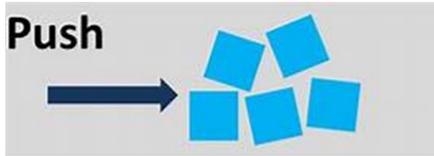


Leading by Pulling vs Pushing

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Ever thought about how much you communicate? Studies on communication find the average person talks 1-2 hours a day. Most people listen more than twice that. If you add the time people spend on social media, email, and messaging, which is between 5-11 hours a day, we communicate the equivalent of about two books a day.



You never knew you were such a prolific author, did you? So, what are all your books about? Are you creating good books? Mystery novels? Instruction manuals? With so much experience, our books should be awesome, right? Unfortunately, no. Quantity doesn't equal quality.

Studies on communication also find we spend up to 3 hours a day clarifying what was previously said which for some people is merely repeating themselves but at a higher volume. In the workplace, these books on miscommunication cost organizations millions of dollars in lost productivity. At home, communication problems are the leading cause of divorce. What about parent's books on parenting? It is a very small book for many parents. On average parents spend fewer than 15 minutes a week in serious discussion with their children. Think about that. What about our books on health? Studies find that over one third of injuries are caused by miscommunication. Twenty percent of malpractice lawsuits against doctors are linked to communications errors – by the doctor, the staff, or the patient. In some areas we talk too much. In some we don't talk enough. How do you like the books being created by our government and the media? Some call it fake news. Some call it propaganda. Some call it fact. Some call it fiction. Whatever it is, a whole library of it is being created every day.

Do you think you are a good communicator? Take this quiz. Can you share differences of opinion without arguing? Take feedback without being defensive? Listen without giving advice? Help people without telling them what to do? Share your feelings and concerns rather than keep them to yourself? Are you keeping thoughts to yourself right now that you should be sharing with a spouse, friend, or coworker?

I've worked with thousands of managers and executives. Guess what improvement area people want help with most often? Communications. Why? Great communicators are the best leaders. They are the most influential and persuasive. They build the highest performing organizations. They make the most money.

Are most people aware they have a communication problem? No. This a huge blind spot. We don't realize that many of our problems are rooted in communication issues. Instead, we blame other factors or other people. Have you ever blamed someone or something else for a problem, but later realized much of it was your responsibility? Bosses think their employees are the problem. Employees think their bosses are the problem. Parents think their kids are the problem. Kids think their parents are the problem. Siblings learn to blame each other starting at an early age. "You made the mess." "No, you made the mess." No matter the context – work or home, people don't realize that poor communication is at the root of their problems.

Do you have a personal development goal to be a better communicator? Not many do. Isn't it interesting? We have goals to improve our business, make more money, and be happier, but we don't have a goal to be a better communicator. Yet being a better communicator is the key to achieving many of our goals.

How should you communicate? How do you persuade people, motivate people, coach people, and maintain great relationships? It boils down to one word: PULL. Great communicators pull people instead of push them. They attract people like a magnet instead of repel them.



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Everyday, people need help, but instead, get repelled. Instead of a helping hand, they get a pushing hand. They receive a lecture or reprimand. For example, say your best friend has a bad idea, like starting a small business that competes with Amazon. She could easily squander her life's savings. You meet for coffee. You have two options. You can pull her. Or you can push her. If you push her, you might say, "Joan, you can't compete with Amazon. Their retail prices are lower than your wholesale prices. Don't be so foolish." In contrast, if you pull her, you might say, "Joan, you are quite the overachiever trying to compete with Amazon. How do you plan to do that?" Notice that the pulling approach starts a conversation.

Here is another example. You come home from work and discover your 12 year old son played after school instead of doing his homework. You have two options. You can pull him or you can push him. If you push him you might say "Son, you played today instead of doing your homework. You know you are supposed to do your homework first. Go do your homework." In contrast, if you pull your son, you might say "Son, you've been playing instead of doing your homework. I like to play too, but what happens when you don't do your homework first?" Did you notice the difference between the pull and push language? One pulls people into a conversation. One pushes people away from a conversation.

Being pushed is like being managed instead of being led. I had a boss once who always made me feel managed. Ever had a boss who made you felt managed? Instead of asking me questions and helping me think through something, he told me what to do. Rather than coach me, he tried to control me. "Mike, your not doing that right. Instead of doing that, you need to do this."

Which do you prefer? Do you like being pushed? Or do you like being pulled? Pick the word that describes what you prefer. Do you prefer a conversation or a lecture? Do you prefer a champion or a critic? Do you want to be developed or disciplined? If you are like most people, you want to be built up, not torn down. You prefer to be influenced positively, not negatively. You prefer to be pulled.

Consider the physics of pulling vs pushing. When you are traveling through an airport with your roll-around suitcase, would you rather pull it or push it? If you are going up a step with a wheelbarrow would you rather pull it or push it? You would rather pull it. Whether you are moving objects or people, pulling is more effective.

Why do people push? For some, it's an ego boost. But it's also natural. Pushing may not be very effective, but without thinking, we tend to push things. Pulling is counterintuitive.

Imagine you have a toolbelt around your waist, but instead of construction tools, it holds your communication tools. What's in your toolbelt? Do you have a magnet or a hammer? Push communicators have a hammer and it's well worn because they use it all time. When they want something done, they tell people what to do. If telling doesn't work, they tell it again. And again. And then louder. Then, if people still don't do what their told, rather than receive help, they receive a threat or intimidation, which by the way is technically called bullying in today's workplace. Push communicators might author a lot of books, but not books that motivate and inspire.

Great communicators don't use a hammer. They use tools that pull. Here are four tools used by effective communicators and influential leaders in particular:

Tool #1: P-Prioritize. Whatever you want to accomplish in life involves people. Great communicators make people their top priority. You may think you are in the construction, software, financial, or some other business, but more fundamentally you are in the people business. Flip your priorities. Put people and building relationships ahead of your projects and tasks. Adopt a mindset that values authentic conversations. Allow time to talk, laugh, and cry with people.



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Tool #2: U-Understand. Great communicators get to know people. They understand how people think and feel. They get to know what drives people. They relate to people. They make people feel heard and valued. What tool do they use to understand? Questions. They ask questions. Pulling isn't telling. It is the exact opposite. It is asking questions, listening, being empathetic, and understanding. Many managers, parents, and spouses get it backwards. They think about what to say rather than what to ask. When you focus on what to say, you don't listen. You don't get to know people. Even when you have an agenda or want to share your opinion, ask questions and listen first. You'll have your opportunity to talk later. If you want to be a better communicator immediately, use this tool. If you tend to tell your kids, employees, or friends what to do, stop it. You'll be amazed by how much more effective asking is than telling.

Tool #3: L-Learn. Great communicators and leaders are learners. They also help others learn. When you are leading most of your communication is with the intent to influence or coach. When you are in a position of influence, you help people develop. Learning and development starts with awareness. You pull people forward by helping them become self aware of how they are doing – both what they do well and what they need to work on. If they've made a mistake, you let them retain their dignity, but help them learn from it. With your learning tool, you help others discover and acquire the tools they need to have in their toolbelt.

Tool #4: L-Leap. The real measure of how well you communicate is how well you persuade others to take action. Influential communicators move people from knowing to doing. They cause people to take action. Like coaching an aerial acrobat, you help people let go of their current trapeze and leap to a new one. To a better future, achieve a goal, or pursue their true passion. Whatever it is, you make people feel good about themselves. You build up people and their confidence. You instill hope rather than fear. You give people the motivation, learning, and plans needed to move forward.

In virtually every conversation you have, you have a choice. You can be a great coach, build up people, and pull them. Or you can broadcast negative energy and push them. You can either nurture a meaningful dialog or tell people what to do. Great communicators choose to use positive influence and attract people.

Consider putting new tools in your toolbelt. You might be amazed how well pulling tools work. Everything changes when you author books with words that encourage, motivate, and develop people. You are more influential and more persuasive. You gain more buy in. You build better relationships.

Using a hammer is great for driving nails, but not for driving people.

For a video of this blog, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwOKcdCH9oQ>

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