LR5 Communication Transcript

This is video five in the leading remotely in a crisis module where you can engage everyone around a common purpose with positivity, solutions focus and systemic perspective. In this video, we look at communication as a leader.

00:17

Welcome back to the videos in the module on leading remotely and in a crisis. In this module we are looking at the consistent and timely communication, and providing direction, with confidence and hope. So your role as a leader is to be a beacon of hope, and provide that direction with confidence and hope, so people can engage with it, feel resolved and determined to get there, and believe that you all can, no matter what curveballs life throws your way.

And as I mentioned in the previous module about looking at direction, it means that you need to deliver consistent messages about your direction, and in your confidence in your people to get there. Even when you're dynamically responding to a complex situation when it looks on the surface like you're chopping and changing and constantly changing direction. And when you do not have all the answers because there's always incomplete information in any one time.

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So thinking about your destination as we talked about before, how clear are you about where you are going. How clear are you about your goal and your destination? You as the leader need to be crystal clear yourself first, ln order to convey that message and bring people with you. How can anyone get behind your plans and believe that you will get there, when you are not conveying confidence in where you're going, and knowing where you're going? And then you can give confidence that you can get there by talking about how you are drawing on your values as guiding principles, your collective strengths, the resources that you have, including your ability to learn and experiment as you go, to recognise the positives that you've already identified. And then you can provide grounded and credible evidence that we can do this. So, evidence that people can believe in and that they know and relate to.

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And then we need to provide hope and optimism. This is where we will be creating a positive culture so that we believe we can get there in the end, no matter what comes up. This is not about sugar-coating the problem. We’re not downplaying and ignoring the risks. We need to acknowledge the risks. People know when they're being deceived and that really erodes trust and trust is absolutely critical to bring people with you at all times, and even more so in a crisis.

So we'll be looking at how we can face brutal facts, be grateful for what we have, recognise what we have, look for the positives and acknowledge different perspectives that are otherwise missed because in those different perspectives, you will very likely find the sparks that initiate a positive, constructive way forwards. And those will be some of the answers that you're looking for.

3:24

But we very often miss them, so we need to take active action to find out, and find and hear all those different perspectives.

And we want to embrace the challenges with positivity and mental strength so all of these things and these ways of doing things will help to provide hope and optimism.

And your communication will need to show that you care. Remember communication is not just about broadcasting. Communication involves listening to understand other people's perspectives and showing empathy. And many leaders forget this aspect. It becomes a broadcast we're only communicating outputs. So, remember to actively listen and think about how do you show that connection and empathy with your people as well, so they really understand and feel that sense of connection too. So the first thing with this is about “how do we acknowledge the situation?”

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And so with this, we say, let's face the facts. And in fact, if you've come across Jim Collins book “*Good to Great*” it's a book based on decades of research into what makes companies consistently great. Very, very well worth reading it. He’s made it very accessible. It was scientific research that was done, or academic research, but he's put it into a format that's very accessible for people in business and who are not academics. In his book he refers to it as ‘facing the brutal facts’ and really go into granular detail. Really understand what is it? Where are we at right now?

4:59

And in, in this book. *Good to Great,* they discovered that actually what really makes the difference for companies being consistently great comes down to leadership. But it's not just any good leadership.

It's a particular kind of leader who faces the brutal facts, who distributes decision making, who shares successes and who creates the environment where everybody can contribute and feel valued and they call it level five leadership.

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But you won't necessarily hear an awful lot about it in the media. And that's because level five leaders seem to be the quiet leaders and media doesn't really recognise them. They don't make great news stories because they're forever saying, oh, but it was somebody else in the team who, who, who was responsible here. So it's more amorphous. they can't get a great hold on it. However, I think this style of leadership is invaluable in a crisis, because it combines that strong professional will, your determination and belief that there is a way through whatever comes our way. And coupled with that personal humility and a desire to grow people and leaders throughout the organisation. So think about this when you're thinking about how are you leading. And the more that you can bring other people with you, to grow other leaders, distribute the decision making with confidence. Then you will be going a very long way to helping your organisation really succeed through any challenges that you're facing.

Leaders often fear that you can't actually tell people the truth because they believe people will panic. And, but people also know and they get a sense of when they're being lied to and that seriously erodes trust, and that's very much worse.

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So it's far better to, to listen to their perspectives and discover a much wider perspective of what are the brutal facts. Not just from your perspective as the leader, but actually how, what is everybody else seeing? How can we create a much bigger picture here? So as we were talking in the system's perspective video, the more different perspectives that we can pull together, the better picture we can create of just how all these tangled threads are playing apart, and that will help to reveal: what are some of the interactions, what are some of the, perhaps, unexpected places within the system that we might find something that is really valuable to help us embrace this challenge, and succeed and pull through.

So, the more that you, you can find out just what are the details, the facts in some granular detail and bring on board people from all levels, so that you hear from the customer facing staff, you hear from staff on, on your factory floor, so to speak. And no matter what kind of organisation you have you'll have people right at the very lowest level but you need to hear that perspective as well as all the intermediate levels to really build a full picture of your organisation and what's happening, and reveal what's really working well at the moment that you could do more of.

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And that doesn't necessarily come from people just at the top because there are many things that you miss, because each layer has a different perspective in your system.

The other thing that was really important here, I think, in the level five leadership is this aspect of distributing decision making. So the facts are different for different parts of your organisation. The context is different for different parts of your organisation and to try to make the whole of your organisation respond in exactly the same way, may not work for your organisation. It might be valuable when there is business as usual and you've got benign conditions. However, in complex and uncertain situations, then, actually, the more that you can distribute decision making, so people can, can respond with more agility to their specific context, then the more successful your organisation will be. And that means that you as the leader need to grow the leaders below you, to have a sufficiently good ways of managing your, your, your leaders and managers below you that you can devolve decision making to them.

9:07

And we talked a bit about some of the ways you can do this in the managing module. - Managing remotely module.

The sailing analogy for this is that your organisation is not like a single boat so you need to think of it as a flotilla of boats. Each Skipper is responsible to sail their own boat and according to the conditions that it specifically is experiencing. So that makes them better able to respond to the situation and crisis more quickly. It makes them more agile. It makes them more successful in actually getting through the situation.

And if you think about it, actually. This I think is the way some of the military work when they're at sea. They don't have a single big boat they have a number of small RIBs where they’re far more agile, with the Marines, to, to get in and move a large number of people about. They don't do it to the single large boat.

And that's because when you distribute decision making to different parts of the organisation, they can respond in ways that are appropriate for their specific context, especially when you support them with the resources and backings that they need to deliver on it.

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So that's about facing the facts and how you can support people to respond constructively based on the facts in the context of their own specific situation.

We also want to listen. So there are two parts of listening. So as I just mentioned earlier, we want to listen to your staff perspectives to get a fuller picture of the facts in granular detail. which really importantly means you involve people at all levels, and especially people working with customers and ‘on the factory floor’, not just your managers and leaders, because the, the people at lower levels can very often identify the little things that could make the biggest difference to how you can work more effectively and respond to these changing circumstances.

The second part of listening is to listen and acknowledge people's concerns. So your people, whether in your team or the wider organisation, They can't really hear your message, they can't get on board, they can't feel positive, they can't believe in what's possible, or even have any resolve to do anything for you, until they feel heard and understood. So that means before you deliver your message, you must first understand their concerns, their worries and their emotions, and then show that you care and you are listening.

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So one way you can do this is in meetings put listening on to the agenda. So, very often we have a meeting and it's a broadcast - we tell everyone the plan and then there's a short space at the end if we don't have run for a Q&A at the end of the session. And, but that very often doesn't leave enough time for people to raise things and things that perhaps weren't even on the agenda because it hadn't been raised to managers or leadership’ attention yet. So, put a whole session dedicated to listening.

So this is what one of my clients did she she'd been brought in to take over a team, and they were seriously behind on a deadline. They had two weeks to provide a final product. And, and it just wasn't happening. But nobody told anyone that their leader was being changed, the manager was being changed. So she came in on a Monday morning. there was enormous hostility. Everyone said nobody told us about this. Who are you? We don't want to do anything. And she said we couldn't get anything done. Every time we tried to run a meeting and tell people the plans, there was just hostility and argument and all the rest of it.

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So then she came up with this idea. Well let's put listening. We’ll put “over to you” as a one hour session on the agenda. And she said this is “over to you”. We don't have a set thing to tell you. you just tell me your concerns. If I can answer it right now, I will. If I don't have an answer right now I will undertake to find something out and bring back an answer to you as soon as I can. And it may be that we don't know and we have to do more research, but that will be the answer then, but I will find out what I can and do what I can to find out and answer your concerns. And, and then the next week when I spoke with her, she said this was remarkable, because this was the key that shifted this hostility into full on engagement. Everybody was on board and everybody became determined to deliver the product within the two week deadline despite the fact that they were months behind on it.

So, do not underestimate the power of listening and acknowledging people's concerns and doing what you can to help explain where you are and what you're planning to do, and have that understanding of their emotions and your… what they're feeling.

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So you have ways for people to submit their concerns. the queries. It might be that you don't have it in meetings. It might be somewhere online as well. And it… what's really critical is that you provide a clear visible response so it's not a black hole of ignored concerns. You know that, the box for suggestions that's never, never addressed and there's never any sort of come back from it so it just seems like the black hole. People put suggestions in there, and then nothing ever happens. No one ever hears that their suggestion has been received, let alone thought about or acted upon.

And listening is even more vital while we're all working remotely, because people do feel isolated and they can't see how everyone else is working. So having ways to show that you're listening is absolutely critical. And again we deal a lot more with that in the managing remotely module, so check on that one as well.

Empathy is rather critical as well. This is about how do we create some emotional connection.

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And, and just as when I was sailing, if you remember the direction video, when we hit those stormy headwinds and the boat was sort of being tossed around, I was terrified for a whole day. And it wasn't until I acknowledged that emotion and reframed it, that I could become constructive in actually what we were doing. And just as in that case, in any crisis, it is vital to acknowledge emotions: your own emotions and the emotions of people around you. Because they impact how much we can respond effectively, or how much we just simply react in panic. And for you as a leader, you need to emotionally connect with people.

So acknowledge your own concerns and worries and emotions. And in that way make it safe for other people to talk about their emotions. We need to face the human tragedy in a crisis first, and then we can deal with the business side, because then people will be more prepared to hear the business side: so what are we going to do about this? And but they need to feel that heard and understood and half their emotions acknowledge first.

So these are some critical part about how do we acknowledge the situation that we're in. So I'll invite you to think about what are the things that you can do to listen? How much are you listening to already? What more can you do? What more can you do to listen at different levels of the system within your organisation?

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And to acknowledge the brutal facts at all those different levels in granular detail? How are you listening to connect with people and hear their concerns? And what can you do more to create an emotional connection? What you're doing already? What’s working really well? What isn't working that you want to drop, and what you want to do more of? So again, I'll invite you to have that discussion with colleagues, and if you're watching this with colleagues, or brainstorm for yourself. And then we'll come back to the next video where we'll be looking at how do we create this positive culture and mindset that is really important for us to have the resilience to embrace the challenges that we're facing.

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