



Communication Skills: Must for most Leaders

*Dr.Chetan Mewada

* Associate Professor H.A.College of Commerce, Opp.Law Garden, Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad-6

ABSTRACT

Communication skill is probably the single most skill that makes an individual a successful, efficient and effective leader. Improvement in the communication skills improves one's chances for success in every walk of life. Leadership always expects that leaders should make continuous improvement in themselves. A leader can convert a marginal performer into an exceptional performer by knowing the fact that what and how you communicate either builds or harms the relationship between you and your employees.

Keywords : Leadership, Communication, Skills, Management

The success in any business, profession or service sector is largely dependent on our ability to communicate. If one communicates well, one advances in career, with advancement in the career; one needs still better communication skills. Thus improvement in the communication skills improves one's chances for success in every walk of life. There might be a query here that what communication is. Without involving myself in the act of quoting the definitions of Communication experts, I would like to make my observations about communication. After teaching Communication Skills at various levels, I have observed that-

- The process of communication involves exchanging facts, ideas, opinions or emotions between two or more persons with verbal or/and nonverbal modes of communication.
- Communication is a dynamic process, having multiple shades.
- Communication is important to business hence modern business needs good communicators to make the business a success.
- The main purpose of communication is to inform or to bring about some understanding.
- Possessing communication skill is an important qualification at the time of both appointment and promotion.

There are three main functions of communication viz. to inform, to persuade and to promote goodwill. No business can develop in the absence of effective internal and external communication. At the same time, no business group can flourish and achieve its heights through a leader. In fact, communication is the life-blood of business and the leader is the brain. So there is a close connection of communication skills and leadership. Gilbert Amelio, President and CEO of National Semiconductor Corp remarked, "Developing excellent communication skills is absolutely essential to effective leadership. The leader must be able to share knowledge and ideas to transmit a sense of urgency and enthusiasm to others. If a leader can't get a message across clearly and motivate others to act on it, then having a message doesn't even matter."¹

James Humes once said, "The art of communication is the language of leadership."² This language was surely mastered by Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Jawaharlal Nehru and many other successful leaders in their respective fields along with their stupendous knowledge. Even two great legendary Indian cricketers, Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev, are having equal cricketering skills but the former one is having better communication skills than the latter one and that is why is in a position to establish oneself as a leader in cricketering world.

Any discussion on leadership and Communication skills cannot escape a reference of the Universal leader and communicator Lord Krishna. In his article, 'Why Krishna is relevant even today', Neeraj Mahajan says, "Lord Krishna is one of the greatest corporate communicators who knows exactly what to communicate when and how with every one of the stakeholders and the Mahabharata is a great communication treatise. Lord Krishna's presentation style, non-verbal or verbal communication, interpersonal skills, mass communication is relevant even today and should be a model for modern Management and Communication practitioners."³

For making an individual from an ordinary entity to a leader, communication skills play an important role as Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Leadership is an inevitable and necessary aspect of human life. It is the result of strong will power, hard work, vision and choosing the right priorities. Leadership should contain 'vision part' and an 'architectural part'. One of the important ingredients of leadership is to have the ability to comprehend that human beings have differing motivating forces at varying times and in different situations. Communication and informal talks with your people certainly affect motivation. Employees are encouraged when managers take time to notice and compliment their work. Constant interact with staff could be a single strategy that help the leader in getting work done. Stephen Covey, in his book, The 8th Habit has correctly pointed out, "Leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves."⁴

A leader can convert a marginal performer into an exceptional performer by knowing the fact that what and how you communicate either builds or harms the relationship between you and your employees. While communicating, Leader should remember:

The six most important words: "I admit I made a mistake."
 The five most important words, "you did a good job."
 The four most important words, "What is your opinion?"
 The three most important words, "If you please...."
 The two most important words, "Thank you."
 The one most important word, "We"
 The least important word, "I"

(Source: <http://rooseveltjeanfrancois.com/2012/10/01/leadership-lessons-from-an-unknown-author-on-human-relations>, accessed on 10th November, 2012)

These short sentences are apt examples of communication skills in a leader. The first sentence indicates that leader should have the courage to admit the mistake, if any. The next suggests the need of appreciating and acknowledging others. The third one talks about the importance of involving others in the thought process and decision making act. The next short sentence highlights the value of polite tone in communication. The fifth one encourages the leader to develop the art of gratifying others when they do something worth for the organization. The sentence "We" is a suggestion that a leader should take initiative in doing work or seek for the cooperation... and the last one...the most vital one that a communicator or leader should not be egoistic in attitude. These are the basic principles of communication if taken care by a leader would definitely make one an efficient and effective leader. I would

like to sum up the discussion on the topic with the quote from the book Everyone Communicates Few Connect written by John C. Maxwell that contains abundant leadership and communication quotes, such as these:

"To add value to others, one must first value others. People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude. All good communicators get to the point before their listeners start asking,

"What's the point?" The first time you say something, it's heard. The second time, it's recognized, and the third time its learned. In the end, people are persuaded not by what we say, but by what they understand. People pay attention when something that is said connects with something they greatly desire".

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