

# How the Best Managers Communicate

The best managers are great communicators.

That's not surprising, because great management is about bringing employees and teams together, motivating through big picture thinking, and then organizing logistics and roles to achieve objectives.

Naturally, doing that well takes great communication skills.

Just as naturally, poor communications skills lead to bad management. Consider examples of bad management tactics: holding employees accountable to unspoken expectations, making a habit of holding long meetings that accomplish little, or fostering an atmosphere of mistrust. These are not just bad management tactics; they're examples of poor communication, too.

The bottom line is that communication skills have a huge impact on management success. If that's intimidating, don't worry, because there is good news: communication skills can be learned and improved.

[With practice and training](#), anyone can become a better communicator, which, by design, improves their management skills.

Ready to get started? Here's how the best managers communicate.

## 1. Good managers are clear, concise, and compelling.

We've all sat through meetings where the leader has rambled on monotonously about issues that were irrelevant. If we're honest, most of us have led meetings like that, too.

Good communication is clear, concise, and compelling. For managers, that's especially true.

If you don't communicate clearly, your employees won't understand their objectives. If you aren't concise, you'll waste your team's time. If you aren't compelling, they won't listen or buy-in to what you are selling.

A few tips:

- **Get rid of jargon.** It's only clutter, and [even your internal team understands only half of it](#).
- Lead your communication with your main point. If you bury what you want to say at the end, it'll take longer to get there.
- **Prepare.** If you don't, you'll take longer to get your message across and you'll certainly have a more difficult time saying what you mean to.

## 2. Good managers have stage presence.

First: what do we mean by [stage presence](#)? For our purposes, “presence” refers to the physical characteristics of spoken communication. That includes things like:

- **Eye contact:** Maintaining eye contact in communication helps to convey confidence and focus, both of which are integral in getting a message across.
- **Body language:** Physical stance does influence an audience’s perception of a message. The best stance for presenting is to stand flat, with arms at your sides.
- **Speaking with emphasis:** A monotone conveys disinterest. Speaking with emphasis conveys passion. The latter method is far more motivational, even if the spoken content is the same.

Contrary to common perception, stage presence, like other communication skills, can be learned and improved.

## 3. Good managers can motivate a team by communicating a vision.

Motivation is sometimes overlooked as a managerial talent, under the rationale that coordinating logistics is what’s most important to getting results.

And yes, the details are important. But the details are better received if they’re communicated in a way that’s not just organized, but inspiring, too. The best managers do this by communicating vision.

Sell the big picture before detailing the process. If you get people invested into the end game before you tell them what is required of them, they’ll be much more likely to adapt to any changes that will be needed.

For example, let’s say you’re bringing in a new management software. Here’s a process-first approach:

We’ll be making updates to our software on June 3rd. We’ll schedule a day for migrating data, and you’ll be required to participate in eight hours of training as a part of that.

Employees are likely to gripe, and with good reason – if all that’s presented is detail, any process seems like useless work.

Here’s a vision-first approach, in contrast:

We haven’t updated our software in over ten years. Our competition is getting ahead of us, and if we don’t innovate, we’ll be left behind. I know this will be difficult, but we’re working to get you the training you need so that we can lead the market again.

The vision gives context to the details and makes their accomplishment matter.

## 4. Good managers lead great meetings.

Yes, great meetings exist. Unfortunately, they're far less common than ineffective ones. But with training, that can change.

[The first step to leading a great meeting](#) is to question whether or not it's necessary in the first place. The primary reason to hold a meeting is to collect group input that drives a project forward. If that's not your purpose, it's probably better not to meet.

If a meeting is necessary, here's how to make it good:

- **Answer the four communication questions.** Who is my audience? What's my goal? What does it take to get there? How much time do I have? Let the answers shape the format of the meeting.
- **Create an atmosphere that encourages participation.** Don't put PowerPoint up and the lights off – anything's preferable to that. Jeff Bezos prefers written memos that invite discussion; slides aren't necessarily bad, but don't let them unduly influence the environment. Ask good questions. Bring good food. Get people involved.
- **Keep discussion focused.** Don't let the meeting veer off course toward irrelevant topics. As a leader, curtail unproductive conversation – not by shooting down ideas, but by realistically acknowledging time constraints. A good line: "This deserves more time than we can give it in this meeting."

## 5. Good managers are good at listening.

The reality is that communication is never a one-way street. Managers need to cultivate an environment of trust and be open to honest feedback from their teams. Failing to listen will result in frustrated employees and failed initiatives.

To get better at listening, work on expressing empathy. Empathy requires that you understand the perspective of another, and it's a sure sign of a good listener.

## Become a Better Communicator and Manager

If you work to improve the skills listed here, you'll be well on your way to becoming a better communicator and a better manager.

### The next question is: how can you work to improve?

Reading proven wisdom is a great place to start. Here are three books we recommend reading to hone your managerial communication skills:

- [Crucial Conversations](#) by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan
- [Made to Stick](#) by Chip Heath, Dan Heath
- [Emotional Intelligence](#) by Daniel Goleman

Each of these offers impactful insight into communicating well.

**And, of course, the best way to [improve your communications skills is through training](#).**

We've worked with managers up, down, and across organizations to help them communicate more effectively with teams large and small. From introverted engineers to extroverted executives, everyone can improve as a communicator – and that means anyone can become a better manager.

Don't view communication as one more thing to check off of the to-do list. Look at every communication situation as an opportunity to sell an idea, to motivate, and to inspire.

If you're ready to become a better manager through better communication, [let's talk.](#)