

Transformational Leadership: 5 Tips For Leadership Communication

When we think of leadership communication most organizations focus on information tools. These include intranet sites, staff magazines, CEO blog, Town Hall meetings and so on. Whilst all these employee communication methods are to be applauded, they inform employees about what is going on. To truly engage employees in the process of change, for instance, a merger or acquisition, a re-organization, financial results or corporate social responsibility, leadership communication methods need to be designed to actively engage employees.

The fundamental difference between employee engagement and information is the former focuses on changing employee behaviour to support the achievement of business objectives. The latter is about providing information to employees about what will change, when and why.

Here are 5 tips that will ensure that your leadership communication methods do achieve those outcomes.

1. Step one is reviewing all the current tools and methods you use to communicate with employees. You need to scrutinize the content of that communication and determine whether it is one way information or whether some could be adapted as an engagement tool.
2. Step two is very important for transformational leadership because you want to create an "Aha!" moment for employees. This means you convey information in such a way that creates a paradigm shift in their thinking about a topic. The focus for employees needs to be that they finally understand what the change will mean to them, how they can contribute and why it is important.
3. This third step is about conducting focus group research to find out what employees actually think about a particular topic and then what information you have to counter their views and to create a change in how they think. The objective is to find out what information will make employees stop and say, "Aha! now I get it". Once you have the answer to this it is easy to design engagement strategies that will focus employees on the change to the organization and the work that they do.

Benefits of focus group research are that they are a good format for allowing topics to be explored further and frequently will uncover issues or ideas which hadn't been considered prior to the session. Focus groups generally are held for one and a half hours duration and in groups of 8 - 10 participants. The facilitator should lead the discussion but leave the actual dialogue to the participants, and steer them around to the main issue if they have gone off topic and to ensure that all the topics that you wanted to cover within the timeframe allocated are. Well facilitated focus groups identify the key messages to focus your leadership communication strategies on as they relate to specific business objectives.

4. The fourth tip is that once you have the focus group outcomes, you can then begin designing leadership communication strategies that engage employees. You should have a clear understanding about what employees know and what the facts are, and the gap between the business facts and staff perceptions. This forms your key message to create the "Aha Moment".
5. The fifth step is to take the key information that you have gathered from the focus groups and then identify a business issue that you feel certain your transformational leadership strategies can impact. The advantage is that by making use of that information you are then able to create a personalized leadership communication approach that will be measured against business results.

When you have gathered all the outcomes of the focus groups you will then be in a position to identify the key messages and data to bring about change in your organization. Transformational leadership is about understanding what is of concern to your employees and what they need to know to support your business objectives. Development of an employee engagement strategy that focuses on "Aha!" moments and information is the essence of transformational leadership.

About the Author

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