

The Language of a Leader *(Second in a series on leadership)*

By Rick Wright

Language is the means by which we communicate with each other. According to Webster's, a leader is 'one who leads or guides'. The language of a leader is the communication of one who shows the way.

How can we best communicate to show the way? Through expression, listening, simplicity, and behavior.

Expression

Clarity is essential to leadership and your expression of it. How can your vision inspire if no one knows about it? Or understands it?

When you express, be clear within yourself first. Then say it – in word and deed. What you communicate with your body is just as important as what you say with your mouth. When you achieve clarity of mind, your body will express a congruent message. There's no ceiling on your ability to impact the listener.

Simple language is a product of clarity and when achieved, inspires. Choose words that give an optimal chance of being heard—the cleaner, the better. Feel that you're not being heard? Get cleaner. Don't speak French if your listener only speaks English. If you're simple, clear, congruent, inspiring and still frustrated, you may have the wrong idea. (It happens).

Listening

Do you take full responsibility for your listening? Find out. For one full day, listen openly. Don't leave a conversation until you're sure the speaker feels heard. Be patient and present to their thoughts, feelings, tone and behaviors. Notice when you are considering your next words instead of listening to theirs. Don't let your mind or emotions sweep you off purpose. Leaders who truly listen see people, situations and solutions that non-listeners never see, allowing abundant levels of teamwork, workability and solutions. Try it and grow your ability and stamina to stay present in the moment.

Simplicity

Simplicity is always more powerful than complexity. Want to hide weaknesses and be political? Complicate the message with fancy words, bells and whistles. (Remind you of anybody?) This is not positive leadership. It's deception.

Accomplishment of a vision requires all the energy and passion a leader can inspire from a team. The simpler, more authentic you are in word and deed, the easier it is for people to interject their energy and passion. For maximum impact, simplify everything to its authentic essence. Simplify not only your behavior and communication, extend this practice to the organization's systems, processes, and infrastructure. Witness the impact. Authenticity is an outcome of simplicity.

Behavior

Leading by example starts with integrity and honesty. Integrity is doing what you say you'll do. Honesty is speaking and living the truth. Think about it. Leaders who inspire you the most possess these qualities. Honesty and integrity are the difference between doing a job and embodying a vision

Clean up any little white lies. Return phone calls. Keep promises. Apologize. Be on time. Serve and inspire others. Continually reach for your highest ideals. It's simple, but not always easy. Be persistent, one situation at a time, one person at a time. Action counts!