

Chapter 15

Innovation, Leadership, and Communication Intelligence

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Abstract In this chapter, we consider the relationship between effective leadership, communication, innovation, and creativity within organizations and teams. In a dynamic business world where innovation is a critical driver for competitiveness and growth, we argue that closing the gap between ineffective and effective leadership and communication approaches matters. To assist, we provide two interrelated “tools” that can improve effective leadership communication practices at every stage of the innovation cycle—from ideation through to implementation. These lead to clear, open, and compelling communication interactions that underpin innovation and engagement at inter and intra-organizational levels. Our focus is on increasing the chances of successful innovation outcomes by using effective leadership and communication approaches, combined with “communication intelligence” and “fair process” involvement.

15.1 Introduction

Why do highly innovative companies like Apple, Google, and Gore expend considerable effort and resources communicating the value and utility of their products and services? A simple answer—because by communicating effectively, they capture the minds and hearts of their customers. These firms emphasize effective communication that is clear, open, and compelling inside their businesses.

Effective communication means achieving the desired outcomes and objectives of communication exchanges, in a specific context or situation, which leads to shared understanding and satisfaction for the participants in those exchanges (Woodward et al. 2016). Effective communication underpins every phase of successful innovation: from tapping innovation resources and investment; through the ideation process; through implementing change; to marketing the innovative

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products and services produced; and engaging in interactive customer feedback. On the other hand, ineffective communication or miscommunication cuts idea generation short, confuses creative exploration, wastes resources and effort, contributes to implementation disasters, and demotivates or disengages people. A key challenge for leading people toward innovation outcomes is how to close the gap between ineffective and effective communication interactions for all those involved.

Therefore, in this chapter, we discuss the relationship between innovation, creativity, leadership and effective communication. We examine the research on leadership and communication approaches as well as the behaviors and language that facilitate, engage and mobilize innovation, creativity, and collaboration within organizations and teams. We then present two interrelated “tools” that will substantially improve the potential for effective leadership communication in practice, in every phase of innovation. The fundamental “tool” is building “communication intelligence” among innovation stakeholders, to increase interaction that is clear, open and compelling. In addition, we recommend adopting the “*INVOLVE*”—“fair process” leadership communication practices across the various innovation phases to positively motivate and engage people.

15.2 Innovation, Creativity, and Work

Knowledge and information are two key constituents of dynamic innovation and change (Pfeffermann 2011). The focus on innovation and creativity is critical in a modern business world where organizations are under continuous pressure to perform and deal with the paradigm shift of knowledge work in a digital age (Dalkir 2013; Drucker 2009). To maintain competitive edge, organizations must meet this shift (Mayfield and Mayfield 2004), find efficient ways to promote innovation at different levels (Mayfield and Mayfield 2008), and understand the nature, opportunities and threats of disruption (D’Aveni 1999).

Moreover, to create and maintain continuous innovation flow, employees need to be motivated to innovate, and have the skills and capacity to do so (Mayfield and Mayfield 2008). Employee creativity lays the groundwork for organizational innovation (Oldham and Cummings 1996). Creative employees bring forth solutions to problems, defend their ideas and provide an action plan for how to put these ideas into practice (Gumusluoglu and Ilsev 2009a, b). Innovation is core to many established management approaches, such as total quality management (Osayawe Ehigie and Clement Akpan 2004), Kaizen (Imai 1986), and organizational learning (Senge 1990).

By its nature, innovation requires “out of the box thinking,” doing new things or doing old things in new ways. This includes introducing novel and better ways of carrying out work tasks (West et al. 2003). Zaltman et al. (1973) see innovation as any “idea, practice, or material artifact” taken up by an individual, group, or organization in order to bring about change. From this perspective, types of innovation will differ depending on the *level* of focus (Amabile et al. 1996;

Mayfield and Mayfield 2008). At the organizational level, innovation concerns the domains of strategy, structure, organizational processes, and new market, product, or service selection. Innovation at the group level can include designing and creating new products, processes, and administrative routines. Individual level innovation includes idea generation, process effectiveness, and improving individual work (Stoker et al. 2001). At the leadership level, it can include creating, articulating, and persuading about innovative ideas or initiatives (Elkins and Keller 2003; Jung et al. 2003)

Creativity, the basis of innovation, is sometimes assumed to be limited to certain areas or professions, such as sciences or arts (Mumford et al. 1997). However, creativity is required in any jobs with tasks that pose complicated, unclear problems where effective performance is contingent on developing new and effective solutions (Ford 2000; Mumford and Gustafson 1988). This is the setting of modern business, where leaders and their teams need to deal with largely “adaptive” problems—problems that have no straightforward solution or quick fixes available. Solving adaptive problems requires innovation—and a transformation in beliefs, ideologies, values, and ways of working (Heifetz 1994).

Creative work, in general, comprises processes to both produce ideas, and to implement them (Vincent et al. 2002). The idea generation process (ideation) includes: defining a problem, collecting information, conceptual structure generation, and combing these concepts to form a new category (Mumford et al. 2003). For idea execution, the key processes include: idea evaluation, vetting and testing, and formulating and designing a plan (Loneragan et al. 2004). Creative work revolves around individuals who must actively look for, and manipulate knowledge and concepts (Byrne et al. 2009). This requires expertise, and years of experience (Qin and Simon 1990; Weisberg 1999). For a successful solution, problems will need expertise from several areas in various forms, which makes creative work collaborative (with communication exchanges), as well as individually focused (Cagliano et al. 2000).

Creative work constitutes several stages, consuming time, and energy. For example, successful idea execution requires continuous effort supported by a good amount of intrinsic motivation (Collins and Amabile 1999). Creative work demands organizational resources along with the time and commitment of several people and groups. As such, politics and persuasion are likely to come into play to secure resources for successful project completion (Dudek and Hall 1991). As innovation moves into implementation, leaders must also focus attention on “active monitoring and tailoring the plan” to cope with the inevitable challenges faced in the field (Byrne et al. 2009, p. 264).

Furthermore, creative work entails risk (Mumford et al. 2002), as the idea might not be generated at all or might not be sound enough, and as such the resulting product might not fit the market need (Cardinal and Hatfield 2000). Therefore, context plays a huge role and the leadership of creative efforts should consider not just the organizational strategy but sociotechnical aspects as well (Byrne et al. 2009). Cultivating an innovative environment fosters risk-taking and provides an opportunity to employ more creative techniques in the workplace (Gumusluoglu

and Ilsev 2009a, b), which requires trust. Perceptions of trustworthy and engaging management are enhanced by leadership communication openness or transparency (e.g. Butler 1991; McCauley and Kuhnert 1992). To succeed, innovation, and creative work activities require effective leadership approaches and effective communication interactions at every point.

15.3 Innovation, Leadership Approaches, and Communication

Much research on leadership and innovation examines the results of leader behaviors on outcomes such as effectiveness or efficiency rather than the innovation outcomes (De Jong and Den Hartog 2007). A special issue of *The Leadership Quarterly* (2004, Vol. 15, No. 1)—“leading for innovation” examined the creative efforts of leaders. Mumford and Licuanan (2004) summed up the research by emphasizing the various communication roles played by leaders, such as facilitating problem definition, as well as encouraging open discussion on different concepts or ideas, that also allows followers to understand the source and meaning of these. They highlighted that many traditional leadership approaches might not fully fit the innovative leadership required into the future.

Leadership support and guidance are critical in facilitating innovation at the early stage, as these enable successful team processes (Tannenbaum et al. 1996). The skills, attitudes, and knowledge of a leader affect group climate and norms (Hackman 2002) and through monitoring, coaching and feedback, a leader creates a supportive environment, which helps the team to innovate (West et al. 2003) and perform successfully (McIntyre and Salas 1995).

Zaccaro et al. (2001) highlight a series of factors essential for team success, and they see leadership as the most critical. The degree to which the leader draws team objectives, and organizes and manages the team to make sure that these objectives are attained, adds significantly to team innovation (West et al. 2003). According to Yukl et al. (1990), leaders who clearly communicate instructions, such as deadlines, standards, and priorities, were more successful in leading innovative teams.

In examining the research on leaders of creative efforts, Byrne et al. (2009) noted that leaders are likely to structure the work environment “by creating groupings of technical expertise” (p. 259), and promoting effective communication between groups operating in a flat structure. They also, however, note the value of leadership coordination to assist the actors in the creative process. Earlier research noted the role of leaders structuring activities as well as fostering teams of diverse people who communicate effectively with one another (Mumford et al. 2007). The positive relation between innovation and effective, engaging leadership is confirmed by a number of studies in R&D settings (e.g., Keller 1992; Waldman and Atwater 1994).

Interestingly, Bel et al. (2015) examined the interplay between communication, leadership styles, and the probability of successful innovation, and found a positive

link between innovation and firm size, regular communication, and result-oriented leadership. However, they also found that although organizations require “both strong leadership and sufficient communication to overcome inertia; frequent communication—particularly amongst strong managers and in larger firms—can cause leaders to pull the firm in different directions, resulting in disagreement and a failure to successfully innovate” (p. 1). This research suggests that as the organization size increases, it will be essential to achieve coordinated and collaborative communication with more emphasis on the effectiveness, rather than quantity, of communication.

Leaders also have a strong impact on employees’ work behaviors, which also includes innovation behaviors (De Jong and Den Hartog 2007). The impact can be direct through identifying and addressing followers’ intrinsic motivation essential to creativity (Tierney et al. 1999) or indirect by creating a safe climate for exploring different approaches (Amabile et al. 1996). Innovative behaviors in the workplace depend on interpersonal interaction (Anderson et al. 2004; Zhou and Shalley 2003). As Basadur (2004, p. 103) writes about the most effective leaders of tomorrow as the being the ones who “will help individuals (...) to coordinate and integrate their differing styles through a process of applied creativity that includes continuously discovering and defining new problems, solving those problems and implementing the new solutions.” We argue that the leadership approaches deployed and underpinned by effective communication including appropriate language are crucial for innovation outcomes. So, what kind of approaches are likely to contribute to this?

15.3.1 Organic, Transformational, and Charismatic Leadership

One contemporary leadership approach related to collective innovation is the so-called “organic” paradigm (Avery 2004). These are “leaderless” or “leaderful” organizations or teams, where leadership may not be “vested” in a single individual (p. 63); and leadership roles and tasks might shift among different people as teams self manage over time. It involves organizations where motivated people mutually work together and “sense-make” through collaborative communication. An analogy is a jazz quartet where rhythm, melody, and harmony flow dynamically through the improvisations of the different players to create a whole creative musical performance, and where the quartet members are shifting and signaling seamlessly between leading and supporting roles.

In organic work settings, effective communication exchange among organizational members is extensive to make sense of “rapidly changing circumstances,” and to share vision, knowledge, and information (Avery 2004, pp. 63–64). Organic leadership is important, as this modern, ad hoc approach is process oriented, enabling people to quickly innovate, and adjust in a fast changing business environment while mutually solving adaptive problems. The growth of organic

organizations (including matrix or latticed structures) is accelerating, particularly in the technology or entrepreneurial arenas (e.g., see Gore case study by Bell, in Avery 2004). Collaborative and transparent behaviors with active listening are essential for clear, open, and compelling communication in these organic situations.

By contrast, the two major leadership approaches that research over time demonstrates as particularly associated with innovation are: transformational and charismatic leadership. Both are built on the assumption of effective leadership communication and interaction.

By intellectually challenging followers, espousing innovation, and communicating a strong vision with a clear sense of emotional purpose, transformational leaders nurture a climate where employees are motivated to search for innovative approaches (Ling et al. 2008). Transformational leaders promote creative ideas, based on the “championing role” they adopt (Howell and Higgins 1990). In these settings employees can exceed performance expectations and be stimulated to take on innovative work techniques. Charismatic leadership with people engagement also influences the organizational climate (Koene et al. 2002). Charismatic leaders demonstrate innovative behaviors that deviate from the regular norms, and in doing so, they permit “out of the box” idea generation for those involved with technological innovations, such as R&D teams (Conger and Kanungo 1987).

There are many research examples of the impact of transformational leadership on creativity and innovation. For example, Sosik et al. (1998) in their research on 36 undergraduate students found that transformational leadership enhanced creativity in a “group decision support system” context. Research by Howell and Avolio (1992) on 78 managers in a Canadian financial institution found transformational leadership behaviors was positively related to the business-unit performance and this relationship also needed clear leadership support for innovation. Research by Gumusluoglu and Ilsev (2009a, b), shows a positive correlation between transformational leadership, followers’ creativity, and organizational innovation also influenced by psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, and the perception of support for innovation. Likewise, Chen et al. (2014) in their study of 151 CEOs and matching senior management team members from Chinese Manufacturing firms, show transformational leadership to positively influence product innovation performance (conceptualized as the degree to which a new product or service achieves its market share, sales, investment return, and profit objectives).

Although transformational leaders at times can adopt a more directive communication style, they also actively seek followers’ involvement by emphasizing the significance of collaboration in performing joint and collective tasks, offering a chance to share and learn, and delegating responsibility to their followers to perform any necessary work to ensure effective performance (Bass 1985). In doing so, they create an empowering environment, where followers pursue innovation in their work tasks. Amabile et al. (1996) show that autonomy enables employees to be more creative, as it enables them to believe that they have greater personal authority over how to go about accomplishing their tasks. Empowerment further caters to the

intrinsic motivation of followers, which (as already discussed) contributes to innovative behaviors (Jung and Sosik 2002).

15.3.2 Leadership, Motivating Language, and Framing

Research studies show that employees' behaviors can be impacted by a leader's conscious use of speech (e.g. Mayfield et al. 1995). "Leader talk" enables leaders to seek, and gain, trust, and acknowledgement of subordinates (Reina and Reina 1999). Appropriate leader language skills in motivating and conveying vision are significant (Goleman et al. 2001). Transformational and charismatic leaders try to engage stakeholders around vision, ideas, innovation and change. Two effective communication attributes for these leadership approaches are the notions of motivating language and communication framing.

The motivating language framework involves classifying leadership communication language into three types: direction-giving language, empathetic language and meaning-making language. Direction-giving language occurs when leaders reduce uncertainty by elucidating roles, performance expectations, goals, and responsibilities. Empathetic language happens when leaders go beyond the mere economic exchange between them and their followers, to care for their peoples' emotional well-being. Meaning-making language takes place when leaders convey and express the organizational norms, culture, behaviors, and values that are unique and relevant for each organization building affiliation, supporting change management, and organizational socialization which Jablin (2001) refers to as "Entry and Assimilation."

Mayfield and Mayfield (2004) highlight motivating language as part of the innovation relationship between leader and followers, arguing that when leaders strategically communicate through motivating language, follower innovation increases. Direction-giving language, empathetic language, and meaning-making language encourage innovation through a combination of, for example: catering to followers' intrinsic motivation and understanding of what the task entails; and delineating reward policies and organizational goals, as well as risk-taking methods (Mayfield and Mayfield 2002). Additionally, this lays the groundwork for leadership training interventions to enhance workers' innovativeness (Zorn and Ruccio 1998) and provides ways to maximize employee outcomes such as satisfaction, performance, retention, and so on (Graen et al. 2004; Mayfield et al. 1995).

Fairhurst and Sarr (1996), who view leadership as a "language game," contend that framing is the most important skill in this game. "Just as an artist works from a palette of colors to paint a picture, the leader who manages meaning works from a vocabulary of words and symbols to help construct a frame in the mind of the listener" (Fairhurst and Sarr 1996, p. 100). They further explain how framing helps leaders to motivate actions and secure backing for their vision (Fairhurst and Sarr 1996; Fairhurst 2011). These visionary leaders frame the purpose in a way that is relevant and meaningful (Conger 1991). As Snow (2004) states, "Collective action

frames, like picture frames, focus attention by punctuating or specifying what in our sensual field is relevant and what is irrelevant, what is “in frame” and what is ‘out of frame,’ in relation to the object of orientation” (p. 384). Particularly important framing methods for encouraging engagement with innovation are metaphors, stories, examples, and catchphrases.

Innovation literature also identifies the importance of framing. For example, Pfeffermann et al. (2008) note, “framing innovation/s for successful commercialization, innovation communication might be an important managerial function; understood as a firm’s capital that tends to enhance competitive advantage” (p. 41). Such innovation communication (combining communication and innovation capital) would include framing innovations, “to facilitate the adoption process.” (p. 41).

We argue that for innovation and creativity, an effective leader communicator will use a combination of language that motivates, and messages that are framed, to appeal to the innovation interests of participants. This supports effective communication that is clear, open, and compelling. A leader’s language can give others a sense of direction and logic; harness emotive appeal; and place the rational and emotional basis in the context of why people should be doing or committing to something. Using words and phrases that resonate on these different levels in a relevant way should increase the motivation of stakeholders to engage in the innovation process and outcomes. Equally, getting innovation participants to describe objectives or ideas in their own language and choice of words should increase “ownership.” It is not transmitting the message effectively (albeit this is crucial for a leader), but interacting, that builds commitment and understanding. Engaging in dialogue with open and constructive questioning, can clarify the vision, objectives and priorities. Besides, framing the messages using stories and examples should “bring to life” both the objectives of an innovation undertaking, and its potential impact. A resonating catchphrase or motivating language can encapsulate innovation intentions and culture. Just consider Apple’s own “Think Different” campaign; the description of Toyota process innovation in “Lean Thinking”; or Elon Musk’s quote, “Failure is an option here. If things are not failing, you are not innovating enough.”

Our review highlights the need for leaders to encourage innovation and creativity, engage stakeholders in the process, engender commitment to change, and enable an environment of creative work and knowledge sharing. In all, effective communication is a key ingredient for the leadership approaches related to innovation outcomes. Some scholars view communication as an essence of leadership rather than a mere technique (Barge 1994; Macik-Frey 2007). Salacuse (2006, p. 23), maintains, “Indeed, leadership could not exist without communication.” In a similar vein, Barge (1994, p. 21) comments “leadership is enacted through communication.” Literature is replete with studies that highlight the significance of communication interactions in effective leadership (e.g., Den Hartog and Verburg 1997; Fairhurst 2011; Tourish and Jackson 2008). When leading for innovation, these communication interactions occur in different ways (e.g., speaking, listening, reading, writing, behaving, interpersonal relationships) and through different formats (e.g., face-to-face, or technology and media). We believe that the leader’s role

modeling of effective communication matters, and so does the environment for communication interaction and innovation work that they foster in their organization or team.

So, the question arises, how is this achieved and sustained? The answer lies in building on appropriate leadership approaches, behaviors, and motivating language or framing, by deploying effective leadership communication that is essentially clear, open, and compelling at its core. This will help to close the gap between ineffective and effective communication. To assist with increasing the capacity to do this, we present and recommend two interrelated “tools” that will substantially improve effective leadership communication at every phase of innovation. The fundamental “tool” is building “communication intelligence” among innovation stakeholders, especially when role modeled by leaders.

15.4 Innovation Leadership and Communication Intelligence

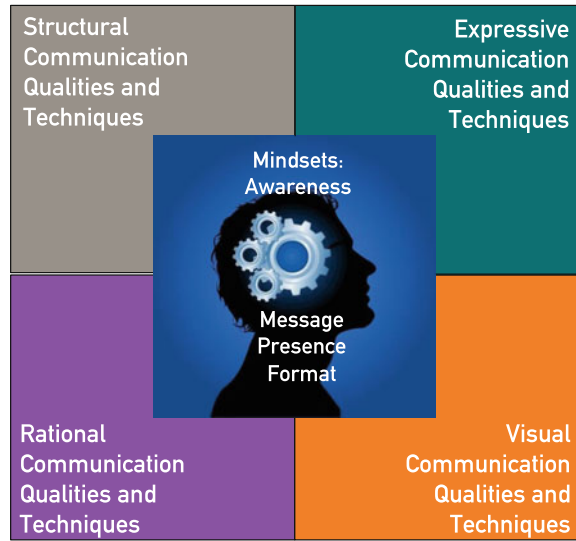
Effective leadership communication that reverberates with people is both relevant and comprehensible. The communication exchanges should resonate (such as with motivating language, vivid examples, or cooperative questioning). These exchanges are interactive, dynamic, and contextual. These build trust through the quality of the relationship experiences, and these relationships are stronger when communication contact is inclusive and accessible.

We contend that leaders should utilize their “communication intelligence” to engage stakeholders in innovation and creativity, by demonstrating effective leadership communication that resonates, clarifies, and connects. This will lead to communication that is clear (comprehensible and meaning based), open (inclusive and interactive) and compelling (motivating and relevant).

“Communication Intelligence” (CI) is a model that fully integrates eight elements to achieve effective leadership communication (Woodward 2015). CI combines four mindsets (the things people need to think about for effective communication); and four clusters of communication techniques and qualities (the ways people need to undertake communication activities to be effective). People with high levels of “communication intelligence” use all the mindsets and use techniques from across all four clusters, particularly those that are natural for them. Yet, they increase their communication effectiveness by learning, then using, techniques from other clusters that are less natural for them.

There are four CI Communication Mindsets (the “what,” “why,” “where,” and “who”): Awareness, Message, Presence, Communication Formats; and Four CI Clusters of Communication Qualities and Techniques (the ‘how’): rational, structural, expressive, and visual (see Fig. 15.1). For a leader’s communication approach to be completely understood, these eight elements sit underneath a person’s cultural

Fig. 15.1 Communication intelligence framework for leaders. *Source* Woodward (2015)



**Eight Communication Intelligence Elements:
Four Mindsets and Four Technique Clusters**

background (because different national cultures have unique communication characteristics), and their individual personality trait of extraversion/introversion—as all eight elements are present in all cultures (contextually adjusted); and are found in both extraverts and introverts (Woodward 2015) (see Fig. 15.1).

CI applies across all kinds of communication situations—public, group, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (with self), and are present across the various communication mediums used by leaders (from email to presentations; from personal conversations to team discussions; from blogs to video posts). Combining these CI elements produces effective interaction between leaders and people, both within and outside their organization or setting, and generates a platform for achieving relevant meaning, connection, and results. It also underscores the multiplicity and complexity of effective leadership communication interactions—especially for dealing with adaptive and creative processes.

The four CI “mindsets” for leaders, interrelated to innovation and creativity are:

- **Awareness:** of self, others, context and purpose. This refers to a person’s ability to be deeply aware of the communication needs and preference styles of those involved in communication as well as oneself; and be aware of the situation, context, or purpose of the communication activity (e.g., informing, inquiring, influencing, persuading, entertaining, motivating, inspiring, brainstorming). For example, in innovation leadership communication, the “awareness mindset” is reflected in: a desire to involve others, and to take account of the diversity effects (e.g., culture, gender, generational cohort) that would influence the communication interactions (transmission and interpretation); understanding the

likely motivators, language and themes that will be relevant to others; and considering cultural context or physical environment when planning activities, such as brainstorming or innovation evaluation discussions.

- **Message:** the core meaning and content of the communication, supported by structure and appropriate details, as well as message relevance and clarity. For example, in innovation leadership communication, the “message mindset” is reflected in: clear message framing and exchange among stakeholders, striving for comprehension, clarity, and relevance; opening up the free flow of ideas and analysis messaging including an appropriate balance of listening, inquiry, and advocacy (asking and telling) that leads to constructive dialogue and shared understanding; and innovation vision messages that resonate quickly.
- **Presence:** beyond the words—the nonverbal (e.g., body language and gestures), paraverbal (e.g., sound/tone of voice) and visual, symbolic or expressive features. For innovation leadership communication, the visible presence of leaders and followers during their interactions will influence the engagement and environment for creative and open thinking. This is reflected in, for example, open body postures; respectful and measured, yet expressive voice tone; and visual communication devices (charts and technology collaboration tools) that are stylistically owned by the participants in the innovation process. Moreover, some form of visualization and “personal energy” is an essential ingredient in creative brainstorming and ideation activity.
- **Format:** the choice and use of communication formats, media and repertoire that are “fit for purpose and situation” (e.g., behaviors, spoken, written, listening, thinking/reflection, novels, text, email, instant messaging, video, and the like). For example, in innovation leadership communication, the “format mindset” is reflected in continuously adopting or adjusting communication activities, media, and technologies that are available, accessible, appropriate, and useful for each stage of the innovation process and assist “ease of collaboration.”

The four CI clusters of communication techniques and qualities for leaders interrelated to innovation and creativity are:

- **Rational:** techniques and qualities that affect the logic, factuality, knowledge level, intellectual substance, idea clarity, and simplicity of language for comprehension in communication. For innovation, “rational” qualities would include: being objective; using verifiable evidence and key facts; suppressing and recognizing bias in thoughts and words (especially when separating idea generation from analysis in the brainstorming and decision stages); clarifying complex ideas and concepts into simple words for understanding; and providing precise summaries of action items and priorities for innovation implementation.
- **Structural:** techniques and qualities that affect the language or sound clarity, consistency, order/flow, construction, thoroughness, levels of detail and accuracy in communication. For innovation, “structural” qualities would include: methods for agenda setting, organizing, disseminating, and exchanging

information; discussion preparation; sequencing participative debate; utilizing deliberate “unstructured” times for communication exchange to allow free-low dialogue and openness without power control; using rhetorical tools, such as “catchphrase,” repetition, and triads (lists in three for summation); and ensuring innovation implementation plans are appropriately and accurately documented.

- **Expressive:** qualities that affect the expression, emotion, interactivity, personalization, and authenticity of communication. In innovation leadership communication, “expressive” qualities would include: storytelling; using inspiring, and motivating language; displaying appropriate expressive nonverbal and paraverbal communication (such as body gestures and voice tone) in support of ideas; active listening (where mind, verbal and nonverbal communication are focused); demonstrating personal commitment and enthusiasm; and exhibiting behaviors engendering a sense of trustworthiness, risk-taking, openness, and collaboration.
- **Visual:** qualities that affect the appearance, visibility, conceptuality, creativity, and symbolism of communication. In innovation leadership communication, “visual” qualities would include: active idea generation; producing graphical, design, or visual representations of ideas and messages; demonstrating future facing messaging to allow people to imagine success after problem solving and ideation; and articulating the “big picture.” [Adapted from Woodward (2015) and Woodward et al. (2016).]

Combining the CI elements creates clear, open, and compelling communication. This is valuable for all leadership approaches to engage people with innovation and to encourage everyone to have “communication intelligent” interactions. One additional “tool” will help to increase involvement levels in innovation processes, as well as build innovation capability and confidence over time. This is “*INVOLVE*”—the “fair process” leadership communication practices, which are usable across different phases of innovation engagement.

15.5 *INVOLVE*—Fair Process Leadership and Communication

Our earlier discussion on leadership approaches raised the fundamental issue of successfully managing processes for innovation and creativity. “Fair process leadership” (FPL) is one framework that does this successfully at individual, team, and organizational levels. FPL is an integrative framework that supports effective leadership, particularly in situations emphasizing process engagement and transparency with stakeholders, as well as objective evaluation (Van Der Heyden 2013). These characteristics are important for innovation and creativity cultures, as “fair process” promises a high level of commitment and trust, which are necessary ingredients for high performance (Kim and Mauborgne 1997; Van Der Heyden and Limberg 2007).

In simple terms, “fair process” exist where the participants in any decision-making process understand the process that will be followed, as well as the associated rules and modes of engagement and communication, and perceives these to be fair with respect to all participants. Fair process principles provide a “means,” rather than an “end,” toward more engaged decision-making and improved implementation (Van Der Heyden and Limberg 2007), which we contend are essential elements for successful innovation.

Van Der Heyden et al. (2005) developed a “Fair Process Leadership” model with a *process description*, consisting of five steps (the 5 “E”s) and a description of *fair play behaviors* that leaders need to demonstrate throughout these steps (the 5 “C”s). This model as further espoused by Van Der Heyden (2013) represents an interlinked cycle for decision-making, implementation and continuous review (see circular model within Fig. 15.2). It can be directly applicable for teams and organizations seeking innovation built on deep engagement and commitment including organic teams. In additional work, Woodward et al. (2016) posited three communication practices to enhance “fair process” as an actionable concept, these are the ‘INVOLVE’ practices (also see Fig. 15.2). How might fair process principles translate into leading, working and communicating within innovation processes? We adapt and cite from the relevant research below.

Adapted from: Van Der Heyden (2013) and Woodward et al. (2016)

Leaders and teams can adopt the “INVOLVE” communication practices to enact “fair process” to facilitate innovation, creativity, and engagement. The core

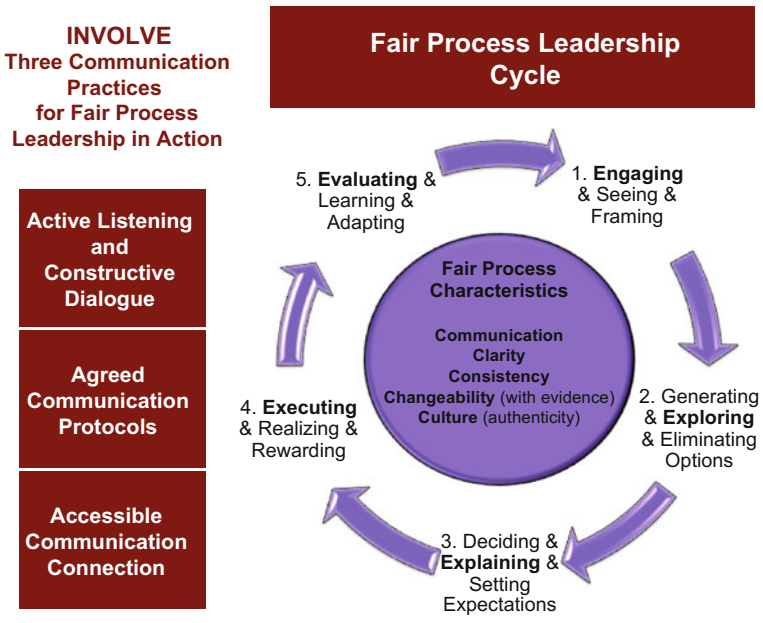


Fig. 15.2 INVOLVE—fair process effective leadership communication

principle is a simple and compelling message: “*INVOLVE*.” This is the deep belief and conviction to encourage effective communication that demonstrates fair process for all those involved. Three specific communication practices put this principle into action at each stage of the innovation cycle:

- **Active Listening and Constructive Dialogue** [productive behaviors for interaction, deliberation, option generation, analysis, decision-making, explanation, and evaluation; as well as an appropriate balance of inquiry (asking) and advocacy (telling) with demonstrable active listening];
- **Agreed Communication Protocols** [mutually developed and transparent communication rules with commitment and follow-through that are culturally appropriate—these should not be bureaucratic, but guidelines to coordinate the development and exchange of knowledge as the creative ideas emerge and are taken forward—e.g., the expected rules or ways of behaving for doing unstructured or structured activities, or the expected norms for using technology collaboration systems]; and
- **Accessible Communication Connection** [useful, convenient, and readily available communication activities, formats, and media to facilitate participation and engagement with internal and external stakeholders—these are the communication format choices that make sense at any point in time, and are subject to change during the innovation cycle to foster collaboration]. (Adapted from Woodward et al. 2016.)

The five complementary and mutually reinforcing behavioral characteristics of FPL identified by Van Der Heyden (2013), and to which the “*INVOLVE*” communication practices relate, are:

- **Communication:** the ability to give all actors a “voice” without fear or pressure of retaliation once that “voice” is exercised;
- **Clarity:** the transparency of behaviors, interactions, and exchanges by the actors of the process;
- **Consistency:** the uniformity in the treatment of actors, issues, and steps, including over time;
- **Changeability:** the possibility of “correction,” changing actors’ beliefs, and possibly changing the chosen course, as a function of new evidence; and
- **Culture:** the commitment to ‘do the fair thing’ not just superficially, but deeply and authentically. [Adapted from Van Der Heyden (2013).]

With these behaviors in place, all participants can dynamically enact the five stages of the FPL model (Van Der Heyden 2013) for innovation and creativity—deploying the “*INVOLVE*” practices along the way:

- *Engage:* Establish an innovation process to involve relevant people; seek inputs to framing issues and generating ideas; seek constructive challenge to views; make contributions to the process design and priorities before the decisions are actually made, when influencing this is still a possibility.

- *Explore*: Generate and explore all options and their potential outcomes thoroughly and comprehensively. Allow an open and dynamic ideation process, by not closing options early and keeping idea generation separated from analysis. Then through constructive debate and analysis eliminate those options that are neither promising nor capable of successful implementation, and take forward the most prospective options.
- *Explain*: Make a clear innovation decision, where the leadership (or group in an organic setting) explains its rationale. Effective communication will take sufficient time and energy to develop understanding, especially for those impacted outside the decision-making group. All the innovation participants should be thoroughly briefed, fully committed, and hold clear and compelling messages for stakeholders outside the decision group. Roles, responsibilities and priorities for successful implementation and execution are articulated clearly; and the challenges, expected benefits, rewards, or appropriate sanctions for poor execution are enunciated.
- *Execute*: Ensure all relevant individuals implicated by the innovation decision are clear on what they are supposed to do and their focus for implementation. Adjust and adapt if outcomes are not according to plan, while informing and involving others to sustain coordination in execution; and maintain rewards (or sanctions) in line with expectations formed and announced previously.
- *Evaluate*: Seek critical feedback from relevant stakeholders on the decision, the plan, and the process followed to get there; share lessons learnt based on the evidence; utilize this knowledge for future innovation process work. [Adapted from Van Der Heyden et al. (2005), Van Der Heyden (2013) and Woodward et al. (2016).]

We argue that when individuals, teams, and organizations demonstrate “fair process” and the “*INVOLVE*” practices for innovation processes there will be transparent, respectful, constructive, and objective communication behaviors. This is characterized by communication described as: “open and authentic rather than hidden or opaque; inclusive rather than dictating; and clear rather than confused” (Woodward et al. 2016). Such communication encourages creative thought with open minds and comprehensible articulation, that is, “communication intelligent,” and clear, open, and compelling.

15.6 Conclusion

Today’s world is volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous, and diverse (VUCAD). It is intensely competitive, with change as the “increasing constant.” Innovation (from process engineering and new products, to technology creation, and new business models) is an imperative for contemporary business. In global organizations, there are initiatives to increase learning, share knowledge, and to develop new capabilities for leaders to engage people and ideas. These are intended to deliver

positive and dynamic business outcomes (Beechler and Woodward 2009). This is especially so in entrepreneurial and emerging organizations which are seeing rapid growth in the twenty-first century (Koryak et al. 2015); as well as global business opportunities for technology innovation, transfer, and investment (Audretsch et al. 2014). Effective communication interactions are essential to empower these innovation initiatives and exchanges. This applies equally to positional leaders and their followers, and where leadership is dispersed and organic. Leaders are required to champion innovation by: planning, implementing, and assessing innovation, shaping and managing various capabilities; and assembling resources at inter and intra-organizational levels (Zerfass et al. 2004). Communicating by inviting and responding to creative ideas is the first step for engaging employees and defining innovation objectives.

As such, we believe that effective leadership communication is evolving in a VUCAD world as an essential ingredient for successful innovation—whether in tapping innovation resources and investment, contributing to ideation, implementing innovation decisions, or interacting with customers. By communicating effectively leaders can increase their ability to nurture innovation, and translate complex innovations in a way that others comprehend, accept, and then embrace. In the innovation workspace, leadership communication is embedded in concrete actions, language, processes and interpersonal relations, and in the depth and breadth of idea dialogue amongst “aware” and motivated participants.

We contend that leadership communication built on the two “tools” (“communication intelligence” and the “*INVOLVE*” communication practices of “fair process”); combined with appropriate innovation based leadership approaches, collaborative behaviors, motivating language, and framing; can positively inspire and engage people toward innovation outcomes and support innovation cultures. We believe these should make a substantial contribution to closing the gap between ineffective and effective leadership communication for innovation. These are part of the solution to: ensuring ideation is not cut short; increasing the commitment levels to innovation decisions; clarifying the focus and understanding of innovation implementation issues and priorities; improving articulation of the benefits of the innovation for internal and external stakeholders; and learning from evaluation and knowledge exchange that is objective and constructive.

Furthermore, “communication intelligence” with involvement-based “fair process” will encourage trust, risk-taking, creativity, and collaboration. This supports an environment where people are more likely to contribute and commit to the changes, new directions or initiatives; and see these to fruition. This builds capacity and confidence for innovative and creative work into the future. Effective leadership communication for innovation will be framed to appeal to emotion and rationality. It will be replete with relevant messages, visuality, expressive examples, interactive engagement, listening, motivating language, engagement processes, and “communication intelligence.” Such innovation communication will be clear, open, and compelling.

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