

Management actions that speak louder than words



BY GREG SCHINKEL

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“A poor hiring decision causes employees to reflect on their own value and take stock of their future prospects for growth and promotion.”

Do as I say, not as I do. This doesn't seem to work in parenting and it doesn't work in business either. Communication, despite knowing it to be a problem, continues to be a challenge in most organizations. Typical results-driven managers mistakenly feel that once they have said something once, everyone should have heard and understood the message and be willing to implement immediately.

In the absence of plentiful and repeated communication, most messages in an organization are communicated non-verbally through the actions observed. In fact these non-verbal messages define the organization's culture over time.

Here we identify four management actions that transmit plenty of information to the organization about what is valued and not valued.

1. Who gets promoted

Promotion is the most visible way to recognize employee contribution and in the absence of regular praise and encouragement, it is one of the few tangible clues about what an organization values. If a person is promoted who is ruthless about pursuing results but leaves a wake of destruction behind them, the message is that results are more important than people. This can lead to demotivation for those who are more constructive as they come to the realization that the organization values them less. In the alternative, if a person is promoted because they say the right things to the boss but don't actually generate results, the message transmitted is to play political games. **Action Tip:** Promote the most capable individual who demonstrates the ability to get results while treating people fairly and consistently.

2. Who gets hired

When new team members are hired, what message is being trans-

mitted? If an individual clearly does not possess the desired skill sets, an ability to learn the job quickly and the attitude to get along well with others, it can cause frustration in co-workers. The hiring decision reflects the values of the organization and the respect it shows to existing employees. A poor hiring decision causes employees to reflect on their own value and take stock of their future prospects for growth and promotion. **Action Tip:** Hire carefully and base the decision on attitude, experience and learning ability.

3. Application of Consequences

Good employees become demotivated when they see poor performing colleagues get away with poor behaviour and unacceptable results. Getting paid the same as another person who does much less than you do isn't a big incentive to succeed. An attitude of "why bother?" sets in and performance tends to gravitate to the lowest common denominator. **Action Tip:** Consistently address and weed out unacceptable behaviour and performance and your organization will attract and keep better performers.

4. Delegation and Development

A manager who does not delegate and develop employees sends a message that he or she does not trust the people who work for him or her to make decisions or solve problems. **Action Tip:** Take an objective look at your team and begin to challenge them until they demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that they cannot competently do what you ask of them. It is better to overload and challenge an individual instead of having them wither away their potential.

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