



August 24, 2023

Communication

FEATURE ARTICLE

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Yes, chef.

This past week I have spent my evenings captivated by Hulu's original series *The Bear*. The storyline follows a talented young chef named Carmen "Carmy" Berzatto who leaves his role as the Chef de Cuisine at the world's best restaurant to return home and take over his family's sandwich shop following the passing of his older brother.

The show does an extraordinary job immersing the audience in chaos and accentuating the vital nature of collaboration. While the series is centered around this small Chicago restaurant, it excels in the portrayal of complex relationships and the importance of communication when working as a team.

Here are just three communication lessons, exemplified by *The Bear*, that can be applied to any team:

1. Communicate your position.

Don't expect others to read your mind. In *The Bear* (and I'm assuming many other kitchens around the world), it is critical that every chef vocalizes their position - whether that be approaching a corner, completing a component of a dish, or walking behind another chef. Considering the pace at which the kitchen must operate, failure to do so can lead to disaster. Teams are designed to accomplish more in less time, but if we fail to maintain communication with our colleagues, any plans we've put in place can quickly unfold. Every team member should have a clear understanding of what others are doing and the status of their progress. While some communication may feel repetitious or impractical, it is this level of interaction that separates a good team from a great one.

2. Value all voices, hierarchy aside.

The Bear clearly demonstrates how roles and responsibilities are crucial for operating efficiently, however, when hierarchal muscles get flexed, things can quickly devolve into disorder. Strict adherence to a chain of command only works when employees remain empowered to voice their concerns or ideas directly to the appropriate decision maker - no matter the circumstances. Create an atmosphere where strolling into the CEO's office unannounced on a Tuesday afternoon is welcomed - not disparaged.

3. Develop a truce.

No one is immune to losing their cool. In *The Bear*, Carmy institutes a physical sign that can be used in times of heightened emotion. As disagreements ensue, he simply makes his hand into a fist and rubs it in a circular motion across his chest - *sign language for "sorry"*. This notifies his audience that the current circumstances are affecting his ability to communicate effectively, and they shouldn't take any harsh words to heart. While there is value in one's ability to remain level-headed, it is unrealistic to expect perfection. Conflicts are bound to arise. Empower your teams to establish their own signal-of-truce to mitigate the adverse effects of disagreement.

The Bear, beyond its captivating storyline, is a strong reminder that teamwork relies on great communication.

Let it rip.

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