

IS THERE ANYONE WHO DISAGREES?

AN EYE CATCHING TITLE....

.....and a phrase leader's should avoid or risk intimidating their teams into submission as opposed to inviting open and honest collaboration.

As leaders we sometimes forget the power that comes with the position and the title, particularly for those who are new to leadership and are used to pushing hard to be heard. It can be a challenge to shift our mindsets to understand that our words are powerful and have a significant effect on the motivation, mental well being and careers of the people we lead.

The communication freedoms we enjoyed and leveraged for success during our career ascent may be the very traits that stifle success when in a leadership position. Now, every word, every micro-expression, every shift in body language or tone of voice will be a signal to your team and will be creating perceptions of your underlying intentions and expectations.

This can result in the exact opposite of what you wanted to achieve or communicate.



THATS NOT WHAT I MEANT!

This is where self awareness and intent come into play for those who want to be effective leaders.

When you say 'does anyone disagree' you may have the best of intentions to generate constructive challenge or collaboration, but there are two million factors that come into play which will determine how that phrase is interpreted.

You may find your team reads this as an indication to demonstrate surface level compliance or that to speak up would be seen as a sign of challenging you. This could in turn result in you missing out on key feedback to enhance or improve the wider business outcomes.

This can be an exhausting reality for many leaders, not only baring the weight of the organisation's targets but also responsible for positively motivating and coaching their teams.

'Being so self aware that you can manage all components of your communication. '

Self Awareness



PERCEPTION IS REALITY

OK, so I mastered self awareness, I speak with purpose and intent and regulate my other communication signals. Can I relax now?

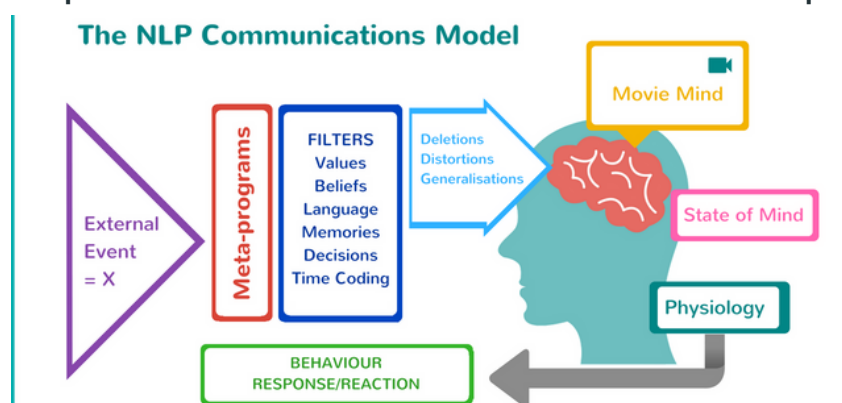
It's not time to relax yet!

Perception is reality and perception is rarely based on fact, it is impossible for two people to have a carbon copy perception of the information you communicated because we each process that information based on a unique set of filters.

In any one communication instance, you/they will absorb two million pieces of information (its hard to imagine that your simple sentence of 'Does anyone disagree?' comes with two million pieces of information).

This information is then filtered, processed and made sense of by the individual and that individual's processing filter is based on a set of unique memories, experiences, values and beliefs which will shape their interpretation.

An individual that has enjoyed a history of supportive leadership will interpret that statement very differently to one who has experienced authoritative leadership.



The 'NLP Communication Model' provides a useful representation of this filtering and processing.

PLAYING WITH POWER DYNAMICS

Leadership Bubble

As we progress up the ladder, at times our ego can lead to what is known as a Confirmation Bias. We only see, hear and think what we want to and due to our position of power, those around us will want to please us and so will exhibit behaviour that reinforces our beliefs. This can result in Hubris Syndrome, limiting our effectiveness as a leader because we become out of touch with reality.

Power and Communication

If the Leadership Bubble isn't enough to contend with, research has shown that more care, accuracy and detail is given by an individual explaining a concept to a leader than when a leader explains a concept to a member of their team.

Your position in the hierarchy effects how much you assume other people know.

How to counteract this?

Leaders can counteract this by creating a safe space for equal flow of information without repercussion.



Where Does the Power Sit?

Power comes from many sources, a good leader will understand this and a great leader will leverage it.

For many, power comes from position and authority. In reality, the true power in the room sits with the people who are the subject matter experts, out of the box thinkers and the people who can most effectively influence the outcome - the trusted networkers.

A great leader will know when to step aside and let others lead, empowering them to be successful and creating a safe space to fail forward on road to success!

“It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.” - Harry Truman

"KNOW WHEN TO TAKE CHARGE AND WHEN TO GET OUT OF THE WAY"

Harvard Business
Review March 2023

A big inspiration for this article was the March 2023 edition of Harvard Business Review.

Their article debated which style of leadership was most effective:

- Empowering Leadership - often linked with the concept of Servant Leadership
- Take Charge Leadership - often linked with notions of authoritarianism.

They found that the best leaders were able to change gear and flow between power models.

The key balancing factor was being able to clearly communicate to your teams the shift in gear.

For example:

- now we collaborate,
- now the leader makes a decision,
- now we confirm understanding,
- now the team will take action.



This requires leaders to be willing to create space for collaboration, transparency and openness while setting a clear indication of:

- Transition of power during collaboration (to the team)
- Who would make the final 'educated' decision
- When collaboration would end
- When action would commence.

Changing gear works best when you truly know and understand your people, what dynamics enhance their performance and their current mindset.

"A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves." - Lao Tzu

I UNDERSTAND, NO REALLY I DO!

Empathy

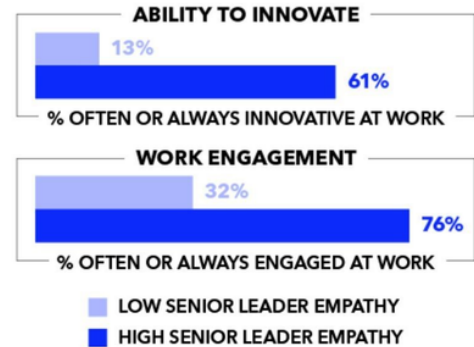
In March 2023, the World Economic Forum published research by Catalyst (a global Not for Profit), demonstrating a direct link between Empathy in Senior Leaders and the levels of innovation, engagement, cooperation and commitment of the people they led. The combination of these traits can be described as 'Passion' or 'Energy'.

The most successful teams - full of life, passion and energy to succeed, are those who feel supported.

Empathy for the individuals and teams you lead, trying to see and feel the world as they do, to understand their perspective will empower the intuitive and empathetic leader to find the right way to inspire their people.

Linking this concept back to that of the Servant Leader, your strategy should not be 'how do I succeed as a leader?' but 'how do I enable my team to succeed?'. The rest will follow.

How **Senior Leader** Empathy Impacts Employee Innovation and Engagement



Personal Reflections

I am privileged to have led a number of passionate and motivated teams during my career.

In my early days of leadership, I believed I had to be the one at the front with all the answers, giving directive orders (leaving the team behind me to pick up the pieces).

As I have matured into my leadership roles, I have realised that my role is to be fluid. To set the vision and create the space for the team to be successful. To understand the team dynamic, stepping forward to coach, redirect or protect the team when needed.

“One of the criticisms I’ve faced over the years is that I’m not aggressive enough or assertive enough or maybe somehow because I’m empathetic, it means I’m weak. I totally rebel against that. I refuse to believe that you cannot be both compassionate and strong.”

— Jacinda Ardern