

COMMUNICATION – THE ESI WAY

10 Behaviors of Successful Leaders



	Behavior	Definition	Opposite	Examples
1	Communicate with Customers in Real-Time	Respond to an email / voice mail with the same sense of urgency as if the customer was in person; aim for an immediate response to acknowledge receipt, with a maximum 2-hour response time	Delay acknowledging an email / voicemail until you have all the answers, avoid the customer; emailing your customer when calling is more appropriate, give a partial response or not answer the customer's question	"Thank you for your email. I am gathering the information you requested and will connect with you by the end of the day. (Responding immediately communicates the customer is important to you)" "Thank you for your email. I am confident we can work through these most effectively over a call or in-person meeting. Which would you prefer? (Providing the customer options is important)"
2	Ensure Your Customer Feels Heard	First, seek to understand, before being understood, listen, pause before you speak; ask open-ended questions. Restate to check for understanding, ask clarifying questions	Make assumptions, interrupt the client, demonstrate impatience while the customer is talking, monopolize the conversation, talk over the customer	When you say [ABC], do you mean (this) or (that)? "Can you give me some background about the issue?" "What is your ideal outcome?", "Have we covered everything?"
3	Speak Your Customer's Language	Find a preferred method of communication, adapt your communication style to fit your customer's style; understand your client's technical competency and speak in layman's terms	Expect your customer to adapt to your communication style, refusing to adapt despite poor results; using wrong method of communication style to fit the situation (i.e., email when they need a phone call, text when they need an email)	Customer is <u>social</u> . Being short, impersonal, or too serious is off-putting. Warm up with a friendly conversation, then get to business. Customer is <u>all-business</u> . Being too casual, too wordy, or silly is off-putting. Get to the point quickly, honor their time, and leave room for a more casual connection at the end of the call.
4	Be Present and Engaged in the Conversation	Be present in meetings, read micro-expressions (what is not being said), invite differing points of view to mitigate risk of silent resistance; make eye contact	Oblivious to social cues; on your phone or computer when someone is talking, distracted; camera off during virtual meetings; expect someone else to run the meeting when you are the leader	(Reading customer's expressions) "You seem frustrated, is this a viable solution or do you have a different route in mind?", "Is there any reason why this solution will not work?", "On a scale from 1-5, how confident are you that....?", "I'm going to take notes while we walk the jobsite to make sure I capture action items." "Is this a good time?"
5	Clarify Expectations	Expectations are valid if they are conscious, spoken, agreed upon and realistic; restate what you think you heard to get clarity, explain the "why it matters" to provide context, check for buy-in.	Leave a meeting / call without clarifying expectations, action items, and who is responsible; an attitude of "they should know;" Fail to ask for commitment or buy-in	"To ensure we are all on the same page, I will send you the contract documents by 5pm. You will sign the contracts and send them back by Wednesday. Did I get that right?" "Before we leave our meeting, this is what I captured for action items (include responsible person, deadline and set the next meeting date), did I miss anything?"

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6	Be Human	Build rapport, trust, and partnership by getting to know your customer; show respect, arrive early to meetings, call customer to 'check-in,' acknowledge concerns, use your customer's name	Transactional interactions, treating your customer like an object, overly formal communication (e.g., please be advised); disrespecting your customer's time by being late to meetings	"I heard you were out sick last week. Sorry to hear that, Jill. Do you need additional time to get those deliverables to me?" "I understand your concern. It's important to me too. Let's work together to find a solution that benefits us both."
	Plan Your Conversation	Plan your conversation (meeting, call, in- person), have an agenda, an established purpose statement, be prepared; schedule planning time in Outlook before meetings, schedule the next meeting before you leave	Wing it or fake it, make up content as you go; show up unprepared, waste time by not having clarity of purpose for the call or meeting; get caught by surprise or blind-sided	"As part of our pre-con meeting today, we are going to firm up communication protocols to ensure we are on the same page regarding method, frequency and preferred methods of communication." "We have 5 minutes left in our meeting, since we have a few things left on our agenda that are unfinished, how does Tuesday at 2pm sound?"
8	Organize Your Communication	State your communication road map, simplify message; focus on what matters most (Bottom Line Up Front), provide background with short, digestible content, broken into clear sections; start and end with conclusion.	Leave your customer confused and frustrated, wondering where your conversation is going; long, unstructured emails that force your customer to read through a long email before understanding the point of the communication	"I have three things on our agenda today. I will start with the most important in the event we run out of time. First..., Second...,Third..." Bottom Line: "Do you have 30 minutes next week to hop on a call to discuss the schedule?" Background: "Our goal is to ensure supply chain challenges do not negatively impact our schedule.", Use the subject line to inform, To: (responsible person) cc: (info only)
	Build Trust and Transparency	Build trust through transparency with your customer, be honest when it's uncomfortable, deliver good news fast, bad news faster; develop a cadence of communication, own mistakes, provide solutions; candid is kind.	Hiding, avoiding, spinning, being argumentative, defensive, dishonest, rude, blaming, holding a grudge, playing the victim (when will they, why do they); not following through on commitments, overcommit and under deliver; drama triangle (using bcc)	"I take responsibility for the breakdown of communication. Here is what we plan to do to ensure that doesn't happen again.", "Based on our meeting last week, here are the three things we completed to ensure we meet our deadline.", "This sounds important, I have 10 minutes before my next meeting, let's meet at 3pm today to finish this conversation." "I appreciate that I can be candid with you..."
10	Harness the Strengths of Your Team	Be a student of your team's natural talent and communication styles, leverage the talents of your team, and define roles and responsibilities for customer interaction.	Ego-driven: "I'll do it myself;" unaware of team member's talent or communication styles, not valuing other's perspectives, doing the same thing over and over despite poor results	"This project needs your organizational skills to help keep us on track. You have permission to hold us accountable to weekly action items to provide consistent customer communication", "You have a knack for spotting risk. Call us out on the customer communication deficiencies you see that we may not be taking as seriously as we should."

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Communication Styles

	Characteristics	They Like	They Hate
The Doer	Ambitious, forceful, strong-willed, decisive, goal-oriented, independent	• Clarity, brevity, focus • Stick to business • Supplemental info delivered in an organized way	• Discussing unrelated topics • Leaving loopholes or cloudy issues • Disorganization
The Influencer	Magnetic, enthusiastic, friendly, demonstrative, political	• Warm & friendly environment • Big picture (put details in writing) • Answering feeling questions & opinions	• Curt, cold, reserved • Controlling the conversation • Leaning on facts, figures, abstractions
The Pragmatist	Steady, relaxed, modest, patient, predictable, reliable	• Breaking the ice • Soft delivery, non-threatening tone • Answering “how” questions to get their opinion	• Rushing into business • Domineering, demanding tone • Pressure to act quickly
The Engineer	Perfectionist, neat, careful, conservative, compliant, dependent	• Well-prepared organized case • Sticking to business • Accuracy and realistic expectations	• Informal, casual tone • Setting unrealistic goals, pushing too hard • Messy, disorganized presentation