



Lead People Better
by Presenting Well

A Supervisor's Guide to Effective Communication



Transforming Common Mistakes into Leadership Success

Introduction

Effective communication is the cornerstone of successful leadership. Even the most dedicated supervisors can struggle to connect with their teams, leading to missed opportunities, ineffective collaboration, and unmet expectations. If you've tried everything—from consulting mentors to hoping problems resolve themselves—and your team still isn't reaching its full potential, the root cause may lie in how you communicate. This guide will help you identify and overcome the top three communication mistakes supervisors make and provide actionable strategies to build trust, foster collaboration, and drive results.

1. Be Approachable: Bridge the Gap with Your Team

Common Mistake: Not Being Approachable

Supervisors often unintentionally become too stern or aloof, especially when new to their role or working with unfamiliar teams. Balancing the demands of senior leadership with those of your team can make you feel like you're serving two masters, and it's easy to default to formal, distant communication styles. However, treating your team as you would senior leadership can create barriers and reduce trust.

Strategy for Approachability

- **Leave the Jargon Behind:** Use friendly, relatable language when communicating with your team. Save formal "leadership speak" for upper management meetings.

- **Connect as a Person:** Engage in casual conversation, greet everyone warmly, and show interest in both work and personal lives. Share appropriate personal stories to build rapport.
- **Find Common Ground:** Discover shared interests—whether it’s hobbies, family, or travel—and use these as conversation starters to foster meaningful connections.
- **Communicate Outside the Office:** Organize informal gatherings, such as breakfasts or team lunches, to strengthen relationships away from the pressures of work.

Approachability is about being human. When your team sees you as someone they can trust and rely on, they’re more likely to share concerns, collaborate openly, and support one another.

2. Get the Tone Right: Balance Authority with Collaboration

Common Mistake: Misjudging the Tone

Striking the right tone is a challenge for many supervisors. Being too casual can undermine your authority, while being too distant can make you seem unapproachable. The most effective leaders are those who are warm and personable, yet still maintain a clear sense of authority and purpose.

Strategy for Setting the Right Tone

- **Position Yourself as a Collaborator:** Act as a coach and guide, supporting your team’s growth while remaining the trusted authority.
- **Share Clear Expectations:** Define what success looks like for each project or task, and communicate these expectations transparently. Work backward from desired outcomes to set clear boundaries and goals.
- **Offer Constructive Feedback:** Provide feedback with the assumption that employees want to improve. Be honest, direct, and supportive—whether the feedback is positive or points out areas for growth.
- **Use Non-Verbal Communication Effectively:** Body language and tone can reinforce your message. Maintain eye contact, use an open posture, and ensure

your non-verbal cues match your words.

By balancing approachability with authority, you'll inspire your team to stretch beyond their comfort zones while feeling supported and respected.

3. Communicate Transparently: Build Trust Through Openness

Common Mistake: Lack of Transparency

Transparency in communication is often misunderstood. Supervisors may struggle with what to share, how much to share, and when to share it. The result is often irregular or incomplete updates, which can erode trust and make employees feel disconnected from organizational goals.

Strategy for Transparent Communication

- **Focus on Three Areas:** Communicate about the topic at hand, why it matters, and the challenges or opportunities it presents.
- **Be Honest and Regular:** Share information openly and on a consistent schedule. Both the style and frequency of your communication matter.
- **Answer Questions Promptly:** If you don't know the answer, commit to finding out and following up.
- **Communicate Timely Updates:** Ensure your team learns important information directly from you—not through rumors or external sources.
- **Explain "Why":** Help your team understand the reasoning behind decisions, changes, or challenges.
- **Acknowledge Difficult News:** Be willing to share bad news or setbacks honestly, and discuss how you'll navigate challenges together.

Transparency fosters vulnerability and trust. When your team feels informed and involved, they're more likely to stay engaged and motivated—even during periods of change or uncertainty.

Conclusion

Effective communication isn't just about what you say—it's about how you say it, when you say it, and how you make your team feel. By avoiding these common mistakes and implementing the strategies above, you'll create an environment where collaboration thrives, relationships deepen, and organizational goals are met with enthusiasm and commitment. Start today by reflecting on your communication style, making small adjustments, and watching your team's effectiveness and passion grow.

Further Resources

[· NPR: Code-Switching in Leadership](#)

[· ExpLearning: Non-Verbal Communication for Leaders](#)

Want more support?

If you'd like more support in developing your supervisor communication, reach out for a consultation! Together, we can diagnose the challenges you're facing as a supervisor and support you as you move your team closer to that well-oiled machine you've imagined. [Click here to send me a message!](#)

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