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People Make The Difference whitepaper

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Are you co-dependent with your email?

There is no substitute for face to face communication

Everybody does it – they get busy and think “oh, I’ll just shoot off a quick email about that.” And yes, there is no denying that email is a very effective tool when used properly. The problem however is that email is overused and most definitely abused. Leaders who are looking for an edge need to break the hold that email has on them and find new, more powerful ways to communicate.

Here’s three ways to break the vicious email cycle:

1. Get up and walk around

So often a leader’s view of what is happening in an organisation is informed by only a handful of people in the management or executive team. Take the time to step away from your desk and walk around the office, talking to people outside your direct reports. Be friendly and approachable, whether you’re saying hi to the cleaner or the CFO. You’ll become a more in-touch leader with a better read on the pulse of what’s going on in your business.

2. Hold meetings on their turf

If you are in the same office as someone, there is no reason to send them an email – unless it’s to follow up and confirm details of a conversation. Instead, at the very least

pick up the phone, and even better go and see them in person. Help your team members to be more comfortable by going to their office or desk, rather than making them come to you, and maybe even take them a cup of coffee.

It's also worth practising this habit beyond your direct reports. Skip-level meetings – i.e. meeting with the team members who report to your direct reports – is another great way to get a better insight into what's going on within your organisation. These meetings can also help you to identify future leaders so that you can invest in their skills development.

3. Visit and listen

Getting an insight into the customer experience is an important element in any leader's role. Yet when you send an email to customers requesting feedback, it's fairly standard to have an incredibly low response rate. Asking for feedback via email sends the message that you're only asking their opinion because you feel that you should. In contrast, physically going to visit your customers gives a stronger impression that you actually care and want to hear about their experiences – and that you'll be taking action about any feedback that they give.

Making the effort to communicate more in person allows you to better get to know your team members and customers on a human level. You can read body language to determine more subtle signs and get a less filtered view of events. There's also less room for misinterpretation – especially with more difficult conversations – leaving everyone with a much clearer understanding of any issues and expected outcomes.

For more tips on enhancing your leadership communication skills, sign up for regular updates from People Make The Difference.

Or if you're ready to commit to become a stronger, more people-focused leader, call us on +61 412 333 415 to find out about our leadership coaching services.