

# SHAW ACADEMY

Lesson 4 Practical Notes  
How leaders  
communicate to inspire

**Advanced Diploma in Leadership and  
Management**



SHAW ACADEMY



# Advanced Diploma in Leadership and Management

## Lesson 4 Practical How leaders communicate to inspire

### Lesson Pillars

How to inspire  
Applying situational analysis  
Communication self-awareness

### Lesson Resources: Keep a Learning Log

It is recommended that you keep a learning log. Get a small personal notebook that you can use exclusively for this course. In it, you will record insights, thoughts, reflections on previous leadership and management experiences you may have had. During key learnings in the course you will be prompted to think about a time in your past when you observed, noted or reacted to a situation. The learning log will help to build a picture of your growing self-emergence as a leader and manager.

### Introduction

In this practical lesson, you will learn how to inspire action into your teams. You will develop situational and contextual awareness particularly when dealing with confrontation. You will also have the opportunity to look at how strong your communications skills area right now.

### How you can inspire?

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do, so throw off the bowlines, sail away from safe harbour, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover”. Mark Twain

### How you can inspire you team

Here is a three layered model that starts with purpose, focuses on significance rather than success and follows up with respect, that is the respect and admiration for the work of your employees. The ideas presented here are all actionable right now if you’re leading others.



Purpose: Employees are inspired by knowing that their hard work makes a difference beyond profitability. Employees want leaders who see beyond the obvious and look to create wider reaching impact that extends into the community and influences social causes. Example of IKEA when they found that carpets were being made by child labor. Founder Ingvar Kamprad and his IKEA executives immediately took action, addressing the problem from within and taking all steps necessary to ensure that an IKEA product never again would be created by manufacturers that exploited children. IKEA then solidified its commitment to eradicate the problem at its root. The company partnered with UNICEF to create a program to help prevent child labor by changing the conditions that lead to child labor in the first place, namely: poverty, hunger, and illiteracy.

1. Stay close enough to your employees' activities to know the 2 or 3 tools and/or resources that each would require to take their performance to the next level. When given the right tools and resources, the best employees will instinctively challenge themselves to be more innovative in their work – and will perform better. That is why incentives inspire performance – but remember that money alone is not the sustainable answer. Focus on giving your employees the opportunities to elevate their individual value while serving the needs of the company. e.g. At Dell we asked trainers how they would like to design their classrooms.

2. Stop selling your employees about why they need to perform better. Explain why their contributions help solve problems and contribute to the company's advancement. Employees are more inclined to step up their game when they know their work can add-value to the healthier whole. E.g. we went to an education for special needs school and saw how they used the latest technology to build intriguing class lessons.

3. The secret recipe to inspiring employees is to know the "ingredients" of the people you are inspiring. People want to know that their leaders understand their tendencies, aptitudes and behaviors well-enough to best work with and motivate them. The best leaders and coaches always do. When you spend time with your employees, make it matter. Don't just expect your time and title to inspire them. Employees want a leader that pays attention and genuinely cares about them. Great leaders take the time to know the ingredients before they can create the best recipe for success. Employees are most inspired when a leader takes the time to know them and show that they have their best interests at heart. E.g. At Dell I set up the challenge cup

#### Not About Success

4. Employees are tired of being told what to do. They are eager to learn and remain relevant. But they find it difficult to be inspired by leaders who only inflict fear. In today's fast-paced world, people don't have time for lectures; they want continuous coaching and leaders that are paying attention. Eager to grow, they want objective feedback. Let your employee do their jobs well by providing the right tools and support to make them better at carrying out their roles & responsibilities. Be a great teacher, but quickly shift into facilitator mode. People are inspired when given the opportunity to learn how to do new things. Stop lecturing and start teaching. E.g. Instructional design Tell Show Do.

5. Significance: Helping your employees to be successful is important, but not inspiring enough in itself. People want much more out of their leaders and if you can activate the natural talents of your employees in ways that make them feel more responsible about their jobs, you will be inspiring something that is more significant – and has longer lasting impact.



The next time you conduct an employee performance review, evaluate each performance in two areas: success and significance. Let's say that "sales" is a performance category – and your employee has performed at 90% of plan. That's good. After you discuss what is required to reach 100% of plan, measure the significance of the sales generated. For example, perhaps reaching 90% of plan generated enough revenue to hire 5 more people or contributed to a particular community outreach plan as a result of a local market push. You never know the significance of someone's performance until you measure it; and when you do, it's an effective way to inspire even greater performance.

6. Innovation: Employees want to create impact. Allow them to be part of the innovation-based projects in your company by letting them get their hands dirty. Ideation is important, but being part of implementing the ideas that come to life can be a more exciting and meaningful growth opportunity for your employees that will inspire them to perform.

Earn Respect: Beyond appreciation and praise, show your respect and admiration for the work of your employees. While people want to know they are respected, you must establish the ground rules for how respect is earned

7. Its about Ownership not Accountability: However, when you can give your employees "ownership" in the process of defining how accountability is enforced – you inspire trust and a desire to go above and beyond the call of duty. Giving your employees ownership means that you have shared and entrust them with your authority. You are now allowing your employees to "call the shots" based on what they believe is in the best interest of the team and the organization. For example, create a special project and allow an employee to take ownership of it. Outline your expectations for the end-result, but allow him or her to take charge of the project. Agree to meet once-a-week and observe the change in attitude and desire to perform. Use the results and what you learned along the way about the employee as a means to customize your approach to best inspire that employee's performance long-term.



8. Personal growth: Leaders must take more time to mentor and / or guide their employee's development and growth.

Encourage networking opportunities and performance development forums. If the budget gets cut, – put your money where your mouth is. For example, purchase copies of a book that you believe will help your employees advance and grow in their work. Phil Jackson, former basketball coach of the Los Angeles Lakers and Chicago Bulls, has won 11 NBA championships – the most in history. Jackson became known for giving each one of his players a specific book that would help the player be a better teammate, decision-maker, leader, etc. on the basketball court. E.g. At Dell we focused on building career opportunities through IT certifications tracks.

#### 9. Trust, Not Just Transparency

Ultimately, it is a relationship based on trust that inspires employees to perform. When you are mindful of managing and concurrently implementing points #1 - #9 this will certainly jump-start your ability to earn trust with your employees and inspire their performance. When you trust someone, you believe in them. People are inspired when they know that their leaders believe in their capabilities to deliver. E.g. The training team got an identity for helping others learn and achieve their goals in getting IT certified.

Inspiring employees to optimally perform requires a leader who can see beyond the obvious in people. Inspiration comes not from something that you turn on and off, but rather from constant behaviour – triggered through multiple ways – that makes your employees feel that they matter and that you genuinely care.



## Inspiring others to action

We all know people who are inspiring. But just how does one inspire others? Here are ten simple ways you can inspire people to be their best:

Be a good example. People watch what you do more than they listen to what you say. Be someone worth emulating.

Care about others. People don't care about how much you know until they know how much you care. Ask questions. Take a genuine interest in people.

Encouragement. Everyone goes through tough times. When you support people and encourage them through these times, you'll be inspiring them to see the best in themselves and in the situation.

Be inspired yourself. Look for people, ideas, environments and knowledge that you find inspiring and motivating.

Share from your own experience. You have more to share than you realize. Mine the rich experiences of your life and share your wisdom from your unique point of view. You may be the only one who can touch someone with your inspiring message.

Be vulnerable. Be willing to share your failures as well as your successes. Others will relate to you.

They'll understand that they're not the only ones with challenges.

Tell stories. Facts tell and stories sell. They inspire, too. We learn best from parables and we all need to develop our own inspiring stories.

Be a good communicator. Increasing your ability to communicate effectively is a critical element for you to inspire others. Watch how you speak and what you say. Invest in your communication skills.

Challenge people. Many of us have had teachers who at times seemed more like tormentors than mentors. They challenged us to do our best, and we were better for it. Practice "carefrontation"—the careful and caring confrontation of others.

Read. It may not follow that all readers are leaders, but certainly all leaders are readers. Stay informed. Share what you read with others. Tell people about books that have inspired you. Share the knowledge.



## **Situation analyses where managers struggle**

“Do you want to know who you are? Don't ask. Act! Action will delineate and define you”. - Thomas Jefferson

### **What do we mean by Situational and Emotional Awareness**

Situational awareness: being aware of what's happening around you to understand how information, events, and your own actions will impact your goals and objectives.

Emotional Intelligence: The ability to be perceptively in tune with yourself and your emotions, as well as having sound situational awareness can be a powerful tool for leading a team. The act of knowing, understanding, and responding to emotions, overcoming stress in the moment, and being aware of how your words and actions affect others, is described as emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence consists of these four attributes: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

### **Challenge 1 - You know things you can't share with employees.**

Challenge #1: You know things you can't share with employees.

Typical Situation: Sales are down, financial results are poor, layoff rumors have been swirling for weeks. The employees you manage know you've had several meetings to discuss options, one as recently as yesterday. During that meeting you decided to lay off 10 employees the following week.

An employee comes in your office and says, "Hey, I know you guys have been talking about layoffs. I'm really worried; I can't afford to lose my job. Do you know what's going to happen?"

The Challenge: You shouldn't say. You can't say. But you've built a solid rapport with your employees, always answering questions and giving honest feedback. How can you respond without breaking confidentiality yet also without breaking the sense of trust you've built with your team?

The Solution: Hard as it is to do, you can't say what you know. But you also can't just say, "I'm sorry, I can't tell you." That non-answer will go out on the floor as, "I asked him, and he said he couldn't tell me. If there weren't going to be layoffs, he would have just said so. So I know people are going to get laid off."

Clearly that doesn't work; you have to go a little deeper. Here's what you could say:

"You know we've been struggling as a company. And we have had a lot of meetings where we talked about what to do. We've looked at all kinds of options. I wish I could, but I really can't tell you anything at this point. I've been asked not to, and that's a good enough reason, but more importantly it wouldn't be fair to anyone else if I told you things I didn't share with everyone.

"Here's what I can tell you: Whenever decisions are made and I have permission to share those decisions, I will tell you and everyone else on the team immediately. You will be the first to know. I promise. For now, just know that we're doing everything we can to make a bad situation as good as possible."



Will the employee go away happy? No. He might even get angry or feel betrayed, especially if you have shared things in the past you weren't allowed to share. (Admit it -- we all spill a few secrets from time to time, especially with great employees we trust.) But this is one situation you can't leak. Don't assume the employee will be able to keep the news to himself. After all, you didn't.

Bonus Tip: Any situation where you are asked questions you shouldn't answer is made more difficult when your lips were loose in the past. It's always tempting to share sensitive information with certain employees. Not only is it at times nice to have someone to talk to, sharing also builds a stronger relationship and bond... and makes managing a little less lonely. But that "openness" also makes any "I really can't tell you" situation that much more difficult -- and leaves the employee feeling suddenly shut out. The best practice? Keep all sensitive matters to yourself, and never share information you aren't allowed to share. Not only is that a good personal policy to follow, it makes this challenge much easier to deal with.

### **Enforcing policies at the risk of losing a superstar.**

Typical situation: An employee is so outstanding he seems almost irreplaceable. Say he's a salesperson responsible for well over half of your revenue. Then you find out he cheated on an expense report.

The Challenge: He didn't make a mistake; he clearly overstated expenses.

Or he violated another basic and important company rule, and based on your policies he should be fired.

Do you let him go and risk the potential impact on your business? In your business, sales are heavily relationship-based, and if he goes, many of your best customers could go with him.

The Solution: This time there's little judgment involved. First make sure you have all the facts. (Any time you fire an employee you should work very hard to ensure you aren't making a decision based on inaccurate information.)

Then let him go.

No matter how "important" he may be to your business, employee policies are only as effective as your enforcement of those policies. Plus it's likely whatever you did find was the tip of a larger iceberg, since an employee who cheats on his expense reports is probably unethical in other ways as well.

Then look at your sales process. Why was he such a superstar? While it is possible to have a "knack" for sales, most great salespeople have skills that can be copied. Sales is both art and science; what caused him to be so successful? Even if you didn't let him go, you have a problem that still needs to be addressed because he could choose to leave at any time. Either your sales process is broken, or your sales training is ineffective, or you have a product that's almost impossible to sell. Figure out the problem and fix it.





While you should never discuss the reasons for any disciplinary action with other employees, guaranteed word will get around regarding why he was fired. Never confirm or deny; always say, "I'm sorry, but whatever happened is confidential." Don't grandstand or say something to the effect of, "No one is bigger than the company!" Employees will respect the fact that rules are applied fairly; don't spoil it by patting yourself on the back for making a hard decision.

### **Challenge 3 – He said. No, he said. Managing conflict**

**Typical Situation:** An employee complains about how a peer treats him. While it happens at work, the behaviors aren't specifically work-related: He says the other employee makes snide remarks, sometimes ignores him, makes dismissive gestures, talks behind his back... high school stuff that nonetheless often happens in the workplace. You speak to the other employee, and he denies it, saying, "I don't know what his problem is. He thinks everyone hates him."

**The Challenge:** Sorting out interpersonal issues is never easy and it can appear you took sides -- especially to the employee who "loses."

**The Solution:** Stick to facts. Talk to both employees, separately or together, but only talk about facts: Words, actions, behaviors, tangible outcomes. Enter the "feelings zone" and you're in a black hole you won't escape from. Sure feelings are important, but you need to know the actions that caused those feelings. Feel free to interrupt and direct the conversation.

At all costs avoid discussion like, "I know he thinks..." or "I know he assumes..." or "I know he doesn't like me..." For example, if an employee says, "I know he doesn't respect me..." interrupt and say, "Let's talk about that. Why do you feel he doesn't respect you? What has he said or done to make you feel that way?"

By discussing the situation in terms of facts, you help employees focus on behaviors that can be changed. Employee emotions are largely outside your control as a manager, but employee behaviors definitely fall within your scope.

So find out exactly what was said and done, determine whether that was appropriate, and then clearly state what you expect in the future. And then keep a close eye on the situation and make sure your door is always open.

Never say something to the effect of, "Look, grow up. You don't have to like each other. You just need to do your jobs." While that is what you may want to say, you can't. To at least one employee the problem is very real. While you may not fully solve an interpersonal squabble, most employees respond positively to the fact you tried.

### **Managing Upwards – Some scenarios**

#### **Managing Up**

We rarely choose our bosses until the day we decide to leave for greener pastures. But it is possible to learn how to better navigate and communicate with your boss. If your workplace is open to work values and personality assessments, consider sending your results to your boss or sending them an invite so they can see where you are similar and where you are very different. Comparing your results (especially



before a performance review) will help both of you learn how to get more done, with less conflict.

You can also share insights about your direct reports with upper management so they understand the people who are responsible for carrying out their decisions and policies. If upper management isn't interested in learning about who makes up their team, you can remind them that 70% of employees feel their employer should understand them to the same degree as they are expected to understand customers.

HBR recently ran a special series on managing up, asking experts to provide their best practical advice for navigating this important dynamic. Together, these pieces provide a good primer on how to maintain an effective, productive working relationship with your own boss.

To start, consider the type of manager you have. Many pose a unique set of challenges that require an equally unique set of skills to handle. Perhaps you're dealing with:

- A brand new boss, someone you've never met before.
- A manager you don't see face-to-face because she works in another location
- An insecure boss (hint: it's important to know how to tame his ego)
- An all-knowing or indecisive boss
- A manager who gives you conflicting messages
- A long-winded boss
- A hands-off boss
- A manager who isn't as smart as you

No matter what type of manager you have, there are some skills that are universally important. For example, you need to know how to anticipate your boss's needs — a lesson we can all learn from the best executive assistants. You need to understand what makes your boss tick (and what ticks her off) if you want to get buy-in for your ideas. Problems will inevitably come up, but knowing the right way to bring a problem to your boss can help you navigate sticky situations.

There will, of course, be times when you disagree with your boss, and that's OK — as long as you've learned to disagree in a respectful, productive way. Still, despite your best efforts to build a good relationship, there may come a time when you've lost your boss's trust. It happens. And while it may take some diligent effort on your part, it is possible put the relationship back on track, even if you feel like your boss doesn't like you.

And if you scoff at all the talk of bad bosses and think, "I have a great boss," be careful. It's possible to like your boss too much. And being friends with your manager can be equally tricky. You don't want your boss to be your only advocate at work. You need to find ways to demonstrate your worth to those above her as well.

Perhaps the most important skill to master is figuring out how to be a genuine source of help — because managing up doesn't mean sucking up. It means being the



most effective employee you can be, creating value for your boss and your company. That's why the best path to a healthy relationship begins and ends with doing your job, and doing it well.

### **Some common challenges you will face**

#### **Not Accepting Feedback**

New or young managers may feel insecure in their newly acquired position. When this is the case, it's easy to become defensive or feel threatened when feedback comes your way. But feedback from superiors as well as your direct reports provides a valuable opportunity to learn and grow. It can also provide new insights from front-line employees who are more in tune with customer needs.

#### **Shifting from team mate to boss**

Picture this – you're close with your coworkers and suddenly you're promoted to being their manager, you're no longer "one of them." This is a common situation and can be pretty awkward.

How do you tell your friends what to do without it affecting your friendship? It's a tough question. Being tough with your friends is not an easy thing to do, but you need to learn how to separate work from friendship. Understand that when you're at work, it's business time and you need to be the boss, but when you're out of work, that's your personal life.

#### **Holding People Accountable**

In any professional organization, there are duties and objectives that must be completed for the good of the company. But holding people accountable is not your sole responsibility. Make everyone's objectives public so that the entire team can hold each other accountable. Don't be afraid to hold the bar high. Be clear in your expectations, provide honest feedback, and encourage everyone to do the same.

These classic new manager mistakes don't have to be a rite of passage. You can avoid them by adopting the right values and implementing them in the workplace. By trusting in your employees and providing them with autonomy and encouragement, you can simultaneously make intelligent business decisions and create an environment that allows your employees and your business to flourish.



## Communication self-awareness

“You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across, your ideas won't get you anywhere.” Lee Iacocca

## How do you become self-aware?

Author Anthony Tjan in his book “Heart, Smarts, Guts, and Luck” observes that there is one quality that trumps all, evident in virtually every great entrepreneur, manager, and leader. That quality is self-awareness.

The best thing leaders can do to improve their effectiveness is to become more aware of what motivates them and their decision-making.

Without self-awareness, you cannot understand your strengths and weakness, your “super powers” versus your “kryptonite.” It is self-awareness that projects conviction while simultaneously remaining humble enough to be open to new ideas and opposing opinions. That self-awareness is a critical factor for business-building success is not a new insight. The tougher code to crack is how to become more self-aware. Here are three key ways to do so:

1. Test and know yourself better. but understanding which core trait drives your decisions and your attitude is what is most important for increasing the probability for success.
2. Watch Yourself and Learn. In the classic Harvard Business Review article, “Managing Oneself,” Peter Drucker wrote, “Whenever you make a decision or take a key decision, write down what you expect will happen. Nine or 12 months later, compare the results with what you expected.” Drucker called this self-reflection process feedback. He said it was the “only way to discover your strengths.” Many successful people follow similar practices: Warren Buffett, for example, has made it a habit for years to write down the reasons why he is making an investment decision and later look back to see what went right or wrong. The key to the effectiveness of feedback analysis is to codify rationale and motivations and reflect and assess outcomes. Such a practice forces one to focus not just on the what, but also equally on the why.
3. Be aware of others, too. Self-awareness is crucial when building a team. Knowing your natural strengths and weaknesses makes you a better recruiter and allocator of talent. But you also must be an acute observer of others’ strengths and weaknesses. Effective teams are made up of people who both understand and complement each other. By definition, it is impossible for any one individual to be above average across all the business-building traits. The best teams are rarely made up of similar types. On the contrary, they are composed of a diversity of excellence. If one is open-minded and objective, different types of people on a team will also help over time to further self-awareness and deepen an appreciation for the variety inherent in patterns of success.



When you see people progressing towards a common goal by following different paths from yours, there is an implicit peer-based feedback loop and systemic learning in that observation itself. Having the right complement of people and a supportive learning organization allows you to see more clearly what you do well and what others do well.

This is the trinity of self-awareness: know thyself, improve thyself, and complement thyself. These are common sense principles but are not necessarily commonly followed. Why? Because people don't always commit to stand in the face of truth. Intellectual honesty, rigorous commitment, and active truth-seeking are sine qua non to any self-awareness process.

Self-reflection and its reward of self-awareness cannot be thought of as passive exercises, new era meditation, or soft science. They're absolutely essential. There is a reason why in rehabilitation programs the starting point is being aware enough to admit you have a problem. So, too, is the case in business leadership and personal development.

### **How good are you at communicating?**

#### **Get personal**

Most of the time, people don't care about what you're saying unless you're saying something they find valuable on a personal level. That personal level doesn't have to be deep, it just has to exist. Good communicators establish a personal connection by focusing on how their message may impact the other person. For example, good communicators in the marketing industry always explain how the company's products or services will benefit the customer. This gives the audience a reason to listen and remember what the marketer has said.

#### **Represent facts**

Inaccurate information is worthless, so if you're not sure about something you're saying, either don't say it or at least admit that you're not sure about it. Sometimes, we can get carried away with a conversation and begin spewing out random things we've heard but don't know to be true. Although this may seem harmless, regularly offering inaccurate information not only leads people to believe things that aren't true, it discredits you as a valuable source of information, and sharing information is what communicating is all about.

#### **Be specific**

Good communicators cut to the chase and understand the value of brevity. You may love to talk, but that doesn't mean others want to hear it. If you have something to say, say it. Ambiguity and superfluous words are likely to bore people and discredit you, causing your message to get lost in a cloud of noise. Good communicators always respect people's time and choose simple, straightforward words.



## Ask questions for clarification

Whether the conversation is with one person or many, good communicators always ask questions. Most importantly, they question their audience to confirm that their point has been understood. Of course, it can get irritating if someone continually asks us “Do you know what I mean?” or “Get what I’m saying?” Such questions may come off as condescending, but there are friendlier, more subtle ways to ask for confirmation. Instead of putting the focus on your audience’s ability to understand, put the focus on yourself by asking “Am I explaining this well?” This invites the other person to ask for clarification without feeling incompetent. While it’s necessary to make sure others understand your own points, good communication also requires you to understand their points. The same way you think the information you share is important, your conversation partner likely believes the same and would love for you to truly comprehend what they’re saying. Furthermore, understanding their message is vital to responding appropriately.

Many people are afraid to ask for clarification for fear of offending the other person, but that fear is unnecessary. Everyone comes from a different background, so everyone associates different words, phrases, and even body language with different meanings. If you aren’t sure what someone means, ask for clarification! Simply asking “What do you mean?” is not only a good way to understand better, it’s also a great vehicle for moving conversations forward.

## Listen

A big part of communicating well is responding appropriately to what someone else communicates. This requires knowing how to actively listen and making every effort to understand what they’re telling you. If you don’t listen and then respond inappropriately, that can make people feel unimportant and literally unheard. In addition to responding appropriately, attentive listening makes the exchange enjoyable for your conversation partner.

## Read body language

Listening with your eyes is just as helpful as listening with your ears. By looking for non-verbal cues, you can more readily ascertain how someone is receiving your message, and then adapt accordingly. Furrowed brows, for example, can indicate that the other person is trying to understand your point, but not fully succeeding. If you notice, you can facilitate good communication by asking if there’s something you can clarify.

## Take the communication style self-assessment

### Summary

How to inspire

Applying situational analysis

Communication self-awareness



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# Thank you

