

## Module 5 Notes

*"An essential skill for the true leader is competence in the use of language. In every area of life-work and the professions, marriage and family, friendship, worship and entertainment-ability with language is a great advantage for exercising influence, and incompetence is a serious drawback."*

*-Habiger, True Leadership, p. 129.*

### Communication in the Digital Age

Welcome to Module 5! This week, we shift our focus to a skill that is not just essential, but foundational for effective leadership: communication. Together we will explore the art of communication, the challenges in this digital age, and the key elements that contribute to becoming an effective communicator.

As the digital landscape evolves, so does the way we communicate. While technology has expanded our reach, it has also introduced challenges. In chapter 11 of "True Leadership," the authors point out that email, texting, and social media have led to a certain sloppiness in our communications. Have you considered how the speed, brevity, and informality of these platforms can undermine clarity, tone, and context? Has access to technology helped or hurt our ability to communicate?

### Key Elements to Effective Communication

To truly excel in communication as leaders, we must embrace several essential elements:

1. **Tone:** The tone of our communication greatly influences how our message is received. Being mindful of the tone we use can prevent misunderstandings and foster positive interactions. One of the drawbacks of communicating via email, text, or chat is that the messages(s) lack tone and might be misunderstood.
2. **Context:** Effective communication takes into account the context of the conversation. What might be appropriate in some situations could be entirely out of place in another.
3. **Habit 5:** "Listen to understand, not to be understood." One of Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, emphasizes the importance of listening with the intention to truly understand, rather than simply waiting for your turn to speak. This habit aligns perfectly with effective communication in leadership and is part of your assignment for this week.
4. **Empathy:** The ability to understand and share the feelings of others is a cornerstone of effective communication. Empathy allows us to connect on a deeper level and address the needs of our team.
5. **Authenticity:** Authentic communication is honest and transparent. Leaders who communicate authentically build trust with their teams, fostering an environment of openness.
6. **Body Language:** While much communication happens through words, body language conveys a significant amount of information. Being aware of nonverbal cues enhances our communication effectiveness.

## **Providing Feedback**

When we consider communication in terms of ethical leadership most people will envision speeches and presentations. However, providing feedback is just as impactful if not more than speeches and presentations. Please watch "The Secret of Providing Great Feedback" in Module 5 Lecture Materials & Resources. Consider how providing great feedback can make you a better ethical leader.

## **The Digital Age and In-Person Communication**

While the digital age has brought challenges, it also offers opportunities for effective communication. Embracing digital platforms while remaining mindful of the principles of tone, context, empathy, and authenticity can elevate our interactions. Additionally, don't underestimate the power of in-person communication. Face-to-face interactions allow for nuanced communication, including body language and facial expressions.

## **Conclusion**

Effective communication is not just a skill; it's the bedrock of leadership. In a world where messages can be easily misconstrued, the ability to communicate clearly, empathetically, and authentically sets ethical leaders apart. As you engage in conversations, both digital and in-person, remember the wisdom of Habit 5: Listen to understand, not just to be understood. By doing so, you create a space for meaningful connections, informed decisions, and ethical leadership.