

## Lessons in leadership communications

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You Can't Not Communicate 2 is the latest offering from David Grossman, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA. Is this insightful book worth taking to the beach this summer? Read on to find out.

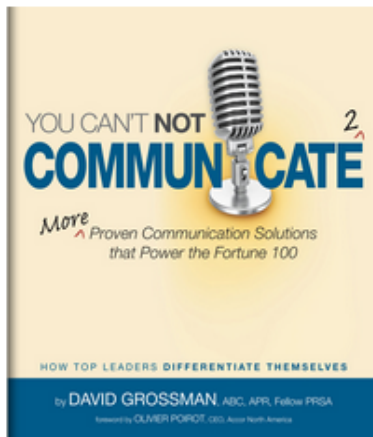
*By Kelly Kass*

As many of us know, effective internal communication starts at the top which is why I was keen to read [David Grossman's](#) new book, *You Can't Not Communicate 2*, a sequel to his first book which was published in February, 2010.

According to Grossman, "We've entered the dawn of the leader**communicator**, where you can't separate communication from leadership."

He lists his tops tips to help leaders communicate effectively which include visibility, frequent communication, transparency and accessibility to name a few.

But it's not just about Management. A big part of communicating well has to do with engaging employees and meeting their needs.



### So what do employees want?

In the book, Grossman presents a wish list for employees working in global organizations:

- **Less BS and more humanity** – a little honesty and a direct approach from bosses goes a long way for employees.
- **Understanding of your expectations** – "People rise to the expectations set for them," Grossman says.
- **More listening (to me)** – Employees want to have a voice; leaders should ask them for input and feedback and strive for two-way conversations.
- **Take action on employee suggestions** – As a leader, even if you don't implement their ideas, show your appreciation for their feedback.
- **Show me you care (in a genuine way)** – Bosses should acknowledge critical milestones that strike a chord with their staff.
- **Empathize with me** – Putting yourself in your employees' shoes and can help you learn what motivates them.
- **Recognize and appreciate me** – Leaders should give thanks for a job well done and reinforce the behaviors they want to continue to see.



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To engage employees, Grossman says leaders need to help them understand the realities of the business as well as defining their roles in helping the business achieve the bigger picture. Showing staff they can trust you is highly critical, and you can't go wrong by asking people how they are doing.

### **Communicating during tough times**

This is never easy for leaders, but somehow, Grossman is able to simplify the process in Chapter 3.

It all comes down to identifying what the problem is and what you hope the desired outcome will be. Knowing the audience you're communicating with is also essential, as well as identifying the proper time to share the news.

Grossman also presents ways for leaders to structure the difficult messaging and how they will deliver the information. And perhaps most important: *the follow-up*. It's crucial to address any questions employees might have and to see what's on their minds.

### **Channels**

Grossman points out the best internal channels to use once leaders know what they want to communicate.

For topics that need immediate action, face-to-face is the way to go. Likewise when it comes to complex or sensitive matters.

Email is ideal for directional and timely information distributed to targeted audiences; it's also an effective channel to use when directing recipients to online sources for more information. And if you have data to share, a written e-mail is the most helpful way to present those details.

For leaders that still pick up a phone, voicemail is an effective tool to use when communicating "urgent, brief messages that require quick action but don't require proof that the communication was made." It's also a great way to communicate with colleagues who are traveling.

### **The art of messaging**

In Chapter 7, Grossman discusses how leaders can master their messaging, and it all starts with a main message "that's supported by additional messages, data, and stories that reinforce specific components of the main message."

What makes a great main message? According to Grossman, it should:

- Provide a brief snapshot of the topic and what's happening;
- Be aspirational in tone and easily remembered and repeated;
- Leave your audience saying, "Tell me more."

## **"A story is worth a thousand data points"**

Grossman says that by presenting data and illustrative stories, leaders will be able to prove their points – something that employees will expect of them. Adding specifics will describe the "why," "what," "how," and "what's in it for me."

## **Forever young**

In a particularly interesting chapter, Grossman offers advice on how leaders can communicate to the Millennials in their workforce. He even offers his own personal anecdote, recalling the time he encouraged a young, technological savvy employee to use a good old-fashioned device called the telephone – rather than opting for email or instant messaging.

Grossman says that to truly engage Millennials, "you need to understand where they're coming from and what motivates them." He points out the typical characteristics that make up Millennials. They're socially-minded, confident, technologically-literate and team-oriented, and are used to being faced with a number of options in life – from hundreds of television channels to multi-colored iPods.

As a result, Grossman points out, Millennials are change agents and thrive in evolving environments. "Few Millennials expect to stay with the same organization for many years," he remarks.

In addition, Millennials embrace diversity and are technologically sophisticated – they're comfortable with new digital tools, can adapt quickly, and are strong candidates to pilot new processes and lead technological transitions to maximize business results. Millennials also flourish in challenging environments and are excellent multi-taskers, Grossman points out.

To engage this young workforce, it's critical to encourage and foster creativity, keep them challenged, and chart a career path so they know where they will fit and advance in the organization. A straightforward approach to communicating always works best with Millennials.

Later chapters in Grossman's book offer leaders tips on giving off the appropriate body language while communicating to employees (e.g. strong eye contact and good posture), as well as how to connect with a hard-to-reach, non-wired workforce.

## **Worth a read?**

In short, yes. *You Can't Not Communicate 2* is an ideal pocket guide for any leader looking to connect with their employees and take internal communication to the next level.

The conversational language and user-friendly structure (complete with bold fonts, bullets, and plenty of illustrations) are sure to satisfy any CEO or Senior Manager with limited attention spans and who are pressed for time due to challenging schedules.

Through research, examples, and his own personal experiences, Grossman presents a thorough look at today's workforce and the type of audiences leaders need to communicate to. As a result, Grossman does a fine job communicating to his own audience, exhibiting the empathy and know-how of a truly effective communicator.



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