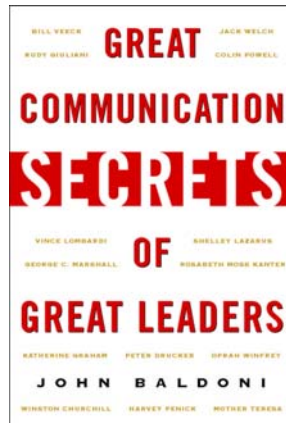


Developing the Message

by

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Developing the Message

4 I-Message

Leadership messages must communicate information as well as open the door for participation of the listener. As such the leadership message must do these four things:

- *Inform* people what the issues are and what they need to do. Leaders owe their people an explanation of the situation, be it good news or bad. Such leaders also spend time with customers listening, which meant they personally were informed about issues and when it came time to communicate internally, they did so on a credible platform of knowledge. And keep in mind, even when there is no news, leaders need to be seen and heard frequently. Absence in this case does not make the heart grow fonder, it gives rise to gossip.
- *Involve* others by soliciting their input. Effective leaders do a good job of traveling around to meet and mingle with employees from all levels of the organization. Such openness will break down the imaginary barrier between boss and employee. It will also invite people to raise issues and offer suggestions.
- *Ignite* individual imaginations about they can do to make things better for themselves and their organizations. Imagination is a powerful mental tool. Consider the example of our Founding Fathers; they gave voice to the aspirations of a people tired of the yoke of tyranny. They fanned the flames of freedom and stoked it by words and example.
- *Invite* people to participate in the enterprise, be it the fulfillment of a goal or the transformation of a culture. Leaders who about what they can do *for* themselves and *by* themselves are those leaders who understand they role as inspiring action or change. Think of successful coaches. They make players of all abilities feel that they could contribute and as a result, they did. In

the process create win-win situations: a win on the scoreboard, and a win for the collective psyche of the team.

All four aspects need not be apparent in every message. Sometimes the leaders message is simply and update. Other times it's a call to action, the invitation to do something. But over the course of a leader's tenure, the success of leadership communications depends upon achieving these four items over and over again.

When a leader informs her people, involves others in the effort, ignites ideas about what is to be done, and invites people to participate in the process, she gains support for her ideas and enables the process of achieving results possible. Also, as with all strong leadership messages, she makes it possible to build greater levels of trust, the bond upon which all leadership must be grounded.

Communications Planner: Developing the Leadership Message

The leadership message is the most important part of the presentation. It is the core upon which the entire presentation hangs. Think of the message the 30-second take away you want the audience to remember.

Here are some questions that you can use to spark your thinking process. The answers to these questions will help you formulate your message.

1. Why am I speaking and what do I want to say?
2. How can I establish credibility?
3. What do I want people to remember?
4. How can I sum up my message in less than 30 seconds?
5. How will the audience react to my message?
6. How can I color my message to improve its clarity?
7. If I make a mistake, what steps can I take to restore my credibility as leader?