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Bridge-Building Skills and Practices For Senior Leaders

Andora Gandy Hinton

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Bridge-Building Skills and Practices For Senior Leaders

Andora Gandy Hinton, Founder & CEO, Willow Growth North Partners



In today's workplace, effective interpersonal communication isn't just a soft skill—it's a critical leadership capability. Senior leadership can determine the success of an organization, influencing everything from daily operations to strategic alignment, by communicating well. But [8 out of 10 business leaders](#) still struggle to get their point across. It's time for a reevaluation—a rethinking of how interpersonal communication is understood and practiced at the highest levels of leadership.

The Crucial Role of Communication in Leadership

Effective leadership goes beyond giving direction or offering guidance. Strong leaders have a vision that others are inspired to follow. They foster trust, facilitating dialogue that drives innovation and strengthens connection. The most successful senior leaders are bridge-builders, connecting diverse groups within their organization through clear, empathetic communication. They go beyond exchanging information and take two crucial steps:

1. Unite departments and teams around common goals, values, and principles.
2. Ensure this shared understanding guides day-to-day operations by building business systems that keep communication flowing.

3 Common Communication Pitfalls for Leaders

Senior leaders often encounter specific challenges that can hinder effective communication:

- **Too Much Tech:** According to one study, meeting in person can be [34 times more effective](#) than sending an email. Overusing technology often leads to misunderstandings. The nuances of tone and context can be lost, leading to a lack of emotional connection. Left unchecked, leaning too hard on tech may lower emotional intelligence by hampering conflict resolution skills, making it harder to read people, and demanding instant results from complex processes.
- **Ignoring Cultural and Generational Differences:** Culture, age, and upbringing are among myriad factors impacting communication styles and preferences. If leaders don't plan accordingly, outcomes will suffer.
- **Underestimating Emotional Intelligence:** Emotional intelligence is the backbone of effective communication. Leaders who fail to invest in their emotional intelligence struggle to engage their teams, manage conflicts, or inspire loyalty— all big missteps on the path to [organizational failure](#).

5 Critical Skills for Improved Interpersonal Communication

To ensure success, your leadership teams can prioritize these strategic best practices:

1. **Empathy:** Empathy is a [defining leadership skill](#) for senior staff and executives. And it's only becoming more important as workplaces (and the workforce) evolve. Understanding the "why" behind what team members do (or won't do) is essential to preventing major setbacks.
2. **Active Listening:** Foundational to effective communication, active listening demonstrates understanding, keeps the conversation moving, and allows teammates to take meaningful action.
3. **Personalization:** Considering cultural nuances, weighing generational differences, and understanding individual preferences help leaders effectively personalize their messaging so it's better received and understood.
4. **Transparency:** Obfuscation and unnecessary complexity only create issues, not to mention wasting time. Committing to clear, transparent communication across teams and between departments minimizes headaches for everyone.
5. **Consistency:** Consistent communication is vital for building trust. This includes delivering on plans and promises, reiterating goals and objectives, and checking in with people regularly.

Don't Stop at Reading: Start Practicing

We've all read something that inspired us to change our leadership approach, only to leave the tab open and the changes unmade. Practicing better communication across teams and departments demands a multifaceted approach that includes effective communication with colleagues, stakeholders, and teams and demands indispensable skills from senior leaders. Communicating well requires a dynamic approach. Careful thought and planning helps leaders empower their interpersonal communication.

You can build stronger bridges between teams and departments, enhance collaboration, and improve outcomes. And you can start right now.

What's one thing you're tired of repeating at work?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Andora Gandy Hinton founded Willow North Growth Partners with a goal to help professionals transform both their professional and personal lives in a way that would make a monumental difference in their holistic work.

[Willow North Growth Partners](#) is committed to giving organizations and their teams the tools, resources, and support they need to meet, and exceed, their personal and professional development goals. With over 22 years of experience in sales, sales management, training, coaching, and leadership development, Willow North Growth Partners has helped to develop thousands of leaders nationally and internationally.

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