



Communication Principles from Netflix

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I recently saw something that reinforced strongly for me our work on communication during the July 1 retreat. It is drawn from a [PowerPoint slide deck put together by Reed Hastings, the CEO of Netflix](#), about their organizational culture of freedom and responsibility. It is a fascinating document that contains 128 slides, which he describes as intended for reading, rather than presenting. I cannot imagine watching these at a conference, but I have started reading them and they are interesting and provocative. According to Hastings, the slides represent their “current best thinking about maximizing our likelihood of continuous success.”

Hastings believes that “real company values are the *behavior* and *skills* that we particularly *value* in fellow employees.” No question. He points out that many companies, including Enron, have nice sounding value statements that have little to do with the real values of the organization. For example, the following four values were chiseled in marble in the main lobby of Enron’s building: Integrity, Communication, Respect, and Excellence. Sounds like they were 0 for 4. I encourage you to look at each Netflix value and its related components (listed early in the slide deck)—Judgment, Communication, Impact, Curiosity, Innovation, Courage, Passion, Honesty, and Selflessness. Netflix makes it clear that “we want to work with people who embody these nine values.” In other words, they become criteria as you retain and recruit people who will add to the organizational culture you are trying to promote.

Communication is one of nine values strongly promoted by Netflix. Here are the four components of communication that are especially valued by Netflix.



1. You listen well, instead of reacting fast, so you can better understand.
2. You are concise and articulate in speech and writing.
3. You treat people with respect independent of their status or disagreement with you.
4. You maintain calm poise in stressful situations.

We did a nice job of developing our own working list of communication principles. I also find these components of communication from Netflix compelling and I encourage Greg Allison and Cindy Lee to consider them as their collaborative work environment committee continues its good work. All organizations, including our own, would be better if everyone demonstrated these communication behaviors and skills. As Reed Hastings of Netflix pointed out, the key is living these and other important values, not just putting them up on the wall. What do you think about them? What else can we do to be sure that we reinforce them in our day-to-day interactions with each other?

If you look at the other slides in the document, you will see that there is a strong private sector feel to their culture. No surprise. I'd be interested in your thoughts about any of the other values that drive their culture.



Reed Hastings, Netflix CEO