



**LEADING
COMMUNICATORS**

LeaderSpeak

LEADERSPEAK™ IS A COMMENTARY ON HOW LEADERS CREATE, ENGAGE AND MOBILIZE FOLLOWERS

Can Your Leadership Be Trusted?

The times, as they say, are a changing. As a leader in these uncertain times, you may find it tough to find something positive to convey.

So you may be tempted to say nothing at all, and instead focus on putting out the fires that keep erupting all around you.

Or you may resolve to speak but only when absolutely necessary. Usually to deliver bad news, like disappointing financial results; reduced revenues; cutbacks in expenditures; employee layoffs.

Either way, you risk eroding trust in your leadership unless you are mindful of what we believe to be a key principle of leadership communications:

Your words and actions need to be consistent.

It's a straightforward principle. Maybe even self-evident. Yet it's frequently violated.

No matter how sincere you feel your words to be, if others perceive that the actions you are taking belie those words, you will erode their trust. Just ask the leaders of the auto industry how effective they were at convincing their stakeholders of their commitment to financial responsibility when they arrived in Washington, D.C. by private jet.

Nothing erodes trust faster than if people believe you say one thing and do another. And if they can't trust you, why would they follow you?

This key principle applies to any time you speak, as well as to when you don't, whether by design or default. Here's why.

Action can too easily be misconstrued.

Silence creates a void. And whenever there is a void in communication, people rush to fill it. Whatever their capability or intention, they will interpret your actions for themselves, often sacrificing fact to speculation.

In uncertain times like these, the stakes are just too high to risk your actions being misunderstood.

If you don't frame your actions with the right words, and instead allow others to interpret your intentions while you remain silent, there is a real risk that your actions will be perceived in a way you did not intend.

And misperceived intentions can significantly erode trust.

If you want others to trust in your leadership, make sure that there is no room for error in interpreting your words and actions.

Because once eroded, trust is very tough to recoup.

- Can Your Leadership Be Trusted?
- How To Build Trust
- How Trustworthy Do You Sound?

LeaderSpeak is written by
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Leadership Communications
Assessments & Solutions

- Speakcheck® assessments of a leader's effectiveness in speeches, presentations, meetings and conversations
- Action learning programs
- Executive coaching
- Communications counsel
- Leadership counsel

For more information, please
contact us:
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How To Build Trust

Trustworthiness is critical to leadership. Here are a few of the key components of trustworthiness included among the 150 elements assessed by our Speakcheck® software diagnostic as essential to the communications effectiveness of leaders:

- 1. Empathy.** Particularly essential when conveying bad news, empathy demonstrates that you care, even when the concerns may not be your own. Speaking with empathy shows that you are aware that what you are saying will affect others' lives, and that you're genuinely concerned. If they believe that you really care, they will be more inclined to do whatever is necessary, even when it is not ideal to their own interests.
- 2. Sincerity.** Unless you appear to be sincere, you won't be trusted. And although your words matter, they are not enough to convey sincerity. In his recent book, *Trust Me*, Nick Morgan maintains that every time people speak, there are two separate conversations going on: the verbal and the non-verbal. If the two are not consistent, people will always believe the non-verbal, since the more primitive, limbic portion of our brains has conditioned us to do this for survival's sake. Make sure that your body language doesn't inadvertently undermine your sincerity.
- 3. Credibility.** If you are not perceived to be a credible spokesperson, you will not be trusted. So always ensure that you speak on those matters in which you have the authority and expertise to be credible.
- 4. Authentic.** The words you use should sound like your own. If you write them yourself, write as if you are speaking to someone you know and care about. And if someone else is writing your words for you, make sure they capture your voice. The best speechwriters do this. Audiences know the difference, even subconsciously. To build trust, you need to be perceived as authentic.
- 5. Believable.** Here's where your past catches up with you. If you have a lousy track record of fulfilling commitments making promises and failing to deliver then no matter what you say now, you will be less believable. Actions and words have to be congruent, not just once but consistently over time, if you want to be believable and therefore trustworthy.

How Trustworthy Do You Sound?

If you need to know whether or not you or others leaders in your organization are eroding trust or communicating effectively in these uncertain times, contact us to arrange for a Speakcheck of your communication (past, present or future; live, taped or web cast). Speakcheck is the first diagnostic to measure the communications effectiveness of leaders (**What does Speakcheck measure?** Visit this link: <http://leadingcommunicators.com/speakcheck.php>). We offer a special value on this unique Canadian technology to subscribers of LeaderSpeak. Please call or email us for more information.

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