

Introduction

What makes someone a good communicator? There's no mystery here, not since Aristotle identified the three critical elements — ethos, pathos, and logos. — thousands of years ago

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Ethos: Your Credibility

Credibility is the reason people should believe what you're saying. In some cases, ethos comes from your rank within an organization. More commonly, though, today's leaders build ethos most effectively by demonstrating technical expertise in a specific area (which helps convince people that you know what you're talking about), and by displaying strong levels of integrity and character (which convinces them that you're not going to lie to them even though, since you know more than they do, you might get away with it).

Pathos: Emotional Connection

The reason people believe that what you're saying will matter to them. I've written here before about the importance and the power of making emotional bonds (more ethos?) and why I believe this to be a critical area of competence for present-day leaders. Giving people your undivided attention, taking an active interest in your team members' career development, and being enthusiastic about both the organization's progress and the individuals who enable it are ways that leaders do this well. At the end of the day, pathos has the greatest influence on followers' perception of their leader's effectiveness as a communicator..

Logos: Appealing to others' sense of reason

But all the authority and empathy won't really help if people don't understand what you're talking about or how you came to your conclusions.

Logos is your mode for appealing to others' sense of reason, ergo the term logic. Employing strengths in strategic thinking, problem solving, and analytical skills are how today's leaders express logical ideas in clear and compelling enough terms to influence outcomes. While some people can get by on gut feel, as Steve Jobs famously tried to convince us he did, most leaders are required to provide some kind of analysis to make clear their decisions. This is where many leaders feel on the firmest ground — when assembling and analyzing data to address organizational problems. A caveat, though — assembling facts is not the same as presenting them clearly (here talking in complete sentences helps a lot), or marshaling them expressly to demonstrate the merits of a course of action. Facts do not speak for themselves, which is sad, since it would save so much time if they did. Effective leaders know the effort and time spent making explicit the connections they're drawing from the data to the analysis to their conclusion are well worth it..

Triangle

