

Leadership Communication for Today's Corporate Leaders



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Today's Discussion

- Establishing the importance of communication
- Defining leadership communication
- Understanding the role of ethos
- Creating a positive individual and organizational ethos
- Coaching others in leadership communication

Communication is Important: The Facts

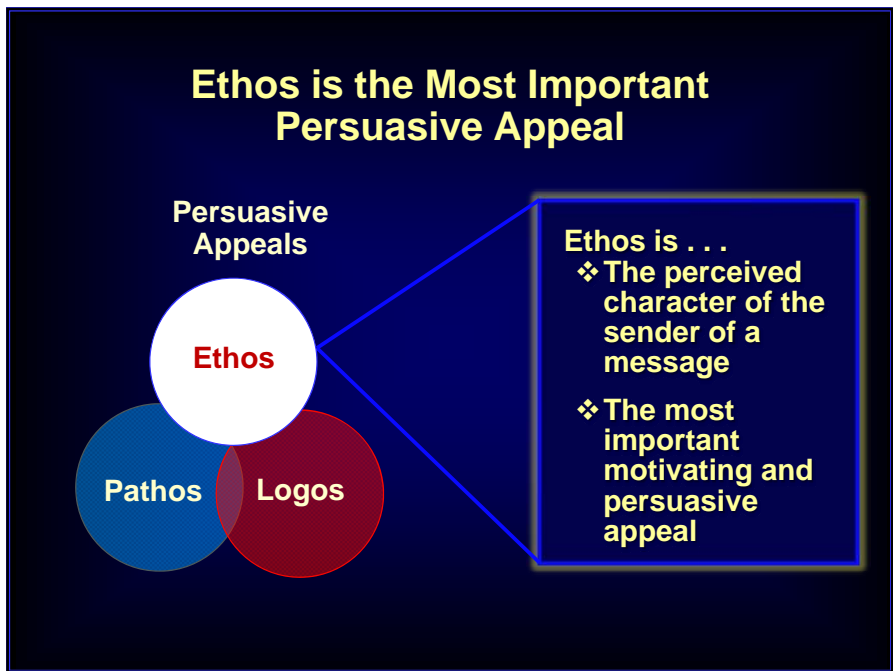
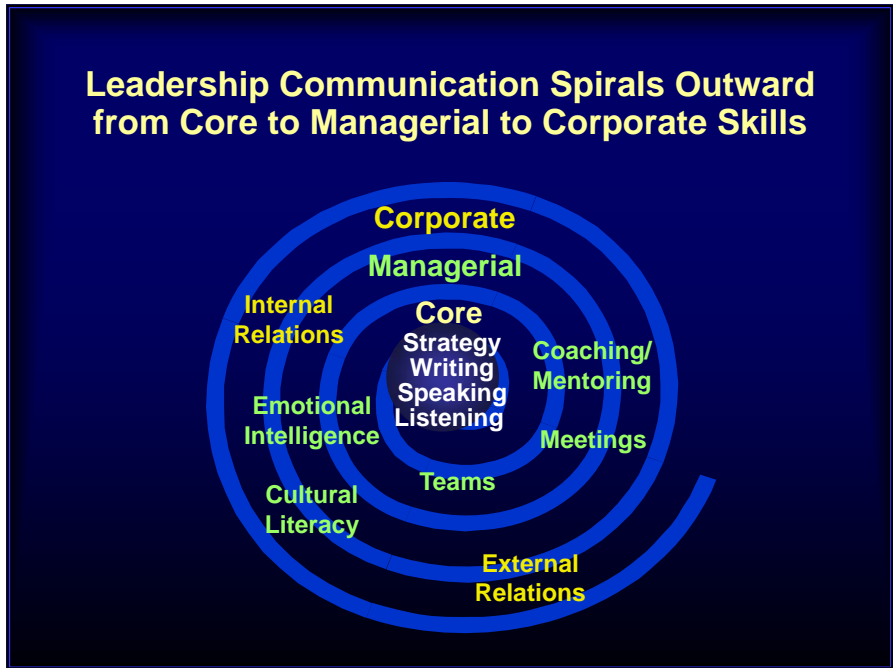
- ❑ Managers spend 70% to 90% of their day communicating.¹
- ❑ Without effective communication in an organization, nothing can happen.
- ❑ Meaningful communication is essential to achieve a high-performing organization.²
- ❑ Effective leadership depends on effective communication.

¹ H. Mintzberg. (1973). *The Nature of Managerial Work*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. R. G., Eccles & N. Nohria. (1991). *Beyond the Hype: Rediscovering the Essence of Management*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

² Jon Katzenbach. *The Real Change Leaders*, pp. 165-170.

What is Leadership Communication?

- ❑ Leadership communication is the controlled, purposeful transfer of meaning by which leaders influence a single person, a group, an organization, or a community.
- ❑ Leadership communication uses the full range of communication skills and resources to overcome interferences and to create and deliver messages that guide, direct, motivate, or inspire others to action.



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Credibility is at the Heart of a Positive Ethos

- ❑ “Persuasion is achieved by the speaker’s personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible.”
- Aristotle
- ❑ Credibility is the number one reason people follow someone.¹
- ❑ “Most managers overestimate their own credibility – considerably.”²

¹ J. M. Kouzes & B. Z. Posner. (1993). *Credibility: How Leaders Gain it and Lose it, Why People Demand it*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers).
² Conger, J. A. (1998). “The Necessary Art of Persuasion.” *Harvard Business Review*.

Who Projects the Best Ethos?



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Now, Without as Many Preconceptions, Who Projects A Positive Ethos?



Three Primary Methods for Creating a Positive Ethos

Aristotle argued that a communicator can create a positive ethos by

1. Ensuring all messages are “worthy of belief”
2. Making his/her “own character look right”
3. Putting the audience into the “right frame of mind”



Ensure Messages are Worthy of Belief

- ❖ Make messages meaningful, clear, and logical
- ❖ Have all of the facts in hand
- ❖ Be honest and ethical
- ❖ Avoid careless errors



Make Own Character Look Right

- ❖ Dress the part
- ❖ Project confidence
- ❖ Know the subject and be prepared
- ❖ Take time to build a rapport
- ❖ Avoid common delivery mistakes



Put Audience in the Right Frame of Mind

- ❖ Affirm cultural values
- ❖ Be sensitive to context
- ❖ Understand their needs and motivations
- ❖ Target messages



Creating the Organization's Ethos: Leading by Example

- ❑ Pay attention to what is measured and rewarded. What do the measures say about the company's values?
- ❑ Realize that reactions to events, particularly a crisis, help frame and promote the company culture
- ❑ Leadership is demonstrated in the little as much as the big. What do day-to-day attitudes and behaviors reveal?

Creating the Organization's Ethos: Leading by Communicating

- ❑ **Make sure all internal and external messages are consistent, honest, and meaningful**
- ❑ **Look closely at how messages are communicated: building layout, hall conversations, daily meetings, visions, missions, and credos, annual reports, Web sites, press releases, analysts' briefings, etc.**

Communicating In Today's Economy

- ❑ **Be honest, authentic, and open about any challenges and how they will be handled**
- ❑ **Focus on positive messages, which in Houston is possible with most industries performing well**
- ❑ **While reducing costs is good business in a downturn, moves to do so can easily be misinterpreted, so communicate openly, but carefully, and ensure all constituencies are addressed and heard**
- ❑ **Open up all channels and communicate frequently to discourage internal turf battles and rally employees around the company's core strengths**

How Can We Help Today's Corporate Leaders Communicate Better

1. Use our own communication abilities to convince them that communication matters
2. Help them recognize the importance of a positive ethos individually and for the organization overall
3. Coach them in the kinds of messages to deliver and guide them in how best to deliver them

In short, use our own leadership communication abilities to lead those around us

For More Information

- ✓ On Leadership Communication:
 - ❖ Contact Deborah at barrett@rice.edu.
 - ❖ See Deborah's book, *Leadership Communication* (McGraw-Hill). Purchase directly from publisher or through Amazon.
- ✓ On Rice's communication program, go to www.rice.edu/comm.
- ✓ On University Connections, contact Jim Lavis, 713.626.2606 or jlavis@university-connections.com or go to www.university-connections.com

And GO VOTE!!!