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*HR in the Gulf Region:*

## COMMUNICATION IS SUPPOSED TO BE SO SIMPLE

By Dave Millner

**MR. MILLNER:** Hi, I'm Dave Millner, and I want you to talk about communication. It's supposed to be so simple, isn't it? How many times have you heard at work someone moaning about the fact that no one seems to communicate with them and tell them what's going on? Personally, I've lost count. The importance of communication is well known, but it's generally overlooked by most teams and businesses. At some point, everyone on your team will need to communicate what they know and how they're doing, shouldn't they? Effective communication is the key to getting the results that you as an individual and the organization want. Not only is the way you communicate important to effectively showing your ideas within your team, but it's also how you speak, write, and relate to other people that sets the way in which the organization will operate.

In terms of building a strong business, the importance of communication is the number one factor that can determine success. If we look at the multi-cultural, diverse work forces that exist across the gulf region, this just adds another layer of complexity that needs to be overcome. It's not just about communicating with people regularly, but it's about ensuring that what is said makes sense to all the different individuals who have different values and interpretations of what people may have said.

Let's look at change, for example, something that most people seem to fear in some way. It's not that people don't want a better work environment; it's just that it's a huge gap between what they want and what they do. And that usually begs the question, "Does that mean that change is even possible?" Well change is possible, but implementing change is easier with the right people than the wrong ones.

Obviously there's a huge emphasis on leadership, what it takes to be a great leader, what leaders do, and how they do it. That's absolutely crucial to any change process. Improving work place communication takes true leadership and vision to both implement what needs to be done as well as influencing people to want to follow their leaders and make things happen. Organizational change is often described as applying new programs to an old, outdated operating system. Well, maybe that's true, but changing the way people communicate is always a major part of any change process. Work place communication shapes the way in which we all structure and define our experience in business and life. When we use the right words, we can open doors, and yet with the wrong words, we can quite easily close them. Ideally we're all in the business of making ourselves more profitable, more efficient and more persuasive. Now this all sounds very easy, but we all know that communication is one of the most difficult skills to develop.

Successful communication starts by individuals getting real with themselves by breaking down the barriers that are stopping teams and work groups from achieving their goals and ensuring that honest, effective communication is valued by everyone. It's not just the leaders who communicate, it's everyone's responsibility. The fact is that the closer someone feels to a specific group, the more commitment and affinity they're going to have in terms of engaging and helping out with that group. Communication is at the heart of this commitment. And if people cannot communicate, they cannot lead. It's as simple as that. Leaders at all levels set the standard for the team, the unit and the organization as a whole in terms of just how important communication is and how

much they value it.

Everyone has their own way of communication, but in my simple mind, there are three aspects that are fundamental, irrespective of what job you hold. Firstly, always be consistent in what's communicated. Some people are economical with what they share and some people are very open, I guess almost too open. That style is vital so that colleagues know what to expect. When people are trusted, they usually give more because they feel valued. Communication is how that trust is built up.

Secondly, clarity is vital, and simple messages are taken onboard far easier than long, rambling, detailed dialogue. People can always ask questions if they don't understand, you know.

And thirdly, respecting other people. No one person is more important than anyone else, irrespective of their title, seniority, background and culture. People deserve and respond when they're treated with respect, always. This sets the tone for how individuals, teams, and the organization as a whole will communicate with one another, with their clients, and with their customers.

The importance of communication is not always clear, but it's always a significant indicator of an organization's health. Discovering how to lead and work with people is essentially a matter of learning how to communicate effectively. Effective communication is not the goal. It's the tool that must be used to shape all of our actions at work as well, if just to help shape the work environment that we can all enjoy, because doing that means that you've got a highly engaged work force. And we all know that that drives superior business performance.

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