

ELEVATE YOUR INFLUENCE

15 PROVEN TIPS FOR CLEAR & CONFIDENT COMMUNICATION

Listen. Communication is an exchange, a shared intellectual journey. You should be at least as interested in what the other person says. With a boss, tilt in their favor.

Let them talk. Interrupting is an exceptionally rude individual and organizational habit. If you interrupt your boss, you're committing professional sabotage.

Let yourself talk. Too many leaders interrupt themselves with a caveat, counterpoint, or an intrusive thought. Think in sentences, even paragraphs. You've got worthy insight. Let it come out fully.

Be here, now. We don't read multiple sentences at once...so don't cover multiple points in one dose. Narrow your topics by priority. Present one thought at a time. Craft clear transitions.

Follow your script. Create a method for bringing up a topic, especially with your boss or higher. Ask what they prefer. Example: BLUF - Outcome - Context, Risk/Opp./Opt./Rec.

Develop a preparation method. You may have 5 months or 5 minutes to prepare for a key conversation or speech. Figure out a system or series of habits that allow you to 1) produce the required insight and 2) give you the familiarity and confidence to hit a home run.

Actually prepare. Even if you don't have that 5 minute heads up, take a second to pause, breathe, collect your thoughts, and commit to the minimum effective dose before opening your mouth.

Share the spotlight. If you're a leader, the spotlight often defaults to you. You always have a stage. Your team has a lot to contribute, though. And those are the leaders who need to prepare for their time in your position. So, consider who else could be speaking.

Focus on the audience. The purpose of a speech is not to make the speaker look good. The purpose is to influence and add value to the audience.

Incorporate stories. We live in story. Stories make your narrative more engaging and more likely that your audience (including peers/boss) will remember your points.

Open and close well. Have a clear opening and closing to prevent run-ons and give yourself an on and off ramp. Avoid stepping in front of a crowd without knowing when you'll stop talking.

Tailor your message. Each echelon deserves different messaging for their unique perspective. Not everyone needs to hear readouts from every part of the organization, especially the negative aspects of command.

Overcommunicate your message. At every opportunity, restate your vision, reinforce priorities, define the landscape for the team. You should feel like you've said it 1,000 times.

Filter and Prioritize. You don't have to share all of your content in one dose. If you only have 5 minutes, fill it with only the most important points.

Rehearse. If you're giving prepared remarks, get feedback and rehearse it 10 times.