through challenges, communication for leaders is much more complicated and nuanced than for individual contributors. Leaders who are skilled communicators create mutual understanding, harmony, and action by adapting their communication styles based on situational factors. Harnessing the power to communicate effectively is one of a leader's most critical skills, especially during crises or significant setbacks.

ASSESSMENT	
Webinar Objective	Skill Rating ① None ② Basic ③ Competent ④ Masterful
Determine their natural communication style and identify strategies to improve their communication	
Identify what distinguishes effective leader communication from other forms	
Explain how to communicate with impact during crisis or adversity	
TOTAL	

Scoring

SCORE	SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS
LESS THAN 6	Complete the Leadership Academy webinar on this topic
7–9	Review the developmental suggestions in this reference
MORE THAN 10	Explore the supplemental resources for in-depth insights on this topic; consider mentoring others on this skill.

SKILLED BEHAVIOR	UNSKILLED BEHAVIOR
✓ Delivers messages in a clear, compelling, and concise manner	✗ Confuses stakeholders by communicating too verbosely
✓ Actively listens and checks for understanding	✗ Primarily talks at others, poor listener
✓ Adjusts communication content and style to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders	✗ Relies on one style of communicating without consideration for the needs of listeners
✓ Models and encourages the expression of diverse ideas and opinions	✗ Sends mixed signals about being receptive to diverse ideas

Development Tips and Suggestions

- Interview two experienced leaders you respect to learn about tactics and strategies they use to communicate effectively
- Ask your manager to observe your verbal and non-verbal communication skills in a meeting and debrief afterward
- Before speaking to a new group of stakeholders, anticipate their top three concerns; adapt your message to fit the audience
- When faced with a major change in your team or department, create a communication plan that includes multiple channels (e.g., in-person large group discussion, email, written, etc.), frequency (e.g., daily, weekly), and opportunities for two-way communication
- Identify a Toastmasters Club near you and attend meetings to help you build skills in formal and extemporaneous speaking
- Build your empathy skills by anticipating the emotions of colleagues or team members when giving a presentation; share your perspective on what they may be feeling and ask for feedback
- In a meeting when team members offer dissenting opinions, positively acknowledge their contributions
- Before responding to a colleague or team member during a conflict situation, paraphrase your understanding of their position

Resources

Bridges, W. (2017). *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*.

Harvard Business Review Press (2013): *HBR's 10 Must Reads: On Communication*.

Lancaster, S. (2016). *Speak Like a Leader* (video). Available at: <https://youtu.be/bGBamfWasNQ>

Landry, L. (2019). *Eight essential leadership skills*. Harvard Business School Online. Available at: <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/leadership-communication>

O'Toole, J. & Bennis, W. (2009). *A Culture of Candor*. Harvard Business Review Press. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2009/06/a-culture-of-candor>