



#GSD POST

LEADERSHIP RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

BY J. SCOTT

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JANUARY 17, 2024



Transformational Leaders know how to connect with people and communicate to lead

Introduction:

Forget the fancy talk and MBA jargon. It's all about clear, simple communication to avoid team breakdowns. In this #GSD Post, we explore the "Bedside Manner" approach, breaking down tech talk into plain language. Stress in execs? It's real. Handle it with empathy and straight talk. Situational leadership is a must, and emotional cues count. Remember, perception is reality in leadership, so stay positive, focus on solutions, and make people feel safe to follow.

Mastering Communication

In the sphere of leadership, we have been taught that we need to look and sound smart. To do this we need to use fancy words, speak in MBA jargon, and use the words we read in articles from McKinsey, Bain, and Accenture. If we do this, we will be recognized and respected as leaders.



Be brief, be brilliant, and then be gone

This is total bullshit! “We Communicate to Lead.” If you are using words that people aren’t familiar with, communication will break down and so will the team's results. Using words that people don’t understand often triggers their shame response, and under those circumstances, they are unlikely to ask for clarity, thus eliminating any possibility of teamwork.

Avoid using complex jargon in favor of clarity and simplicity. Your team will engage, and you will get better results. Nobody cares how smart you are if you and your team are delivering outcomes that matter!

The basis of effective leadership communication is having a “Bedside Manner.” Your ability to translate technical nuances into plain, outcome-relevant language. This approach parallels a physician who opts to explain a medical procedure in terms the patient can grasp, rather than delving into the complex biochemistry. Our stakeholders and executives seek clarity and assurance, not a deep dive into the minutiae of management theories.

When presenting challenges, obstacles, blockers (nobody cares what you call them), or mission updates, it's essential to articulate the situation in straightforward terms.

The key questions that you must be prepared to answer succinctly are:

- 1.What is the challenge at hand?
- 2.How does it impact our timeline and budget?
- 3.What steps are we taking to address it?
- 4.When do we anticipate a resolution?

Leaders must master the art of communication, balancing the depth of their professional knowledge with the practicality and relevance needed to keep others out of fight or flight while working to advance their stakeholder's objectives. The timeless guidance of the 3-B’s holds in this context. **Be brief, be brilliant, and then be gone.** Leaders should be adept at understanding and employing advanced tools and theories, yet also skilled at conveying their insights in a manner that resonates with their audience.

Managing Stress In Executives

Leading effectively requires an acute awareness of the psychological and physiological aspects of stress, particularly in executive roles. Leaders must recognize that executives have become conditioned to assume when you reach out, you are bringing them bad news. This perception can trigger stress responses in executives, who, while ultimately responsible, may not be best positioned to develop the solutions.

Awareness of the fight-or-flight response is crucial in these interactions. Fight or flight triggers a physiological response in the human body. In a nutshell, it causes two of the three brain centers to shut down and reduces the person to the emotional equivalent of an eight-year-old.

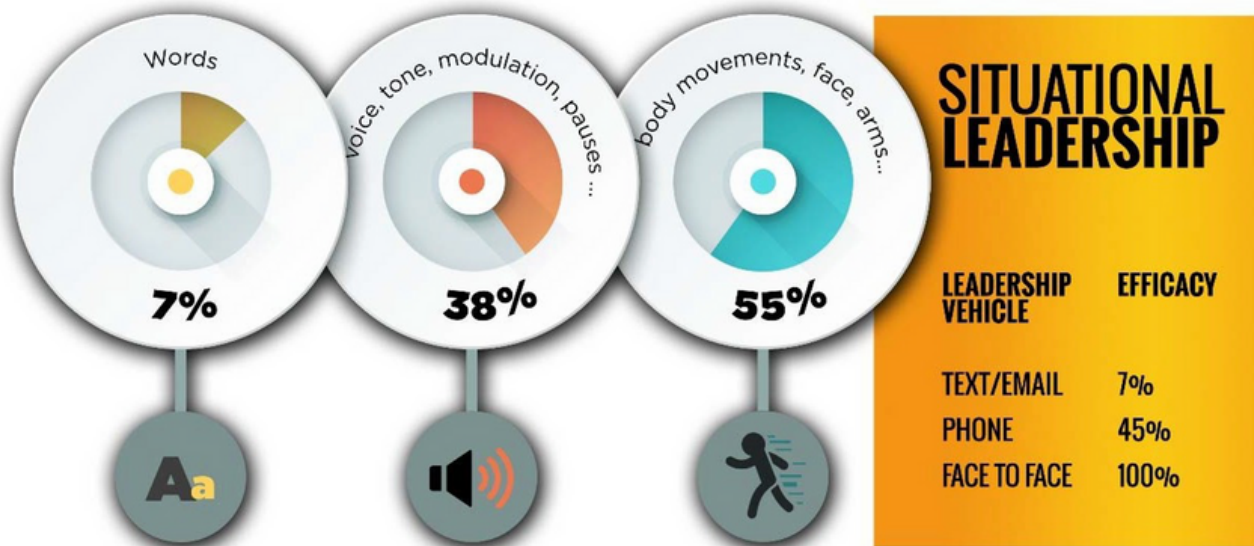


This physiological reaction can diminish an individual's problem-solving abilities, reducing their cognitive function. Leaders must navigate these situations with empathy and strategic communication, ensuring that decisions made are in the best interest of all parties involved.

To manage these scenarios effectively, leaders should:

1. Be prepared to crisply outline the problem and confidently walk them through the solution you have chosen.
2. Make it feel safe—be cool, honey bunny.
3. Bring your fearless, irreverent confidence.
4. Get straight to the point. Do not ask them how their weekend was. They know why you are there.
5. Be brief, be brilliant, be gone (three Bs).

Situational Leadership



Leadership isn't one-size-fits-all; it varies depending on the situation. Situational leadership involves discerning the appropriate level and type of leadership required for each context. A high degree of Leadership is only necessary when change is imminent or desired. Asking someone to pick up the copies at Office Depot on their way into the office requires almost no leadership skill because there is no emotional impact. Telling that same person that their job has changed because of a company reorg requires a ton of leadership because their world changed.

When we talk about situational leadership, we need to start by understanding Professor Albert Mehrabian's communication model. The model above depicts the amount of emotion we can pick up from words, tone of voice, and body language. When it comes to leadership, understanding how people are feeling is important. It's also important for our followers to see and hear how we are feeling. They want to know if we are being sincere, if we care about them, etc. These emotions are mostly conveyed via tone of voice (38 percent) and body language (55 percent).

On the right side of the situational leadership model, we have taken the percentage of emotion conveyed by each communication vehicle and turned that into a model for leadership effectiveness. If you need something simple done, like picking up the copies on the way into the office, an email or text message will suffice. If you need to lead someone through a change, you will only be able to perceive 45 percent of what they are thinking or feeling over the phone. And in turn, they will only be able to perceive 45 percent of what you are thinking or feeling. Face-to-face will always give you the best chance of effectively leading your team members. This model can be used to assess a situation and then employ the communication vehicle that will achieve the best results. Remember, the more emotional the situation, the more leadership is necessary.



Perception is Reality

Leadership often involves navigating through a landscape of challenges and blockers. Leaders need to remember that their interactions with stakeholders significantly shape these individuals' perceptions of their performance and capabilities. Therefore, maintaining a professional demeanor and avoiding off-the-record venting sessions is essential to creating the perception that you are safe and that you can be trusted with their reputation.

Focus all interactions on cultivating a can-do culture, emphasizing possibilities rather than dwelling on obstacles. This mindset is critical in meetings and discussions, where the goal is to foster an environment of clarity, confidence, and possibility.

To embody a can-do approach:

- Focus on potential solutions and positive outcomes.
- Engage in fact-based discussions for informed decision-making.
- Listen and respond contextually to questions and statements.
- Clarify understanding and expectations.
- Present alternative ideas only after demonstrating that you fully grasp the idea being presented.
- Explore concerns through questions aimed at uncovering
- Address mistakes by focusing on future outcomes.

Adhering to these tenets will ensure that you make people feel safe. If you make people feel safe they are much more likely to trust and follow.

In summary, leadership communication in team engagements demands a balance between professional knowledge and practical articulation, an understanding of the psychological impacts of stress, and a situational approach that adapts to the emotional context of each interaction.



J. Scott

Jason Scott is an executive transformational leadership coach with over 22 years experience developing leaders who build high performing teams who consistently increase team satisfaction, customer experience, and profitability.

Learn the techniques 120VC uses to develop Transformational Leaders and turn a group of Leaders into a single, unified, high-functioning Leadership Team.

J. Scott is available for private or custom programs and for executive leadership coaching - call for more information [818.842.8041](tel:818.842.8041)

WWW.JASONSCOTTELEADERSHIP.COM | WWW.120VC.COM