C-level executives continue to tolerate things taking place throughout their organization and procrastinate on taking action in areas that are dramatically affecting their company’s results.

The most important issues business leaders are allowing to sabotage organizational results involve employee performance.

Bad employee performance is exhibited by team members that:

- Are not taking responsibility for their jobs and roles
- Need constant prodding to get things done
- Are not responsive to client requests
- Are not returning phone messages
- Are throwing their fellow employees “under the bus”
- Are having shouting matches in the office and on project sites
- Are using profanity when communicating with co-workers, clients and vendors
- Procrastinated on following through on business opportunities
- Are showing up late or leaving early with no explanation
- Have negative attitudes
- Complain about customers and co-workers
- Are “disappearing” during the day

Mediocre organizations and “Champion Organizations”

The difference between mediocre organizations and “Champion Organizations” often comes down to how leaders manage issues such as those outlined above. Many leaders feel challenged in managing performance and either procrastinate on addressing issues and thus tolerate the results, or they address them with ineffective communication habits that sabotage their intended outcomes. This article will address the latter.

There are seven primary stylistic mistakes leaders regularly make when communicating to manage performance in their organization. Additionally, leaders who are not cognizant of, or choose to tolerate, these communication errors being made by others in their organization are seen as either, at best, enabling the behaviour, and at worst, authorizing it. Either way leaders are allowing it to negatively impact the work environment.

The level to which these seven leadership communication sins have infiltrated an organization’s culture will determine whether the work environment could be considered toxic or hostile, or is just an annoying place to earn a living. Again, either way, it is a workplace that is not as productive as it could be and most likely has a high rate of employee turnover, or is likely to once the economy heats up and the job opportunities begin to open.

The mistakes identified below are “The 7 Deadly Sins of Organizational Leadership
Communication:

Communication Sin #1: Lack of Specificity
This causes people on the receiving end of a communication to have to mind-read or guess as to what is being requested of them. In non-specific communication details are left out or are, at best, vague.

The recipient for many reasons fails to ask follow up questions to get specifics and, as such, they have to figure it out on their own causing stress and frustration on both sides as a trial and error become the norm for completing delegated projects.

Communication Sin #2: Lack of Focus on Desirable Behaviours
It seems to be human nature that people are great at saying what they don’t want or what they don’t want others to do, but have challenges identifying the behaviours they want instead. This is a learned behaviour from our upbringing. Thus, it can be unlearned.

It is important to understand that wherever your focus goes, grows. As such, people are getting more of what they don’t want because they continue to focus on it. Shift communication style to focus on desired, positive behaviours and results will come more quickly with less micro-managing necessary to get those desired results.

Communication Sin #3: Lack of Directness
This is where people in organizations go behind the backs of their co-workers, peers, bosses and subordinates with water cooler gossip. Another example is the leader who tries to fix a problem that should be addressed to one person but calls a team meeting to offer a blanket directive. A third is when co-workers tell managers the mistakes their co-workers have made hoping to make themselves look good at the expense of someone else.

Communication Sin #4: Lack of Immediacy
This is procrastination, pure and simple. Champion leaders do not engage in procrastination.

This is when communication is avoided because the conversations are difficult and leaders don’t know how to approach the offending party, so they choose not to, allowing it to fester while hoping the issue goes away and gets better.

It never does, does it?

Communication Sin #5: Lack of Appropriate Tone
Ever had someone in a professional setting raise his or her voice at you, or someone else, in a condescending or threatening manner? How about responding in a sarcastic manner? These are just two of the ways inappropriate tone ruin relationships and trust in company cultures.

This sin may also be the most immediately damaging style of communication as it is demeaning to others and, depending on the situation, could be construed as workplace bullying. If there was one of these seven leadership communication sins that must be stopped in its tracks before it grows, this is the one. This type of behaviour is absolutely unacceptable in the workplace.

Communication Sin #6: Lack of Focused Attention
In this day of technology and multi-tasking too many office conversations occur passing in the hallway, while one person is checking/responding to e-mails on their smart phone, or talking to us while on hold waiting for someone they will likely deem more important once they come on the phone. This fosters disrespect and low trust in organizations and should not be tolerated.
Unfortunately, because technology has created the expectation of the instant response organizational leaders feel compelled to always be connected. This is misdirected thinking. Responding to an e-mail request or enquiry while attempting to communicate with a direct-report or other team member will cause long-term damage to a relationship that must be based on trust and commitment. While holding off on the e-mail response for 10-15 minutes no one on the other end will know the difference and the leader can do wonders for building a solid, trusting relationship with valued team members reaping long-term organizational benefits.

This sin can be easily rectified with a little self-leadership to manage expectations and set boundaries.

**Communication Sin #7: Lack of Respectful Rebuttals**

This may be the most common, yet subconscious of all seven leadership communication sins. It’s the conversations when someone agrees or provides positive feedback in the first part of their sentence, only to be followed by “but.” After the “but” comes the other shoe and you end up feeling misled and unfulfilled, and don’t even know why.

These seven leadership communication habits can cause significant damage to productivity. As mentioned earlier in this article long-term toleration of these communication styles can create a low-trust, highly toxic and hostile work environment.

The best organizations create an environment where leaders and their teams agree to a certain standard of organizational communication based on core values that are truly lived and managed to, and are not just corporate graffiti.

Leaders of these organizations communicate at a high level, and they expect their employees and team members to do the same. They also have created a culture where team members are able to hold each other accountable to their style of communicating and are thus able to overcome these seven deadly sins of organizational leadership communication.

To make this type of environment work organization leaders must bring high levels of humility to their approach and expect appropriate levels of humility from their employees. Humility is a powerful leadership tool which allows for an openness to constructive feedback, which is a topic for another day.

If you believe you and your team members may be making these same leadership communication mistakes go to: www.HowToImproveOrganizationalCommunication.com and download the free White Paper, “The 7 Deadly Sins of Organizational Leadership Communication” to learn how to fix these sins and build a championship organization.

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Skip Weisman has over 28 years of experience in leading organizations and/or operating his own successful business. Today he works with business leaders and leaders of not-for-profit organizations to improve personnel, productivity and profits by helping them “Create a Champion Organization.”

Skip defines a “Champion Organization” as one that communicates effectively and takes action with commitment towards a shared compelling vision, effectively
develops leadership and teamwork throughout and diligently, consistently, fairly and effectively manages performance.