

Core Competency: Communication

Developing It as a Core Competency in Your Leadership Journey

Effective communication is at the heart of successful leadership. Leaders who excel in this core competency can inspire, influence, and guide their teams to achieve their goals. This white paper outlines a comprehensive leadership roadmap for developing and enhancing the core competency of communication. The roadmap includes four key concepts:

1. Listening and confirming what you are hearing,
2. Knowing your audience and tailoring your approach,
3. Encouraging participation, and
4. Being aware of your non-verbal cues.

By implementing these concepts, leaders can become more skilled communicators, ultimately leading to improved team performance and organizational success.

Communication is a fundamental skill for leaders at all levels of an organization. To lead effectively, one must be able to convey thoughts, ideas, and instructions clearly and in a manner that resonates with the team. A strong emphasis on communication enables leaders to foster trust, collaboration, and engagement, which are essential elements of successful leadership.

Below we follow a roadmap for developing communication as a core leadership competency, focusing on four crucial concepts: listening and confirming, knowing your audience, encouraging participation, and managing non-verbal cues.



LISTENING & CONFIRMING

Listening is the cornerstone of effective communication. Leaders who actively listen to their team members build trust and demonstrate respect. Here are key strategies for developing listening skills:

- **Active Listening:** Practice active listening by fully concentrating, understanding, and responding to what others are saying. This involves maintaining eye contact, nodding, and providing verbal cues, such as "I understand" or "Please continue."
- **Avoid Assumptions:** Avoid making assumptions about what someone is going to say. Instead, listen with an open mind and be prepared to adapt your understanding based on the actual message.
- **Paraphrasing and Clarification:** Confirm your understanding by paraphrasing or asking clarifying questions. This ensures that the message is accurately received and understood.
- **Feedback:** Provide constructive feedback when appropriate to reinforce that you are actively engaged in the conversation.

KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE & TAILORING YOUR APPROACH

Leaders must adapt their communication style to suit their audience. Different individuals or groups may require different approaches to be effective. Here's how to tailor your communication:

- **Assess Your Audience:** Understand the background, knowledge, and expectations of your audience. What are their preferences and communication styles?
- **Customize Your Message:** Tailor your message to be relevant and relatable to your audience. Use language and examples that resonate with them.
- **Adapt Your Delivery:** Adjust your tone, pace, and style of communication based on your audience's preferences. This can include using formal language with executives and a more casual approach with frontline employees.

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

Effective communication isn't one-sided; it should encourage participation and engagement. Here is how a leader can foster a participatory environment:

- **Open-Door Policy:** Create an environment where team members feel comfortable expressing their ideas, concerns, and feedback. Encourage open and honest dialogue.
- **Ask for Input:** Actively solicit input and feedback from team members in meetings, one-on-one conversations, and through feedback channels.
- **Recognize and Acknowledge Contributions:** Acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of team members. This recognition reinforces the value of participation.

BEING AWARE OF NON-VERBAL CUES

Non-verbal communication plays a significant role in conveying messages. Leaders should be mindful of their body language, facial expressions, and gestures:

- **Maintain Eye Contact:** Maintain appropriate eye contact to show that you are engaged and interested in the conversation.
- **Body Language:** Be aware of your body language, as it can convey confidence, openness, or discomfort. Maintain an open and approachable posture.
- **Facial Expressions:** Your facial expressions should match the tone and content of your message. Smile when appropriate and express empathy when needed.
- **Gestures:** Use gestures purposefully and sparingly to emphasize key points but be cautious not to distract from your message.

Developing communication as a core competency in leadership is a continuous journey. Leaders must practice and refine these skills to become more effective communicators. The roadmap presented emphasizes the importance of listening, audience awareness, participation, and non-verbal cues. By focusing on these concepts, leaders can inspire, influence, and guide their teams with clarity, empathy, and engagement, ultimately leading to improved team performance and organizational success.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS

- [Communicate Like a Leader: Connecting Strategically to Coach, Inspire, and Get Things Done by Dianna Booher](#)
- [Playing Big by Tara Mohr](#)

VIDEOS

- [The Power of Communication by Nina Legath](#)
- [The Art of Active Listening - The Harvard Business Review](#)
- [Non-Verbal Communication in Leadership - Father Dr. Justinus Pech](#)
- [Sorry' but these are Things Women Should Never Say in An Email - by Angeline Jane Bernabe, GMA](#)
- [It's Not Manipulation, It's Strategic Communication by Keisha Brewer](#)
- [How to Control Your Emotions During a Difficult Conversation - The Harvard Business Review](#)

INTERVIEWS & PODCASTS

- [How Women Undermine Themselves With Words - Goop](#)
- [Why Women Criticize Each Other - Plus Ways to Play Bigger - Goop](#)

BLOGS

- [Leadership Communication by Valamis](#)
- [15 Tips for Effective Communication in Leadership by Center for Creative Leadership](#)
- [The Language Women use in the Workplace and What It Means by STEM Women](#)
- [What Time I Stopped Explaining Myself - and Then Got Everything I Wanted by Heather Havrilesky & Marie Clare](#)