

October 2023

TIP OF THE MONTH: Practice Gracious Communication

In every interpersonal communication, leaders should err on the side of kindness. This statement sounds simple, but it takes courage to do so. The environment in which we live does not promote meaningful connections with each other. We lack focus: it is not unusual for you or the other person to check the phone or multitask when talking. We rush: we run from one thing to the next without reflecting on the human implications of what we just did.

Great leadership is about connecting with people by making them feel seen and heard. That means standing against the current environment and instead practicing “gracious communication.” Gracious communication involves small gestures and an overall demeanor that allows for connection. This communication is important for defined and aspiring leaders in daily interactions and big, difficult conversations.

Break down defensiveness with graciousness.

When you encounter a tough situation, say, “Thank you so much for inviting me here today.” Genuinely smile. Show you want to listen and contribute, not to stonewall anyone. It takes courage and maturity to allow for more creative, productive problem-solving.

While you may be angry for a good reason, it is not the most effective tool for opening minds and moving hearts. Anger shuts the other person down; kindness opens them up.

Give credit where credit is due.

People like to be seen and appreciated. Recognizing those who deserve it engenders enthusiasm, hard work, trust, and loyalty. Practicing gratitude can ignite creativity: thinking about your interaction can give you an idea for another opportunity to connect. Giving credit shows you have the maturity and self-confidence to appreciate someone else.

The urge to claim recognition can be strong if someone has just been credited for your idea or work. But before you step in to correct the record, think twice. People are observant; they can often see who is doing the work. Staying silent in that moment, rather than rushing to say “No, I did it!” shows how confident you feel about yourself. You would embarrass someone else in public. However, there are situations where you should raise your hand, such as when your team achieved a goal (in which case, say “we”) or your or your unit’s reputation is at stake. In the end, giving credit to others can be more powerful than taking it.

Give the other party space and clarity.

No matter what conversation you want to have with someone, do not catch them off guard. Whether it is a quick question or a serious piece of bad news, always ask if it is a good time and try to provide a sense of what you want to discuss. It allows the other person to prepare and makes it clear that you are interested in listening to their response. It is also polite as it lets the person know what to expect. The goal is not to burden the other person in your conversation, and instead, be outward-focused on the other person, not yourself. However hard that is, it pays big dividends toward your relationships, leadership, and well-being.

Susman, S. (2023, July 12). *The simple power of communicating kindness*. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2023/07/the-simple-power-of-communicating-with-kindness?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter_daily&utm_campaign=mtod_notactsubs