

### **Think Before You Speak**

Leadership is a language game. Some experts assert that leadership's true impact is on human sentiment and understanding rather than the bottom line. Leaders operate in uncertain, sometimes chaotic environments that are partly of their own creation. While leaders do not control events, they do influence how events are seen and understood. They are movers and shakers in their organizations, and their most important tools are symbolic and linguistic.

Leadership is a language game. Most leaders spend 70 percent of their time communicating, even though they pay relatively little attention to how they use language as a tool of influence.

The skill of framing is a quality of communication that causes others to accept one meaning over another. You can learn to manage meaning through framing. It is a skill with profound consequences for behavior that influences how we and others respond to the world in which we live.

Framing is a way to manage meaning through the selection and highlighting of one or more aspects of our subject while excluding others. There are three components of framing: language, thought and forethought. The language component is the most tangible. It helps us focus, classify, remember and understand one thing in terms of another. The thought component is essential to the development and use of our mental models. We must frame for ourselves before we frame for other. The forethought component prepares us to communicate spontaneously through internal mental practice.

Stories frame a subject by example and engage our attention and emotions. They are useful teaching tools. "Spin" casts the subject in a positive or negative light – but too much spin erodes credibility.

Believability frames, such as truth, morality, objectivity and legitimacy, are especially important to leaders espousing a vision. Believability that comes from how you frame is influenced first by your speaking style – the presence (or absence) of powerless speech forms such as hedges, hesitations, intensifiers, questions and intonations.

Framing increases our chances of implementing goals and getting people's agreement because once the right frames are in place, the right behavior follows. It requires both clarity of purpose and a thorough understanding of those for whom we are managing meaning. Think through, absorb and be sensitive to the context and environment of the people receiving the message.

Source:

[The Art of Framing, Managing the Language of Leadership](#) by Gail T. Fairhurst and Robert A. Sarr

