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## Communications in the Workplace Are Evolving. Are You? Part 3

### Email Cathy

Earlier this week, I enjoyed catching up with my friend, Hank, over in South Park. As it usually happens, our conversation turned toward leadership and communication. We shared stories and personal accounts with each other along with our beliefs regarding the importance of respect in our interactions.

He cited the recent poor example of leadership communication during a hearing before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) corrected Brigadier General Michael Walsch as to how he was addressing her. He began to answer one of Boxer's questions with a respectful "ma'am" when Boxer immediately cut him off.

**Recommended Resource**

#### **Leaders-Influence and Inspire with Integrity**

*Social Intelligence-the  
Revolutionary New Science of  
Human Relationships* by Daniel  
Goleman - This science  
enforces the importance of  
connection for leadership  
success. "If you thought that  
relationships were a matter of  
feelings, nothing more than  
feelings, think again."

"You know, do me a favor," an irritated Boxer said. "Could say 'senator' instead of 'ma'am?' It's just a thing, I worked so hard to get that title, so I'd appreciate it, yes, thank you," she said.

"Yes, senator," he responded.

#### **What do you think she was communicating in that moment?**

On most days, I'd say she was sending a message of insecurity and disrespect. On a cynical day, I might even say she was communicating ignorance and arrogance.

There are leaders who think their authority comes from their title, certifications or high backed leather chair. And that there is an implied respect that comes along with those *things*. When I observe this, I see a leader who is hiding. It can sound like a loud public message like Senator Boxer or it can be subtle. Subtle with significant impact on the trust and respect in our relationships.

Sometimes we hide behind others' authority, our teammates' personalities, a business contract or strongly held beliefs. When we do this, we communicate less than powerful leadership and we detract from our ability to really connect with our clients, team members, family and friends. It puts up barriers to trust and that means lower productivity, less sales, high turnover, stress and more.

#### **Take a few moments to sit back and check in with yourself:**

- **What might I be hiding behind?**
- **What am I not doing/saying/being to really step into my leadership?**
- **What beliefs are holding me back from influencing those around me to action?**

#### **Interesting Side Note**

Talk about working against herself, Senator Boxer would've established more credibility with our courageous military men and women had she put any effort into understanding their *language of respect*. In the armed forces, "sir" and "ma'am" are often used to address anyone *higher* in rank. And addressing someone with just their title, for instance "private" or "senator" communicates less respect in the relationship.

Funny how she was so insistent on pointing out that she had "earned" her title, I'm pretty sure Brigadier General Walsch earned his. And he doesn't feel the need to announce it or remind people.

I respect that.

Blessings to you,  
Coach Cathy

*A link to a video of the event:*

*[http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2009/06/17/boxer\\_asks\\_general\\_to\\_call\\_her\\_senator\\_and\\_not\\_maam.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2009/06/17/boxer_asks_general_to_call_her_senator_and_not_maam.html)*



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