



# 5 Things Not to Say in a Leadership Role

People don't need to be led. They'd rather have the opportunity to follow a natural leader (a guide) so that they also learn how to lead themselves and others in any given environment – be it career-related or personal. Therefore, people in leadership roles have a tremendous responsibility to speak the truth and not just “shoot from the hip.” Leaders must understand, and consider with care, the meaning of each word they utter, as well as act as role models to encourage others' future growth and organisational continuity.

In light of so many buzz words used today, it is important to pause and question some of the common sayings that leaders might use – without considering the implications – when they perform in a leadership capacity. To be truthful to themselves, as well as to others who fall under their responsibility, leaders should avoid the following five common statements.

**1) We are a family.** This overused term makes the claim to others that they are part of a family. If leaders in your organisation walk around and tell employees that they are part of a family, remember this key point: “Parents do not fire their children when things don't work for them!” Business is business. There is no need to make promises you cannot keep – or misuse a sentiment that is false and misleading.

**2) I am authentic.** Being authentic is a luxury few people can afford in a business environment. Obviously, if you are in a leadership role, possessing power and authority, you might entertain the idea of being authentic. However, be cautious about telling others to be authentic as well. Authenticity requires an enormous amount of transparency. That said, don't say “I am authentic” and encourage others to be so if you are not 100% sure your organisational culture actually encourages and supports authenticity, instead of mouthing nice-sounding phrases.

## 5 Things Not to Say in a Leadership Role

- 1) We are a family.
- 2) I am authentic.
- 3) I am looking forward to this new adventure.
- 4) We should all embrace change.
- 5) And let's not forget to have some fun.



**3) I am looking forward to this new adventure or challenge.** People who take on new leadership roles are the most likely individuals to make this comment. Please don't say these words! If you want a new adventure and challenge, embark on a hiking expedition or exotic trip in the wild. A person looking up to you as a leader needs to see someone who is not only "super confident" about the upcoming role as a leader for the business, but also radiates confidence to support the employee as an individual and team member. Consider how you would feel, boarding a plane and hearing the pilot say that he or she is looking forward to this new trip as an adventure or a challenge. I'd shout, "Please get me off this plane right now!" Anyone would prefer to board another plane where the pilot is poised and self-possessed at the idea of going from point A to point B (and making sure you arrive safely). A word of advice to new leaders who want to say something meaningful to their staff: Simply state that you are honored to be given the leadership role and that you take it – and the responsibility that accompanies the position – seriously.

**4) We should all embrace change.** If you have ever been involved in a change management project or initiative, you should realise by now that people equate change to something new, and new equates to something "unproven" – which makes it a double unknown. This fact underlies why so many change management

projects fail to achieve their expected outcomes. Consider: When you know that change will bring some unknowns to people's lives, why should you tell them to embrace it? Human nature has proven again and again that people will resist change when they do not know what that change will mean for their circumstances. By saying these words (about embracing change) and knowing what they really mean, you are, in reality, telling others that you know about "something" but cannot tell them what it means for them! If you know about something (whatever that may be) that will change the way people work or put them out of work, it is better to provide hints rather than hiding things until the change knocks on the door. This approach of honest communication is much more efficient than telling employees nonsense and wasting time for the organisation and the people whom you expect to believe what you say.

**5) And let's not forget to have some fun.** Having fun at work is a great thing if everyone is on the same page and enjoying it. However, if you have no clue as to whether people enjoy their current roles, think about



their organisation culture, and view their relationship with their leaders – and then tell them to have “fun” – you might be implying that they should celebrate these unknowns. Before making such a suggestion, make sure that people in your organisation truly enjoy what they are doing, feel comfortable being who they are and want to be, and embrace their current leadership.

Here is the bottom line: Leadership roles are not meant for managers to persuade others to believe that they are part of a family, to encourage them to have an adventure, to tell others to be themselves when they are clueless as to how competitive and frustrating it is out there for others, or to inspire them to have fun and “whistle while they work.” Leadership roles are serious business. Leadership roles are not about you but about others. Leadership roles are for people who genuinely want to help others succeed.

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