

BEING THERE

Communication is a multifaceted tool

BY JAY PERRY

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Every piece of research on what to do as a leader during tough times seems to contain this one common thread—communication.

It cannot be overstated as to how the proper communication is critical to the wellbeing of your company—the challenge is the 'proper' part.

Many think communications are restricted to sharing how one individual sees the challenge, what they think should be done about the challenge and who should do what about the challenge. This is not the 'proper' type of communication that is needed at these points in time.

What is needed is more listening than talking. Yes, you must share your perspective, the reality of the situation as you will have a different perspective as a leader with a broader view of the corporate position. The big thing though, is listening to your people.

This listening is multifaceted. It has the component of listening for potential solutions from a different perspective than your own and has a component that is best described as supportive. Sometimes people crave a safe place to vent about their concerns, their personal challenges or just to know there is a sympathetic ear that is available on the occasion that they might need it.

This to me, is part of fulfilling our duties as leaders. I have several clients with significantly sized staff numbers and when the pandemic crisis struck, they didn't retreat to the board room to strategize. No, they made themselves available to their people, checking in on them personally by phone if they were remotely working or on a lay-off; and in person for those that were deemed essential and had to be onsite.

These clients shared information as to what immediate steps they were taking to provide a stable and sustainable approach to response, but the focus was on the person they were talking with. There was more listening to whether they had other family members affected by the crisis, how their children were doing—were their relatives okay? In other words, they demonstrated care with a deeply genuine level.

That authenticity is in each of us. We all have that side of us and certainly we talk about caring and how, "Our people are our most important asset". Are we all smooth and comfortable with those types of conversations? I think not.

It is, though—with a little practice—something that we can be good at. I don't mean the talking part; I mean the listening part. When you are just 'there' for someone it communicates more than the words being exchanged. It communicates that this person is important to you and you are not only interested in but supportive of their wellbeing.

It is this kind of 'putting ourselves out there' or vulnerability that helps us be distinguished as a leader and stay the one who's driving. **CRM**



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