



PETRA PEOPLE

**LEADERS: COMMUNICATE CONSTRUCTIVELY,
NOT CRITICALLY**



LEADERS: COMMUNICATE CONSTRUCTIVELY, NOT CRITICALLY

LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

I talk to business leaders every day about how effective communication within a company can mean the difference between a successful business that attracts A-Players and one that's poised to die on the vine. But what is effective communication? Well, one thing it isn't is venting about problems or criticizing others, without offering solutions.

Communicating a problem means sharing what the issue is in an open setting where all parties can be heard and then talking through possible solutions. Venting, on the other hand, is often behind closed doors, between two or three colleagues and most often, not constructive. Sure, it can help get a weight off of someone's chest, but more often it can hurt more than help, and can start rumors that spread like wildfire. People talk about "healthy venting," but there's nothing healthy about it, if nothing comes out of it and issues are not resolved.

So how can you turn venting into effective communication in your organization? Here are four steps to get you started:

CREATE A FEEDBACK SYSTEM

There needs to be a process by which employees can share their comments or concerns openly with their higher-ups that leads to a solution. Whether that be bi-monthly check-ins or a complaint submission platform that leads to a meeting with senior staff, the important piece is that employees feel encouraged to share and that their managers work with them to find a solution.

DEFINE WHAT'S HEALTHY AND WHAT'S NOT

Not only should team members feel like they can share with their leaders, but also they should be able to recognize when they are not communicating in a healthy way. Venting – thought it may feel good in the moment – does not address problems in a way that a solution can be found. It's important that team members feel free to express themselves, however, "venting" only communicates frustration – not ideas. In order to resolve an issue, two parties must come together, listen to each other and work toward a resolution. However, this is not a natural instinct for everyone, and that's where training comes in. As a leader, emphasize that the only way a solution can be found is to share openly – and provide

some key tips on how to do so. It might also be helpful to illustrate real examples of what happens when an employee continues to vent without sharing those feelings. Perhaps share a personal story of communication gone wrong and the effect it had on you.

CREATE A CULTURE OF SELF-CHECKING

Being part of a team means keeping one another in check too. If an employee is comfortable enough to talk smack or "vent" with his colleague, that colleague should feel comfortable enough to advise him to speak up and share with the senior staff. Employees on a team are just as responsible if they are hearing about issues from others as they would be if the issue was their own, and likewise, should help their colleagues communicate those issues.

INCLUDE EVERYONE IN CHANGING THE CULTURE

I like to remind all my member companies that "Great minds discuss ideas, average minds discuss events and small minds discuss people." At your own company, set aside time to talk about ways in which the team can avoid gossip and replace it with open dialogue. The best way to create a healthy communication system is to get everyone's input on how it should work. It's the only way to truly get them on board with it – and the only way to make communication a part of your company culture.

It is possible to get everyone on the same page and to make healthy communication a standard. And, the more you reinforce that standard by living it yourself and requiring that your team all follow suit, the more successful you'll be. You'll retain and attract the people who can live that vision and repel the people who can't. It might take some time to change old habits, but it will be worth it, and your company will be a more open and honest place to be for everyone.

This article originally appeared in Small Biz Daily.



THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.

Looking to change your business life - forever?

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

Andy Bailey is lead entrepreneur coach with business coaching firm Petra and serves as the Entrepreneur Organization's global membership director. Visit his blog at www.petracoach.com for more business and leadership insight.

PETRA COACH

342 Cool Springs Blvd., Suite 203, Franklin, TN 37067 | 888.330.1020
www.petracoach.com | www.facebook.com/petracoach

