**It’s Not What You Say, But How You Say It**

*By* **STEVE TOBAK** **MONEYWATCH** *July 18, 2011, 9:10 AM*

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[](http://i.bnet.com/blogs/speaking.jpg)Communication is about content and delivery, fifty-fifty. But when it comes to leadership, it's all about the delivery. Of course what you say matters, but how you say it, how you relate to folks, is what differentiates great leaders from the pack.

That means you can have innovative ideas, indeed you must, but if you can't deliver them in a way that connects with people and relates to them in a meaningful way, you won't get results.

Here's a perfect example from the season premier of *Restaurant Impossible* with [Food Network chef](http://www.bnet.com/blog/ceo/10-leadership-lessons-from-food-network-chefs/7118" \t "_blank)**[Robert Irvine](http://www.bnet.com/blog/ceo/10-leadership-lessons-from-food-network-chefs/7118" \t "_blank)**. A family had thrown its entire life into a restaurant for 30 years, the place was failing, and the owners were more than a half a million dollars in debt.

After it finally sunk in that he'd made just about every possible mistake in the book, the owner was depressed, demoralized, and seemingly inconsolable. And yet, Irvine - the taskmaster who'd gotten his start in the Royal Navy - was able to turn things around.

He put his hand on the guy's shoulder, looked him right in the eye, and told him how much his family and employees needed him now. Indeed, how much Irvine needed him to help him turn this thing around and not give up. There was genuine empathy and caring in his eyes. Strictly no BS.

If you've ever watched Irvine work, you know what I'm talking about. The guy's a helluva leader. Yes, I know it's TV, but I'm telling you that some executives and leaders have that ability. Most don't. I've known plenty of both kinds, and to be honest, I've seen myself as both kinds.

Early on, I was a brash, aggressive, distracted, young executive hell-bent on "making it" and driving results. Later I learned the importance and motivational impact of genuinely connecting with people in a meaningful way.

That transition doesn't happen all at once, it's a process of continuous improvement and the learning never really stops. So, wherever you are in your journey to the top, I'm sure these 5 tips will help to improve your delivery so folks will want to be a part of whatever it is you're doing.

**Look people straight in the eye and really "see" them.** If you take one thing away from this post, this is the one. It's huge. I can't say exactly why, but when you look someone straight in the eye, you're initiating a potentially deep connection that can't be achieved any other way. It also shows respect, i.e. there's nothing more dismissive and demeaning than not "recognizing" someone by looking directly at them.

**Be direct and genuine.** […] The more direct and genuine you are with people, the greater their sense of trust and the more respect they'll have.

**Executive presence isn't about power and domination.**This is perhaps the biggest misconception about executive presence. It doesn't come from command and control, it comes from connecting and relating, from sharing your passion in a way that's meaningful to others. It breaks down barriers.

**Learn to be a storyteller.** [People relate to stories and storytellers](http://www.bnet.com/blog/ceo/how-to-be-a-great-storyteller-and-win-over-any-audience/6460)**.**People don't remember facts and figures or even logical arguments as well as they remember stories. They also find it easier to connect with storytellers. If you really want to relate to people in a deep way, tell them stories they can relate to.

**Increase your self-awareness.** How you say things is more about how you feel than what you think. If people have trouble relating to you or respecting you, chances are you're not as self-aware as you think you are. The only way to change that is to find out what [other people in your life] like and don't like about how you communicate. Being open to feedback is the only place to start.