

Straight Talk Balanced by Demonstrating Mutual Respect

Several team HRO behaviors depend upon successfully creating an environment where honesty and candor is expected from individuals. Talking straight is based upon the principles of honesty and integrity. You want to leave the right impression by communicating clearly enough to assure you are not misunderstood.

The opposite of Straight Talk is when people lie or deceive. That destroys trust completely. Most people don't flat out lie. Instead they engage in counterfeit behaviors like beating around the bush, withholding information, double talk, flattery, posturing, positioning and spinning communication in order to manipulate the thoughts, feelings and actions of others. Another dangerous counterfeit is technically telling the truth, but leaving a false impression by mincing words or splitting hairs. These all diminish trust.

Become aware of your communication by asking yourself, "Am I talking straight – or am I doing something different?" If so, figure out why. What are you afraid of? Fear of being wrong? Fear of hurting another's feelings? Is it a desire to be popular or a lack of courage?

Learn to get to your point quickly. Avoid giving excessive content. The personal discipline of talking straight helps create a precision of language and an economy of words.

Demonstrating mutual respect is based upon the principles of fairness, kindness, civility, and the intrinsic worth of individuals. This behavior is the Golden Rule in action. The opposite is not only showing disrespect, but that you just don't care, don't know how to care or don't take the time to do it. The counterfeit of demonstrating respect is to fake respect or concern, or showing those to people who can do something for you, but not for all. Genuinely care for others by showing respect for every person and every role. Don't fake it and don't be "efficient" with people.

Content above paraphrased and condensed by David Christenson, Assistant Center Manager of the U.S. Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center from the writings of:

Covey, Stephen M.R., The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything, Free Press, Simon & Schuster, Inc. 2006