

Interpersonal skills

- and human relations

3. Acting diplomatic

Introduction

Leadership is about effective communication and bringing out the best in individuals according to their competences. One more crucial characteristic that a leader must possess is the art of diplomacy.

Being diplomatic refers to a way of acting that emphasizes tact, empathy and relationship buildings. It is also about using soft skills to manage people effectively. In a business context, it involves getting people to work with you rather than for or against you. Diplomatic people are known for their ability to handle sensitive situations with grace, encourage collaboration and seek win/win solutions.

To be effective, diplomatic persons:

- First, we need to understand ourselves and our own behavioral pattern.
- Second, when we understand ourselves and our own reactions, we can start establishing good relationships with others. However, in order to have good relations with others, we must study, learn and understand others.
- Third, we also need to understand the context in which we are working, such as situations, circumstances, conditions and environments.

As managers and leaders, we must constantly try to bring out the best in others. Important to remember is that leadership is normally not a function of what you say but how and when you say it. Good leaders never stop developing and learning.

Most of us have probably met or encountered individuals who, regardless of the situation or environment, always seem to know what to say and how to say it. These individuals master the art of communicating diplomatically, confidently and with tact. They say the right things, in the right way and at the right times. This is perhaps the single most important skill we need, to be able to influence people and drive results.

On the other hand, some managers and leaders sometimes seem to completely be lacking tact, and they need to become more aware of what kind of image they are sending out, or that they are communicating the wrong message. However, most individuals can, through training, gain a more flexible communication style with a greater awareness of the type of word choice, tone and body language they are perceived to have.

Most of us can develop our ability to communicate different opinions in a more neutral way and communicate more effectively through active listening so that we act instead of react.

Notes

Successful sense of tact and diplomacy

If we learn to understand how others see and perceive us, we will gain an increased self-awareness of how we normally are trying to exert influence. Below are some points that most of us need to think about and even practice to develop a better sense of tact when communicating with and leading others:

- Develop a flexible communication style
- Increase trust, confidence and respect through increased awareness of our non-verbal and verbal communication, i.e. our words and actions
- Be able to speak in a confident, diplomatic and tactful manner even in difficult situations and conflicts
- Be able to present ourselves in a powerful way without exaggerating and scaring others
- Strive for a “win-win” outcome, to increase our chance of being successful, even in problematic situations so that all parties can feel happy regarding the result of the process.

For some people, tact and diplomacy are natural and easier than for others. The good news is that, as with most leadership abilities and skills, tact and diplomacy can be improved through practice and experience.

"Leadership is a conscious choice to act out of a deep sense and awareness to one's situation and surroundings." ~ Dr. Karen

Effective use of tact and diplomacy comes from our ability to perceive what another person is feeling or thinking at any given moment, and then respond in such a way that we avoid bad feelings or embarrassment, while being able to assert or raise our own ideas and feelings in a well-intentioned way. All human beings and all communication situations are unique. Developing effective tact and diplomacy will take practice and good judgment.

One of the basic prerequisites is common sense, being able to use good judgment regardless of the situation. There are a number of essential skills if we will be able to communicate with a sense of tact:

- Listen actively and attentively: you need to be able to listen not only to what is said but also to how it is said in order to understand and react in an adapted and appropriate way.
- Emotional Intelligence (EQ): People with higher EQ normally have a greater ability to communicate naturally with tact.
- Show empathy: Part of EQ, i.e. our ability to see and perceive the world from another individual's perspective.
- Assertiveness: one of the biggest reasons for using tact is often to be able to convince or influence others to think or behave in a certain way. Determination without steering or overrunning is fundamental to this process.
- Politeness: being able to be polite and accommodating, with respect for other people's points of view and cultural differences is important in most types of relationships.

Notes

What can we do to better understand what's needed to increase our business partners' commitment?

Which of the five points, at the bottom of the previous page, do we need to focus at the most?

What do we most of all need to improve in order to be more diplomatic in our communication?

Notes

The art of diplomacy

Leaders across all industries and professions are tasked with navigating difficult situations. Being diplomatic is the ability to work with people to accomplish the goals.

Being a leader often requires strong levels on diplomacy in order to be successful. Diplomacy is crucial when there are disagreements between people and a lot is at stake. Tact or diplomacy can be used to achieve a great purpose. Diplomacy not only gives way to a bettering of relationships but leads to mutual trust and respect. Hence in increased chances of success and progress.

Diplomacy is essentially a fancy word for working *with* people to accomplish the goals. It is about understanding each other's point of view and reaching common ground, rather than working through or around people. Effective diplomacy requires honesty, respect and the ability to recognize and value differences in order to build social capital and form trustworthy relationships with other people.

Diplomacy in leadership refers to the use of tact in such a way that policies, conflicts, interests, and benefits are agreed upon, and where everyone is happy with the outcome.



Strategies for being a diplomatic leader

The skill of diplomacy is applicable to common business practices. A diplomatic business person treats people with respect, builds consensus and works to achieve common goals. He or she holds honesty and trust as key values of the organization's culture, recognizes and appreciates different opinions and is willing to change and adapt the own approach.

As mentioned before, leaders and managers across all industries are tasked with navigating difficult situations with a variety of constituents. Effectively utilizing the skills of diplomacy can help us to maintain relationships and create win-win outcomes under difficult circumstances.

Diplomacy is all about understanding that people have their own feelings, opinions and ideas involved in the process of work. Leaders are authentically diplomatic when they are appreciative and considerate of emotions and situations of others, no matter what they may themselves feel about the scenario. They accept the fact that an effective solution can only be reached when everyone agrees with happiness.



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Building trust and respect

No organization can run smoothly until and unless there is mutual trust and respect among people. Only when an air of confidence and consideration is developed, everyone is able to work smoothly and productively. Diplomatic leaders know how far they may push and how much they can examine. They don't intend to harm the self-esteem of any person, just come out at the top with excellence. This is the reason why they give attention to the minutest of detail and are willing to take criticism that can lead to success. They are full of appreciation and encouragement and are willing to be flexible. This is what makes them so accessible to everyone.

One of the best things that a diplomatic leader is able to do is to maintain ethics of the highest order. They have a standard set of rules and regulations, as well as a set of business conducts. This may seem to be an ordinarily simple task, but it can prove to be very difficult since the agreement has to be reached between different people, with different background. Meeting the demands of everyone, while maintaining ethics, can only be done by good leaders, who practice their work by setting an example and safeguard the integrity of the organization at all times.

A diplomatic leader understands that everyone who is involved in work wants to be treated with respect and has own ideas of how things should be done. A diplomatic leader is willing to listen to all kinds of opinions and suggestions without belittling anyone. In addition, a good diplomatic leader is able to make sure everyone works to their full potential in such a way that they don't merely benefit themselves but the organization as well.

Diplomatic leaders know that only a happy business partner is productive, which is why they keep the interest at the forefront. Performance is discussed in such a way that everyone feels important and needed and agreements are leading to success.

How diplomatic leadership skills can be developed

Developing diplomatic leadership skills requires practice, feedback, and reflection. To improve our diplomatic leadership, we should listen actively and attentively to understand the needs, interests, and emotions of others. We should communicate clearly and respectfully, using appropriate language, tone, and body language. It's important to acknowledge and appreciate the contributions and perspectives of others, even if we disagree with them. Aiming to find common ground and mutual benefit, rather than focusing on differences and competition is crucial as well. We should also remain flexible and open-minded, and be willing to adapt to changing situations and expectations. Additionally, we shall seek feedback and learn from our mistakes, and celebrate our successes and those of others.

Notes

Diplomacy is essentially a fancy word for working with people to accomplish the goals. How can being diplomatic help us to convince people to work harder, in order to reach set up goals?

Among other things, being diplomatic means maintaining ethics of the highest order. Our own set of business conducts:

What we need to change to be more diplomatic in our approach!

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