

Why Higher Ups Avoid Communicating with their Employees

Laleh Hancock, CEO, [Belapemo](#)

Managers have a unique position to fill. Not only are they the main “gateway” for communication between top level management and the employees on their teams, they have the ability to influence and empower employee engagement.

Recent data from Gallup[1] shows that not only do manager relationships with employees account for 70% of variance in employee engagement, they are also the people in the organization experiencing the least clarity about expectations and reporting greater stress than their staff.

On top of this, further research[2] has shown that managers, like anyone, will avoid communication if they believe it will be received negatively, or don't believe they can deliver it authentically, or feel uncomfortable being vulnerable.

Greater ease with communication ultimately relies on the willingness to be a leader in your own life. In business, being a leader and effectively engaging employees exponentially impacts possibilities for productivity and growth. Use these 5 tools to invite greater engagement with employees, bosses, or anyone else, and empower you to be a [leader](#) with an innovative and empowering mindset:

1. **You don't have to have all the answers.** As a manager, it can feel like the pressure is to have answers and solutions for everybody. But what if all you really need is an open mind and a sense of curiosity? Discussing negative feedback or having an uncomfortable conversation can be an opportunity for possibility when

approached without the pressure of assuming the worst or fixating on achieving a particular result. Go into all your interactions with a fresh mental slate. The best question to help create that is, “What is possible here that I haven’t considered?”

2. **Ask and listen without bias.** When it comes to communicating better, listening without bias is one of our greatest tools. Asking employees what they are aware of will give you more information than confronting or asking for explanations. It engages them rather than putting them in defense mode. Ask questions like, “Can you help me with this?” “What do you know here that can assist?” and “Could you give me some clarity around this?” People can sense when you have an agenda or judgment, and they’ll come ready to fight or defend. If you use these questions and take an inquisitive and neutral approach, a different atmosphere gets created, making genuine engagement more possible.
3. **Forget “failure vs. success”** It’s time to bench paradigms of success/failure, right/wrong, good/bad forever. They create polarized ways of thinking and functioning not only in your own role and attitude, but it entrains others to limit their thinking as well. We all can learn a lot from “failure” and it shouldn’t be avoided. Your vulnerability and willingness to perceive things differently in this area will go a long way to inspiring highly productive and innovative communication. When things don’t go as planned, blaming, trying to fix, correct, or identify where someone went wrong is counter-productive. Asking questions like, “What’s right about this are we not getting?” “How can we use this to our advantage?” and “What do we now know that we didn’t before that we can use to create even greater in the future?” creates a generative conversation. It will lead communication towards inspired action, within which any corrective action required will often naturally take place.

4. **Be willing to change.** Are you willing to change something when it isn't working? Are you willing to change something when it is working so it can be even greater? Many of us avoid change unless there are problems to fix and it's unavoidable. This attitude is destructive to growth and communication – because you will train employees to expect conversations about change only when something is “wrong”! What if there are endless possibilities to pursue that everyone can contribute to, and that was the main reason to engage with your employees? One of the most productive conversations you can have in business is, “What can we add, change or create here that would make _____ even greater?” You don't have to act on every idea, but just allowing ideas without judgment is great daily practice as it opens the door for innovation and creativity to be organically part of your team communication.
5. **Tell people what they can hear.** One question we don't often ask ourselves when communicating with others is, “What can this person hear from me right now?” When we have feedback to deliver or conversations to be had, every individual's requirement for receiving information or being approached is different and can be different from moment to moment. Some like information straight, some need negative feedback couched in more positive acknowledgment, some people need more context, and some can only receive small amounts of information at a time. Rather than function from, “I have to tell them this,” start asking, “What can they hear and what can I say that will create greater here?”

Being a leader will allow you to be a greater manager, but you don't have to be a manager to be a leader. Being a leader in your life and workplace should be the target of all staff at every level. No matter your role in an organization, if you choose to be the leader in your own life, you will become an invitation and source of inspiration for others to do choose

the same – and create many greater possibilities as a result.



About the Author: Laleh Alemzadeh-Hancock is a leadership and entrepreneurial coach, professional services consultant, personal wellness mentor, and founder and CEO of global professional services company, [Belapemo](#). Laleh boasts 30 years' experience in operational excellence, change management and business consulting, and has inspired and empowered thousands of individuals including Fortune 500 executives, government agencies, non-profit organizations, athletes and veterans. A highly respected executive and leadership coach, Laleh has a particular interest in supporting and encouraging the leadership capabilities of women – in business, in the workplace, at home and in the wider community. She is featured alongside luminaries such as Oprah Winfrey, Melinda Gates, and Ginni Rometty in the 2019 publication, [America's Leading Ladies: Stories of courage, challenge and triumph](#). Follow [Laleh](#).

[1]

<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/245786/gallup-reports-share-leaders-2019.aspx>

[2]

<https://www.ragan.com/survey-69-percent-of-managers-dislike-communicating-with-staff/>