


Effective communication paramount in the new normal

 By [Brian Eagar](#)

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It is acknowledged and irrefutable that good, solid organisational communication eliminates barriers and helps to resolve problems timeously. It improves the culture and helps to build stronger workplace relationships which lead to increased performance and productivity. In fact, what you say, how you say it and when you say it *is* your culture.



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Although information overload and remote collaboration have been on the rise for some time, no-one could have predicted how this would accelerate in recent months. It is now even more important to communicate effectively, especially on a digital medium. So, how do we adjust the old rules to thrive in the new normal?

Engage to switch on

The best organisations promote discipline, accountability and strategic alignment with clear communication. The best leaders motivate and inspire their people through clear constructive communication. Leadership and communication are therefore symbiotic. If you leave those whom you lead in the dark, dysfunction and corridor talk will sprout spontaneously.

Use Dr David Rock's SCARF approach as a guideline to engage respectfully and effectively: Tell your team members that you value their contribution (Status), clarify and align expectations as much as possible (Certainty), express trust in their ability to get things done (Autonomy), be vulnerable to forge strong connections (Relatedness) and ensure that your message is fair and balanced (Fairness).



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Learn to listen first and ask questions

When we engage digitally, we are often tempted to just get down to business and get our message or needs across as quickly as possible. With remote working still being a vital precautionary measure for many, it is important that we not only

make time to talk to our teams and clients but to be fully present and listen as well.

All conversations should be held on an authentic platform that encourages open exchange and discourages information-hoarding. With a two-way stream of information flowing, it is much easier to find solutions that benefit all parties and help your organisation to thrive.



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Don't forget the basics

The Purposeful Leadership Company's Five Essentials of Purposeful Communication still hold true and require even more focus if your message is going to get through all the digital noise.

- **Telos** is the purpose of your message – ultimately what you want your audience to buy into and work together to achieve. It is important that you decide what you want to achieve up front.
- **Topos** is all about framing your communication within a situation so that it meets expectations or is more clearly understood. It is important to clearly position the chunks of information within the context of your overall message while ensuring that it speaks to your audience's context.
- **Logos** means using reason or logic (i.e. providing factual information) when communicating. Make sure that you use facts that are relevant both to your message and your audience and include examples or parallels that will help them to understand the information and put it into perspective.
- **Ethos** is about acquiring and maintaining the trust and respect of the audience – and engaging them with either empathy or enthusiasm depending on the situation. Your tone, passion and conviction will be the driving force behind what you are trying to communicate.
- **Pathos** refers to emotional appeal and how enrolling your message is. If why the audience should listen is not emphasised – i.e. if what is in it for them is unclear – the message is shared in vain. This is where your message makes the transition from mind to heart – switching the listener on. When assessing this element, bear in mind that the other four essentials all work together to support it – Pathos is fundamental to effective communication. At the same time though, if you fail to incorporate pathos, it will render all the other essentials powerless.

When delivering your message on a digital platform, pay extra attention to these elements: Communicate the purpose of your message beforehand so that everyone is prepared to engage (Telos), make sure everyone has the necessary background information to put your message in perspective (Topos), keep facts clear and succinct (Logos), turn your camera on when possible to make the most of non-verbal communication (Ethos) and keep an eye on the facial expressions of your audience to make sure your message lands as intended (Pathos).

Remember that you are the message

Just as these five essentials cannot be separated from each other, the message cannot be separated from the author/speaker. If all the essentials work together, it will strengthen your message exponentially. However, neglecting only one of these could potentially destroy your message.

Similarly, as the deliverer of the message, you can render the best-constructed message a failure by the way you speak, your body language or even by what others believe your character to be. In short, if they don't believe in you, they won't believe in your message.

In summary, your communication depends on how you engage, listen, construct your message and how you show up in general. Leaders who enjoy the respect of all those whom they serve have earned their trust in word and deed.

ABOUT BRIAN EAGAR

Brian Eagar is the founder and group CEO of TowerStone. From being voted as the naughtiest kid most likely to fail at school, Eagar found success in the information and technology sector as a young sales and marketing executive, culminating in an executive sales and strategy role for one of the Siemens businesses based in Germany. On his return to South Africa, his passion to inspire leadership led to the creation of TowerStone Leadership Centre in 2006.

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