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The challenge of leadership in 2012 and beyond focuses on whether those in 'subordinate' roles (i.e., including everything from lower level employees in all of our organizations to citizen taxpayers listening and following our elected leaders) understand both the **intention and outcome** of the words being communicated to them in all situations. We all struggle daily in our individual leader roles being clearly understood and in turn being followed. To create an easier path for 'followership,' we must be deemed trustworthy and in order to accomplish this level of respect, our actions must be predictable and certain in terms of both thoughts and actions.

I once had the privilege of working for a leader who not only understood how to clearly communicate with all of us on the team in a concise verbal style, this leader was also self effacing in his own need to at times correct his timing and pace so that we could readily follow his tempo for deliverables and achieve on his behalf, -thereby perfecting his ability to complete work 'through his team'. At another point in my career I worked for a leader who not only had pacing and delivery problems, the need to control and dominate decisions and processes was the overarching method for abating this leader's own insecurity. Needless to say, as team members we all walked softly and tried to exceed all real and imaginary deadlines in order to avoid direct punishment for alleged missteps in our individual roles!

Whether you are early in your professional career or at a mid - to senior career level, ask yourself these key questions in terms of self assessment about your communication abilities as a leader:

- a. How do you communicate your expectations for 'pacing' and tempo for deliverables to those who are your team colleagues (subordinates and peers)? Is your pacing ahead or behind that of these colleagues and most importantly are you a hindrance or a boon to their work?
- b. Ranking your level of trustworthiness among your subordinates and peers (from 1 - 10 with ten representing the highest achievable ranking), has your level of sustained trustworthiness remained at this level for at least the last twelve (12) months (if you have been in your current role at least that long)? If it has fluctuated or lessened in ranking, specifically what caused this loss of credibility?
- c. How do you confirm (daily, weekly, monthly) that your style of communication is on target - i.e., not overly abrasive, not too reticent, not inappropriate for the setting or assignment that you find yourself in?
- d. What three key communication goals have you set for yourself for 2012? Within your work setting? Within your personal life? Within your roles/commitment to your community?

We all have the capacity to improve our ability to listen, verbalize and participate in the relationships and exchanges that make up our daily lives. What is standing in your way in terms of moving to the next highest level in this skill set?