


# Leadership Excellence



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# Let's Focus On Clarity In 2019

## | Top strategies to follow



By [Evan Hackel](#)

Clarity is a huge issue in business. If you want to be a great leader, having clarity throughout the system is essential. So as we enter the New Year, I would like to suggest that focusing on clarity will produce more beneficial results than any other resolution you make for 2019.

### **Strategy One: Make Your First Communications About Projects and Priorities More Clear**

As leaders, we tend to make assumptions that people understand things that they don't. Because we are always working at such a fast pace, we don't stop to make sure our initial instructions about projects and priorities are

clear. It is almost as though we expect people to be able to read our minds.

*One critical step* is to be sure that people understand the jargon we are using. And to do that, it is not effective to simply say, "Do you understand this?" Most people do not want to appear unformed or unintelligent and they tend to

say, "I've got it!" So as you give instructions, take a little extra time to ask open-ended questions and allow people to validate what they know.

**Another important step** is to welcome questions, both when you are first explaining things and later on down the road. In your attitude and approach, make it clear that you are not going to reprimand people if you need to explain further. Remember that being asked to explain is an opportunity, not an imposition.

### Strategy Two: Make Sure Your Emails Are Crystal-Clear Before You Send Them

As leaders, we are all rushed, and many of us have the tendency

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to unload a lot of information into our emails, expecting the recipients to sort out what they are supposed to do. If you can slow down and invest only a few minutes creating clearer emails, you will save a lot of time and frustration later on.

**One effective way** is to shift to using more bullet points in your emails to make it easier for people to find your key concepts.

**Another critical step** is to differentiate between the people who need to take action based on your email and the people who should read it only for informational purposes. I can't tell you how many times I have sent an email to six people and later learned that everyone assumed, "Someone else is going to handle this." One effective tool is to put the people who should take action on the "To" line of your email, and the "need to know" people on the CC line.

**It is also important** to set out clear expectations in the body of your email by saying, "Bill, I expect this by such-and-such a date," to make it really clear.

### Strategy Three: Use Deadlines as a Clarifying Tool

Deadlines, which most people dislike, are actually great tools to increase clarity and improve results.

**I recommend** asking people to create their own timelines and deadlines for getting things done, and then to share them with you. As a leader, you can review

that information and use it to both understand whether work is on track and to coordinate what different people on a team are doing.

**Deadlines are also useful indicators** of whether or not you have created clarity. If you delegate work and someone submits a deadline for his or her work that is not near enough, that serves as a good indication that you have not been clear enough about expectations.

### Let's Make Things Clearer in 2019

The more you can create clarity, the more effective your business will become. Remember that the people you lead might be spending too much time on the wrong priorities. And clarity is the cure.



**Evan Hackel** is a 35-year franchising veteran as both a franchisor and franchisee. He is CEO of [Tortal Training](#), a leading training development company in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Principal and Founder of [Ingage Consulting](#) in Woburn, Massachusetts. Evan is the host of Training Unleashed and author of *Engaging Leadership*.



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