Independent Banker  
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Portfolio

[tag] Leadership at All Levels

[hed] The gift of clear communication

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In this season of giving, what can leaders do for their teams? Give them the gift of clear communication, rules of the road and pathways to success. Being able to communicate transparently is a skill that benefits all leaders, and it has a positive ripple effect across the team, allowing clarity in situations that might otherwise be complex or overwhelming.

It’s also a relatively easy skill to learn as there are several simple tricks you can apply to your day-to-day life at the bank. Essentially, setting clear rules of the road means establishing ground rules and boundaries. Try some of the following techniques:

1. **Lay your plan out in writing.** If you’re about to have a discussion or launch a project, make a plan. Be clear and concise. Include timing, rules, objectives and goals, stakeholders and other key details. Triple-check your written words. Give your message a little breathing room and revisit it after 20 to 30 minutes with fresh eyes before sharing with others.
2. **Consider the context.** Don’t deliver your strategic goals for 2024 in a water-cooler setting. Share them in a team meeting and, if possible, in writing. Stay focused on delivering the critical information and avoid veering into unrelated discussions.
3. **Repeat what’s important to know.** It’s said that people need to hear information multiple times before it truly hits home. So, go ahead and repeat yourself, but not so much that your team starts to ignore you!
4. **Ask people to repeat a plan back to you.** There is always room for misinterpretation, so repetition comes into play again. It reinforces learning, confirms that something is understood and removes ambiguity. The phrase “clarify and summarize” can be a helpful tool for the team.
5. **“Does that make sense to everyone?”** Asking is another great tool. Ask questions but also invite questions in case what you’ve said is unclear.
6. **Watch your tone**. The way in which you say things is also part of the process, and make sure your nonverbal communication matches your written or verbal communication. Mixed signals don’t work for anyone.
7. **Be honest and authentic.** For example, if you don’t know the answer to a question, promise that you’ll look into it, and then communicate the answer to all stakeholders in a clear manner.
8. **Be open to feedback.** We can always do better. This is part of active listening.

One final thing to consider: Communicating clearly sets a great example. It’s also a skill worth passing on to others, either directly by sharing your communication methodology or indirectly by fostering a culture of communication. It’s a gift that keeps giving, and that’s exactly what we all need this holiday season.

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