

# Behaviors of Transformational Leadership



The world is changing quickly and it can feel like every day our traditional ways of doing business are under attack. Organizations expect to continue making dramatic organizational and work changes in the next few years to keep pace.

You can help your team navigate through change by developing a transformational leadership style. Keeping them up to date about what affects them is an important behavior. Most people don't expect simple answers or absolute certainty in the midst of complex, evolving challenges. They simply want to get an accurate current picture, even if it's still cloudy, about what's ahead and what is likely to happen in a way that both acknowledges their concerns, and positions challenges as opportunities.

Here are a few guidelines for getting the essential messages to your employees, and in doing so, creating an environment of trust and adaptability:

- **Make room for dialogue.**

Everyone needs reassurance on our bad days, or bad weeks. There is no substitute for renewing trust by speaking directly and candidly with your people. Be ready to say your piece and to respond to those questions that you can.

- **Focus on what you can control.**

Much of the market and economic turmoil is beyond our reach. We have to live with it, but can do little to directly change it. Keep your team focused on what is in arm's reach: what each of you say and do. Set clear direction whenever possible.

- **Stress the opportunities.**

We are surrounded by large, complicated issues. Dwelling on them, or comparing notes about how awful things are will only keep us feeling badly. Instead, what are the windows of possibility and opportunity? Where can everyone find energy and inspiration? Paint a vision and then show enthusiasm for progress towards it.

- **State what you know.**

You probably understand part of the situation well. Be clear and specific about what you can say without reservation.

- **Explain what you believe.**

Our experience and judgment will shape our ideas about what may happen. If you feel pretty confident about where some things are headed, but aren't completely certain, say it, but be clear that your thinking is a strong possibility.

- **Specify what you don't know.**

None of us fully understands what the future may hold. Being specific about what's still fuzzy and unpredictable is realistic. It's also a way to help others think about what may lie ahead.

- **Tell them what you can't discuss.**

You may have some plans or possibilities in the works that are too new or underdeveloped to make public yet. Say so. Most people will understand that it may be a matter of timing.

- **Follow up.**

If your conversation uncovers an important, unanswered question or concern, do what you can to investigate and address it later. The same message guidelines will apply. But people will appreciate your responsiveness.

There are no magic ways to navigate our immediate future, or any challenge that confronts an organization. By painting an honest, realistic picture, though, you can help your valuable people face it with greater awareness and confidence.