

Introduction

Leaders come in all shapes and sizes. However, one thing that successful leaders have in common is that they are easily recognisable for their passionate commitment to their goals and their unswerving determination to achieve them.

This type of passion was nominated as a 'unique form of sustainable competitive advantage' by ex-president of the International Association of Business Communicators, Kevin Thomson.¹ He claims a range of benefits for having passion at work—from excellence in customer service, enthusiasm for quality products and a spirit of innovation through to the capacity to motivate people to develop products that sell. This passion for success is often quite infectious and is exuded quite naturally by 'natural leaders'. Or is it?

Many managers are passionately committed to success, but they find themselves struggling to communicate their passion to their staff. Persuading staff to reach your organisation's goals and getting commitment is a significant challenge in contemporary times. It is for this reason that the capacity of a manager to persuasively communicate ideas and relationship—manage their staff is a significant dimension of leadership competency.²

The ability to communicate persuasively will enhance all of your other management skills, such as financial and human resource management, because it ensures that staff can:

- clearly understand your reasoning, and your commitment to the organisation and to them
- trust that you have the answers they need so they can commit to your goals and to make them their own
- understand what you want them to do next (perhaps the most important).

Carly Fiorina, CEO of Hewlett-Packard, recommends that the job of the leader should be 'to set the frame, to set the people free'.³

So this chapter provides an overview of the reasons why all contemporary managers need, now more than ever before, to be persuasive communicators. By considering some of the shifts in the social landscape and the changing power dynamics of organisations, this reasoning will become clear.

Having persuaded you of the value of committing to such a

goal, I will then outline some key elements of persuasive communication. The chapter will also provide you with examples of the way some inspiring leaders have used effective communication to mobilise their listeners. It is my hope that through this information you will gain some useful directions for developing your own persuasive skills.

What is persuasion?

Persuasive leaders have most likely created their positive image with a great deal of hard work and strategic thinking. They are also experienced hands at doing so with integrity. After all, we put our trust in those we admire rather than in those who promise more than they can deliver.

Models of outstanding communication such as Jack Welch and Richard Branson are an inspiration to us all. Even a cursory reading of Jack Welch's autobiography, *Jack: what I've learned leading a great company and great people*,⁴ or Richard Branson's *Losing my virginity*,⁵ would highlight the highly conscious and conscientious attempts of both men to shape their communication in order to win the hearts and minds of their various stakeholders. Branson's account of his determination to stay true to his convictions, and to be successful while taking seriously his social responsibility, demonstrates it is possible to be successful and persuasive and to act with integrity. He is one of that rare breed of celebratory entrepreneurs whose motives are seldom questioned and who attracts staff who want to work for his company. *Being trustworthy pays dividends*.

But what does it mean to be persuasive? Although many people think of persuasion as a moment in time when someone tries to encourage another to do what they want, I want to propose a much broader way to think of persuasion.

Persuasion occurs when one or more people are involved in both one-off and ongoing activities or processes that create, modify, reinforce or change the beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motivations or behaviours of others.

This process can be two-way, with modifications to the meaning of the interactions coming from the interaction itself.

And managers can increase their persuasive impact if their staff experience a heightened engagement within the interaction.

Being persuasive requires that a manager be rhetorically sophisticated. The concept of rhetoric, or the art of persuasion, is based on the notion that language can act as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation because people, by their nature, respond to symbols. Consequently, choosing a particular set of symbols, including words and images, creates the means for us to 'see' the world in a particular way. Rhetorical skill lies in finding the symbolic means to create a complementary view of an issue and, in doing so, resolve the differences in perspectives that others may feel. Thus, having the capacity for rhetorical sophistication allows us to create a *shared view* of a particular issue.

Although rhetoric has received a lot of bad press, it is important to recognise that rhetorical skill is not of itself ethical or unethical. Having rhetorical skill is just like having financial skill. How well you use these capacities will determine the outcomes, and there is the same onus on you to use this skill with integrity as there is with all of your other managerial skills. Nonetheless, because persuasive communication is often subtle and behaviour shaping, you have a particular responsibility to ensure that you consider the outcomes for all stakeholders and do not use your rhetorical sophistication to manipulate those around you.

An important part of persuasion occurs when managers and employees 'imagine' or envision together. The symbolic processes that occur in meetings and conversations create new ways to think and are integral parts of the persuasive process (in addition to the obvious processes such as modifying beliefs or changing people's behaviours).

Managers have a critical role in inventing and managing meaning in an organisation, and this process can play an important part in creating new and inspiring ways for employees to see what is going on around them.

Persuasion can be systematic, deliberate and thoughtful. If you are the target of such a deliberate message, you will no doubt recognise it. However, we can also be persuaded more indirectly, when meaning is channelled through heuristic cues. These heuristic cues are the rules that guide how we make sense of the

world. All of us carry rules around in our heads that we have learned from childhood and that we develop through our experience. Most times, these decision rules or heuristic cues seem like natural things to do and become an automatic part of our thinking, so that we don't even notice we are using them. For example, while you are focusing on the content of a message and scrutinising the arguments systematically, a number of other activities are occurring. You might reflect that the source of the message is a very credible CEO, or that he or she has outlined six reasons to commit to the idea (you notice that it seems a very large number of reasons). You might respond positively to the opportunity offered by the CEO to 'imagine together', or find his or her message inspiring because she or he looks confident, warm and enthusiastic.

In other words, although the specifics of the messages are important, many of the *meta-messages*—the messages about how to understand a message—are critical also and are part of the persuasive process.

Another way to think about persuasion is to consider the 'sufficiency' principle,⁶ that is, when making a decision, we usually strive to know as much as we need, but no more or less. There is enough support for this principle in literature on persuasion to assert that those who wish to persuade others seldom need to present a comprehensive, all-encompassing argument about an issue, because in most cases listeners make up their minds well before they reach the end of a long, detailed, comprehensive and potentially turgid overview.

All of this is a reminder that a rational argument, on its own, is often not enough to achieve commitment. Persuasion is a complex and multi-faceted process which often engages our hearts as well as our reason.

To begin, let's listen in on a familiar interaction at a local advertising company.

Facing up or getting out

The room is full of the sorts of people you have come to expect at a business meeting. There is the usual array of older, tired and overweight men and a large handful of handsome, well-dressed young bucks. Beside this younger group are two beautifully dressed, perfectly made up young women, and at the edge of

the group, two neatly and expensively dressed 50-year-old women who carry themselves well but with determination.

One of the older men, James Williams, is the managing director of the group and commands the attention of the room. Each of the managers in the room is focused attentively on the closing words of the meeting. Jim is speaking quietly but intensely.

We have had a great year. We have two major new clients, our established clients seem to be coasting along, and we have appointed some bright young graduates who have good ideas.

However, if we want to stay at the top, we need more than good ideas. I need each and every one of you to give me more! It's not enough to do a good job. I want you to care about what you do! I want you to ask yourselves this question: *Are you passionate about Denko Advertising?* If you are, the rest will follow! If you are not, then we are asking too much of you, and maybe Denko is not for you.

Is James Williams asking the right question?

Persuasion and soft control

I'm sure *passion* is a word that all managers recognise from their professional readings, their conversations with other organisational members, and from the popular press. So why is the image of the 'passionate' manager so central to management success today?

There has been a significant shift in the way managers must relate to their staff. Hierarchical, authority-based relationships are being or have been replaced with matrix-style, team-based work. Although there are now strong accountability lines in organisations and greater imperatives for employees to meet task goals, there is also a democratic imperative and a growing preference for challenging work and competent management.

Richard Florida's thought provoking book, *The rise of the creative class*,⁷ demonstrates through a range of large-scale surveys that challenge and responsibility are the most important drivers of job satisfaction in the contemporary workplace, and that working with talented peers is a critical dimension of what matters to employees. The notion of empowerment and individual autonomy is widespread, and what might be termed 'hard' control has been replaced with 'soft' control and self-discipline.

So, managers need 'unobtrusive' and indirect forms of control

to do their job well.⁸ This form of control is subtle but encompassing, and works because staff know the 'thinking' of the organisation; they understand what is going on and why the organisation is moving in a particular direction, and they choose to commit to that direction. If staff are to feel empowered to make decisions and act out the organisation's goals, they need to be absolutely clear about those goals.

Soft control is a form of self-regulation that comes from within, rather than from external controls—that's why it can be thought of as unobtrusive. Our society now values self-direction and individuals value being in charge of their own destinies, so members of organisations resent being constantly monitored and controlled, but will willingly regulate their behaviour if they understand and commit to the logic and passion of the organisation.

This subtle form of control requires that employees become connected, committed and inspired to do their best for their organisation and, in particular, for their manager. This is why effective and persuasive communication has become such a critical tool for all managers, not just those at the very top of the organisation.

Soft control may sound somehow devious or unethical, but it is important to acknowledge that societies have always relied on people to self-monitor and understand what is required of them without being told everything directly. Families and work groups are good examples of how members learn the rules and then act as they believe the family or work group wants them to. Organisations have just been a little slow to recognise that intrinsic motivation, harnessed through good, clear and persuasive communication, is far more engaging and productive than formal control.

The power of identification

Setting the parameters for empowered action is a mighty task. It is less simple than in the past, when managers could give directions, threaten and cajole, and take authority for granted. The democratic imperative that permeates the personal lives of employees is increasingly apparent in organisational life and, as the drive for flatter organisations continues, the need for soft control will increase.

Choosing to follow replaces the *right to lead* in this equation. So, in the end, good management will become the capacity to engage staff

sufficiently so that they choose to follow you. You don't need to look back, because the momentum is so powerful that the whole team is surging forward with you. Consequently, managers need to create a language of leadership that inspires, is emotionally intelligent and accessible to all staff, and at the same time possible to 'do' every day.

How staff become committed to their organisation and their manager is a complex process that many researchers have tried to understand in a variety of ways. One rather new way to think about this is to consider how an employee achieves *organisational identification*.⁹ Put more simply, these are the mechanisms that lead employees to identify with their manager and their organisation. Researchers working in the field of corporate identity and reputation have been analysing the relationship between the communication employees receive and their development of supportive behaviours. As illustrated in Figure 2.1, the researchers have identified four key elements that determine this relationship and lead to positive employee identification:

- information availability
- personalised messaging
- communications quality
- emotional appeal.

Notice that the employees' positive response comes partly from having sufficient knowledge of what's going on, but also from the way they are made to feel about their manager and about themselves (including being given the chance to participate in the organisation's decisions, the level of personalised messaging they receive and their level of connection with the organisation).

Attempts to influence others in order to achieve a positive response have, of course, been the subject of attention for centuries, and were first explored by the ancient Greeks. Aristotle recognised that a mix of the various appeals must be used if listeners are to commit to the goals proposed by another. Aristotle taught that, when seeking to persuade, we should:

- seek to engage the rational thinking (*logos*) of our audience
- inspire a sense of belief and trust (*ethos*) in those with whom we communicate
- seek to engage our audience emotionally (*pathos*).

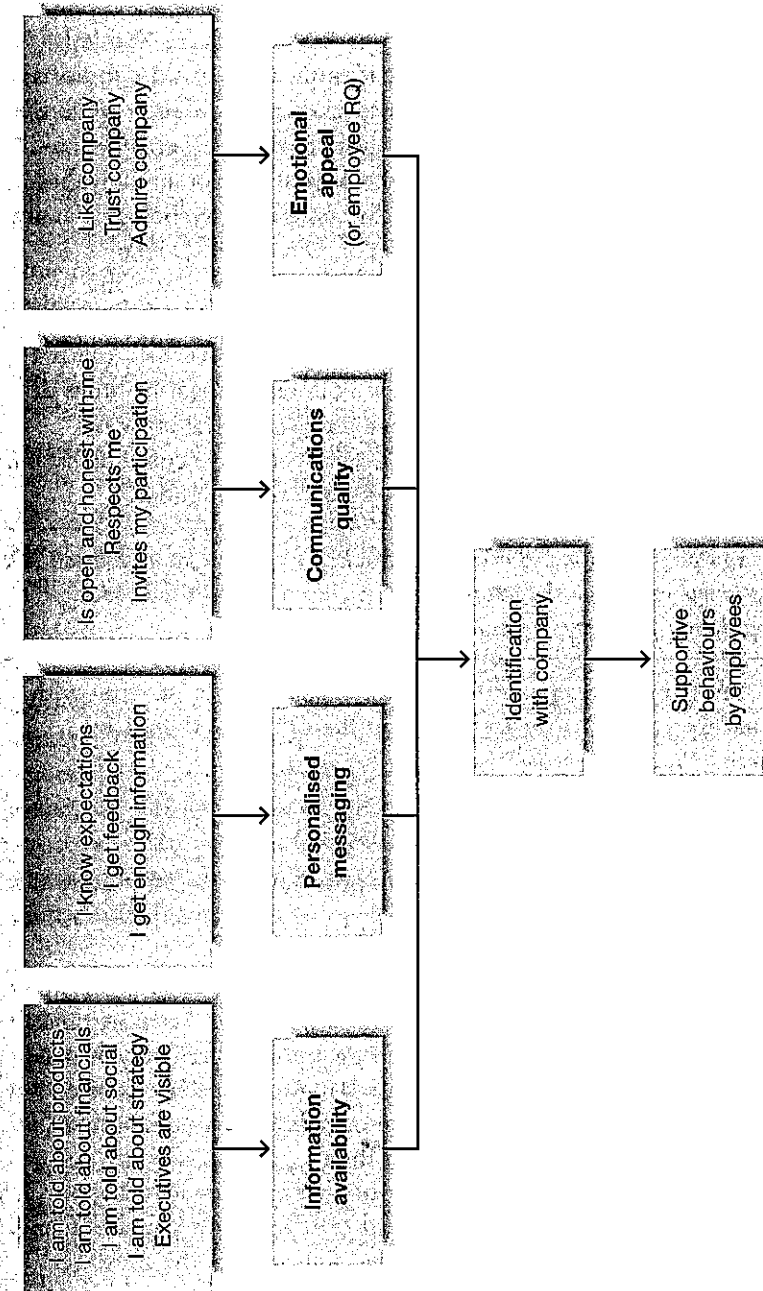


Figure 2.1 Measuring employee identification with the company¹⁰

This idea was further developed by US rhetorician Kenneth Burke, who explored the idea that identification was the important moment of connection between a speaker and a listener, when the listener identified their ways with those of the speaker.¹¹

When employees identify with the organisation or an individual manager, the result is the positive achievement of psychological unity. It is here that James Williams, Managing Director of Denko Advertising, must turn his attention if he wishes to engage the passion of his staff. If his employees answer his question ('Are you passionate about Denko Advertising?') in the negative, then this is a reflection of his own communication skills rather than the limits of his employees. Why? Because achieving psychological unity is a significant and likely effect of high quality persuasive communication.

Kenneth Burke challenged us long ago to remember:

*You persuade a man [or even a woman?] only in so far as you can talk his language, by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his.*¹²

Yet, many managers still frame their messages by starting with what they want to say. Listeners, on the other hand, start by asking: 'What's in it for me?'

Audience, audience, audience!

Taking the audience as the starting point of any communication is hardly a revolutionary idea, but it is a surprisingly difficult task for most managers that I encounter.

The idea of framing a message from the point of view of the audience is an important start if you seek to win the hearts and minds of employees. If you wish to be truly influential, you need to be aware of the people you are talking to and adapt to their needs. Your target audience's frame of reference should always determine how you will approach them.

There are four golden rules about creating messages that are right for your audience and linked to the situation you are in and the characteristics of the people who will receive the message. This sounds like commonsense but is, unfortunately, a more complex task than most people recognise. The rules relate to:

- 1 situation
- 2 audience frame of mind
- 3 audience preference for type of communication
- 4 audience demographics.

Situation

It is critical to assess the situation surrounding the delivery of your message. If you have to pitch a new idea to your team, it will really matter whether you are doing so after a long and heated debate about procedures and how some staff will ultimately be forced to change their behaviour, or whether you have just celebrated a successful sales period. Will you get five minutes to persuade your team? Will the item be at the end of an agenda or the beginning? Will the meeting be devoted entirely to the issue? The situation will be an important determinant of how you should approach an issue. You must be prepared to adjust your content accordingly.

Audience frame of mind

You will need to consider whether your audience will oppose or agree with your ideas. You also need to consider their values and attitudes. The recent movie *What women want* with Mel Gibson explored just this idea. Gibson played a male chauvinist advertising agency star. He developed the ability to read women's minds following an accident. This new-found talent allowed Gibson to come up with advertisements that women loved. Why? He started with what women wanted rather than starting from his own perspective.

This facility of reaching into the mind of your audience might not be so simple outside life in the movies, but it does demonstrate that the real test of an effective message is not what the originator of the idea holds dear. Rather, understanding how the audience is thinking about an issue is critical, and respecting their perspective on things that will affect them will pay dividends.

Audience's preferred type of communication

Audiences have preferences for certain types of communication. Peter Thompson, in his useful book, *Persuading Aristotle*,¹³ created a simplified template for thinking about this issue. Most managers have, at some time, completed a Myers-Briggs assessment or other simple

test to determine how they operate, and many managers can reel off their personal assessment. What Thompson did was to take this one step further by considering the adaptive communication strategies that are needed to suit differing personal styles (see Figure 2.2).

This model is useful because awareness of the communication needs of those listening to you gives you a map for what adaptations of your natural preferences will enhance your persuasive powers. For example, imagine that you are talking to an 'auditor' (the upper left quadrant of the figure). This person has a high preference for detail, careful outlining of the issues and proceeding slowly. You, on the other hand, like to talk 'big picture' and proceed quickly, searching out new directions as you go. When considering your listener's needs, you will do better to adapt to their pace, their information requirements, their tone and even their emotional state.

If you know that your audience has a variety of types in the group, the challenge is to build strategies to suit them. Your versatility will increase your likelihood of success.

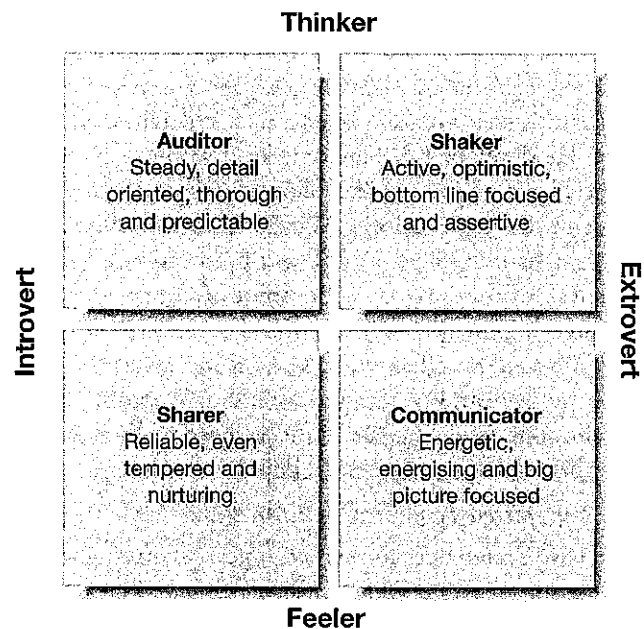


Figure 2.2 Communicator style¹⁴

In a recent presentation, given to an extremely varied group of academic and professional staff about the significance of reputation to an organisation, I carefully incorporated a reference to the opinion of an economist who has identified the skewed distribution of rewards that accrue to good organisational performance. The presentation was directed to a generally highly motivated audience of sharers and communicators. However, there were a number of auditors in the room (whom I had identified as mainly economists). The economists were likely to find economic theory convincing here. I therefore commented that there is a disproportionately high return on a good reputation because of the human tendency to exaggerate small differences and to reward on the basis of *relative* importance rather than *absolute* importance. Thus, a good reputation can be a 'tipping point' giving a disproportionate share of visibility to an organisation. I then took this idea forward to propose the big picture idea that 'Reputational markets are winner-take-all events'.¹⁵ By incorporating an auditor perspective and then, in a later phase, a communicator perspective, I maximised my chance to capture the listeners.

Audience demographics

Demographics are an important consideration when sizing-up your audience. Your audience's age, gender, educational experience, and socio-economic and cultural background will provide excellent signals about what matters, what does not, what 'hot buttons' listeners have, and what will be interesting to them.

Young employees will often have different priorities from older staff, and styles of communicating need to be shaped by these issues. Targeted illustrations of a particular point and the use of a more or less formal style of communication are possibilities.

Richard Florida paints a very vivid picture here of the emerging preference amongst younger professionals for informality and what he calls the 'no collar workplace', with its new dress codes.

Or, as another example of differences, some Australians have what can be considered a relatively aggressive style of verbal interaction.¹⁶ The cross-questioning that follows a pitch might be considered dynamic, engaged and searching by these staff members, but confrontational, negative and bordering on rude by those from cultural groups that value harmony and avoid conflict.

US leaders are able to use to good effect rhetoric that tugs at the heartstrings,¹⁷ but Australian cynicism has traditionally required a more 'down to earth', egalitarian and pragmatic approach (although Richard Florida's research on the new workforce might suggest that there are new imperatives afloat).

The characteristics of the audience are as important as the content of your message. Recognising this is a critical step on the journey to becoming a successful persuasive communicator.

Credibility

Just as you must consider audience characteristics when shaping your message, you are equally dependent on your audience to determine your credibility or *ethos*.

There are three primary dimensions that determine whether a listener considers you to be believable. Extensive communication research suggests that listeners make their judgment based on a combination of assessments of your *expertise*, *trustworthiness* and the goodwill or *sense of caring* that you generate.¹⁸

- *Expertise*. Attention to demonstrating expertise, or even the expertise of others on whom you rely to make your claims, is a critical pathway to achieving credibility with many audiences. Whether you seem informed, qualified, competent or experienced will shape how people hear the message.
- *Trustworthiness*. The listener's sense of your personal integrity may be generated over time rather than in the moment of encounter.
- *Sense of caring*. The listener's sense that you care, understand and have the interests of the listener at heart will play a critical role in the believability of the message.

Interestingly, it seems that your credibility will be of greater significance in an interaction where listeners are less involved in the issue being discussed than when they are deeply involved. In the case of listeners already or deeply involved, the strength of the arguments themselves is the most persuasive factor.¹⁹

In the workplace persuasion based on personal credibility requires considerable strategic focus on your part and is never a simple process. All those involved in the process need to recognise, over time, that you are trustworthy, knowledgeable and

committed. You need to signal that moving forward together with your team is your desired outcome. Remember the model of employee identification presented earlier in the chapter.

Non-verbal communication

A number of secondary dimensions also affect credibility. Much of your credibility is attained by how you communicate non-verbally. The levels of extroversion, composure and sociability of a communicator all contribute to the way an audience perceives the interaction. You can think about this as the level of 'immediacy' or the way that your non-verbal behaviour suggests warmth, closeness, friendliness and involvement with those with whom you are communicating. A large degree of separation between you and others could be either physical or psychological and either will determine the way your message is heard.

The way you use eye contact, the types and range of gestures you use, the vitality of your facial expression, the passion of your voice, the energy your body exudes, even the stillness which suggests that you are composed and relaxed in the discussion, are forms of code that allow others to make sense of your message.

A great communicator like Bill Clinton understands and uses this knowledge every time he interacts. The versatility of his facial expression, tone of voice, eye contact and vocal warmth provides an excellent model for those wishing to achieve communicative effectiveness. This is a secret code that everyone understands but which is nonetheless hard to master.

A good guiding rule on managing non-verbal behaviour in order to build rapport is to mirror the non-verbal behaviours of the audience.²⁰ Your upper body, in particular, is your expressive core, and adds powerfully to your communication. However, Anthony Robbins, that master of persuasion, noted in his best-selling novel, *Unlimited power*, that one good place to start to build rapport is with the voice. Robbins offers this advice:

*Mirror his tonality and phrasing, his pitch, how fast he talks, what sort of pauses he makes, his volume . . . People feel that they have found a soul mate, someone who totally understands . . . who is just like them.*²¹

There is ample research to suggest that human beings tend to believe the non-verbal rather than the verbal messages when there is a contradiction between the two. Nonetheless, as non-verbal communication specialist Edward Sapir suggested, non-verbal codes are both elaborate and secret. Because of this we can often detect—both consciously and unconsciously—subtle messages about the integrity of their meaning.²²

If the speaker is insincere, we will often come away less convinced of the argument than if our reading of the non-verbal communication instils confidence in us. In sum, non-verbal strategies need to harmonise with the verbal message and support the relationship between the speaker and listener. Managing this harmonisation effectively must not be confused with manipulating it effectively.

Direct and sincere eye contact is also a critical part of persuasive behaviour. Many studies have demonstrated that those who engage in more eye contact, use pleasant facial expressions, and use gestures such as pointing, produce more compliance in their listeners than those who avert their gaze and use limited facial expression.

In summary, the broad repertoire of capabilities that managers should have to be persuasive includes:

- knowing what an audience needs to know
- finding ways to mirror the audience's thinking while leading them forward to imagine a new way to think, to change what they think or to reinforce a long-held belief
- giving a sense of direction so that employees carry with them the decision-making rules of the organisation.

As the model of positive employee behaviour that was proposed early in this chapter suggests, a mixture of appeals, both verbal and non-verbal, is needed to gain commitment.

There is, of course, an important word of warning to offer here. There is an increased danger that, if individuals are socially competent and highly persuasive, they can also be more successfully deceptive. For example, competent communicators who are attentive, friendly and precise can be more successful at deceiving others.²³ It is important to acknowledge that being able to bring the skills of the effective persuader to bear entails an added responsibility to use those skills with integrity.

Winning words

Great communicators understand the power of language to shape the way an audience responds. Developing a heightened sensitivity to language choices is well worth the effort. The power of metaphors and analogies to stimulate new ideas and responses; the effect of repetition and rhythm to add clarity and focus; and the role of stories in making abstract concepts into real and meaningful experiences, are all useful tactics when building an argument. Whole books have been written on the effective use of language, but perhaps some illustrations of the strategies of good communicators can serve the purpose here of exploring effective language use.

Profile: Carly Fiorina

One outstanding communicator who recognises the power of many of the strategies discussed earlier in this chapter is Carly Fiorina, CEO of Hewlett-Packard (HP). Fiorina has been presented in the media as a tough corporate warrior with the will to accomplish the almost impossible (as demonstrated by her ability to achieve a merger in 2002 between technology giants HP and Compaq).

Fiorina has an image as a charismatic leader and communicator. Jeff Christian, the headhunter who interviewed Fiorina for her position at HP, described her as 'incredibly captivating'²⁴ and one HP director claimed that Fiorina was seen as a 'very courageous leader' by employees²⁵ despite fear about the merger between HP and Compaq that she led.²⁶ She has been photographed and written about endlessly in newspapers, with Betty Spence, president of the US-based National Association of Female Executives, claiming that 'The Enron collapse is a story about Enron. The Hewlett-Packard story is about Fiorina'.²⁷

Carly Fiorina has devoted a great deal of her energy to communicating with her various stakeholders. Throughout her time at HP, she has placed a high priority on talking to stakeholders, initially travelling to offices all over the world, then making endless presentations at industry conventions, to customers and to various stakeholders. Fiorina's perception of communication is worth noting. In 2000, she told Helen Trinca, a journalist for the *Australian Financial Review*:

*Effective leadership requires an understanding that you don't own people, you can't control people. They must want to, they must choose to be in the company of others, oriented towards a particular mission. That means, in my view . . . using communication vehicles really creatively.*²⁸

Fiorina promised to reinvent the company in three years, setting out to transform HP's slipping profits and worldwide image. Some of her employees and shareholders have disapproved of her strategies, and they have aroused the ire of Walter Hewlett, 57-year-old elder son of HP's late co-founder, Bill Hewlett. She took on the opposition to the merger with Compaq, arguing strongly with her detractors about the wisdom of this move and finally winning shareholder support. Showing an unanticipated tenacity against significant opposition, she defined a new direction for HP. By April 2002, she did what she had promised at the time of her appointment: she reinvented the firm by pulling off the acquisition of Compaq to create a US\$87 billion dollar technology giant. In the second half of 2002, the company posted a quarterly net profit of US\$390 million, a turnaround on the US\$505 million loss in the same quarter of the previous year.²⁹

One of Fiorina's key strategies has been to create strong images of what HP wishes to achieve, binding together dimensions of its past history and culture with a strong new image of a company that is inventing the future while being socially responsible. She regularly draws upon the powerful mythology of 'Bill and Dave' (Hewlett and Packard, respectively) in her internal communication, because these iconic and popular figures still matter to many of the staff at HP. This allows her to draw upon the strength of what has traditionally been called HP's 'garage culture'. The image of the old garage still appears around the organisation, eliciting images of spontaneity and natural backyard inventiveness.

However, Fiorina has taken another important step by projecting the idea of 'invention' forward, into the future. By leveraging the idea of invention for sustainability and for an improved world, she is creating a new way to see the fruits of technology.

In various speeches, Fiorina has coined some interesting phrases

to capture her vision. She talks about 'the digital renaissance' and 'e-inclusion' as a way to think of the changes that technology is bringing to society. The clever use of these phrases is a strategy to counter the connotations of technology as something to fear. As a rebirth and a pathway to new development, a digital 'renaissance' puts a new and softer spin on the effects of technology. The idea of the 'renaissance man' also recalls a classical notion of human excellence and the changes that took the Western world into a new era of enlightenment. Choosing a metaphor with such a rich historical legacy engages listeners in the past and also leads them to the future, suggesting a parallel movement for good. The idea of 'e-inclusion' jumps off the term 'e-mail' but adds the idea of the people connection.

Many of Fiorina's speeches address the importance of leading change to improve society (the appeal to *pathos* is evident). However, her understanding of effective persuasion is demonstrated when she ensures that she weaves a strong and clear thread of logic through this seemingly emotive message. For example, when addressing an education and technology conference in 2002, she argued strongly that 'We (HP) must contribute—not just for our shareowners, not just for our customers, not just for our employees—but for our communities as well.'³⁰ She then moved quickly to point out that:

*This is, of course, an issue of enlightened self-interest, as much as it is about business or philanthropy. Education is the single most important lever for increasing economic prosperity. It is the single most effective lever, the most important lever for growing a diverse, highly skilled workforce.*³¹

Alongside this careful weaving of *pathos* and *logos*, it is interesting to note Fiorina's use of repetition to reinforce the message in these examples.

In another example, this time in a speech about the importance of a strong brand, she argued: 'If you do the *right* things for the *right* reasons, then ultimately, the *right* outcomes can be achieved'. These simple examples demonstrate that good communicators pay attention to their language strategies as an essential part of building a persuasive case. A conscious and careful use of

imaginative language and repetition can heighten the engagement of employees by helping them to see things in a different light.

Fiorina provides an outstanding role model with her clever, rich and engaging examples. Her speeches are available on the HP website.³² Any manager wishing to find ways to develop their persuasive skills will be inspired by studying the structure, language choices and themes that she uses.

Profile: Jack Welch

As one of the most celebrated CEOs of his era, Jack Welch is another great model of communication excellence. Welch has clear and well articulated advice on how to communicate with his stakeholders, just as he did on most things connected to GE and its operations during his time as CEO.

Welch, like Fiorina, believes in the power of language to make a difference. At GE, Welch was committed to what he called 'relentless consistency'. His advice was summed up by Robert Slater in his book, *Jack Welch on leadership*. Welch's tips are:

- 1 Present consistent messages about your business over the long haul.
- 2 Present consistent themes and strategies to every audience you address.
- 3 Articulate your messages, and then engage in a follow-up campaign to assure those messages are getting through.³³

Notice the term 'campaign' here. Campaigns are often long and demanding and require strategy, energy and commitment. Welch's approach, like Fiorina's, demonstrates that persuading those around us to change, to commit and to excel is not a one-off hit (although each message is strategically important), but rather the building of a relationship that allows employees to think together with you—anticipating your direction and yet finding surprises, challenges and rewards in the freshness of the vision.

And this is, once again, where your choice of language plays such an important role in persuasion. Welch coined terms like 'boundarylessness' to help staff imagine a different way of operating at GE:

*We had to get rid of anything that was in the way of being informal, of being fast, of being boundaryless.*³⁴

Welch's use of the term 'stretch' to think about goal setting was also powerful, and you have probably noticed the term creeping into your own vocabulary and goal-setting conversations. Why? Because it is accessible and an easy way to capture the difference between goal setting that simply restates what is easy to reach and what is really challenging. As Welch put it, 'If you do know how to get there, it's not a stretch target'.³⁵ This clever use of language is an important persuasive strategy. If you use catchy language well, its excitement is infectious, and you will hear others around you take up your idea because the way you expressed it captures their imagination. You will be a successful manager of meaning.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that an effective manager needs to be an opinion leader to be successful in the contemporary workplace. This requires using the cognitive and behavioural skills of the persuasive communicator and also the heightened consciousness of the reflective practitioner who recognises the line between integrity and manipulation.

Managers who are rhetorically sophisticated have the all-important capacity to manage the meaning that is occurring in an organisation. Individualistic, autonomy-seeking employees demand both the opportunity to experience a challenging, engaging and stimulating workplace and the setting of clear boundaries and guidelines about the direction of the organisation. Clear, emotionally engaging and well reasoned arguments for the various commitments required of staff are critical elements for effective management.

For too long, the symbolic aspects of managing people have been seen as optional extras for the eccentric, and the 'soft' skills as the prerogative of HR departments. Managers must recognise that the social and cultural shifts largely brought about by increased affluence and educational levels are creating new organisational men and women who seek challenge, responsibility, creative expression and flexibility. These new employees require increasingly sophisticated managers, and to maintain their credibility, managers must take up the challenges that soft control

brings. Being articulate, being able to sell ideas and engage the minds and hearts of employees are the new bottom line for managers.

One very important path to influencing others is through persuasive communication. However, the power of symbols such as language and images must be used with a strong commitment to ethical practice. If those in positions of leadership use their knowledge of the extraordinary capacities of language well, we can look forward to the growth of organisations that are fulfilling for their members and respectful of the diversity of views held about an issue, and where the creative instincts of all staff are heightened and explored.

Tips for becoming persuasive

- 1 *Reflect on your current strategies for being persuasive. Now experiment!*
- 2 *Remember that an audience listens with one question in mind: 'What's in it for me?' So persuasion is all about audience! audience! audience!*
- 3 *Whether you are getting ready for a brief encounter or a formal presentation, think about your audience.*
- 4 *Adjust any communication to the communication style of your listener (consider the differences in Figure 2.2 each time you plan an encounter).*
- 5 *Take the time to watch (or read the text or case studies about) some good presentations, such as those of Carly Fiorina, to gain inspiration and gather a set of resources which you can adapt for your own presentations.*
- 6 *Always practise your presentations aloud in front of a mirror to heighten awareness of your non-verbal communication.*
- 7 *Remember that shaping effective, persuasive communication is fundamentally about strategic thinking. Aristotle called it the 'invention' or imagination stage of persuasion.*
- 8 *All persuasion should be built on integrity.*
- 9 *There is only short-term benefit in unethical persuasion. In the end, your credibility is your most valuable asset in persuading others to your point of view.*

For further exploration

- D Goleman, R Boyatzis & A McKee, *The new leaders: transforming the art of leadership into the science of results*, Little Brown, London, 2002.
Following on from Daniel Goleman's earlier book, *Emotional intelligence*, Goleman and his co-authors provide an excellent study of what they have identified as the repertoire of leadership styles that leaders can use. They stress how important versatility is in using these styles, and highlight the important role of persuasion in leadership.
- P McCarthy & C Hatcher, *Speaking persuasively: the essential guide to dynamic presentations and speeches*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2002.
My own book; it provides a practical guide to the development of persuasive skills. The book contains lots of case studies using Australian and international examples.
- K Thomson, *Passion at work*, Capstone, Oxford, 1998.
Thomson takes the perspective that having passion at work is central to business success. The book takes the reader step-by-step through six secrets for personal success, suggesting that relationship management is just as important inside an organisation as it is with external clients.
- P Thompson, *Persuading Aristotle*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998.
Australian journalist Peter Thompson offers a practical but thought provoking book about how to pitch ideas so that audiences will respond positively. It is worth reading just to reflect on your own style of communication and the communication preferences of others. Thompson's ideas about communicative styles inspired my comments on the subject for this chapter.

Notes

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CHARISMA AND 3 INFLUENCE

Desmond Guilfoyle

Introduction

What is charisma?

'Doing' charisma

Referent power: meeting the perceiver's standards

Increasing your charisma

Charm

Conclusion

For further exploration

Notes