



Commanding Respect, Earning Trust: A Guide for the Authoritarian Communicator

Do you find your leadership style leans toward the direct and decisive? This guide is for you, the **authoritarian communicator**. While this approach can be effective in certain situations, fostering a more open and empathetic communication style can significantly improve team morale, engagement, and overall success. Here are practical steps to help you bridge the gap and connect with your team in new ways:

1. From Commands to Conversations: Mastering Active Listening

Many authoritarian leaders struggle with active listening. Here's how to shift your focus:

- **Be Present:** Put down your phone, silence distractions, and make eye contact with the speaker. This conveys genuine interest and encourages them to elaborate.
- **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Instead of yes/no questions, ask "Why?" or "How?" to encourage deeper conversation and understand their perspective.
- **Practice Reflective Listening:** Summarize what you've heard to ensure understanding. Phrases like "So what you're saying is..." or "It sounds like..." demonstrate you're actively engaged.

Practical Exercise: Pair up with a colleague and take turns playing the role of speaker and listener. The speaker shares a challenge or idea, and the listener practices active listening techniques. Afterward, provide feedback on each other's communication skills.

Example: During a meeting, a team member expresses hesitation about a proposed deadline. Instead of dismissing their concerns, you actively listen and summarize, "So you're worried the current deadline may impact the quality of the project?" This opens a dialogue for a collaborative solution.

Journaling Prompt: Reflect on a recent conversation. Did you give the speaker your full attention? How could you have been a more engaged listener?

2. The Art of Feedback: Recognizing Strengths and Providing Opportunities for Growth

Authoritarian leaders often focus on shortcomings. This approach can be demotivating. Here's how to create a more balanced approach:

- **Leveraging curiosity, ownership, and accountability:** Ignite curiosity and ownership in your direct reports by asking about their career goals, then provide a balanced feedback session highlighting strengths and areas for growth. This empowers them to take charge of their development.
- **Focus on Behavior, not Personality:** Instead of "You're always disorganized," say "This report could benefit from better organization."



- **Focus on the Future, not Dwelling on the Past:** Provide feedback in a timely manner, and focus on how they can move forward instead of dwelling on past mistakes.

Example: Instead of criticizing a team member for missing a deadline publicly during a meeting, provide private feedback using the "sandwich" technique. Focus on specific actions they can take to improve time management in the future.

Journaling Prompt: Reflect on your approach to feedback. Do you primarily focus on shortcomings, or do you acknowledge strengths as well? How can you use the "sandwich" technique to deliver more constructive feedback?

3. Transparency Breeds Trust: Demystifying Decisions

Authoritarian leaders often keep their reasoning behind decisions hidden. This lack of transparency can create confusion and resentment. Here's how to cultivate trust:

- **Explain the "Why" Behind Decisions:** Don't just announce decisions. Explain the rationale, the goals you're trying to achieve, and the bigger picture. This fosters understanding and buy-in from your team.
- **Welcome Questions and Clarifications:** Encourage open dialogue after making a decision. Allow team members to ask clarifying questions and address any concerns they may have.
- **Share Progress Updates:** Keep your team informed about the progress of decisions and initiatives. This transparency demonstrates your commitment to open communication and inclusivity.

Example: You've decided to implement a new project management software. Instead of just announcing it, explain the inefficiencies of the current system and how the new software will benefit the team. Encourage questions and address concerns about the transition process.

Journaling Prompt: Reflect on your past communication regarding decisions. Do you typically share the rationale behind them? How can you become more transparent with your team in the future?

Remember, becoming a more effective leader involves a journey, not a destination. By incorporating these strategies, practicing the provided exercises, and engaging in self-reflection, you can move beyond the limitations of the authoritarian communicator persona. You'll be well on your way to fostering a more engaged, motivated, and ultimately, successful team.

Need Support? Reach out to us at charlene@habitatforleadership.com

Ready to explore if coaching is right for you? Schedule [here](#)