

Leading from the centre

The right communication strategies can make you an influential and effective leader

There are two kinds of leaders — those who simply tell their people what is to be done and those who try to involve them in the decision-making by letting them know what outcomes they want from it.

The first type can be described as the directive leader, the second the influential leader.

Directive leaders use command and control and assume their followers are unable to operate without tight constraints. Influential leaders tend to trust their followers and facilitate the process through empowering and supporting them.

Directive leadership can be effective in the short term but, given the complexity of today's workplace and the range of skills required, a directive leader may well find it

difficult, if not impossible, to make all the necessary decisions in a given situation. In the longer term, an influential style of leadership is better suited to the demands of today's workplace.

What is your leadership style? Does it change with the maturity of your people and the needs of the situation, or is it a rigid style that is always controlling?

To build an influential style of leadership you must think about influencing rather than directing those around you. That involves building up trust on both sides. Trust is critical for an influential leader.

To enhance the impact of your communication and build trust with those around you, you need to 'warm up' your communication style. Try to create more empathy in your conversation. At the simplest level, this is achieved by using encouragers to keep the conversation going — 'That idea sounds interesting, tell me more.'

Empathy is critical in effective communication; the way you present information can make all the difference. Always be mindful of the communication process. Be aware when a communication problem exists, accept that the person may be misinterpreting your communication and then be ready to repair the miscommunication.

How well do you choose the words with which you deliver the message? If you say you value trust, do you offer a high level of disclosure when speaking to your people? Do use empathetic language or do you use evasive language to protect the knowledge and the information you have? Using 'I' messages indicates disclosure and trust and encourages two-way communication. By saying: 'This is how I feel about the situation' or 'What I've been thinking is...' you reinforce the value you place on an assertive and open communication style.

In any given message there are parts that are of interest and parts that are not. Therefore, we often deliberately ignore the uninteresting parts and pay attention only to those parts that are more attractive to us. You need to be open to all parts of the message and listen interactively.

To be an influential leader you must learn to use a wide range of interpersonal communication strategies. That is the way to ensure that the people you are leading will follow you — and help you realise your vision for the future.

The NSW Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA NSW) deliver a short course titled: 'The power to influence' an interactive program that explores practical strategies to help drive key messages. This and other short courses are available to ALIA personal and institutional members at a discounted rate. All of IPAA NSW courses meet the requirement for the ALIA CPD Scheme and attract one CDP point per hour. Go to the ALIA website for details on how to enrol <http://alia.org.au/education/cpd/services.html>, e-mail cpd@alia.org.au, ph 02 6215 8258. If you would like further information on this or other IPAA NSW short courses please refer to the IPAA NSW website http://www.nsw.ipaa.org.au/04_learning_development/public_prog.htm or contact IPAA NSW directly on 02 9228 5225 for more information.

New interface offers easier access

A new interface to Kinetica was launched in early March. Searchers can now choose to search specific sub-sets of the National Bibliographic Database, for example: Australian publications, government publications, conference publications, publications for young people, theses, electronic publications, books, journals, newspapers, maps, pictures, or films.

The new screens implement a number of recommendations from Australian libraries and create a much easier pathway to important resource resources, such as Australian theses. The ongoing development of the Kinetica service is designed to enhance access to the collections of Australian libraries to assist resource discovery and sharing.

For a user to locate the 150 000 theses held by Australian libraries they will need to simply tick the 'Australian publication' and 'theses'. Locating special types of material has long been a challenge in such a large database as the National Bibliographic Database with over 37 million holdings and 14 billion bibliographic records. Discovering relevant resources is significantly enhanced by the new interface, which was piloted on researchers at the National Library of Australia.

More information on the search screens can be found at <http://www.nla.gov.au/kinetica/newsearch.html>, comments and feedback are welcome — see <http://www.nla.gov.au/kinetica/kineticaweb/feedback.html> or contact the Kinetica Help desk on 1800 026 155, kinetica@nla.gov.au to pass on suggestions.

The advanced search screen