Effective Communication in Business

2016 Whitepaper

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Executive Summary

Businesses cannot exist without effective and productive communication. This whitepaper provides analysis and actionable advice regarding the use of different methods of communication in modern business. The methods of analysis include expert interviews, statistical analysis and theoretical discussion.

Findings suggest a disconnect between entry-level employees and their managers, as well as a need to focus on training to help different generations deal with changes in technology. This is particularly evident in the discovery that most Millennials struggle to use telephones in the workplace, a method which still proves to be successful in fields such as sales. This report's recommendations include:

- Earlier training for management prospects;
- More cohesive strategies communicated from top management;
- Phone training for Millennials;
- And localizing all online activity to ensure productive relationships with clients and customers.

Introduction- What is 'Effective Communication'?

Communication incorporates everything written, verbal, and visual that helps to convey specific information. It's a simple concept, but that doesn't mean it's a simple practicality.

Effective communication is about clarity on both sides of the interaction, so both the speaker and receiver are clear on the intent and message of what is being said. In business, clarity is vital if you want to maintain a company vision, and be open with customers, clients and, stockholders.

This whitepaper will analyze methods of communication in business and the people who use them. It will explore interpersonal relationships in the modern workplace and with expert opinion offer conclusions about the best way to approach specific situations.

Roles Explained
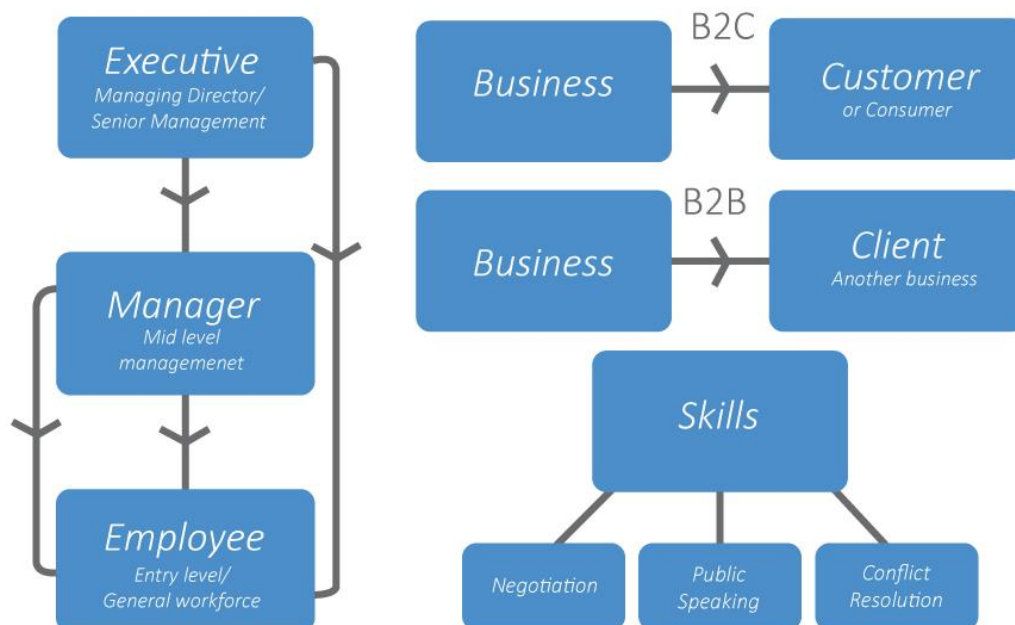
In this paper, business leaders such as Managing Directors, CEOs, or any other senior role will be referred to as 'executives'. Managers, including both departmental and team, will be referred to as 'managers.' Frontline employees, incorporating any individual, skilled or otherwise, who is not in a management role will be referred to simply as 'employees'.

The other two categories discussed, 'customers' and 'clients', are distinguished by their relationship with a business. A 'client' is any organization that has a commercial relationship with another business (B2B). A 'customer' refers to any *individual* who receives goods or services from a business in exchange for payment (B2C).

Methods of communication

The methods which we use to communicate with one another have developed greatly over the past 20–30 years. Always looking to stay ahead of the curve and the competition, industry is often the first to adopt innovative ways of sharing information

These methods all have benefits and will vary in effectiveness dependent on their use. An employee might, for example, use one platform when talking a colleague, but prefer to use another when talking to a prospect, client, or customer.

Unsurprisingly, internet-based communication methods such as email are amongst the most popular cross-situation solutions in business. Email specifically shows very high utilization percentages, with 97% saying they use it in their current role, according to The Employee App.[1]

Although there are variations across different niches, the workplace communication app creator's survey of 250 communications professionals revealed that the usage rates across all digital methods were:

- Email: 97%
- Intranet: 78%
- Mobile App: 14%
- Social collaboration: 45%
- SMS: 35%
- Social media: 38%

Perhaps showing less evidence of use than we might have predicted, are apps and social collaboration tools. While they show significant utilization already, their use will only increase as a workforce more attuned to these new methods enter the workforce. With Millennials now making up the majority of the workforce for the first time (34% to Gen X's 33%) and Generation Z consumers beginning to start work, apps are most definitely the future.

Despite the unstoppable invasion of the internet, the telephone is still a big part of office life. 83% of employees surveyed by RingCentral[2] in 2015 said they have been issued a personal telephone when they started their current job. Of those with desk phones, 41% still make phone calls very often.

Face-to-face interaction is still important to any business, but it's becoming less imperative. As if to back up the statistics even further, when asked by Ring Central about their future plans for meetings, "a *whopping 95 % of those surveyed say they plan to use business communication tools instead of in-person meetings, including email (48%), mobile (20%), desk phones (10%), text messaging (8%) and web meetings (8%)*".

How effective are they?

With so many ways to talk to each other, it can be difficult to know which method to use at any given time. Each has their own set of benefits and difficulties, and the choice of which one to use can have massive ramifications on the outcome of a personal or business situation. Here are some of the most commonly utilized ones and an analysis of their effectiveness.

Face-to-face

Personal, or 'face-to-face', communication is still considered the most formal way to interact during business transactions. As such, presentations, quarterly meetings and anything directly related to finance traditionally still happen face-to-face. While video conferences are becoming more popular, real-life meetings offer an authenticity that is still lacking for many employees, and especially those of older generations, on video and over the phone.

Michael Massari, Senior Vice President of National Meetings and Events, feels that a face-to-face presence makes it simply harder to refuse your pitch:

"You are twice as likely to convert prospects into customers with an in-person meeting. The likelihood of getting a "yes" increases, because it is so much easier to say "no" in an email or on a phone call."

Another big benefit it offers is the opportunity to read body language fully, something lacking over the phone or even over a video conference. Studies have shown[3] that up to 93% of communication is nonverbal. Of that 93%, 38% is attributed to the tone of voice and a massive 55% to body language; if you don't meet face-to-face, you might not be getting the full picture.

The amount the human brain reads from body language can be both a blessing and a curse in business. You can convey positivity by using body language techniques, for example, by leaning forward when speaking to your subject to display enthusiasm. Proximity, generally, can really make a difference to an interaction, as Edward T. Hall's personal reaction bubbles indicates:
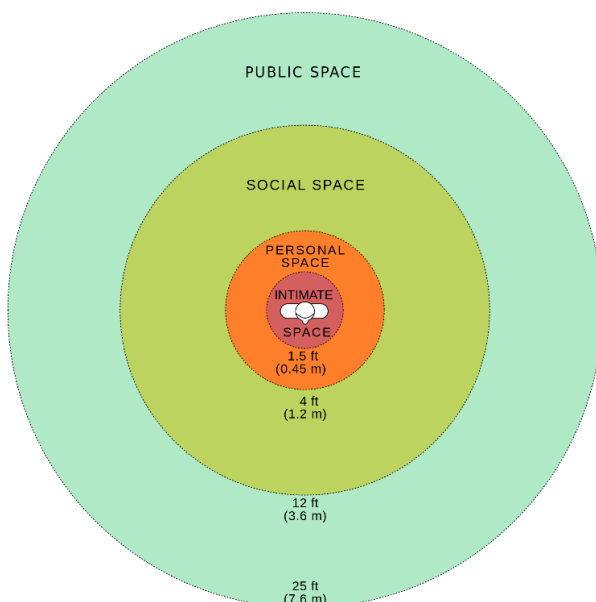
Source: Wikipedia[4]

However, there's also the risk of inadvertently giving off the wrong impression, for instance with a 'weak handshake'. A 2015 study by Bath University explored the importance of handshakes. It wanted to see if the gesture acted as an indicator of trust, even when undertaken by a robotic arm.

Chris Bevan, from the University of Bath's Department of Psychology who carried out the experiment found evidence that:

"Even virtual handshakes create a sense of connectedness between two parties. This experiment highlights just how important the symbolic ritual of shaking hands, specifically as an indicator of being trustworthy and willing to cooperate."

Face to face meetings can be very effective at fostering trust between businesses and clients or customers, however, they also need to be treated with a more formal approach. This means they require a certain traditional code of conduct. For example, you may be required to wear a suit when meeting a client, even if it's not typically part of your work attire. While this shouldn't be a

problem for older employees, younger members of the workforce should be prepared to learn from those with more experience.

For more information on how your body language affects your experiences, view Amy Cuddy's TED Talk, 'Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are'.[5]

Phone

We've already learned that the vast majority of office workers are still equipped with personal desk phones. But how comfortable are employees with using them? Our Communication in Business phone guide asked Millennials how they felt about using the telephone, and 72% of graduates admitted that they are sometimes scared to use the phone. When we compare that to the mere 35% of over 65s who find it to be a problem, it becomes apparent that this may be a generational issue.
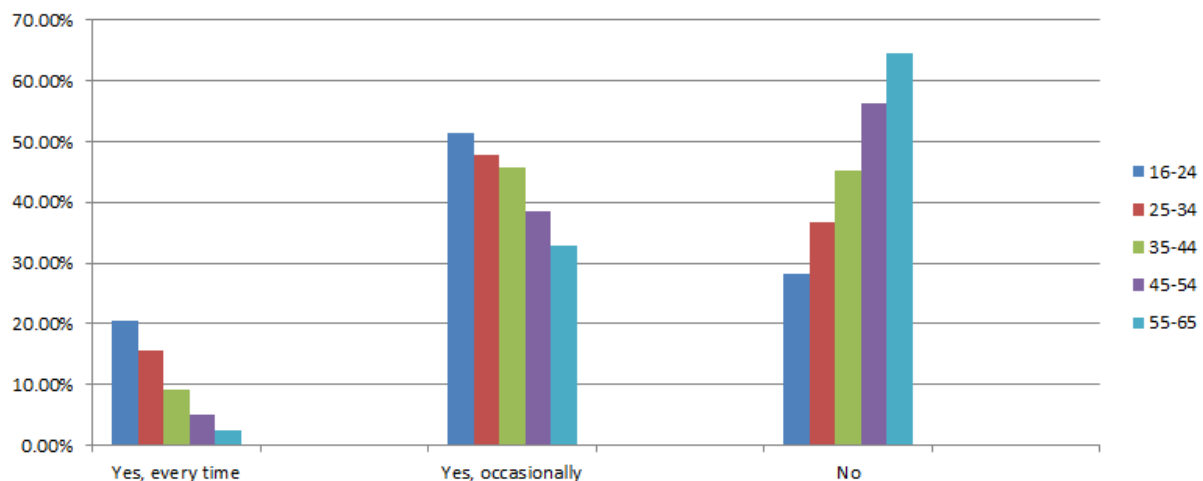
"Do you feel uncomfortable when using the telephone?" – Communication in Business – Toll Free Forwarding[6]

Perhaps one reason why younger employees with less experience find telecommunications so daunting is their immediacy. As a generation used to the detached, drafting process of email and social media, millennials can struggle to deal with difficult situations when having to think on their feet on the phone.

For information about how to deal with difficult customer calls, view our guide '8 Steps to Deal with Tricky Customer Calls'.[7]

So if the biggest generation of the workforce don't really like using them, why persist? Well, when it comes to sales, there's great evidence that phone calls are still much more effective than other methods, such as email.

A study by Salesforce found that the response rate for telephone calls can be up to 27 times better than for email.[8] This disparity may be as a result of the automation of email. Users simply can't be sure what is real and personal over email, sometimes receiving up to 115 emails a day.

A phone call is the closest you can get to a face-to-face meeting. It's very easy to detach yourself from an email, to ignore it or store it away in a folder and forget about it. Phone calls, although still

not offering any visual cues, still have the immediacy and emotive tonal aspects of real-world meetings.

As well as landlines, though, the cell phone is becoming a more common tool for employees. Office-based working is still the bedrock of business, but remote working has become a popular alternative, specifically for Millennials. In fact, 68 %of job seekers who are Millennials said that the option of working remotely would greatly increase their interest in specific employers.[9]

Email

Email has become integral to the way businesses now work. It's used internally for communications, externally for promotion and often for customer services purposes too. Personalized emails improve click-through rates by 14%, and conversion rates by 10%.[10]

Although there is evidence to support the idea that telecommunication has some major benefits, especially for sales, email is certainly more versatile. While initial contact may be made by phone, it's common to follow up with more information by email.

Email, like all digital communication, allows time for drafting and forethought, enabling employees to analyze interactions with customers and clients to prevent mistakes and misinterpretation. It's also a multimedia format, so you can send images, video, and links to online content – all with ease.
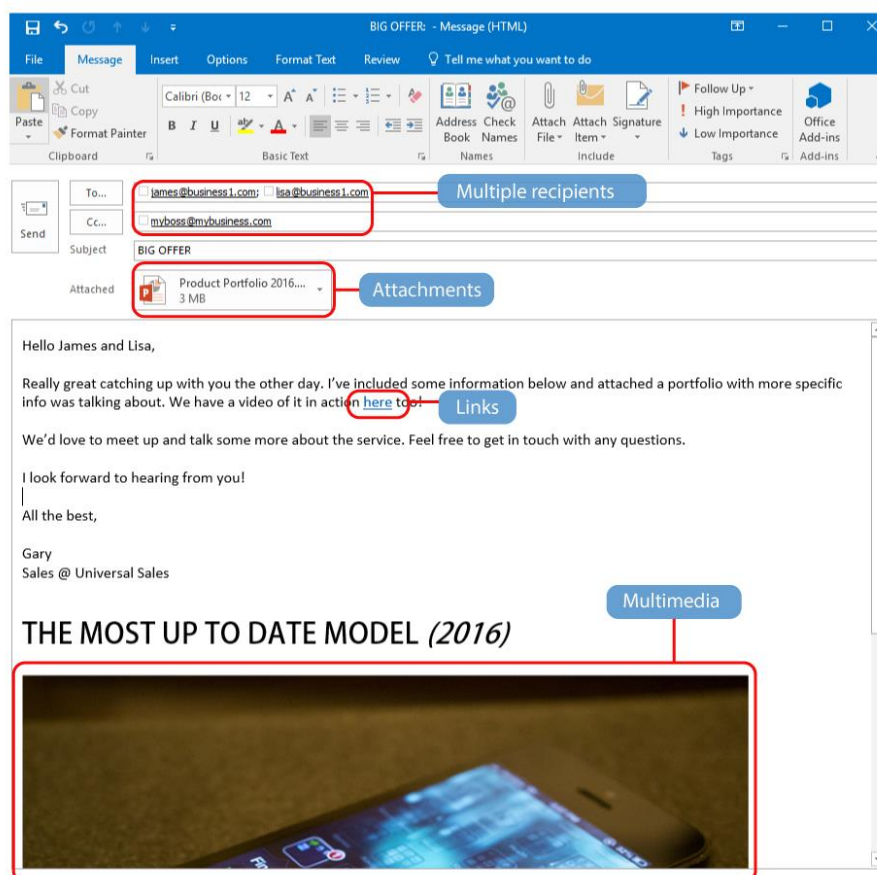
An example of email versatility

There are limitations to email as a platform, though. Most have relatively small attachment limits; although you can send multimedia elements when it comes to something like HD video, you still have to rely on online tools such as WeTransfer, Dropbox or streaming services such as YouTube or Vimeo. This shouldn't be a problem if all you want is for your recipient to view the collateral, but if they need the actual files you may want to try something else.

For more information on utilizing email, view Mind Tools' guide, 'Writing Effective Emails.'[11]

Social

While most businesses now have public company pages that help them deliver on-brand messages and interact with customers, there seems to be a general reluctance to also use social media internally. Platforms like Skype have already been widely adopted to help businesses with video conferences for meetings, but when it comes to day-to-day interaction, social can be useful for quickly connecting employees.

While the term "social" might strike fear into the minds of executives, it now encompasses a number of platforms specifically designed to streamline communication in-house. Convo[12], for example, makes sharing information internally easier, allowing users to share imagery, video, and other formats live, and comment on/annotate them. This should help foster a culture of feedback and grant managers greater visibility on the workflow of employees.

Even if it isn't strictly for work purpose, allowing employees to connect and become comfortable with each other should help to create a more positive work environment. For more information on how to implement an internal Social Network, view Axero's guide, '10 Simple Secrets to Totally Rock Your Internal Communications'.[13]

Executives to Employees

The priority for executives should always be how they communicate their company vision with the rest of their company. While those in senior roles may be looking for ways to streamline their team's communication, it's only by starting at the very top that a true change in company culture can occur.

How do executives feel?

Who is the average CEO? They're typically over the age of 50 and male[14], and while this obviously isn't a rule, there is still a lot of work to be done before equality can be claimed in the boardroom. Of the Fortune 500 companies, only 22 are women. So, what do these predominantly male executives prioritize when it comes to communication in their business?

A common theme was the need to communicate with stakeholders. A survey by PWC found that 48% of CEOs believe they should be doing more to communicate the impact and value of innovation to wider stakeholders.[15]

If presiding over a publicly-owned company, the perception of stakeholders will always be the main concern for executives. However, CEOs and senior management should remember that their employees are stakeholders, too. If they want to maintain morale, produce great results, and ultimately make external stakeholders happy, they have to establish positive communication channels with employees.

How do employees feel?

For the average employee, a CEO can feel a million miles away. Depending on the company size and culture, CEOs can be visible every day or conversely may not even interact with frontline employees at all. As a result, it can be very easy for a lack of direction to set in.

Pay is a big issue, and often a controversial one when it comes to the disparity between CEOs and their employees. CEO wage figures are publicly available, but how much do staff know or care about the wage of their boss?

A recent survey by online magazine Chief Executive found that only 45% of staff knew what their CEO was paid. Of that number, surprisingly only 21% said that they thought the pay was excessive. [16]

Employees do want to be rewarded as well as their executives, though. A Harris Poll survey from 2015 revealed that 65% said the biggest mistake business leaders made was not rewarding or recognizing employees for good work, so executives should remember to share success around. [17]

Potential barriers and strategies

So what barriers are there to prevent effective communication between executives and their employees? Management consultant Tarah Keech[18] discusses the most common roadblocks and how businesses can address them:

One-way communication

You need to share ownership and investment in the vision with your employees. Rather than delivering a vision/mission statement as an edict or directive, weave in the perspectives and stories of your employees. Acknowledge and praise how the vision is already in action and making a valuable difference and when necessary, call them to higher action.

Why it doesn't work: When a leader "requires" their teams to adhere to an edict or blindly follow a directive (such as a company vision or mission statement), their audience either immediately tunes them out as irrelevant, subconsciously or intentionally seeks opportunity to rebel, or feels resentment as though they were receiving an authoritarian requirement.

What to do instead: I recommend this three-step system to successfully disseminate a vision to a group so that they understand it, appreciate it and wholeheartedly adopt it as their own.

1. Listen first to your audience. This can be done formally through surveys or structured interviews, or informally through casual conversations or observation. You want a representative cross-section of the employees in your audience. Here are a few examples of questions:

- What is our company's mission? Why does it matter? How do we accomplish it?

- What sets us apart from our competitors?

- What are you most proud of about our company? Ask for stories that illustrate what they're most proud of and why.

- How would it look/feel/work if we were doing the best possible job for our clients?

2. Validate their responses and identify any shared sentiments or experiences. If you're speaking one-on-one, use active listening and responses that indicate you're paying attention and relating to their point of view. Even if you don't agree you can use responses like these:

- I see where you're coming from
- That must have been challenging
- It's clear that you care a great deal about this
- I've had similar experiences too

3. Tie the theme of these conversations back to the company vision by using "we" statements, and language from your audience's feedback, as well as referring to specific stories. Whenever possible use stories that illustrate how they're already accomplishing that mission. You want to demonstrate how the work they are or will be doing is making a difference and how it matters in supporting the vision. For example:

As we all share so many stories of how our product makes a difference in our clients' lives, we share this vision for our company's mission/purpose/future. [Insert story.] Your work matters. Our company matters. And I'm that proud we're in it together and are working to achieve the best possible results for our clients.

4. Know why.

First, you have to know your "why". When you share stories to illustrate your personal "why" you build trust and relatability. When you use stories to support your company's "why", you build employee loyalty and a shared accountability in co-creating that success.

As Simon Sinek's[19] work describes, a clear "why" will motivate you and maintain directional clarity throughout any challenge. So dig deep with your own "why" before sharing the vision with your teams. Answer a few key questions, such as:

- Why is the vision important?
- Why are does your company do what they do? (The answer cannot be profits.)
- Why does it matter to YOU?
- What result/impact/value does this have at the end of the day to those you serve, to your coworkers and to yourself?

Manager to employee communication

One of the most important aspects of communication is how management interacts with the typical employee. Your line managers are the ones tasked with translating your vision to the rest of the company on a day to day basis. Without a positive and streamlined strategy in place between the executive, manager, and employee, your business's message may become disjointed, with managers frustrated and employees unclear on their roles and responsibilities.

How do managers feel?

One of the first steps towards this should be to make sure your managers are trained and comfortable in giving feedback to their team members. Unfortunately, though, according to a 2015 survey from Interact[20] up to 69% of the managers said that they're often uncomfortable communicating with employees. The things they were least confident doing included:

- Giving direct feedback or criticism (37%)
- Demonstrating vulnerability (20%)
- Recognizing achievements (20%)
- Delivering the company line (20%)

When Managers Are Uncomfortable Giving Feedback

PERCENTAGE WHO SAY THEY'RE UNCOMFORTABLE COMMUNICATING WITH EMPLOYEES WHEN...

Communicating in general	69%
Giving direct feedback/criticism about their performance that they might respond badly to	37
Demonstrating vulnerability (e.g., sharing mistakes you've learned from)	20
Recognizing employee achievements	20
Delivering the "company line" in a genuine way (e.g., company direction, change in plans)	20
Giving clear directions	19
Crediting others with having good ideas	16
Speaking face to face rather than by email	16

SOURCE INTERACT SURVEY OF 616 MANAGERS CONDUCTED BY HARRIS POLL

© HBR.ORG

Source: Harvard Business Review[21]

In a separate study, from consultancy firm Penna[22], 82% of managers said they are 'always' or 'occasionally' good at supporting direct reports with opportunities for promotion. But 39%of employees disagreed.

Even more managers (91%) said they supported employees with opportunities at least some of the time, though 29% of staff disagreed. More than half (51%) of employees believe they would make a better people manager than their own manager.

Just a quarter (25%) of staff respondents said their manager is supportive, and 23% feel they are accessible, compared to 44% and 40 % respectively of managerial respondents.

How do employees feel?

Managers play a massive part in employee retention, perhaps more than employers realize. A survey of over 7,000 American employees by Gallup[23] from last year revealed that perhaps, unsurprisingly, managers who are open and approachable are much more likely to have engaged employees.

Part of this engagement may also be due to how employees perceive their managers. According to a recent survey by the CIPD, 51% of employees said they thought they would be better at managing people than their managers. The same survey also revealed that:

- 25% said their manager was supportive
- 23% said their manager was accessible
- This was compared to 44% and 40%of managerial respondents, respectively.

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EMPLOYEES WHOSE MANAGERS ARE OPEN AND APPROACHABLE ARE MORE ENGAGED

A productive workplace is one in which employees feel safe enough to experiment, challenge, share information and support one another. The best managers get to know their employees and help them feel comfortable talking about any subject, whether it is work related or not. Among employees who strongly agree that they can approach their manager with any type of question, 54% are engaged. When employees strongly disagree, only 2% are engaged, while 65% are actively disengaged.

I feel I can approach my manager with any type of question.

	5 Strongly Agree	4	3	2	1 Strongly Disagree
Actively Disengaged	6	13	30	47	65
Not Engaged	40	63	58	50	33
Engaged	54	24	12		1
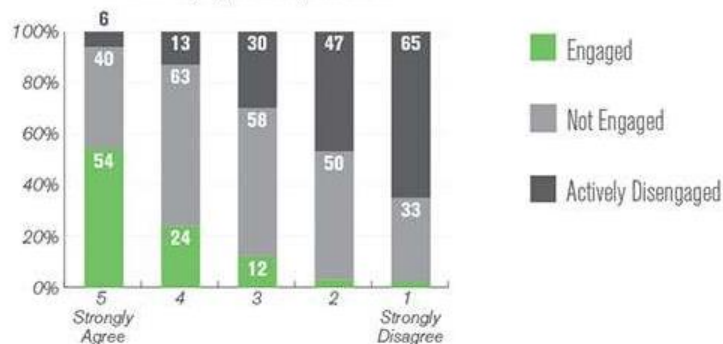
GALLUP

Source: Gallup[23]

There is evidently a big disconnect between how managers think they're communicating with their staff and how employees feel.

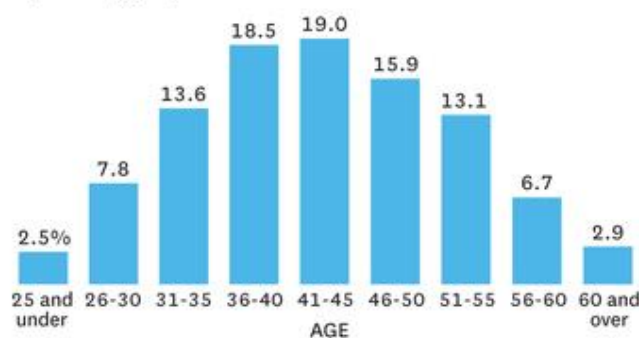## Potential Barriers and Strategies

What is it that makes the majority of managers feel so disconnected from staff that they find communication in general difficult?

Age and training
The age of those in management positions varies from industry to industry. However, the average age for first-time managers according to a 2013 study by the Harvard Business review is 30.[24]

WHEN DO MANAGERS FIRST GET LEADERSHIP TRAINING?
On average, at age 42—about 10 years after they began supervising people.

Age	Value
25 and under	2.5%
26-30	7.8
31-35	13.6
36-40	18.5
41-45	19.0
46-50	15.9
51-55	13.1
56-60	6.7
60 and over	2.9

AGE

SOURCE ZENGER/FOLKMAN TRAINING DATABASE   HBR.ORG

Despite this, the same study found that employees aren't getting the vital management training they need until the age of 49. Who can blame managers for not fulfilling their potential when they're not offered the correct training?

Consistency
The most important thing to foster is a consistent vision. Without consistency in your business, nothing will run smoothly. All managers need to have certain qualities that enable them to be leaders

and help facilitate the work that their team does. The diagram below shows the eight qualities that search engine giant Google thinks make a good manager.

1 Be a good coach	2 Empower the team and do not micromanage	3 Express interest/ concern for team members' success & personal well-being	4 Be productive and results-oriented
"He caters to your skillset and personality with his guidance and feedback and pushes you to grow while still making you feel strongly supported."	"I like the trust my manager gives me and my team... There is no micro-managing... Yet we know that he is there to answer our questions/guide us if need be."	"He is incredibly authentic, credible, and caring, and manages to do a brilliant job ensuring our team members achieve their goals, while ensuring everyone on the team also feels valuable."	"He is relentless in removing obstacles on the team. he created a concept called "RUSH," where any decision that needs to get made, gets made quickly. Meetings begin on time and end on time, always."
5 Be a good communicator	6 Help with career development	7 Have a vision	8 Use your technical skills to advise
"My manager encourages an extremely open dialogue that permits us to share issues and concerns that, in most organizations, would be concealed."	"I tell them career development isn't about just being promoted, it's about growing, acquiring, sharing expertise."	"Her team is the only team I've been on at Google in which we've taken the time to collaboratively create a vision, and then to share and act on that vision with relevant teams. I felt part of an important effort."	"He has deep knowledge of our infrastructure. He is a hands-on guy and willing to roll up his sleeves and get to the bottom of the problem."

Tarah Keech discussed with us a couple of the most common problems she encounters in her work and what can be down to avoid and resolve them.

Managers not acknowledging challenges

Be honest about the challenges that you and your team will encounter as you work to make this vision a reality. There's no need to be unrealistic or perpetuate delusion in others. Instead, be a cautiously, well-informed optimist.

- Frame the work ahead with the objective to be success-achievers versus problem-solvers.
- Focus on how to achieve the best possible result of the vision. Dig into what it will look, feel, and sound like to everyone in your company, your clients, and your community.

Immediately you'll have shifted any skeptics or naysayers into an exercise that will create the ideal result. It accomplishes the same contingency support as problem-solving but the morale of your team will be lifted through the act of creatively contributing to achievement rather than risk management.

Zero accountability and follow through

Approach maintaining your vision as collaborative planning for how best to achieve the ideal result. This can branch off into ongoing touch-points, or workgroups who focus on what the next best step is to achieve the vision.

Regardless of how you plan, your next steps all need to be:

- Publicly visible or accessible
- Easy to measure success by

- Built with clear accountability for the actioner
- Set with target dates for milestone for assessments
- Owners to design, implement, measure and publicly report progress

Customer and client communication

If you want a profitable business, then communicating with customers and clients is even more significant than internal communication. How can you stay professional and positive without compromising on profits or values?

How do customers and clients feel?

Customers interact with businesses in a number of different ways: face-to-face in store, online over social, or often over the phone when seeking support for complex issues.

Customers have certain expectations of brands when it comes to social. Over 80% of consumers said to Marketing Land that they *expect* all brands to be on Facebook. Social is now taken as a given by consumers so if you're not there, you're already falling short of expectations.
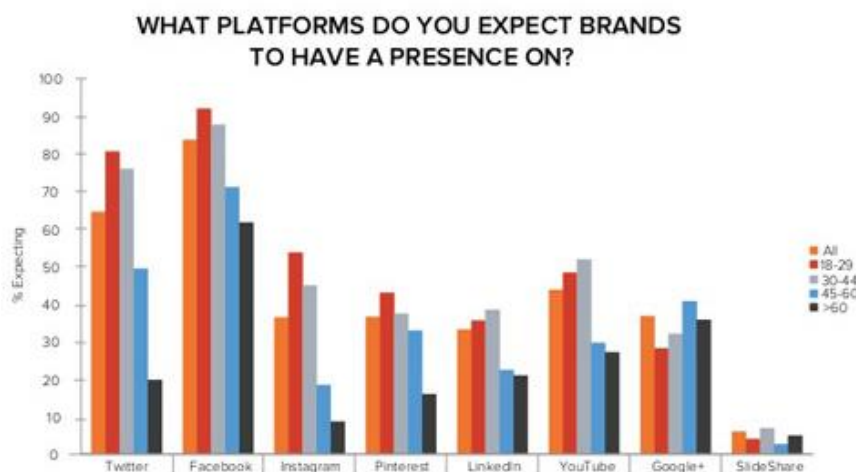
Source: Marketing Land[25]

A consumer survey we carried out last year found that 75% of US customers felt that brands need to do more to encourage loyalty.[26] Undoubtedly, communication is an important part of that.

Fostering a relationship with customers can only happen if you talk to them and create a conversation.

A survey by Accounting Web asked clients working with accountants what, if any, reason they had for recently changing accountant. The issues, unsurprisingly, aren't particularly specific to accounting but could universally be applied to any client–business relationship. 'Poor responsiveness' was second on the list of reasons. [27]

Barriers and Strategies

Consumers and clients alike both expect you to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So what are the barriers facing businesses and how can they be addressed.

Accessibility

As more businesses entertain international expansion and stumble across the issue of cross-time-zone communication and language barriers. To keep yourself accessible:

- Localize as much as possible. Whether that means hiring staff in new territories or simply translating your website and having localized domains, your customer and clients will appreciate being able to speak in their own language
- Make it easy for customers and clients to get in touch. Be active on social media, share helpline numbers, offer pop-up chats functions on your website, and be proactive in stores if you see a customer struggling. Become indispensable to them, or they might go somewhere else.

Feeling wanted (and wanting to stay)
Retaining customers and clients is the key to a successful business. As much as a new business can offer short-term gains, if you can keep customers you'll ensure long-term consistency. Here's how you can encourage your customers and clients to stay with you via effective communication:

- Offer loyal customers rewards. One of the most frequent comments made by customers in our Customer Loyalty Survey[28] last year was how positively they felt about rewards, discounts, and coupons as a way of encouraging loyalty.
- Ask for feedback regularly to make sure you're doing a good job and to prevent any small issues festering and becoming full-blown crises. This way you can improve your own offering and remind your client that you're there to help.

Communicating successes
One thing businesses often fail to do is to communicate their successes effectively with their customers. You're providing a service, and for a consumer or business to have faith in you, they need to know that you're doing a good job. You can help do this by:

- Providing regular summaries of results based on what your clients want to see. Prove your value to them and make sure they know you are helping their business with the facts and figures to back up your assertions.
- Informing customers of your community work. Community and charity-based work can help employees and customers to feel like your company is making a difference. Share all relevant information with customers and it might just give you the edge over competitors.

Communication skills

There are specific business scenarios that we all may need to prepare for in order to fulfill our duties in the workplace. Here are two examples of the most common situations you might come across and how to tackle them.

Negotiating

Getting the best deal for you and your business while still maintaining positive and productive relationships is one of the hardest skills out there. Tarah Keech shares her top tips on being an enthusiastic and efficient negotiator:

You're all in this together

Really. Remember that you've come together to sit at the same table because there's the possibility to create shared value. To foster a productive environment that will produce best possible results for all involved, leverage systems that focus first on articulating and understanding the ideal result for each party.

Assume mutual respect

If you sense hostility, deception, agitation, do not first assume aggression. Do not attribute to malice what a lack of information, fatigue, competing priorities, lack of resources, fear, insecurities, distraction, or interpersonal turmoil can explain. You can never fully anticipate the baggage that someone is bringing to the table, so immediately and tactfully reset the tone as soon as discord is detected with any number of these phrases:

- Is there an opportunity here to ask/answer questions that might speak to the concerns raised?

- Communication is the hardest thing we do and I sense that I may need to re-approach and better articulate my earlier point.

- This line of discussion is emotionally charged and rightly so – it's complex. I hear you and can appreciate where you're coming from. Can you tell us more?

- If it were in our power/budget/schedule to give you [the full ask], we would. Unfortunately, we can't. What we want to do is creatively solve this making the best use of our shared resources.

Conflict resolution

When conflicts inevitably occur in the workplace, knowing how to resolve them as painlessly as possible is an invaluable skill. Tarah Keech shares her strategies for dealing with a crisis:

Clarify need, intent, and objectives

- Neutralize the reactivity cycle and provide a logical, rational review of the situation. Facts only. No assumptions.
- Restate the motives of each conflicting party. This will support a baseline of mutual understanding in negotiations and ultimately foster an accord.
- Gather and summarize the ideal result for each of the conflicting parties.

Coaching
If you are acting as a mentor to a party embroiled in the crisis, provide one-to-one advice and coaching to support their understanding of the personalities, motivations, anticipated behavioral responses, and overall native historical perspective. This is less about giving them the answer than helping them reach it themselves.

Decisive power

You want your teams to solve their own problems as much as possible, both to develop their abilities and skills at collaboration through the crisis, and to maintain efficiency within the organizational hierarchy. However, if an impasse is reached, you must provide a decision. Share your reasoning, the outcome you desire and consequences for non-adherence. Solicit consent and delegate next steps.

Public Speaking

Having the confidence to stand up in front of colleagues, customers or clients can be difficult enough, but getting your point across clearly and effectively is even harder.

Business communications coach (Communicate-confidently.com[29]), Phil Stella, gives his advice on preparing for public speaking:

Let's narrow the topic to workplace presentations – team or company updates, meeting presentations, sales presentations, etc. And let's assume that you are initiating the presentation, rather than responding to an instruction from management to deliver one. Here are best methods for success:

- Identify your specific objectives and intended outcomes of the presentation.
- Analyze thoroughly the primary audience's demographics, psychographics, needs, attitudes, potential objections, etc.
- Plan the content to effectively accomplish those objectives for that audience in an efficient and engaging manner.

- Create a short, attention-grabbing, focused introduction that tells the audience why they're there, what they'll hear, why it's important, what they should do with the information, and why you're worth listening to.
- Develop the content around three or four sub-points, all supporting the main point, which is your primary objective. Support them with appropriate facts, statistics, expert comments, brief examples, or illustrations.
- Create an even shorter summary that restates your sub and main points, connecting the audience to their next steps or your call to action.

Conclusion

With so many methods of communication now in use in workplaces across the country, there is simply no catch-all approach to ensuring effective communication. However, it's apparent that a lack of training for management and a lack of understanding from CEOs about the importance of their wider staff have helped to create a disconnect between the top and bottom of business.

Executives should focus their efforts on creating a collaborative and accessible internal network so that employees stay connected and motivated while trusting in proven and trusted telecommunications and face to face methods externally, to guarantee better closing rates and the long-term success of their business.

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Tarah Keech runs her own consultancy firm. Tarah Keech Consultancy is a boutique management consulting agency specializing in communication strategy and interpersonal PR. Our clients are executive and business leaders who leverage our trainings, workshops and 1:1 coaching to:

- Accelerate their career advancement
- Redeem at-risk client relationships and sales opportunities
- Build alliances with tricky client and internal "personalities"
- Successfully navigate and deliver in politically turbulent execution environments
- Transform stagnant underperformers and teams into engaged, enthusiastic producers

For more information and ways to develop these advantages for you and your team, reach out to tarah@tarahkeech.com or www.tarahkeech.com.

For more than 30 years, Phil Stella has been a valued resource for business leaders who want to communicate with confidence.

Phil is an active member of COSE, Sales & Marketing Executives, the American Society for Training & Development, Lake Communicators, the Heights-Hillcrest Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Cleveland Coach Federation. He is also an active volunteer with E-CITY and five non-profit job search centers.

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