

# Stories about **LEADERSHIP**

## A STORY ABOUT COMMUNICATION SKILLS



"Can you talk for a minute?" Priya texts at 7:21 a.m. Three words, a smiley face, and immediately that inner alarm goes off in my head, saying: It's unclear again.

I'm still sitting at the kitchen table in my bathrobe, laptop open, first cup of coffee half empty. Outside, the gray December sky can't seem to decide whether it wants to be day or night. Inside, the project ticker: Teams channel, emails, status updates. All at once.

"Yes, what's up?" I type back.

The three dots are flickering.

"Which cutover plan is final? I have three versions. Jonas is referring to a different one than I am." I close my eyes for a moment. Not out of anger. Out of tiredness.

In recent weeks, the program has shifted into a parallel universe. We have so many threads that we're constantly tying new knots. Every region, every workstream, every department needs speed – but without a shared communication system, speed becomes chaos.

The weekly call at 9:00 AM shows 23 tiles. 23 different times of day, backgrounds, energy levels. OnePlatform isn't just a project. It's an organism. And right now, it's overheating.

"We have finalized the cutover plan," Jonas says matter-of-factly.

"What cutover plan?" Priya asks immediately.

"The one we shared in the channel last week." "There are 180 messages in the channel." Priya doesn't say it accusingly. Just exhausted.

On the second monitor, I see private chats popping up. "What does he mean?" "Can you send me the plan?" I know this pattern all too well: teams resorting to side communication because the main communication has become unusable.

I could moderate like I used to. Extend the call, summarize the points again, politely ask for better documentation. I know how to pretend that communication is a soft art that you can "somehow" manage.

But I realize: That's no longer enough.

Yesterday during the coaching session, the external coach casually remarked: "Communication is the operating system of leadership. If it's broken, even the best content falls flat."

Yesterday it sounded like a clever statement. Today it feels like a diagnosis.

After the call, I remain seated. The room is quiet, but my mind is racing. If I don't block this out now, the program will lose momentum for weeks. And people will lose trust in each other.

I open a blank document. Title: "Communication Clarity Q1 Pilot". No design, no tables. Just structure.

I ask myself three questions, no more:

Where are we wasting time?

Where does duplication of effort occur?

Where is there a lack of commitment?

The answers come quickly: too many channels, too many versions, decisions get lost in the chat.

And then I do something that becomes increasingly difficult for me the larger the group gets: I set rules. Not as a form of control. As a way to relieve pressure.

The next morning, I invite all workstream leads to a 30-minute call. The title: "Communication Clarity." The invitation contains three rules. Not ten. Three. I've formulated them so they don't need to be discussed, but can be applied.

1. One channel per topic.

All pilot-related matters go in the "Pilot Q1" channel. No side emails, no shadow chat groups. Anyone sharing something outside of this channel should copy it to the main channel.

2. One update per week, same format.

Every Monday at 12 noon, each workstream posts: What happened? What's on the agenda? What's blocking you? What do you need? No longer than ten lines.

3. A decision log for decisions.

Every decision is recorded there. If someone's name isn't in the log, no decision has been made, regardless of how many times "yes" was typed in the chat.

Just before the call, I feel an inner resistance: Is this too harsh? Too simple? Will they think I'm a bureaucrat?

Then Priya's email comes back to me: "Which version is final?" Sometimes, simplicity is the bravest thing you can do.

I start the call without preamble. "I'll keep it short today. We're wasting time, energy, and quality due to information chaos. This is our new operating system. It's effective immediately."

Silence. No nodding. No smiling. First, assessing the situation.

"What about regional special cases?" someone from LATAM asks.

"They'll stay," I say. "But the critical information from the pilot needs to go into the main channel. Otherwise, we won't have a unified picture." Jonas suddenly says, "I support that. I'm currently working twice as hard—on the issue itself and on the back-and-forth of relationships." Priya nods. "Yes. I often spend more time searching for information than actually using it." The sales team seems skeptical. "That sounds like a commitment. We're afraid we'll slow down." "You'll be faster," I say, and I mean it. "Because you'll no longer be operating in the dark."

We briefly define where the log is located and who maintains it. It's not a complicated process, just a clearly defined responsibility.

The first week is bumpy. On Monday at noon, three updates are late. One update is practically a novel. Two people are still posting in old channels. I intervene—politely, but firmly. "Please post here. Otherwise, it'll get lost." I repeat the rules without arguing each time. Repetition is a part of leadership that I used to underestimate.

On Thursday, something happened that I consider a quiet success. Priya no longer writes, "Can you have a minute?". She writes, "I saw in the Decision Log that Region 2 is being postponed by two weeks. I'm adjusting the local plan. I'll let you know if I have any blockers."

One sentence. One responsibility. One shared rhythm.

On Friday evening, Jonas sent a message: "I wouldn't have thought that three rules could bring so much peace."

I stare at the screen for a moment and realize: That's it. Communication isn't charisma. It's structure that connects people.

I lean back. It's dark outside, the streetlights are reflected in the window. For the first time in weeks, my head is quiet.

Strong communication skills are not the ability to say a lot.

It is the ability to say the right thing so clearly that others can act.

# Takeaway inspiration

## Communication skills

Strong communication skills arise when you translate complex reality into a few clear, binding guidelines that enable others to work effectively. Fewer words, but unambiguous structures, are often the strongest protection against friction and loss of trust.

Reduce your next message to three clear points:

What applies?

- What is not valid?
- What is the next step?

If people can act on it, then your communication was strong — not if they just liked you.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS ABOUT COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR YOU

1. Where is a lack of clear communication currently costing us time or trust in a hidden way?
2. What level of disorder do I tolerate because I want to avoid conflict?
3. What three simple rules would eliminate 80% of the friction in our company?



Feel free to contact me anytime::

Victoria Beckers

E-Mail: [beckers@energie-durch-entwicklung.com](mailto:beckers@energie-durch-entwicklung.com)

phone: +49 172 90 69 280

Energie durch Entwicklung GmbH

Hufeisen 13 | D-41352 Korschenbroich

[www.energie-durch-entwicklung.com](http://www.energie-durch-entwicklung.com)