

Talk Ain't
Cheap...It's
Priceless!

Connecting in a
Disconnected World

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WALK THE TALK.COM

Resources for Personal and Professional Success

Talk Ain't Cheap...It's Priceless!

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Introduction

If you look closely at great places to work and companies with high levels of worker engagement and retention, you'll find a common factor. At the core, hidden behind policies and procedures, is a simple human ingredient: connected people.

Somewhere along the line, team members talk to each other to understand mutual goals. Leaders express gratitude and create a place where people feel valued. Somewhere along the line, leaders step from behind desks to listen to what people need, to ask deep questions, to seek critical feedback, and to share information that gives the WHY behind the WHAT.

Look at the underlined words. Every one of these words makes up the most critical connector of all: conversation. In great places to work, the phrase "Stop talking and get to work" has been replaced with "Start talking and get to work." Why? Because failure to use the full range of human communication skills causes a nosedive in productivity, profit, performance, and personal commitment.

You've seen what happens when communication fails and conversation is shortchanged by a one-dimensional e-mail blast or a ponderous PowerPoint presentation. At some time in your career, you've shaken your head and said, "Nobody communicates around here!" The results of living under the dictate to "Stop talking and get to work" can have severe consequences.

When Communication Fails:

- Unclear instructions cause tasks to be repeated.
- Employees kept in the dark create rumors, causing morale and performance to plummet.
- Insensitive and inappropriate communication creates tension and ill will.
- Precious time is wasted in meetings that are data dumps rather than opportunities for candid dialogue and meaningful results.
- Valuable employees feel ignored, so they leave—either physically or mentally.
- Interpersonal conflict—most always the result of poor communication—creates a stressful environment and an increase in absenteeism, health claims, and performance problems.
- Disconnected employees provide slipshod customer service.
- Disconnected customers look for a competitor who will actually talk to them and solve their problems.

For all these reasons and more, being able to connect with the hearts and minds of customers, colleagues, and employees has never been more important. Without connection, customers don't give us their time and employees don't give us their talent. You know, at an intuitive level, that talk is not cheap. It IS priceless.

Here's the challenge. As priceless as it is, communication is one of the most difficult leadership skills to master. It's easier to draft a spreadsheet, to analyze outflow, to diagram an organizational chart, or to perform any myriad of "tasks" than it is to learn how to deal with the softest part of business: the human element.

That's why a Towers Perrin global web survey of 86,000 people reported that only 14% of employees said they were highly engaged in their work. The majority expressed skepticism about leadership, especially in terms of management's vision, ability to inspire, commitment to communication, and interest in employee well-being.

You're holding in your hand a resource to help break those dismal statistics. People don't plan to be careless communicators, lousy listeners, or terrible talkers. We just take verbal communication for granted. We're often unaware of what we say and do, which can keep people from working with us and for us.

This small book offers concrete advice, action steps, and insights to help sharpen this critical leadership skill. You'll start with a personal inventory to raise awareness and then you will find simple ideas and strategies that you can put into action with your team.

Like other leaders who discover the simple power of connecting, you'll generate great results. Firms with effective communication, when compared to competitors with poor communication:

- Have a 19.4% higher stock price.
- Have a 57% higher shareholder return.
- Are 4.5 times as likely to report a high level of employee engagement.
- Are 20% more likely to have low turnover rates.*

The data proves it: In business, the intangibles drive the tangibles. How people feel at the end of a day influences their performance tomorrow.

* Watson Wyatt study of 335 public North American Companies.

If you choose to put these ideas into play, not only will you find yourself creating better results, but you will put yourself on a fast track for more leadership roles. When selecting employees for leadership positions at all levels, the management skill that organizations desire most in their future leaders is the power to motivate and engage others through their ability to communicate effectively, strategically, and interpersonally.

If you yearn to be a *great leader*,

then you must learn to be a

superb communicator.

For your success, talk ain't cheap.

It's priceless.

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“Only Connect!”

—E. M. Forster, *Howard's End*