

Ch3 | Robust Communication

Turning Ideas Into Action

Here are several suggestions on how you can take some of the main ideas of this chapter and begin to implement them immediately. Some of them might work perfectly for you; others will need some adjustment and customization. Read them carefully and start thinking about how you can make them work for you in your organization.

1. Invest in advanced interpersonal communications skills training for key managers and leaders in your organization.
2. Create a lending library of books and training DVDs on communication skills for all employees to access.
3. Use articles and white papers to introduce ideas and topics into the conversation within your organization. In this way, if people are uncomfortable with the ideas presented they can attack the article instead of each other, but at least the topic is out and being talked about.
4. Pick one critically important issue that is currently “un-discussable” and find the courage to put it on the agenda for your next meeting.
5. When someone in the organization delivers uncomfortable or negative news to you, respond with something like, “thank you very, very much for bringing this to my attention. It is important that I know about information like this as fast as possible. I am very unhappy to hear about the situation, but I am extremely pleased that you felt comfortable to come and tell me about it.” In this way you shift from fixing blame, to fixing the problem.
6. Establish a written set of “communications ground rules” that can be used to facilitate more open, honest and frank discussions. Here is an example of what a set of ground rules might look like:
 - Honesty is the best policy -- always tell the truth.
 - Honesty = safety -- the truth will not hurt you.
 - Be tough on ideas, but not on people. No personal attacks -- ever.
 - It is your job to ask questions and challenge assumptions.
 - Don't beat around the bush -- communicate in a straightforward yet respectful way.
 - Keep it short and simple -- stay on topic and follow the agenda.
 - Strive for transparency - share as much information as you possibly can.
 - If you have a concern or question -- make it known.
 - We are all on the same team -- the goal is for only the best ideas to survive.