

CLEAR Communication: An Organization's Greatest Asset

Clear communication is not just a soft skill, it is a strategic advantage. Across industries, it drives performance, trust, and safety, and remains one of the most impactful yet underrecognized and underfunded assets organizations can invest in.

While CLEAR Communication is an asset, poor communication carries real and measurable costs. McKinsey estimates that organizations lose 20–25% of productivity when communication falters, resulting in duplicated work, missed deadlines, and slower decisions. A Harvard Business Review survey found that 37% of managers feel uncomfortable giving direct feedback, fueling frustration, disengagement, and turnover.

These challenges are compounded by the number of ways we now communicate. Today's workplaces span generations, geographies, and technologies. Information flows through emails, instant messages, texts, dashboards, and video calls, each carrying its own tone, speed, and unspoken rules. The very tools designed to make communication seamless often make it noisier. Messages get abbreviated, tones are misread, and meaning gets lost in translation.

Communication rarely fails because of intent. Given that we cannot read each other's minds, Interpretation is usually the issue. Even the best teams stumble when speed, assumptions, or hierarchy get in the way of real understanding.

Drawing on decades of experience and frameworks from Harvard's Negotiation Project, we identify common communication pitfalls and outline how the CLEAR framework helps organizations communicate effectively. CLEAR equips leaders to communicate with purpose, listen with respect, engage emotions with curiosity, align through transparency, and choose the right message for the right medium.

Common Communication Pitfalls

- **Assumptions & the Illusion of Transparency.** We think we're clear when we are not. Most leaders overestimate how well they communicate.
- **Time Pressure & Tone.** Rushed messages lose context and written tone gets misread.
- **Power & Hierarchy.** When junior voices hesitate to speak, vital information is lost.
- **Emotion Blocks Rationality.** Frustration and anger causes wrong assumptions and blocks understanding.
- **Generational and Technological Gaps.** Fast, multi-channel communication favors brevity over nuance and tone, and often gets misinterpreted.

The CLEAR Framework: Five Principles of Effective Communication

- C - Communicate** Communicate with Clarity and Purpose. Define what you want to say, why it matters, and what outcome you are seeking. Setting clear intentions before meetings improves collaboration, reduces wasted time, and shortens decision cycles.
- L - Listen** Listen to understand. Listening is a skill and a signal of respect. Employees who feel heard are 4.6x more likely to feel empowered (Salesforce Research). Simple practices like paraphrasing, asking for clarification, or acknowledging, increases psychological safety and greatly improves understanding.
- E - Engage** Engage emotion with curiosity. Unresolved conflict drains about 8 hours per employee, per week in lost productivity (CPP Global Human Capital Report). That wasted time often comes from people circling around the tension instead of addressing it. Treat emotion as data, be curious, ask questions to understand perspectives, notice cues, name the feelings, and explore the beliefs and stories behind them. By shifting the energy that fuels conflict into insight, leaders transform lost hours into momentum for problem solving and collaboration.
- A - Align** Align through transparency. Trust grows when leaders are honest about the information that is known and unknown. Consistency between words and actions builds credibility that withstands tension. Transparency fuels trust, which in turn drives both performance and loyalty.
- R - Right Message** Right Message, Right Medium. Choose tone, timing, and channel with care. Complex or emotionally charged issues deserve richer, real-time conversation, where voice and body language reinforce receptiveness, preferably face-to-face. Quick updates usually belong in text or email. Misalignment between message and medium is one of the easiest ways to lose meaning.

When leaders communicate CLEARly, they create workplaces where accountability and empathy can coexist and where teams stop competing to be right and instead focus on mutual understanding.

Putting Principles into Practice

These principles are transformative. Saoirse Consulting & Coaching and PranaCo Consulting work together to help organizations put them into action through a combination of communication assessments, interactive workshops, and executive coaching. Assessments uncover where clarity breaks down and assumptions drain resources, while workshops equip teams with practical tools to handle high-stakes conversations and bridge generational or role gaps. Coaching strengthens leaders' confidence and accountability, leading to trust, engagement, and retention.

When communication is clear, people feel heard and respected and they collaborate better. The next breakthrough in your organization will come from a clear, well-communicated idea.