

Transcript | Communicating More Strategically at Work

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00:00:10.190 --> 00:00:12.530

Callie Bradley: Hello, everyone!

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00:00:12.630 --> 00:00:14.640

Callie Bradley: Welcome, welcome!

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00:00:14.890 --> 00:00:20.410

Callie Bradley: I will just give it a few more seconds while everyone joins.

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00:00:20.860 --> 00:00:23.170

Callie Bradley: You are in the right place.

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00:00:24.000 --> 00:00:25.269

Callie Bradley: Alright, great.

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00:00:25.430 --> 00:00:31.859

Callie Bradley: Hello, everyone, and welcome to this panel event on communicating more strategically at work.

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00:00:32.040 --> 00:00:36.290

Callie Bradley: My name is Callie Bradley, and I'm an event producer here at Apolitical.

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Callie Bradley: It would be great to hear from all of you, too, so please do post in the chat where you're joining us from and what organization you work for, if you're comfortable.

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Callie Bradley: A technical note that your messages might come through only to our backstage team due to your Zoom's default settings. So please be sure to select everyone from the blue drop-down menu in the Zoom chat if you'd like to send a message to all of us here today.

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00:01:03.020 --> 00:01:08.830

Callie Bradley: Today is all about communicating your ideas so that they resonate with decision makers.

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00:01:09.000 --> 00:01:17.139

Callie Bradley: You'll hear from 3 experts on how to make your logic visible and present it in a way that drives decisions while creating alignment and trust.

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00:01:17.700 --> 00:01:21.569

Callie Bradley: And for those of you who may be joining us for the first time, welcome!

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Callie Bradley: Apolitical is the world's largest online network of public servants, used by half a million public servants and policymakers across 170 countries.

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Callie Bradley: Apolitical is a strategic partner to governments, helping them prepare their workforces for the future.

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Callie Bradley: We achieve this by upskilling through short online courses focused on government priorities, enabling public servants to find and share best practice through peer communities, and by building innovative tools designed for and with governments.

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00:01:52.880 --> 00:01:58.279

Callie Bradley: Wow, we have lots of people introducing themselves in the chat, so I'm just going to take a look.

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Callie Bradley: And read out some of these. We have Toronto, welcome, we have Nova Scotia, Ontario, okay, lots of Canadians here today. We have London, Manitoba, okay, more Canada, Winnipeg, wow, big, big Canadian contingent here. Welcome, all of you. We have Cardiff, we have...

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00:02:18.390 --> 00:02:34.229

Callie Bradley: some Ottawa, Calgary, Toronto, East Yorkshire. Welcome, everyone. We're so happy to have you all here, and please, please keep those introductions coming in the chat. It's just really nice to... to see where everyone is joining us from.

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00:02:34.630 --> 00:02:42.130

Callie Bradley: So, before we get started, I also want to introduce you all to the life and government community on Apolitical.

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Callie Bradley: Whether you are a new public servant or a seasoned pro, this forum is the place to share resources, ask questions, and gain collective wisdom from your peers on all aspects of life and government.

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00:02:54.730 --> 00:03:04.849

Callie Bradley: The link is in the resources tab at the bottom of your screen, and my colleague is also posting a link in the chat now. So please do take a look, we would love to see your voice in there.

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00:03:05.930 --> 00:03:18.100

Callie Bradley: And I will just get a few more technical notes out of the way before we jump into today's conversation. This event is recorded for on-demand viewing on the apolitical website, so please do not record it yourself.

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00:03:18.440 --> 00:03:22.540

Callie Bradley: Contact details for privacy concerns are in the apolitical homepage footer.

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00:03:22.690 --> 00:03:31.460

Callie Bradley: Closed captions are available in your own language and can be toggled on or off in your screen settings. My colleague will post the instructions for that in the chat.

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00:03:32.840 --> 00:03:43.659

Callie Bradley: All right, and just before we introduce our speakers for today, we are going to run a few quick polls just to get a sense of where you're coming from into today's discussion.

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Callie Bradley: So, let's have a look at our first poll.

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Callie Bradley: Question is, in your organization, what tends to get noticed and rewarded in how people communicate?

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00:03:55.730 --> 00:03:59.119

Callie Bradley: Is that clarity and a clear point of view?

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00:03:59.240 --> 00:04:05.860

Callie Bradley: Thoroughness covering all the bases. Neither. Communication quality rarely gets noticed either way.

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00:04:06.220 --> 00:04:14.269

Callie Bradley: Caution, avoiding anything that could be challenged, or seniority. It matters more who's saying it than how well they say it.

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00:04:14.970 --> 00:04:28.840

Callie Bradley: I will give everyone a few moments to respond. If you have another answer, please feel free to pop that in the chat, but really interesting to see where everyone is coming from today.

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00:04:29.980 --> 00:04:45.090

Callie Bradley: All right, so far, it looks like we have two answers, neck and neck, which are clarity and a clear point of view and seniority. I've heard that concern echoed a lot in our communities by public servants, so that makes sense.

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00:04:46.430 --> 00:05:03.909

Callie Bradley: All right, final chance to get your responses in before we read them out. Again, still neck and neck. These are two really big pain points, I can tell, and that's great, because we are going to be addressing some of these in our panel today.

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00:05:06.750 --> 00:05:23.570

Callie Bradley: All right, I think let's call it there. We have a narrow winner, which is seniority. It matters more who's saying it than how well they say it, and that, like I said, seems to be a really, really common concern.

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00:05:23.770 --> 00:05:44.230

Callie Bradley: All right, thank you guys for participating in that first poll. We do have a second poll, which is a bit of a more general question, but it will help us determine what kind of future content we can put out to help you. So, this next question is, when you need to learn or understand something new at work.

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Callie Bradley: What do you typically turn to first?

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Callie Bradley: So would that be an online search, such as Google, articles, YouTube, something like that? Asking a colleague or peer directly, consulting internal documentation or resources, using an AI tool like ChatGBT or Microsoft Copilot.

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00:06:03.970 --> 00:06:15.759

Callie Bradley: or trying it yourself and learning by doing. As usual, if you have a different answer that we have not included here, please feel free to pop that in the chat. And I will give you a moment to respond to this.

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Callie Bradley: Alright, just taking a little look at the responses...

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Callie Bradley: Give everyone a couple more seconds. It looks like we have, a pretty close tie right now between consulting internal documentation or resources and asking a colleague or a peer.

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Callie Bradley: Followed by an online search, but yeah, sometimes, for context-specific information, I can understand that it's... it's more useful to ask a colleague or someone who understands, or to look at internal documentation.

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00:06:55.640 --> 00:07:09.690

Callie Bradley: All right, great. Looks like we... we have a tie there. Barely, just barely broken by consulting internal documentation or resources. So, awesome. Well, thank you guys so much for participating in those polls.

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00:07:10.760 --> 00:07:22.109

Callie Bradley: Great! Now, we will introduce our speakers. So, we are fortunate to have 3 brilliant guests, Nicholas, Rishwa, and Anne, joining us today.

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Callie Bradley: Nicholas Bruno is a strategic communications consultant who has worked for intergovernmental agencies from the UN, World Bank, and EU, as well as nonprofits, associations, media, and political groups.

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Callie Bradley: He has managed digital advocacy campaigns on international development, education, sustainability, and climate change issues. His recent book, Engage with Impact, is a leading digital advocacy guide. Welcome, Nicholas.

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00:07:50.500 --> 00:07:59.739

Callie Bradley: Rishwa Shekhar is a strategic communications and partnerships consultant working across public and private sectors in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

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00:07:59.790 --> 00:08:11.929

Callie Bradley: She specializes in translating complex policy, data, and technical work into clear, actionable narratives for policymakers and donors, supporting decision-making, trade-offs, and resource mobilization.

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00:08:12.030 --> 00:08:26.260

Callie Bradley: Her experience spans UNHCR, UNESCO, government partners, and technology organizations. She currently works with Amini and collaborates with international organizations and cross-sector partners. Welcome, Rishwa, thank you for being here.

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Callie Bradley: And last but certainly not least.

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Callie Bradley: Anne Hunter Pirtle is the founder and principal of AHP Strategies.

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00:08:33.440 --> 00:08:44.740

Callie Bradley: She is a communications executive, nonprofit founder, an energy, environment, and K-12 education policy expert with 14 years of experience at the federal, state, and local levels.

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00:08:45.040 --> 00:08:53.950

Callie Bradley: She has managed high-performing teams, communicated winning messages, and built diverse coalitions to achieve political and policy goals. Welcome, Anne.

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Callie Bradley: You can read the full bios for each of our speakers by visiting the Resources tab at the bottom of your Zoom screen and heading to the Speakers section.

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00:09:03.500 --> 00:09:18.430

Callie Bradley: So, thank you guys for being here, it's so lovely to have you here. We are going to start with an icebreaker to kick things off. We'll each have around 30 seconds to share your responses, and we would also love to hear the answers of everyone here today in the chat.

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Callie Bradley: So, I am going to start with you, Anne. What's a surprising place you learned communication skills from outside of work?

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Yeah, I'm actually gonna turn the question on its head a little bit, and, what...

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: What comes to mind for me with that question is that

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: we need to use the skills we know to use from work in our internal team and interpersonal communications, right? If you were hosting a press conference.

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00:09:48.580 --> 00:10:08.840

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: making a large announcement, you'd be really careful about framing and messaging and having your facts straight. And, a lot of that goes out the window when we're talking to our own teams, or our own managers about updates, changes, changing environment.

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00:10:08.840 --> 00:10:10.660

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: And so,

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: if there's one thing that I hope folks take from me, today, it's that, all of those skills that we think of in sort of, like, big picture communications, can also serve you well in your interpersonal and interteam communications.

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00:10:27.690 --> 00:10:33.879

Callie Bradley: Yeah, I think that's... that's a really good point, Anne, so thank you for that reminder. I will go to Rishwa next.

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00:10:35.460 --> 00:10:58.359

Rishwa Shekhar: Hey, thank you so much, Kelly. Hi everyone, nice to be here. Looking forward to an amazing discussion. To answer your question, I think I would say kids. You know, whenever I have to think of out of the box, I think about... think of a kid who really, really wants something, and what would that kid say? So, for example, you know, the kid would be like, if you want to have... if the kid wants to have ice cream before bed.

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00:10:58.360 --> 00:11:12.729

Rishwa Shekhar: Probably the answer would be no for all of the parents here. But let's say if they turn around and say, hey, you know what, I want to discuss about my day, can we talk about it, maybe over a cup of... over a bowl of ice cream?

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Rishwa Shekhar: How many of you would say yes?

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Rishwa Shekhar: So, you know, communication for me is exactly that. You need to think about what would the other person care about, and this is essentially strategic communications.

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Rishwa Shekhar: Most of us communicate in the first version in saying that, I want to have ice cream, this is what I want, this is what you want. But actually, start thinking in a strategic way. What is it that the other person wants to hear? And I always go back to this kid's example as, how would a kid ask if he really, or if she really, really wants something?

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00:11:44.920 --> 00:11:55.839

Callie Bradley: I think that's such a great example, and I definitely was guilty as a child of using that trick with my own parents, so... Great, and Nicholas, I will come to you.

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00:11:56.740 --> 00:12:08.130

Nicholas Bruneau: Sure, yeah, when I was a business journalist a long time ago, I used to sort of emulate Larry King, the CNN talk show host. And, so he would first, you know, he would look at

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00:12:08.260 --> 00:12:22.740

Nicholas Bruneau: Trying to understand the person, what, you know, their, their concerns were, to understand their personal story. And then he would ask simple, straightforward questions, not trying to sort of over-fluff it, but just be really direct and really human.

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00:12:22.920 --> 00:12:29.710

Nicholas Bruneau: And then he would listen to the answers. I think this is important, and this sometimes, you know, a step that we skip.

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00:12:29.860 --> 00:12:46.330

Nicholas Bruneau: And then finally, he would link that to bigger picture issues. Link it to global issues, link it to big institutional challenges, so really trying to sort of, you know, bring it all together. So, though that was essentially sort of something that I've tried to sort of keep up.

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00:12:46.560 --> 00:12:48.439

Nicholas Bruneau: Throughout... in my career.

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Callie Bradley: Great, yeah, and I think that sort of tip to listen is so important, because oftentimes we can forget that, but listening is such a huge part of communication. So, thanks for that reminder. We had a one comment from the chat on learning communication skills from high-performance sports teams, which I think is a great answer as well. All right, thank you all. Let's get this panel started.

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Callie Bradley: I'm going to start, with some questions around making your logic visible to decision makers. So, Rishwa, let's start with you. We've all had the experience of knowing that our work matters, but struggling to show why it matters to the people who need to act on it.

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Callie Bradley: What is the most important thing to do when trying to connect your work to the outcomes and trade-offs that leaders actually care about?

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00:13:38.070 --> 00:14:02.990

Rishwa Shekhar: Right, thanks, Kelly. So, I think one of the most important things here is we need to change our thinking in the sense that leaders, most of the time, not just direct managers or someone, but leaders, the people who are going to make the decision on something, they are not evaluating your work. They're not there to evaluate how you performed, but rather, they are there to see and evaluate what happens if they don't act on it, or if they act

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Rishwa Shekhar: on it.

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00:14:03.730 --> 00:14:05.770

Rishwa Shekhar: And that mindset... mind...

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00:14:05.790 --> 00:14:12.400

Rishwa Shekhar: set shift is going to help you understand this in itself. You know, and this is where then you can...

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00:14:12.990 --> 00:14:24.149

Rishwa Shekhar: about bringing that logic, about what is it that will happen if I don't act. For example, me, I use a very simple structure. I answer 3 questions. So what, now what, and what if?

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00:14:24.350 --> 00:14:33.259

Rishwa Shekhar: We start with, so what does this mean in plain terms? So really going back on simplifying what it... so what it means. The next thing is now what?

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00:14:33.480 --> 00:14:39.359

Rishwa Shekhar: So now, what decisions need to be made, or what decisions are needed at this point?

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00:14:39.490 --> 00:14:51.839

Rishwa Shekhar: And the final thing is, and what are the trade-offs if we chose one path, or we chose another, or if we don't act? So you have the so what, you have the now what, and you have the what if.

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00:14:51.910 --> 00:14:54.010

Rishwa Shekhar: I'll give you a simple example.

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Rishwa Shekhar: when I was at UNHCR, we were working on building, some indicators and benchmarks. They were really, really technically strong, we had all the points there, but the donors were not relating to that. And it was the donors who will fund us, ultimately, so we needed their buy-in right there.

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Rishwa Shekhar: So we got into it, and we started realizing we were actually showing activity. So we're showing, you know, this is what's happening, this many refugees were reached, X was something, but we were not really showing the implications of that, and this is what the donors cared about. So we moved a little bit. We shifted our narrative from X percentage of refugees were reached

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Rishwa Shekhar: to...

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Rishwa Shekhar: not... we didn't change the indicators. Indicators have to be in a set format, but when we were reaching to those people, we went ahead and said, at this rate, we will miss our protection targets in these three regions unless the funding is shifted.

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Rishwa Shekhar: So right there, now they knew, if they don't act, this is going to happen, this is what will not happen, and this is what they need to act on. So they had a holistic picture, and

now they can sense the urgency. So bringing that urgency in their mind is really, really important.

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Rishwa Shekhar: With leaders, you know, you'll often see that they have this decision fatigue. Why do you think so many leaders, like Mark Zuckerberg and, you know, there's Sam Altman, they wear the same clothes all the time. They wear the same clothes because they don't want to make decisions.

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00:16:18.260 --> 00:16:36.670

Rishwa Shekhar: So, they will not make the decision unless it's absolutely, absolutely necessary. So, your work is to make sure that you highlight the reason why this decision is important. That would also help you understand that maybe, you know what, maybe my question is not as urgent right now, and maybe something else is a priority for them.

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00:16:36.890 --> 00:16:43.409

Rishwa Shekhar: So let them do that. So in your communications, if you surface this urgency, if you surface this trade-off.

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00:16:43.450 --> 00:16:51.259

Rishwa Shekhar: You are the one who's going to help them make a decision, so they look at the file, they look, okay, this done, let's move to the next one.

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00:16:51.260 --> 00:17:04.330

Rishwa Shekhar: And this is... now you're not just informing them, but you're helping them make a decision. And this is what I think is something that the leaders care about, and something that can help you get them on the same table as you.

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00:17:05.359 --> 00:17:19.929

Callie Bradley: That's such a good point, Rishwa. Yeah, that, you know, your job, really, when you're coming to a leader is not to focus on, you know, the work that you did and your process, it's really to make the decision as clear as possible, so they can just

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00:17:19.929 --> 00:17:30.299

Callie Bradley: make a choice and move on. So, yeah, that's such great advice, thank you. And I'll come to you next, because it can be a little bit tricky when we're talking about trade-offs.

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Callie Bradley: To frame those. So, when you're working across competing priorities, how do you frame trade-offs in a way that feels honest rather than evasive, and still builds trust with your audience?

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Yeah, I think framing has a lot to do with outcomes, and... You can take some ownership.

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Of guiding folks, whether it's your team or your manager, to the outcome that you... that you hope to achieve, through your framing. So, I'll... I'll share an example.

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: at the last federal agency that I worked at, in the previous administration, we had a major announcement

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: you know, multi-billion dollars in grants that was going to roll out, and folks at the agency had been working on the policy behind this for... for months. They were, excited but exhausted, right?

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: And, we got word that the president wanted to announce, the program.

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Which is great in terms of visibility, and in terms of, you know, the press and attention that the program will get, in a positive way. But for... and because of that, we had to hold the announcement for about 6 weeks.

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: And, that was a mixed bag for the folks directly working on this, who had, like, been pulling near all-nighters, and working feverishly for weeks.

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: It's great to get the additional publicity, but there is obviously another level of scrutiny, both, from within and outside government, when somebody like the president gets involved. So,

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00:19:18.060 --> 00:19:33.929

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: I noticed leaders that handled that most effectively framed that update to their teams as very positive. Hey everyone, great news. We've got this incredible opportunity that doesn't come along every day. It does mean

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00:19:33.930 --> 00:19:48.079

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: you know, that the next few weeks are gonna continue to be extremely busy, and I really appreciate everyone's hard work. And, we're gonna get through this together, and I am here to,

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00:19:48.110 --> 00:19:53.900

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: to move roadblocks out of your way, essentially. And so,

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00:19:54.060 --> 00:20:13.520

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: framing that trade-off of, like, you know, sleep versus opportunity in that case, made all the difference. And I think that's something that we can all do on a very day-to-day level. If you start something with bad news, whatever comes next is not going to be received very well, and so,

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Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Keeping, in mind the outcomes you want when you frame up a conversation is always important.

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Callie Bradley: Thank you, and yeah, I'm really glad you brought that up, Anne, because, you know, we... while we do have a lot of folks in the room who are trying to figure out how to communicate with leaders and decision makers, we also have some leaders and decision makers in the room, so I think that's a really, really good reminder, too, that this kind of top-down communication also needs to be strategic and framed in the most effective way possible.

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Callie Bradley: Great. Nicholas, I will come to you now. So, I guess, speaking of, kind of, varied audiences.

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Callie Bradley: You've worked across

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Callie Bradley: different institutional contexts, and so what I'm wondering is, how does the way you frame logic and impact need to shift depending on your audience, and are there any universal principles that hold regardless of the context?

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00:21:07.140 --> 00:21:09.790

Nicholas Bruneau: Sure, I... I remember,

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00:21:10.280 --> 00:21:14.440

Nicholas Bruneau: This one time, one client came up to me and said, you know, we're...

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00:21:14.580 --> 00:21:27.520

Nicholas Bruneau: I don't understand, you know, we're doing this presentation, and everybody's looking at us, and nobody's asking questions, and it seems like they're really confused. And then, of course, you know, they showed me the PowerPoint, and the PowerPoint was totally,

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00:21:27.610 --> 00:21:47.080

Nicholas Bruneau: was full of information, there was no clear structure, it was just a lot of stuff and a lot of diagrams. So the first thing is, is trying to sort of frame it in a way that is as simple as possible. So obviously, to use slides as efficiently as possible, only use visuals, and maybe only a couple of points.

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Nicholas Bruneau: But then, I think the important thing, and we had a CEO once that did this very well, is to start with a story. So start with something that is going to inspire people, and then...

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00:21:57.630 --> 00:22:16.439

Nicholas Bruneau: get into the details. So, if you start with a story that really tries to encapsulate what you're trying to, to say, what your main message is, that's sort of the key thing. And so what we would do is we would use a very simple storytelling framework, which was.

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Nicholas Bruneau: three-part framework. First, what's the challenge that we're trying to solve?

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Nicholas Bruneau: what's the solution that we're either working on, or that we have worked on? And then finally, what's the impact that we're making, or the impact that we are looking to have? So those three, kind of, like.

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00:22:34.610 --> 00:22:41.370

Nicholas Bruneau: That three-part structure allows you to have something that is going to really showcase what you're doing.

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00:22:41.670 --> 00:22:51.989

Nicholas Bruneau: you know, what you're working on and what your impact is. So, trying to have a story that will really inspire people and really, try to adapt, of course, to your audience.

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00:22:53.120 --> 00:23:17.219

Callie Bradley: Yeah, I think that's great. Challenge, solution, impact, I really like that framework, and I think that, again, goes to support this point that, you know, there really are so many principles that are... hold true regardless of who you're communicating to, regardless of how senior they are, and I think a lot of people do fall in this trap of, if they have an audience of decision makers thinking that they need to go so heavy on the information, and like you said, with slides.

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00:23:17.220 --> 00:23:20.700

Callie Bradley: Make the slides really technical, and... but at the end of the day.

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00:23:20.700 --> 00:23:28.429

Callie Bradley: to have this information resonate in the most effective way possible, you do need to return to those principles. So, that's such a great point.

129

00:23:28.430 --> 00:23:36.839

Callie Bradley: Let's move on to the next section, where we'll talk a bit more about communicating specifically to drive decisions. So I'll stay with you, Nicholas.

130

00:23:36.840 --> 00:23:57.729

Callie Bradley: And we'll kind of go back to this slide, the slides example, to elaborate a bit. A lot of presenters default to leading with the technical detail and just kind of hope that the audience will catch up. You advocate for the opposite approach, as you've discussed, so tell us a little bit more about why that's important and how people can do it.

131

00:24:00.790 --> 00:24:13.149

Nicholas Bruneau: Sure, I think, you know, there's something as far as, you know, what we call the expert trap. And the expert trap is that you think that everybody knows what you're talking about, and you think that, basically, just by

132

00:24:13.500 --> 00:24:21.909

Nicholas Bruneau: streaming out and talking about everything, that you know, that, that people are gonna be able to follow. And I think that

133

00:24:21.960 --> 00:24:39.970

Nicholas Bruneau: we are all guilty of using too many statistics, using too many acronyms, and, you know, having a presentation that really is not going to connect with people. So this is where I think, you know, the storytelling, but also using as many visuals, straightforward language, is really important.

134

00:24:40.060 --> 00:24:57.430

Nicholas Bruneau: And, for example, for reports, one thing that we are trying to implement at UNDP is having something that is going to bring down the... make it as simple as possible, so using different score, scoring apps, for example, so...

135

00:24:57.450 --> 00:25:12.279

Nicholas Bruneau: having a readability score, so that it's, like, at a, maybe a 5th grade level, so I'm not saying that we should dumb down everything that we talk about, but we should make it as simple and as clear as possible, and that's really important.

136

00:25:12.280 --> 00:25:21.480

Nicholas Bruneau: Particularly on social media, when you're looking at getting people... getting people's attention, but also in a presentation to your senior, senior leadership.

137

00:25:22.990 --> 00:25:46.889

Callie Bradley: Yeah, great. I really like this point that you've made, and that, sort of Rishwa and Anne have echoed, which is that clear communication is strategic communication, and again, I think that's something that's really overlooked. Rishwa, I will come to you to talk a bit more about these kind of technical details that can hold us back. So, data and numbers are often where alignment breaks down.

138

00:25:46.990 --> 00:25:56.189

Callie Bradley: How do you bring a team to one coherent voice around the evidence, and then connect that to an impact narrative that actually will land with decision makers?

139

00:25:57.150 --> 00:26:04.409

Rishwa Shekhar: Right, I think I'm just... I'm gonna build on what Nicholas was saying, and this is... this is really important, about one...

140

00:26:04.410 --> 00:26:19.440

Rishwa Shekhar: having that narrative and that story really out there very clearly. Why I say that is, so many times, you know, we rely on data, and we rely on numbers, and they're there, they exist, I agree. But people feel that it is data that is breaking the alignment.

141

00:26:19.440 --> 00:26:24.289

Rishwa Shekhar: However, I'm going to object to that and say it's not data. Data is there, it's...

142

00:26:24.340 --> 00:26:39.839

Rishwa Shekhar: It's not objective with the data, it's a number, it's right there. It's the interpretation, how you tell the story around it, that matters. Think of it as something like, you know, we have, for example, there's a statistic that 80% of the world's compute is concentrated in one country.

143

00:26:39.860 --> 00:26:54.079

Rishwa Shekhar: Now, the leader of that country is going to go out and say, hey, you know, 80% of the world's compute is concentrated in our country, we are the leaders in this technology. Now, he or she is going to go out and say to get electoral support, and have a good consensus around that.

144

00:26:54.460 --> 00:26:56.499

Rishwa Shekhar: Turn this, the same statistic.

145

00:26:56.500 --> 00:27:21.390

Rishwa Shekhar: a leader from a different country goes out and says, hey, you know, 80% of the compute is concentrated in one X country, we need to do something, otherwise we will become dependent on that. We need to start building our own infrastructure. Now, this leader is trying to use the same statistic, but in a different way, to get the country, the parliament, or the people, build consensus around investing in the infrastructure.

146

00:27:21.810 --> 00:27:39.179

Rishwa Shekhar: So the number stays, but it's the story that really, you know, affects the sentiments, that affects the people making the decision. And I always say this, at the end of the day, it is people. People are the ones who are making the decision, so you need to get into that psychic.

147

00:27:39.180 --> 00:27:58.479

Rishwa Shekhar: What I... what I do is, you know, there's these three questions when I always, which I start when I want to align on the narrative. Even before using the numbers, I feel there's one thing you need to align on, and that is, what is the narrative? And for that, I start with a very simple question. What question is this data actually answering?

148

00:27:58.980 --> 00:28:05.260

Rishwa Shekhar: So, what is it that this data is going to talk about? In this case, it would be about the compute, let's say.

149

00:28:05.790 --> 00:28:23.549

Rishwa Shekhar: Question number two is, what is the one sentence that we want the decision makers, in one case, probably the parliament, in the other case, the people who are going to decide whether to vote or not, is going to remember? So that one sentence, your whole narrative, 20-minute speech put into one single sentence.

150

00:28:23.810 --> 00:28:42.990

Rishwa Shekhar: And finally, what decision is this going to support? So in one case, it's going to support the people to make, oh, should we vote for this guy or not? And then the others, the parliamentarians, to make, should we put the money in infrastructure or not? Yes or no vote. So going back to what ultimately is a decision going to support?

151

00:28:43.030 --> 00:28:48.070

Rishwa Shekhar: You know, I'll give you another example, maybe a bit closer, to your work.

152

00:28:48.130 --> 00:28:59.270

Rishwa Shekhar: I was working... I work a lot with climate data sets and satellites around in my current role, and we have all the different teams, they're going to pull different insights, different data, and they're going to come and say, hey, you know what?

153

00:28:59.270 --> 00:29:17.210

Rishwa Shekhar: One team is so much focused on accuracy. Oh, our models are perfect, this is great, this is... it's so accurate. The other one will go, oh, you know, we have amazing performance, we're the fastest, and stuff, and the other person is going to go around, we can do this with this, we can do with this, so a variety of use cases.

154

00:29:17.210 --> 00:29:27.510

Rishwa Shekhar: But then this is where you need to bring, as a leader, or as someone who's going to then send that document to the person making, so the person with the pen holding, is... should do is go back and ask whether

155

00:29:27.510 --> 00:29:40.419

Rishwa Shekhar: what is the question that we are going... is this... what's the question that the decision maker needs to see or understand when they look at it? In this case, coming back to this, do we need to adopt this infrastructure or not?

156

00:29:40.950 --> 00:30:05.609

Rishwa Shekhar: And so you need to not reframe about whether your satellite data and the climate things is good, is accurate, is making the use case. Yes, you'll talk about it in the later parts, but the first few parts, the storytelling, coming back to what Nicholas was saying, really bringing the attention back, is where you're going to tell them, hey, you know, without reliable data, without this, without that, we are going to have blind spots leading to

157

00:30:05.610 --> 00:30:11.209

Rishwa Shekhar: Poor crop diseases, lower yields, and unstable incomes for our farmers.

158

00:30:11.380 --> 00:30:16.290

Rishwa Shekhar: And this infrastructure is going to help reduce that. So, invest in that.

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00:30:16.550 --> 00:30:24.409

Rishwa Shekhar: This is the narrative that, you know, we need to bring back again and again, in whatever conversation we are making.

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00:30:25.910 --> 00:30:35.839

Callie Bradley: Yeah, great, thank you, and I thought that that structure for questions to ask that you provided was really helpful, and I can see that people in the chat agree.

161

00:30:35.970 --> 00:30:51.589

Callie Bradley: Anne, coming to you now, kind of on this point that Rishwa talked about, of remembering that it's people who make decisions and kind of remembering the human aspect of communication, you know, we often think of strategic communication as something reserved for really big moments, but

162

00:30:51.590 --> 00:30:58.779

Callie Bradley: What does it look like to make your everyday updates to, you know, your colleagues, your line manager, you know, just people that you work with?

163

00:30:58.780 --> 00:31:00.510

Callie Bradley: Or, or see every day.

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00:31:00.590 --> 00:31:02.950

Callie Bradley: How do we make those decisions ready?

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00:31:05.060 --> 00:31:07.270

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Yeah, it's really important.

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00:31:07.630 --> 00:31:15.810

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: And echoing, what both Nicholas and Rishwa have said, simplicity is... is so important.

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00:31:15.910 --> 00:31:32.039

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Particularly if you are any type of policy expert, and you're communicating to someone in any way outside your team, a supervisor, a leader in your agency, whoever it might be.

168

00:31:32.060 --> 00:31:37.469

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Keeping in mind that that person is smart, but they don't necessarily know all that you know.

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00:31:37.840 --> 00:31:44.750

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: In one of my roles, I was the only communications person on a team of about 25 PhD scientists.

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00:31:44.750 --> 00:32:00.109

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: And, and our agency head, was a politician and lawyer, a very brilliant one, but was not a scientist. And a lot of times we were communicating about

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00:32:00.610 --> 00:32:12.459

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: investments that need to be made in science, R&D, things of this nature, and those, to Rishwa's point, needed to be framed in the sense of,

172

00:32:12.620 --> 00:32:37.530

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: what does this mean for real people? What does this mean for the country, right? What benefit is this going to have in society, if we invest in this particular piece of research equipment, right? And that needs to be communicated at a... at about a fifth grade level, not because we're dumbing it down, but because that's how normal people talk. I also believe and have found and seen a number

173

00:32:37.530 --> 00:32:38.460

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: times.

174

00:32:38.800 --> 00:32:41.849

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Over the years, that if you really can't...

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00:32:42.030 --> 00:32:48.180

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: After, you know, carefully reading the policy document, talking to the experts that produced it.

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00:32:48.620 --> 00:32:55.790

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: If you really can't distill it down to between a 5th and 7th grade reading level, whether internally or publicly.

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00:32:55.810 --> 00:33:14.779

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: that policy is likely to have a very hard time sticking, because people don't like what they don't understand if a policy comes under attack from the other side politically, or whatever happens. If people don't understand it, in a simple way, don't understand the benefit, and can't explain it.

178

00:33:14.780 --> 00:33:21.749

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: then you're in trouble. So, I think it applies at the very interpersonal level, and it applies at the big level, too.

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00:33:23.230 --> 00:33:38.990

Callie Bradley: Yeah, great, and I love what you said, which is that you might be communicating with really smart people, but that simplicity is still so important. It's that, kind of expert trap that Nicholas referred to coming back again, and I think that's so important to keep in mind.

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00:33:38.990 --> 00:34:03.759

Callie Bradley: I'm going to stick with you and as we shift a little bit. So, I'd love to talk more about internal communication. So, a lot of strategic communication training is focused on external audiences, and we've discussed that a bit, but I know you've seen how internal communication often suffers as a result of that. So, I'd love to hear a bit more from you. What does effective strategic communication look like

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00:34:03.760 --> 00:34:06.279

Callie Bradley: Specifically within and across teams.

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00:34:08.949 --> 00:34:28.659

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Yeah, in addition to the other points that we've covered, which are, you know, framing, and being mindful of, your goals and your desired outcomes, internally and with your teams, and even in your just day-to-day casual conversations with your colleagues, oh, how's this project going?

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00:34:29.259 --> 00:34:33.049

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: just be mindful of how you answer that question, right?

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00:34:33.139 --> 00:34:44.599

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Because internal perception of what you're working on matters as much as external perception. But in addition to all that, I think something that gets missed is, emotional authenticity.

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00:34:44.599 --> 00:34:55.059

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: And in particular, taking into account the feelings of the people that you're working with, particularly if you're in a leadership position.

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00:34:55.539 --> 00:35:03.719

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: In the context of framing and keeping the focus on the positive.

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00:35:03.819 --> 00:35:06.959

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Where possible. That doesn't mean

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00:35:07.039 --> 00:35:25.099

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: sugarcoating and acting like everything's great if it's not, right? If there's a hard, update that you have to give, if there are difficult decisions that are being made that impact people's lives, recognizing that, and you can just name it,

189

00:35:25.449 --> 00:35:38.829

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: in a team meeting, or in an email, and say, I know this is, tough to hear, here's the update, I'm here to discuss, let me know what questions you have. And...

190

00:35:39.399 --> 00:35:56.999

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: I think a lot of leaders fall into the trap of, avoiding engaging with emotion, and that is one of the easiest ways to burn your team out, is when their leaders don't seem to understand them and where they're coming from.

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00:35:57.239 --> 00:36:02.289

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: It's really important, and it goes a long way toward supporting your team and their longevity.

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00:36:03.220 --> 00:36:16.270

Callie Bradley: Yeah, I love that point about emotional authenticity. I think that's really significant. Speaking of kind of, like, difficult updates to give or large issues, Nicholas, I'm going to come to you now. So.

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00:36:16.270 --> 00:36:23.300

Callie Bradley: When a big issue lands and everyone across an organization needs to speak about it confidently and consistently.

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00:36:23.480 --> 00:36:29.870

Callie Bradley: How do you actually create that kind of internal alignment, and what can go wrong if it's not done well?

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00:36:32.290 --> 00:36:41.309

Nicholas Bruneau: Yeah, I think, this is where, you know, as communication experts, we need to try to rally the troops, but also, you know, an example was.

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00:36:41.400 --> 00:36:45.090

Nicholas Bruneau: When I was at the Global Partnership for Education during the pandemic.

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00:36:45.120 --> 00:37:03.969

Nicholas Bruneau: things were changing so quickly, and we really were struggling to get people to say the same message, and for people to be on message, but also to understand what were the big, the big picture issues and the statistics. So we created a template, which was.

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00:37:03.970 --> 00:37:10.769

Nicholas Bruneau: an on-message template. What that allowed us is to have something that was kind of like a two-pager.

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00:37:10.770 --> 00:37:27.339

Nicholas Bruneau: That really had the key statistics, it had the key messages, it had, you know, an overview of what the organization was doing, a couple of quotes from leadership, so basically, and maybe even some case studies if we could, but really something that, in one page or two pages.

200

00:37:27.340 --> 00:37:46.150

Nicholas Bruneau: you're able to, across the organization, speak with one voice, and have some of the key issues or the key statistics, so that, let's say, someone in New York or in Kuala Lumpur needs to do a presentation right away, or needs to speak with a client, they have something that has been vetted, that has been approved.

201

00:37:46.150 --> 00:38:07.100

Nicholas Bruneau: And actually, what was cool is that this then allowed more collaboration internally, because the communications team was talking with the policy team, was also talking with HR, was talking with all the other teams to make sure that this was put in through the organization, and really, really something that was a living, breathing document. So I would recommend

202

00:38:07.810 --> 00:38:26.270

Nicholas Bruneau: you know, every organization, if you have some really challenging issues, that you want, to really, really streamline across the organization, to really have something like this, like one or two major. And I'm happy to share that later on as well, with everyone afterwards.

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00:38:27.030 --> 00:38:46.729

Callie Bradley: Great, thanks, Nicholas. Yeah, we will upload that template as one of the event resources on the event page, so that you all can check it out. Great, we are at our final question, and that is for you, Rishwa. So, I know that you have worked across a lot of different cultures and in different countries, so...

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00:38:47.000 --> 00:39:01.440

Callie Bradley: I'd love to hear more about this. We know that culture shapes everything from how you build trust to how you frame a recommendation, so what have you learned about adapting your approach to strategic communication when the cultural context shifts?

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00:39:02.510 --> 00:39:07.529

Rishwa Shekhar: Right. So, you know, I think one thing over the years I've learned is

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00:39:07.600 --> 00:39:26.950

Rishwa Shekhar: that across contexts, is that communication is never, ever cultural neutral. And especially when we're working in policy contexts, impact organizations, we have people who brought up, you know, who were brought up in very different contexts, very different... in very different families, but you're united for that one cause.

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00:39:26.950 --> 00:39:35.060

Rishwa Shekhar: So there is something that is there, but the way you came to that conclusion is very different, and that determines how you think and how you act.

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00:39:35.120 --> 00:39:48.229

Rishwa Shekhar: So, increasing... interestingly, you know, I realized that what builds trust often varies. So there's no one, this is the go-to thing, this is what's going to build trust in the team. You have to understand what's going on, and then that's going to build trust.

209

00:39:48.230 --> 00:40:12.529

Rishwa Shekhar: However, what breaks trust is often quite consistent, and that is not... is not feeling valued enough, coming to a lot of points that everyone was saying, you know, not feeling valued enough, feeling that... that burnout, feeling... not really feeling connected in that team. And, you know, I mean, this is... this is a very well-coded example, and a lot of understands it, but I mean, I will still... I would like to really highlight it, is that, you know, in many cultures.

210

00:40:12.670 --> 00:40:14.190

Rishwa Shekhar: Being direct.

211

00:40:14.490 --> 00:40:17.589

Rishwa Shekhar: And clarity and competence is the up...

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00:40:17.590 --> 00:40:35.790

Rishwa Shekhar: utmost important thing is there, it is, yes, you need to be competent, yes, you need to be clear, but the way you define competence, the way you define clarity, again, changes based on the culture, the context you're coming from, and people might, and they will actually, feel disrespectful.

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00:40:35.980 --> 00:40:37.350

Rishwa Shekhar: So.

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00:40:37.540 --> 00:40:44.669

Rishwa Shekhar: trying to understand where your team is coming from is very important. What I have learned are two separate things.

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00:40:44.670 --> 00:41:09.660

Rishwa Shekhar: The integrity of the message and the style of delivery, they're not the same thing. So you keep the integrity of the message, we're not going to change, yes, but the way you're going to deliver it, you need to adapt it, you need to be actively listening, coming back to

what we were saying in the beginning, you need to actively be listening and having that emotional authenticity to know and understand your team. But the second thing is that while, of course, we have the logic and the recommendation

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00:41:09.660 --> 00:41:18.980

Rishwa Shekhar: and the trade-off very clearly laid, so the first part, the integrity of the message. But the way you're going to talk about it, the recommendation, whether it be too explicit.

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00:41:18.980 --> 00:41:39.380

Rishwa Shekhar: or whether I'm going to first build consensus around my team, have an informal conversation, you know, slowly pitch it to the decision makers over a coffee, or before I go ahead and lend them a big document where they have to make the decision. So really, whether I'm going to warm up the field, or whether they prefer a deck on, you know, a deck on their desk.

218

00:41:39.380 --> 00:41:54.580

Rishwa Shekhar: So this is something I, you know, I repeatedly emphasize, because strategic communication, for me, is not about, changing what you're saying. Your message has to be there, but it's really about ensuring that what you said is heard.

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00:41:54.580 --> 00:42:01.740

Rishwa Shekhar: It's really about making sure that whatever I'm going to say, it will be impossible for you to misunderstand.

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00:42:01.740 --> 00:42:03.630

Rishwa Shekhar: What needs to be done.

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00:42:03.820 --> 00:42:15.380

Rishwa Shekhar: So, if you go with that mindset, I think that would... that helps me, and I hope it can also help a lot of you make... reaching to the people who can make the decision, or who are making the decisions.

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00:42:16.880 --> 00:42:41.439

Callie Bradley: Thank you, Rishwa. I think that's a really helpful point for us to wrap up the panel on. Thank you all so much for that brilliant panel. I'm going to give a reminder to everyone to

keep sharing any questions you have for today's speakers ahead of our Q&A. We have a lot of questions already from you in the Q&A tab and pre-submitted, so please add yours in now.

223

00:42:41.650 --> 00:42:57.169

Callie Bradley: And to ensure that it gets seen and not lost in the chat, again, I'm just going to emphasize that you can submit those in the Q&A tab, which you should see at the bottom of your Zoom screen, and feel free to go through and upvote any questions that you see that resonate with you.

224

00:42:57.480 --> 00:43:12.719

Callie Bradley: So, just quickly, before we dive into the questions, I want to let you know that we've sourced a great follow-on resource to today's topic that we think you'll all find useful. It is an article from an apolitical contributor on communicating change within your organization.

225

00:43:12.940 --> 00:43:29.740

Callie Bradley: So, to receive your link to the article, go to the Life and Government community after the event and leave a comment on the post pinned at the top of the page, and we will send you the resource by email after the event. My colleague has also just posted a link to that thread in the chat.

226

00:43:30.730 --> 00:43:41.800

Callie Bradley: Alright, let's move on to the Q&A. So, Rishra, I'm going to stick with you. This question got a lot of upvotes, so...

227

00:43:41.910 --> 00:43:50.760

Callie Bradley: What would you do if you laid out everything clearly and leaders, specifically a group of about 9 leaders, still don't make a decision?

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00:43:52.270 --> 00:44:03.390

Rishwa Shekhar: That is... that is so true, and I have personally had that so many times. And you know, one thing which I'm going to advise you very, very frankly is, at the end of the day, always, always remember

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00:44:03.690 --> 00:44:18.119

Rishwa Shekhar: it's people again. It's... it's at the end of the day, they're all people, they will have their... if it's politicians making the decisions, they will care about making sure that their, that their constituencies vote them again in power.

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00:44:18.120 --> 00:44:24.660

Rishwa Shekhar: So, thinking that this political leader is not going to make such a decision is going to make something because it's always right.

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00:44:24.660 --> 00:44:31.720

Rishwa Shekhar: Don't do it, don't do, it's not gonna happen. So rather, why don't you frame it in a way that,

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00:44:31.740 --> 00:44:38.180

Rishwa Shekhar: That will appeal to the constituents, and when he or she goes out, be like, you know what? My people will understand.

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00:44:38.180 --> 00:44:53.490

Rishwa Shekhar: Another trick, I think, which I've done is sometimes I don't really go in in a meeting with 9 different leaders at the same time. So, I mean, of course, I'll be sitting together in the same meeting, but I've started warming up before to the idea in a language that they understand.

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00:44:53.520 --> 00:45:10.819

Rishwa Shekhar: Because a lot of time, and this doesn't happen with me, but I think you'll all relate, no matter... we all have these biases, so no matter what the other person is speaking, if you've already made our mind, we will hear either the positives or the negatives of what the person is saying. So if I know the decision is super, super urgent.

235

00:45:10.820 --> 00:45:25.480

Rishwa Shekhar: I am going to make sure that I'll warm up these people, coming back to this, you know, their people, so having that, understanding what works with them. I'm going to have a coffee with them, maybe patch a little bit with a dinner, with a lunch or something, really get my idea land in their head.

236

00:45:25.830 --> 00:45:32.459

Rishwa Shekhar: In their words, even before they're in that meeting with these 9 different leaders making a decision that they don't know about.

237

00:45:32.460 --> 00:45:48.039

Rishwa Shekhar: So, you know, this... these are the two things that I generally work with. I'm happy to get into, you know, more of it later. You guys can always reach out to me individually. Also, I'll probably share a few articles on that after this. But yeah, these are the two things that I personally go ahead and do.

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00:45:49.580 --> 00:46:11.869

Callie Bradley: Great. Thanks, Rishwa. Yeah, thanks guys for continuing to submit these questions. We have so many good ones. So, I am going to move to Nicholas. So someone has said, I often have the situation where I make a proposal in a meeting, and there is no reaction, and then another colleague will make the same point, and it is well received.

239

00:46:11.890 --> 00:46:28.130

Callie Bradley: would you have any suggestions for me to help with this? And we saw in our opening poll that it can be sort of a pain point when other people get credit for something that you... was your idea and that you communicated. So, yes, Nicholas, what advice do you have for this person?

240

00:46:29.640 --> 00:46:39.129

Nicholas Bruneau: Okay, actually, on the previous question, on the previous point, just to back up what Rishwa was saying as well, I think would be to try to find

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00:46:39.270 --> 00:46:56.859

Nicholas Bruneau: statistics that support your cause as well. I think sometimes we are, we are going to be, you know, talking about why something is good, and then we will, not really back it up with statistics, but also to back it up with examples of what other organizations are doing.

242

00:46:56.860 --> 00:47:04.019

Nicholas Bruneau: So, one example was... There was one organization that didn't have a,

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00:47:04.150 --> 00:47:15.890

Nicholas Bruneau: for example, a strong email communications strategy, so I basically showed them the benefits, so getting statistics about the benefits, but also then afterwards.

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00:47:15.890 --> 00:47:28.860

Nicholas Bruneau: Showing what their competition or other organizations were doing, to really, really show that, and make that kind of like, sort of like, well, they're doing it, so why... why shouldn't we, kind of thing, right? So, kind of like,

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00:47:28.950 --> 00:47:31.970

Nicholas Bruneau: And then as far as the...

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00:47:32.290 --> 00:47:39.799

Nicholas Bruneau: the other... the other point that... the other question, I think, you know, one of the things that comes to mind is to...

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00:47:41.980 --> 00:47:58.569

Nicholas Bruneau: I, I, you know, I think you don't necessarily need to have ownership of that, but if you want to then sort of take the lead on a certain issue or a certain idea that you have, is to really, really, you know, try to be...

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00:47:59.810 --> 00:48:09.999

Nicholas Bruneau: sort of an inspirational voice on that topic, and to sort of stay, regularly talking about that topic, so that it's not just a blip.

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00:48:10.000 --> 00:48:25.040

Nicholas Bruneau: but then something that you are known for, for example, that you are, you know, adamant about doing a certain initiative, or doing a certain project, like, for example, just recently at UNDP, I kept...

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00:48:25.060 --> 00:48:33.009

Nicholas Bruneau: Hammering on the fact that we needed to talk about what we're doing in-country, and not just talk about big picture issues.

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00:48:33.010 --> 00:48:46.619

Nicholas Bruneau: but also talk about what we're doing in specific countries. So every opportunity, I would bring it up. I would keep bringing it up so that eventually, you know, I was being, known for that, or at least I was, you know.

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00:48:46.630 --> 00:48:49.869

Nicholas Bruneau: pushing that agenda. So I think being persistent.

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00:48:49.920 --> 00:48:54.000

Nicholas Bruneau: And being consistent is also... is basically the key for that.

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00:48:55.060 --> 00:49:15.629

Callie Bradley: Yeah, I think that's a great point, and, you know, going back to what you said earlier about storytelling and narrative building being such a key aspect of strategic communication, to ensure that your points are well received, like this question says, it's important to remember that. Yeah, the kind of well-received part of it is super important to emphasize.

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00:49:15.630 --> 00:49:20.529

Callie Bradley: Great, thank you. Anne, I will come to you next. So I have a bit of a tricky question.

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00:49:20.530 --> 00:49:32.959

Callie Bradley: Where have you seen internal communication unintentionally compete with external trust? And how can governments design messages that serve both employees and the public without diluting either?

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00:49:34.690 --> 00:49:38.630

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: Yeah, it's a constant challenge, and I've seen those things,

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00:49:39.130 --> 00:49:53.350

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: butt heads numerous times. A place that comes to mind, a number of years ago, I was working at the EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency, and there was a major

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00:49:53.350 --> 00:50:08.610

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: regulation under the Clean Water Act that defined where the Clean Water Act, this major law, applied and didn't apply, right? There had been some Supreme Court rulings that diluted this 1970s law, and

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00:50:08.610 --> 00:50:22.450

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: water law really has nothing to do with hydrology in the United States, so for a science agency trying to figure out, like, where the law does and doesn't apply, this was a really tricky, place to be.

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00:50:22.920 --> 00:50:33.289

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: The regulation, the draft regulation that got put out, was confusing, and for folks like farmers that have maybe,

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00:50:33.810 --> 00:50:45.509

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: streams on their property or ponds that are only there part of the year, there wasn't a simple answer for them. Is this in Clean Water Act Regulation, or is it out? Because that...

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00:50:45.660 --> 00:50:50.829

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: makes a difference in what activities can be done on the land. And,

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00:50:51.630 --> 00:51:09.819

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: the... there was a lot of really smart people that worked really hard on developing the policy, and the internal communication around the policy was one thing. I was in a speech-writing role for the head of the agency at the time, and what I saw was that the way that,

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00:51:10.340 --> 00:51:28.960

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: the agency was handling these simple questions was not headed in a great direction. And indeed, it became kind of a political nightmare, and that regulation ended up getting struck down in court. I think the remedy to that, if I could have waved a magic wand, and certainly there are, like.

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00:51:29.130 --> 00:51:37.300

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: big P political realities that were at play here, which I won't get into in this, in this, moment, but...

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00:51:37.300 --> 00:51:56.069

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: I think if there had been more of a communications and kind of small-pe political gut check earlier on in the policy process, you know, how are we going to talk about this publicly? What are the answers to these basic questions? If that had been more part of the conversation earlier on, I think some of this

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00:51:56.190 --> 00:52:14.719

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: you know, upheaval could have been avoided. I also think that, and this is a simple thing to say and a hard thing to do, but cultivating a culture of internal honesty at

government agencies is super important for this reason. If a major project, a major initiative isn't working.

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00:52:14.790 --> 00:52:27.200

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: We need the ability to be honest with each other about that, and to stop and turn the ship. And, that is really hard for a variety of reasons, you know, politically and otherwise.

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00:52:27.390 --> 00:52:35.860

Ann Hunter-Pirtle: But to the extent that leaders within their spheres of control can cultivate that culture within their teams, I think those things make a big difference.

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00:52:37.100 --> 00:52:48.330

Callie Bradley: Yeah, that cultivating the culture of internal honesty, I think so many, so many people in this virtual room would agree with you there. That's such a great point. Alright, I will come...

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00:52:48.330 --> 00:52:57.240

Callie Bradley: To Rishwa, this... this question got a lot of upvotes. I know you mentioned earlier, this idea of decision fatigue for leaders.

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00:52:57.240 --> 00:52:58.460

Callie Bradley: So someone asked.

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00:52:58.460 --> 00:53:15.399

Callie Bradley: Would decision fatigue also affect staff when leaders don't know what they want, and shift that thinking, slash decision to come up with something to staff? So yeah, I guess kind of, sort of inverting the kind of decision fatigue you presented to us, do you think it can go the other way?

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00:53:16.770 --> 00:53:27.930

Rishwa Shekhar: I mean, I think yes. I think decision fatigue can go to anyone who has to make a lot of decisions, which has a lot of impact. So, decision fatigue, I think, generally comes when

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00:53:28.200 --> 00:53:35.689

Rishwa Shekhar: I have to take the burden off making that decision, which means that if today I'm allocating 10 million somewhere.

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00:53:35.830 --> 00:53:45.849

Rishwa Shekhar: and the decision goes wrong, you might not... you will be the one who will be penalized for that. And I think if there are multiple such decisions.

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00:53:45.970 --> 00:54:04.259

Rishwa Shekhar: Even if you're aiding to that decision. For example, if you're someone who has to write these documents so that someone else is making those decisions, but they're not making those decisions, it's going to start coming down to you, because you are the one who's supposed to help them make that decision, but they're not making that decision, so it starts coming down to the staff.

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00:54:04.260 --> 00:54:13.190

Rishwa Shekhar: So I don't think it's more of a leader's thing, per se, I think it's anyone who is in that circle, who's either making those decisions or is helping

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00:54:13.190 --> 00:54:24.350

Rishwa Shekhar: make those decisions can get into that, but fatigue. I think one simple thing I would suggest, and I mean, I work with a lot of, senior executives making these decisions, I think

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00:54:24.390 --> 00:54:40.010

Rishwa Shekhar: one thing which I can say both ways, either to make a decision or to not make a decision, sorry, for both staff to make that decision, or, again, to get out of that decision fatigue, is 1A, I think, really, I know it might sound sometimes

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00:54:40.420 --> 00:54:51.149

Rishwa Shekhar: incomplete, but go ahead, and if the leader is not making a decision, what I sometimes do is, I'm going to say, these are the three things, make a decision, otherwise I'm going to make a decision about it.

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00:54:51.150 --> 00:55:12.830

Rishwa Shekhar: So, go ahead and say with it, these are the three... my... these are my three recommendations. Go ahead and own those recommendations. Say that I take ownership of those recommendations that often help them reduce the burden on themselves, that I... it will all

go... I cannot emphasize that enough, and I think this is the fourth time I'll be saying it's again at the end of the day, we're all humans.

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00:55:12.830 --> 00:55:22.199

Rishwa Shekhar: If I have to take the burden of all of the things, I'm going to be tired, and I'm going to delay that decision. If someone comes up to me and says, hey, you know what, I have wetted it.

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00:55:22.200 --> 00:55:47.179

Rishwa Shekhar: I think these are the three best options. Within that, even this is the best option. What do you think, in your opinion? Just go with those three questions, and you are going to get a decision from them. And the other thing is sometimes, you know, is a little bit outside of work, lifestyle thing, I would say. Sometimes there's nothing you can do about it. There are decisions that will be pending because of things which are outside of your control. Elections, you know, internal politics, within the

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00:55:47.180 --> 00:56:12.159

Rishwa Shekhar: organization, restructuring, and stuff like that. So that is completely beyond your capacity to anything, so then just go out, do a hobby, really just take it. Just relax and see what works for you. Just forget about that. Oh, my dog is here. Just forget about that, and just let it go. Knowing how to let it go as well, once in a while works, especially for communication professionals and people working

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00:56:12.160 --> 00:56:19.460

Rishwa Shekhar: in partnerships and comms, you're dealing with so many people every day. You have so many of these things that you need to know how to disconnect.

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00:56:19.460 --> 00:56:43.639

Rishwa Shekhar: I just go and play some sport. That works for me, but I think everyone has their own ways. So do that. And don't be ashamed to go ahead and say that. I sometimes just go and say to my bosses, hey, you know what? I'm so done with your decisions, I'm gonna go for 2 hours to the gym. That's it. I'm just gonna go out and say that. So, you know, just don't be afraid to say that. I know it's not possible in all settings.

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00:56:43.750 --> 00:56:46.860

Rishwa Shekhar: But, but have those time for yourself as well.

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00:56:48.070 --> 00:57:11.669

Callie Bradley: Great, I think that is the perfect note to end on, so thank you. Thank you, Rishwa. Thank you, Anne. Thank you, Nicholas. I know there's a lot more questions, so please feel free to take those to the life and government community. We'd love to continue the discussion there. I... we've had such incredible wisdom from each of our speakers today, so I'd like to ask you all to join me in giving Nicholas, Rishwa, and Anne a virtual round of applause. I can see those

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00:57:11.670 --> 00:57:20.450

Callie Bradley: Those emojis, clapping emojis coming. And most importantly, thanks to you, the audience, for investing and learning and being so engaged in this topic.

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00:57:20.580 --> 00:57:30.389

Callie Bradley: The team is going to pull up a quick poll to find out how you felt about today, which will help us continue improving our content, so we really appreciate your responses.

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00:57:30.730 --> 00:57:47.939

Callie Bradley: And before you go, while you're responding to that poll, I want to share a few more events that you can register for to join us again soon. If you're not available to be there live, remember that you can always register for the event, and then the recording will get sent to you, so you can catch up whenever it suits you.

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00:57:48.140 --> 00:57:59.740

Callie Bradley: Coming up next Thursday, you can join us for Futures Thinking Fundamentals for Busy Public Servants, where you will learn how foresight can help you better anticipate change regardless of your role.

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00:57:59.900 --> 00:58:17.219

Callie Bradley: The following week, we have AI for Meeting Management, which is part of our monthly AI Skills Lab series. And then next month, we will be exploring building habits to reduce work stress, where you will learn tips that you can implement right away to prevent workplace pressure.

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00:58:17.980 --> 00:58:30.940

Callie Bradley: Alright, that is all that we have time for today. We hope you found it helpful, and we want to say a huge thank you to our speakers, to everyone who's made today happen, and to you for taking time out of your busy days.

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00:58:31.310 --> 00:58:45.269

Callie Bradley: Keep an eye out for the email coming your way with today's recording and resources. Don't forget to find my post in the Life and Government community, and we hope to see you at another apolitical event very soon. Have a great day, goodbye.

apolitical.com