



5 Communication Habits of Really Great Leaders

By Peter Economy

All great leaders have one thing in common: The ability to sway an audience so completely that they can't help but follow in their footsteps. Think of Steve Jobs, Justin Trudeau, and Sheryl Sandberg.

These skilled communicators have the power to sway their audiences clearly and effectively, enabling them to succeed as leaders. Apply the following 5 communication habits of really great leaders to up your own leadership skills.

1. Make Things Personal

When do you feel closest to another person? Well, usually when they share their stories. Bridging surface-level conversation is an easy way to move into deeper territory and to bring the relationship to a more intimate level. Don't be afraid to share work mistakes with your coworkers. Make extra time to recount the lessons you picked up from your last failed relationship. Draw the other person in and create a sense of genuine trust--so that they feel comfortable sharing too.

2. Be Gentle With Your Tongue

Don't overwhelm people with sharp, cutting words--especially when speaking to a larger audience. In general, we tend to shy away from things that sound potentially threatening. So, unless you wish to alienate people away from following you, learn to be patient. And be sure to convey your words in a manner which reflects that sentiment.

3. Listen

An underrated trait of communication in truly great leaders is the ability to listen. Having a person in a position of higher power really hear what you're saying is an amazing feeling. You, as a leader, can give someone else that feeling. When people speak, especially about important and personal things, be sure to remember what they say. Their gratitude for your compassion will definitely pay off in the long term.

4. Leave Behind An Impression

Whether speaking to one person or a large crowd, make sure to leave your mark on the interaction. You may be remembered as the bouncy, outgoing leader or the serious, stoic one. What kind of impression with which you leave your audience does not matter as much as the fact that they remember you, so be sure to brand yourself.

5. Keep An Open Mind

There's nothing people despise more than communicating with someone who gives nothing back. Don't shut down the ideas or thoughts of others without first knowing where they are coming from. Remember--everyone has a story. It's your job as a fantastic leader to find out what they are.

While Peter Economy has spent the better part of two decades of his life slugging it out mano a mano in the management trenches, he is also the best-selling author of *Managing for Dummies*, *The Management Bible*, *Leading Through Uncertainty*, and more than 75 other books, with total sales in excess of two million copies. He has also served as associate editor for *Leader to Leader* for more than 10 years, where he has worked on projects with the likes of Jim Collins, Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, and many other top management and leadership thinkers. [Sign up here](#) to always stay up to date with Peter's latest Inc.com columns, and visit him anytime at petereconomy.com.

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