

The Power of Two-way Communication

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Everyone has to work together to keep a team's bond healthy, but this is easier said than done. It requires constant open communication with ample compassion. If you are down on somebody because you are not happy with that person's performance, and you don't talk with them about it, then you get stuck in a toxic environment. When the communication is strong, the bond becomes stronger. If even one team member gets left out or doesn't participate for whatever reason, the bond is impacted. To prevent this from happening, team members must learn to talk deeply and reach out. When they do, strengthened relationships and deepened bonds emerge.

Learning how to talk to one another is the single most important thing we can do to create a strong team. Imagine what a team environment would be like if there was no talking. This happens most often in strict teams where members are afraid to say anything, so they remain silent. Communication gaps exist in most teams, and communication that is honest and respectful can be rare. Yelling—the worst form of communication—should of course be forbidden. Healthy teams are built through frequent, careful two-way communication.

The Energy of Openness

Talk can be a powerful tool from day one. How leaders talk tells a colleague how they feel about him or her. Their statements affect both self-esteem and self-worth. To a large extent, their language determines a team member's destiny. It's important that talk be unrestricted. Team members often feel safer when conversation falls within familiar territory, but deep, open and uncomfortable talk is better for growth and

strengthening bonds between team members. Don't miss out on this powerful way to get closer. It can be very nourishing. Initiate new topics. Dream out loud. Explore different subjects. All things are helped immensely by talking openly.

Learning how to talk deeply creates a rare and wonderful energy. Close and healthy teams are built through frequent, honest two-way conversation with one another and lots of it. Cultivate the ability to talk about everything. Teach every team member the value of totally open communication. Don't restrict the boundaries of conversation. Let team members know it's okay to grow individually in different areas and directions. Be open, direct and deep. As leaders, we must help foster and continue the dialogue. Describe problems, give information, encourage discussion and don't forget to model how it should be done. Fully express your own thoughts, feelings, needs and expectations. This includes sharing flaws. Talk about everything. Share past experiences and what was learned from them; it will inspire team members to share theirs.

Encourage your team members to engage in this open talking on a regular basis. Establish a ritual where all team members openly talk about the most meaningful—or discouraging—professional part of their workday or week. This may be about an event with a client, a team project frustration or a creative idea—anything that has special professional importance. Happy as well as difficult work experiences can be shared during this time. If done consistently it will have a powerful impact on your team's interpersonal relationships.



About the Author: Dr. Susan Kuczmariski, Ed.D, speaks on the topic of [leadership](#) and innovation around the world. She is the author of six books, including [Lifting People Up: The Power of Recognition](#), and [Apples Are Square: Thinking Differently About Leadership](#), which was selected by Fast Company Magazine as a “Best Business Book” and received a “Book of the Year” award from Foreword Magazine. For the past 12 years she has been a Guest Lecturer in the executive education program at [Northwestern University’s Kellogg School](#), currently teaching in the “Leading and Sustaining A Culture of Innovation” program. She is the co-founder of [Kuczmariski Innovation](#), which provides thought–leadership and research on innovation, culture, management, teams, and values.