



# Leadership Communication Potential

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HOW TO TAP INTO YOURS AND  
BECOME A REAL PEOPLE LEADER

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## Gratitude

This paper would not have seen the daylight in this shape & form without the generous contribution of their time and insights of 15 Senior Executives in HR/People & Culture of top organisation in the fields of Technology, NFP's, Built Environment, Health & Aged Care, Media, Government, and Finances.



Read their Pro Tips on communication and the new ways of working throughout the paper



## 01 Being at the Center of Leadership Communication

In my 15 years' experience in people management and in working with my clients, I know that communication is critical in leadership, AND it is also THE key stumbling block to making progress and achieving positive results.

**I hear a loud and clear “Oh YES” from you!**

Many leaders believe that communication is about exerting influence and being eloquent. And these are undoubtedly important aspects for leadership communication.

What they often miss seeing is the importance of a human-centred approach. This means the ability to inspire with communication where building a real connection to another person is becoming most important. For a leader to reach staff and employees on this level requires an understanding of their own communication potential and how this impacts their leadership.

Time and time again I've seen leadership communication driven down a “one-way street”. Communication that lacks flexibility, communication that lands only with some of the employees, and communication that is at logger heads with other department heads. What a waste of good intentions and lost potential!

There is no doubt in my mind that there is a strong relationship between communication and leadership. Those people managers and executives who tap into their full communication potential and expand it consciously and consistently are building stronger connections and relationships. This results in more productivity, less time waste, happier people and most importantly - good bottom line results!

With the changed ways of working and a future that seems to demand even more from leadership communication, I believe it is a wise move for organisations to focus on and foster their leadership team's communication potential to support a human-centred approach.

Read more to find out how.



## 02 Leadership Communication in crisis?

According to a recent study of AIM (Australian Institute of Management) “employees point to communication, people management, and coaching and mentoring as the three biggest problem areas leaders need to strengthen. These skills are also among the top four they nominated for great leaders.”

This is not a new notion. A study by Gallup in 2017 in the US uncovered that only 13% of 31 million employees surveyed said their organizations leaders’ practice and cultivate effective workplace communication.

**What is new though is that with the reality of the global pandemic (Covid-19) the need for interpersonal skills and leadership communication is even higher than before.**

Our ability to communicate with clarity & impact dictates the quality of connection & culture in the workplace. But in today’s work world there has been an incredible shift towards new ways of communicating and collaborating. Many are struggling to keep on top this avalanche and are living in a constant state of overwhelm.

It is like standing on a black run on a ski-slope and we are either too scared to continue skiing because it is so steep, or we have already lost control of our skis and are tumbling down the hill, possibly getting injured.



Rotate meeting styles to address different personalities & preferences



## 03 Leadership Communication in People Management

Especially for a Human Resources (HR) and People and Culture (P&C) departments, which are a centre of communication in every organisation, it is a painful feeling when they see that teams aren't performing to their usual standards due to lack of communication and important messages aren't getting through to people.

Similarly, they juggle the balancing act of communication between the executive suite/board and the employees, trying to make it all clear and understandable on both sides.

Sometimes there is a discrepancy between "what the boss wants" and what the HR/P&C Executive knows "what the staff wants". Some human-resources professionals say companies will have little choice but to accommodate workers' demands, as an inflexible workplace could drive employees away as the economy rebounds, and because many workers have proven themselves adept at working anywhere. And this can be difficult to communicate to the boss.

**As a HR/P&C executive you will have to lead the conversation of taking a step back and think about work in the future quite differently, with all demands of a partially distributed workforce in mind.**

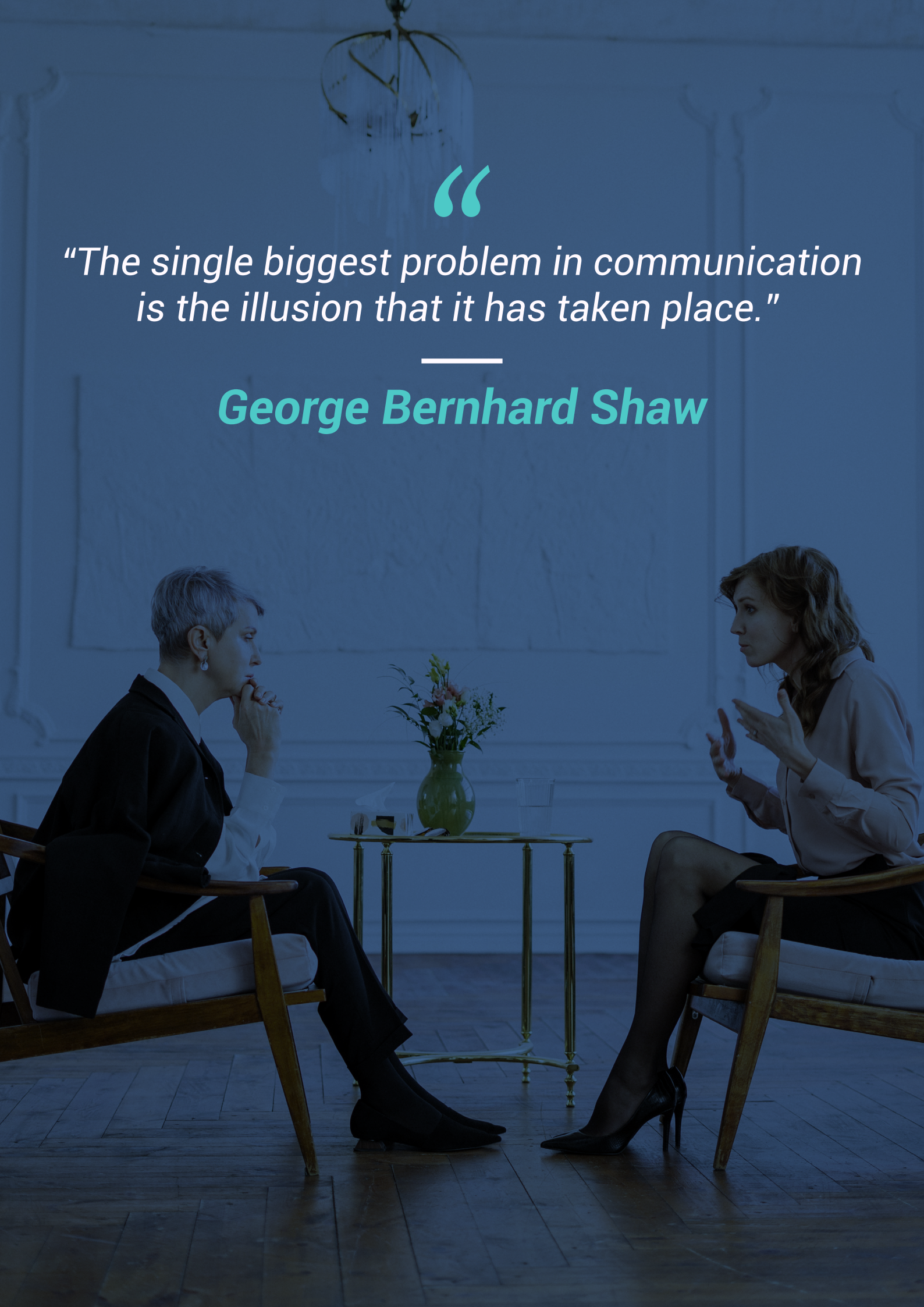
And that can be daunting when you are on the black run (I am using my ski-slope analogy here again!) and you don't know how to get back on top of the hill with the clear overview over the valleys and other mountains (a feeling of absolute freedom).

“

*“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”*

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**George Bernhard Shaw**





## 04 Leadership Communication Issues

These are some of the challenges that I see HR/P&C Managers are grappling with:

- 01 Feeling like a ping-pong ball, caught between different demands/aspirations from
- 02 Communicating fair solutions for return-to-work strategies
- 03 Relentless meetings lose the quality of communication
- 04 Increase of one-on-one meetings
- 05 Feeling they are worked off their feet
- 06 Caring for everyone else, but no time for personal growth and development
- 07 Leadership sabotaged by administrative overflow
- 08 Ways to close the gap of cost-efficiency vs. innovation & L&D

## 05 Leadership Communication - do you have a Plan?

A strategy for bringing real leadership back into the communication provides a framework for individuals to gain clarity on where their potential lies and where their pitfalls are.

In my own leadership experience and in working with my client I see three main issues:



### Confusion

Good communication means different things to different people. That can be very confusing when leaders assume that what they say is landing on the other side, and it doesn't.



### Capacity

Many leaders are unaware of their existing communication potential and don't know how to tap into it, so communication can become a leadership asset to them. They are not utilising their top capacity.



### Confidence

When miscommunication becomes personal and emotions are flying high, the confidence in their own leadership crumbles and has a sabotaging effect on communication. Drama is paramount and we see it play out in organisation regularly.

Limited Leadership Communication does not fix itself.

Understanding and tapping into your communication potential is the first important step to make real changes to your leadership outcomes.

**01** A motivated and happy team

**02** A productivity increase

**03** Projects run on time

**04** Less stress

**05** A positive culture change

💡 Set minimum requirements for office vs home office days, let teams decide the rest



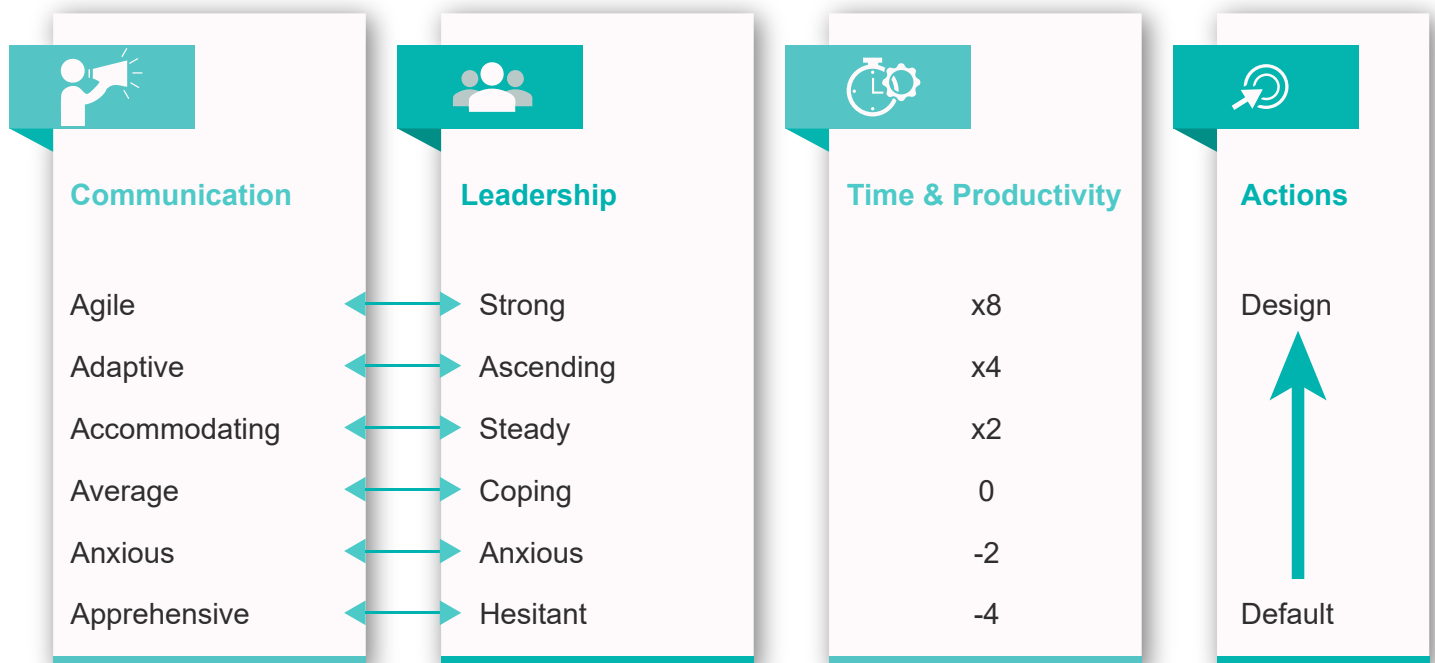
## 06 Leadership & Communication the Development Ladder

Leadership and Communication are in a direct correlation. The more you bring to the table on each side the more you save in time, costs and – yes, also in nerve-wrecking episodes. Who wouldn't want that? Less sleepless nights, less mulling over situations, less justifications.

Once you learn more about communication, your leadership automatically has more value for the organisation. You save time, have a more productive team, you have considerably less emotional hick-ups. In a nutshell, your leadership is more impactful and successful.

### But how do you get there?

We all have an enormous communication potential available and we don't know it and don't use it. Let me explain the different stages of a leader and her/his communication and when we start to see the positive effects. What stage are you at?





“

*“Have a communication  
by design rather than by default”*

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**Ilona Vass**



When you are **hesitant** in your leadership (Can I do this really? Why did I take on the promotion? Does my team accept me as their leader? Am I cut out for this?) your communication is **apprehensive**. You do not articulate yourself clearly and try to be a jack of all trades, sending out mixed messages and creating more chaos than before due to your insecurities and unclear communication. You will feel overwhelmed and exhausted and either give up or get unwell. Leadership is not existing, and help is urgently required to end that state of floating.

Things are still not well when you communicate from an **anxious** place. Sometimes it's a hit, sometimes it's a miss. Your leadership is **fluctuating**, you might be somehow understandable to your team or parts of our team. The other part of the team is struggling to find clarity in what message you are trying to transport, or on some occasion the message is just lost.

Because you feel some people get you, you start to focus on those team members and ignore the others, consciously or subconsciously. You feel threatened by too many questions from staff who want to clarify things, probe you, or enjoy creating drama. Looking at communication preferences and gaining awareness on blind spots can be a first step to move forward.

Are you in managerial roles where you are **coping** (winging it) with the job? You have a reasonably "**average**" communication, but neglect to improve or simply have no interest to do a better job, as you feel it isn't worthwhile. You might not like the culture of your workplace, and your efforts are not appreciated by your superiors, so why bother?

The next stage is where you are a **steady** leader. You are reasonably satisfied with your job and you have an existing relationship with your staff. Your communication is **accommodating**, and you are engaging to a certain extent with the questions and suggestions from your team members. Things are going OK for you, but you still feel that there is something you can improve, but you don't know how or what. Knowing how to improve your ways of connecting with your team and superiors through communication is key at this stage.



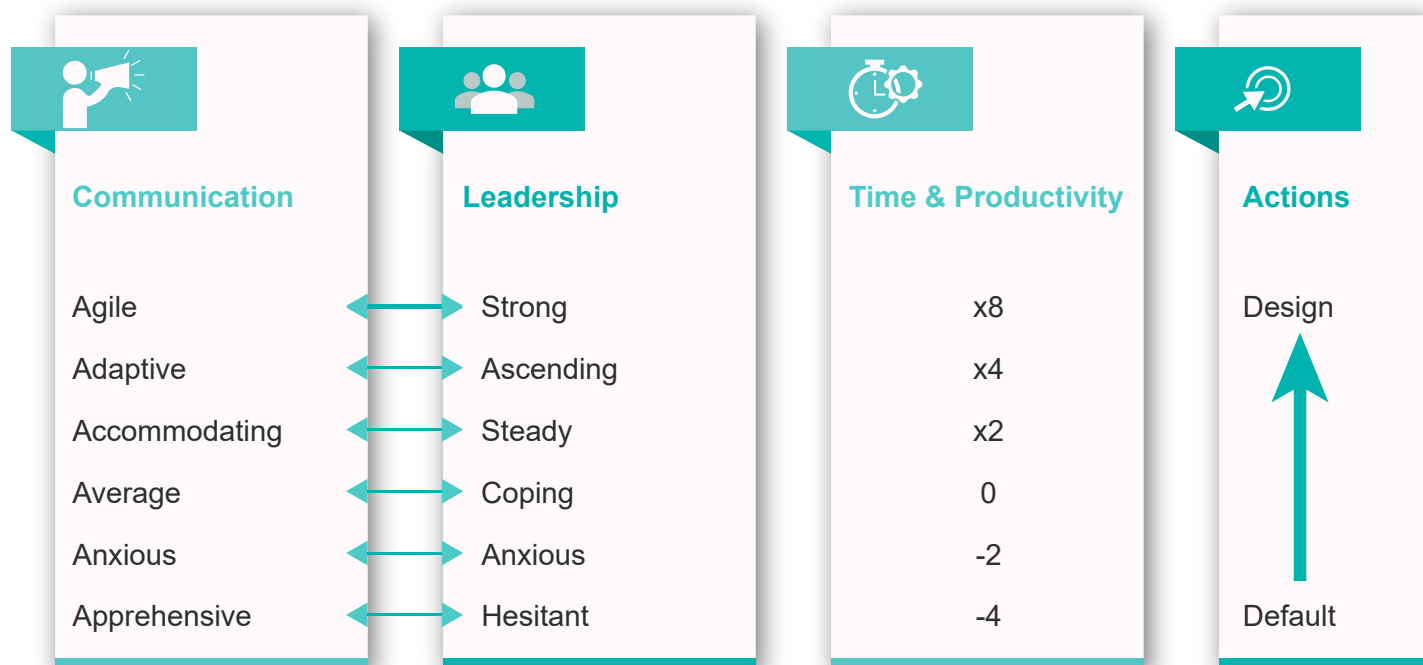
Start meetings with a "well-being" score (0 – 10) without the need to explain why scores are what they are, but support each other accordingly

Your time and your productivity as well as the efficiency of your department is at a better level when your leadership is **ascending**. You feel confident, things are moving in the right direction, your communication is **adaptive** towards people and towards situations.

You know when to motivate, when to show compassion and when to put your foot down. You are aware of your potential and you have a plan on how to harness your strengths and how to move onwards to achieve results. Your communication weaknesses might be still throwing you back sometimes and you look for ways to get better.

When your leadership is **strong**, so is your communication. You have worked on your communication from all angles, from the process of communication to the handling of conflict situations, as well as understanding your inner voice (who often speaks loudest to you).

You are an **agile** communicator, and you find joy, motivation and ease in dealing with your everyday life at work, with your teams, boards and fellow senior leaders. You are relaxed and know that this important skill of leadership communication is part of your acumen and not part of a possible self-sabotage. You feel on top of the mountain and have the overview over all things “human connection” in your senior role.



## 07 Leadership Communication Potential – next steps

Only when you know your full leadership communication potential and tap into it, you can drive leadership instead of being reactive and feeling like a ping-pong ball, that is bounced around by various demands and has no direction itself.

This counts especially for HR/People & Culture departments who play a central role in communication and hold a juxtaposition between the staff in general and the C-suite. They have to make sure communication combines the strategic needs with the practical needs and that is not an easy task!

**How can you make your leadership communication impactful?**

**How can you make communication a conscious process in your daily operation?**





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*“Communication is the most important skill any leader can possess.”*

***Richard Branson***



# Leadership Communication Potential Program

The **Leadership Communication Potential Program** is designed to help HR/People & Culture Managers and their teams to create a new narrative for authentic and impactful communication.

This is a coaching and mentoring program for individuals and/or their teams with 3 options (Mini, Midi, Maxi) to choose from.

## Here are the steps:

- 01 Become aware of your current leadership communication potential
- 02 Understand how this impacts your leadership, positively and in sabotaging ways
- 03 Harness your leadership motivation
- 04 Minimise triggers for miscommunication and conflict

## This will give you the edge to:

- 05 Manage your department at a new level
- 06 Influence communication culture in your organisation positively
- 07 Contribute to success, productivity and profitability of your organisation

Still not sure and have more questions?



Communicate often in different ways



## 08 About Ilona Vass



Ilona is obsessed with leadership communication coming from a human-centred mindset. She is on an inspired mission to improve the way humans speak with each other and handle challenging conversations, always having a positive outcome in mind. Ilona loves to assist leaders and their teams to develop engaged, thriving and supportive workplaces. She believes a healthy and compassionate company culture equals a profitable business.

Working with Ilona is like the “Calm before the Storm”. She likes to make her programs, seminars and masterclasses real, relevant and relatable to the everyday challenges a leader faces in the 21st century work world.

Ilona Vass uses a potent blend of process communication, positive conflict strategies, leadership research and mental wellbeing, as well as her 15 years of management experience in civil aviation, to bring out the best in workplace communication. Ilona is a published author and enjoys sharing her knowledge and expertise on a wide scale, from training, facilitating and coaching to mentoring and speaking.

### In her own words...

I always enjoy seeing the potential in every fellow human being on this earth. I also believe that everybody has the potential to communicate with any other person in positive and respectful ways. When we are able to consciously tap into this given potential and improve our interpersonal communication, the world will become a better place.



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