

TLP Five-Minute Read Over Coffee – Communicating with authenticity

'I don't know when things will get better'.

I found the simplicity and honesty of this statement powerful. It was from a coaching conversation with a Commercial Director, and this person has a deep knowledge of their market and sector.

There was nothing in their 'simply not knowing' that made me doubt or judge their expertise, on the contrary, it just made them more credible in my eyes.

Many of my clients are working in challenging circumstances. They are dealing with huge delays in delivery times, surging costs and deep levels of uncertainty. In my communication workshops over the last few years, I have seen powerful 'ways of being' with customers, suppliers and colleagues. These are summarized in five principles below.

1) **Upfront authenticity**

'Before we go any further, I need to highlight that we won't be able to deliver xx to you before July 2023'. The client might 'walk away' (go) at this point and look for a different solution. But the directness and clarity in this message highlights a transparency and respect for the client's time.

2) **Avoiding false sincerity**

This is much more powerful than what I call a 'false sincerity'. 'We will try our best to, we hope to...' This can simply 'fudge' (confuse) the situation for your customer. Are they going to receive product xx by xx or not?

3) **Proactive in fluid circumstances**

'It is not possible to give an exact delivery time. However, as soon as I know more, I will call you straight away.'

'We can provide you with a number of options/interim solutions to help you manage the next six months'.

While you cannot control the timeframe, you can demonstrate responsiveness, proactivity and commitment.

4) Establishing a shared understanding

'As you know/as you are aware/as I am sure you know, in these exceptional times'. These short phrases can be useful in gently making it clear that the client should be realistic about the current state of the market.

5) We are in it together!

'We will do everything we can to help you get through (manage) this period. I am always available for a chat on the phone or catch up (meeting) - if you need to talk anything through.'

It might sound cliched but the most powerful practice I have seen has really highlighted this idea of a long-term partnership that strengthens, rather than weakens, in tough times.

I wish you lots of power for the week - to get in contact with me, please email toby@tlp.lu.
