

# Leaders Impact on the Employee Voice

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## Abstract

This research project studied the intersections between leadership communication effectiveness and the “employee voice” in an organization. It sought to understand the connections between a leader’s competency in the three main modalities: one to one, one to many and ‘e’ forms of communication and whether the “employee voice” is solicited, honored or actioned in an organization.

For this study, “employee voice” was defined as any input from employees, formal or informal, related to the structure, culture, strategy or operations and processes of an organization. Employee voice is how employees communicate their views to their employer. It is the main way employees can influence matters that affect them at work.

Energizing and actioning the input and feedback of employees may have positive impacts on an array of organization outcomes including morale, productivity, teaming, conflict resolution, problem solving, organizational identity, operational efficiency and both internal and external stakeholder relationships. Perlow and Williams (2003) suggested that when employees feel unable to speak out, negative emotions like resentment and anger bubble up, which can “shut down creativity” and chip away at motivation, productivity and performance. This may be driven by feelings of inauthenticity, which is psychologically damaging. Collins (2001) says that a climate where employees feel able to speak the truth is essential if organizations are to adapt quickly to changing market conditions. A foundational study by Daniel G. Spencer (1986) found that a high number of mechanisms for employee voice correlated strongly with a high degree of retention.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many leaders neglect or undervalue the voice of the employee; in other words, they don’t go out and actively seek feedback. The hypothesis tested was that the “employee voice” is an under-leveraged asset in many organizations. This study had a sample of 500+ responses, the findings will be presented and will show that indeed the employee voice is an underleveraged resource in most organizations.