

Pocket Communicator

A first step towards helping you deal with your leadership communication challenges



creativity • action • flexibility • innovation • motivation • thought • reflection
• leadership • knowledge • vision • transformation • empathy •
potential • commitment • performance • focus • strategy • development • perspective
• balance • insight • integrity • expertise • excellence • confidence •

Step 1: Answer the gap-analysis questionnaire

Step 2: Read the corresponding Pocket Communicator card

Step 3: Follow our 'simple steps' advice (or for one-to-one expertise, give us a call)

Communication skills gap analysis questionnaire



1. Is your communication style holding you back, and making you less effective as a leader?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do you need to improve your communication style in order to better influence key stakeholders?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do you need to communicate with others more authentically, so they see and hear the real you?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you sometimes let personal stress ruin what might have been a perfect performance?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do you need to improve the vibrancy of your communication style, to become more engaging in meetings, presentations, or on the phone?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Is your top team wasting time, energy and money by communicating ineffectively with each other?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do you need to improve the effectiveness of your whole organisation, in terms of its client and stakeholder communication style?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you need a communication style audit, so that you know more about the communication strengths and weaknesses in your business?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

If you've answered 'yes' to any of these questions, you may want to explore how Communication Development would help you resolve the challenges you face. TSO Consulting is sought after for its expertise and results in leadership and top-team development; we ensure tangible return on investment is integral to individual or group development programmes.

For immediate practical advice, take a look at the TSOC Pocket Communicator card that responds to the questions above.

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TSO Consulting

Strategy • Leadership • Performance



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“Explore. Dream. Discover.” Mark Twain
You are your best investment

Your need: Your communication style is holding you back – it's making you less effective as a leader, and you want to change.

Self and others awareness: Your self-awareness is a great asset, and something that will stand you in great stead within the leadership arena, so don't be too hard on yourself – you've already spotted the problem. The main thing to work on now is your 'others awareness'.

In order to be a more effective communicator, you need to give greater consideration to your audience and to the outcome you want to effect. Yes, there are some skills to master too: breath, pace, gesture, and body language. But your primary concern should be your audience.

Whether you want to make more productive phone calls, contribute more effectively to meetings, or present information more impactfully at large-scale events, you must know exactly who you're communicating with, what their expectations are, and what their drivers are. This information will allow you to tailor your communication style to the needs of the listener.

And in a live situation, be open to the effect you're having on people – it's crucial to be aware of how your message is being received. If you can read their in-the-moment response, that will give you much greater flexibility in terms of style. Flexibility is ultimately the key to good communication.

Focus your attention on the other people in the equation. Make what they're experiencing your priority. If someone isn't getting the message you intended, then be attentive to how you can improve your delivery, so that they do.

'There's only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self.' Aldous Huxley

Your need: You need to change your communication style, to a more positive, confident style, so that you can influence your key stakeholders more effectively.

Walk a mile in their shoes: If you can build rapport with your stakeholders, then you will be much better equipped to lead and influence them.

There are some simple things to pay attention to, in building rapport, such as:

- Being genuinely interested in the other person – listen to them actively, be patient, and talk about what's important to them.
- Being curious about who they are, and how they think.
- Being willing to see the world from their perspective.

Once you have started to understand your stakeholder, you can try matching your vocal tone and pace to the person you are communicating with. Try breathing in unison with them, and respectfully picking up and matching their behaviours and vocabulary.

Remember that rapport is not friendship. It's enjoyable to be in rapport, but you can disagree with someone, or hold very different views to them, and still relate respectfully with them.

Rapport effectively allows the other person to hear you properly. It opens the channel of communication fully.

Source: Caroline Goyder, Central School of Speech and Drama www.cssd.ac.uk

Your need: You need to communicate with others more authentically, so that they see and hear the real you.

No quick fixes: Here are 10 ways to improve the authenticity of your communication style.

But beware, these are not quick fixes. Developing authenticity in the way you speak, projecting your true self and speaking from the heart isn't always easy. It will take work, and you'll be challenged to maintain this new stance when under pressure.

But, once you've mastered the approach, communicating authentically will get some really positive results.

1. Use 'I' or 'My' statements. Own what you're saying. Be responsible for it.
2. Speak from your personal perspective, and be specific. Avoid generalities.
3. Avoid trying to mind-read other people. Check your assumptions.
4. Listen to your inner voice, and be true to it when you speak.
5. Listen respectfully to those you're communicating with. Don't formulate your answer before they stop talking.
6. Be comfortable with silence. Think about what you've heard for a few moments before you respond.
7. Be respectful of difference; communicate from an 'I'm OK, you're OK' perspective.
8. Be aware of your own barriers to authenticity – prejudices, expectations, a need to control...
9. Look and listen for the 'heart' of a person behind their words. What drives them? What's their passion.
10. Be able to laugh at yourself with others.

Your need: You're letting stress spoil your communications; you need to be more skilled at managing that stress, so that it doesn't negatively affect your personal power.

Give yourself a good shake: Managing your physiological state, so that you can listen attentively and speak confidently, is the key. Any tension that you feel is likely to be transmitted to the listener, so you need to develop strategies to help you relax, whatever the situation.

The exercises below will allow you greater awareness of your body, and how tense or relaxed it feels. Practise them regularly to help you feel more grounded.

- **Upper torso:** Stand or sit tall. Feel every muscle in your back lengthen. Now roll down the spine, starting at your neck, bone by bone. Come back up very slowly. Breathe.
- **Shoulders:** Slowly take your head to the left, dropping your ear to your shoulder, and feel the stretch from jaw to collarbone. Relax into the stretch. Swap sides.
- **Arms:** Swing your right arm forwards and backwards for one minute, feeling it release into the joint. Swap sides.
- **Breathing:** Sit down, and fold forward from the waist. Feel your neck lengthen and your jaw release. Shut your eyes and relax. Breathe in deeply, into your belly. Focus only on your breath. Relax. Stay here for as long as you need.

If you're not breathing efficiently, your breath will be rising into your shoulders and neck. You'll feel tense and your voice will sound thin and unengaged. If you are breathing efficiently, your voice will be rich, and you'll feel relaxed and grounded.

Source: Caroline Goyder, Central School of Speech and Drama www.cssd.ac.uk

The TSOC Pocket Communicator

Your need: You want to be vibrant when you're communicating, to engage people, make them listen, and get them on side.

Tell a story, make a connection: Storytelling is the original form of communicating. It's a powerful tool, and one you can use very effectively in business to add colour and vibrancy to your messages, so that people literally sit up and listen.

Stories help people make sense of what you're saying, because stories allow us to absorb key messages more easily. Your audience will be interested in the outcome of your story, and will find it much easier than with standard corporate messages to pass the story on to colleagues.

When a story is compelling, it allows us to paint a picture of how things need to change. Stories persuade people. They inform people. And they inspire people. With practice – and a strong story up your sleeve – this approach will help you engage your people and galvanise them into action.

Here are some pointers to get you started in writing your own business story, with which to engage your audience:

1. Set the scene – create context
2. Introduce the characters
3. Begin the journey
4. Encounter the obstacle
5. Overcome the obstacle
6. Resolve the story
7. Make the point – the lesson learned
8. Ask 'the question'. The question makes your audience think about the story's application for them.
9. Restate the point

The TSOC Pocket Communicator

Your need: Your top team or Board is wasting money, time, and energy because they can't communicate effectively with each other. You want to make the team high performing.

Time for action: If your top team isn't performing well, and that's down to poor communication, then the bottom-line implications are serious. We can help with tried-and-tested communication improvement techniques:

- Team MBTI™: a psychometric approach, highlighting and accepting the differences between individual ways of working and thinking.
- Team effectiveness assessment, plus follow-on coaching towards a specific set of organisational goals.
- Board facilitation: We take care of the meeting process and manage personalities and group dynamics, so that you can focus on the content of your meetings.

These solutions require commitment from everyone involved, and some serious attention to the issues. Meantime, here are some suggestions for improving things in the short term:

- Create a POST for each meeting, setting out its Purpose, Objectives, Structure, and Timing
- Listen to each other without pre-judging – be respectful and patient
- Don't underestimate people on the team who don't speak 'your language'
- Try to put your colleagues at ease
- If individuals are 'at war', ask them to sort out their differences one-on-one
- Explore strengths and weaknesses within the team, and understand how each member complements the rest

Your need: You need to improve the communication style of your whole organisation, so that your customer/stakeholder management is more effective, and you're better equipped to meet corporate goals.

Four steps to success:

1. Identify your organisation's key stakeholders – who are they, what drives them, what influences them?
2. Communicate those identities to the whole organisation, in a way that's meaningful/actionable for all grades/functions.
3. Demonstrate clearly the new communication style you want the organisation to exhibit – be explicit, be inspiring, and make sure everyone understands what it means for them.

In our experience, this can be very successfully achieved using large-scale workshops (sponsored by the Board), that incorporate Forum Theatre techniques. Working with our partners from the Central School of Speech and Drama, we present a dramatic scene that enables participants to observe and re-direct unhelpful communication styles. This can be tailored to the business, function, and seniority of staff taking part.

4. Test the new style, measure the change and the impact.

We took this approach with Environment Agency Wales, in a series of 'partner' events that were the culmination of an 18-month confident communication programme. Key stakeholders attended a one-day event to explore better ways of working together. Staff hosted client tables, putting their new communication style to the ultimate test.

Stakeholder feedback was fantastic – they appreciated the new approach, and were engaged by the change of style. New conversations were started, and new relationships were forged.

The TSOC Pocket Communicator

Your need: You need to know how well your organisation communicates with stakeholders and clients, what its strengths are, and what its weaknesses are. You need data, in order to work on the skills gap.

Simple, effective assessment: When you need to measure communication capabilities organisation wide, it's wise to keep the diagnosis uncomplicated.

Our recommended approach is to create a simple communications profile that describes cleanly how you want staff to communicate. For example, the Environment Agency uses a four-point profile: Reasoned (R), Active (A), Vibrant (V), Confident (C).

Once you've established and told everyone about the target profile, then ask staff to assess themselves against it. This is easily achieved using a 10-minute online self-assessment questionnaire, tailored to your needs.

This process can be repeated in the future, so that you can measure the communication style improvement your people have made, against the profile. Here's a sample of the kind of data you might emerge with:

Self-assessment composite scoring (entire sample): Reasoned, Active, Vibrant, Confident

