

THE EFFECTS OF LEADER MOTIVATING LANGUAGE USE ON WORKER DECISION MAKING

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the link between leader communication and worker decision making. Results show that leader communication (as measured by the motivating language scale) is significantly and positively related to worker decision making. Structural equation modeling results indicate an expected 2.5% improvement in worker decision making for every 10% increase in leader language use. These results can be useful to managers because motivating language theory is an easily understood and applied communication framework for improving employee decision making.

INTRODUCTION

This study exams the link between leader communication use and worker decision making ability. Findings show that leader communication, as measured by the motivating language (ML) construct [12] [13] [22], is significantly and positively related to a worker's decision making capabilities. This finding can help organizations promote better decision making at all organizational levels, and such improvements are necessary as today's global environment creates increased needs for organizational flexibility and reaction times [11] [21] [16] [23].

Many organizations are attempting to meet these demands by empowering workers to be more responsible for decision making [8] [11] [18] [21] [23]. However, this shift requires that organizations develop methods to promote good decision making by all workers rather than select organizational members [2] [15] [18] [24]. This study highlights the role leaders can play in developing such a diversified decision making structure [1] [18] [20].

In addition, study findings add to decision making literature due to its focus on the role of leader communication. Previous decision making work has tended to concentrate on individual characteristics, environmental factors, or technological support systems [2] [4] [5] [19] [10] [24]. Fewer studies have examined a leader's role in the worker decision making process [4] [14] [15], and none have specifically examined the role of leader communication behaviors [9] [17]. This oversight is unfortunate since improving a leader's communication ability is frequently a desirable alternative to the daunting task of changing environmental factors. Also, worker training can be costly due to the time involved, lost productivity, and instruction expenses [3] [6] [7].

TABLE 1.

Decision Making Scale Factor Analysis

<i>Item</i>	<i>Loading</i>
Co-workers often ask me for help in making decisions.	0.84
I make work decisions on a frequent basis.	0.79
The decisions I make improve my organization's performance.	0.86
I make decisions more often than my co-workers.	0.88
The decisions I make are usually right.	0.79
I make work related decisions in a timely fashion.	0.83
My superiors usually support my decisions.	0.81
I feel comfortable making important decisions.	0.70
I usually make decisions faster than my co-workers.	0.77

Each question had a five point response ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

The eigenvalue of the first factor = 5.89

The eigen value of the second factor = 0.60

The first factor accounts for 65% of the scale's total variance

TABLE 2.**Variable Relationships**

	Direction Giving	Empathetic	Meaning-Making	Decision Making
Direction Giving	.92	.81	.72	.22
Empathetic	.69	.92	.65	.23
Meaning Making	.59	.47	.93	.39
Decision Making	.20	.19	.30	.94

Correlations are in the lower diagonal, covariances are in the upper diagonal, and scale reliabilities are presented on the diagonal.

TABLE 3.**Variable Descriptives**

	Direction Giving	Empathetic	Meaning-Making	Decision Making
Mean	3.15	3.30	2.59	3.21
Standard Deviation	1.03	1.15	1.20	1.08
Upper Quartile	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00
Median	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.00
Lower Quartile	2.50	2.50	1.50	2.00

TABLE 4.**Model Fit Statistics**

Goodness-of-Fit index	=	.98
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit index	=	.90
RMSEA index	=	.11
RMSEA 90% Confidence Interval	=	-0.01 to 0.24
Model Chi-Square	=	5.48 with 2 d.f.
Model Chi-Square p-value	=	0.06
Chi-Square/DF Ratio	=	2.74

TABLE 5.

SEM Parameter Estimates

<i>Path</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Standard Estimate</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>Z Value</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Variance Explained</i>
ML to Direction Giving	.93	.91	0.08	11.14	0.00	92%
ML to Empathetic	.87	.76	0.10	9.10	0.00	92%
ML to Meaning Making	.78	.65	0.10	7.51	0.00	93%
ML to Decision Quality	.27	.25	0.10	2.60	0.01	91%

FIGURE 1.

Conceptual Model of the Relationship Between Motivating Language and Worker Decision Making

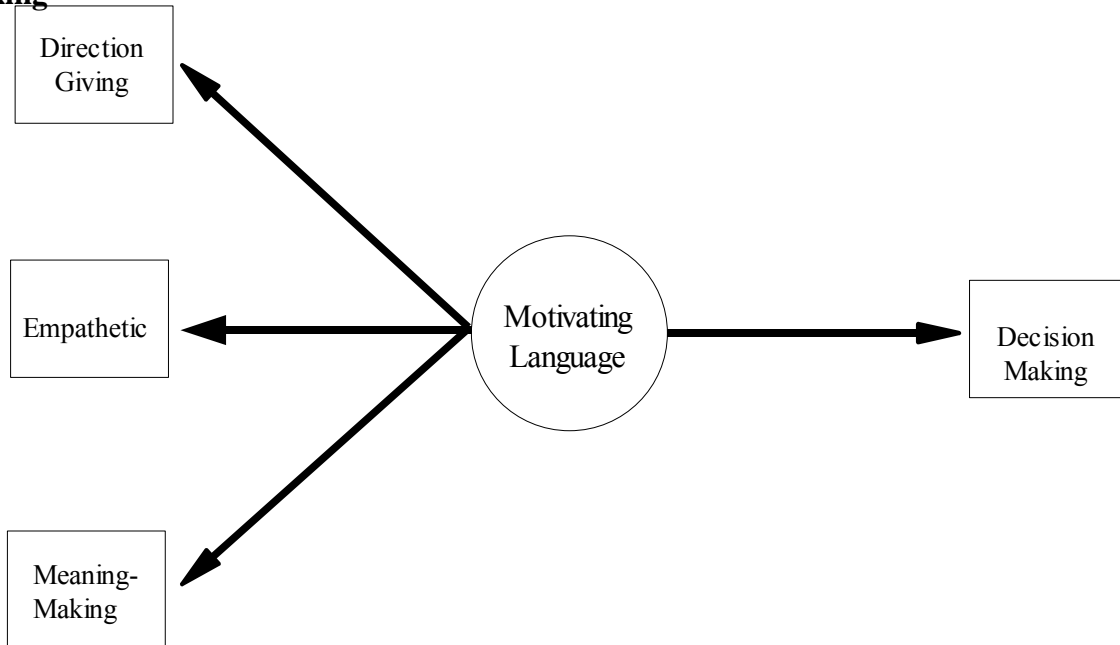
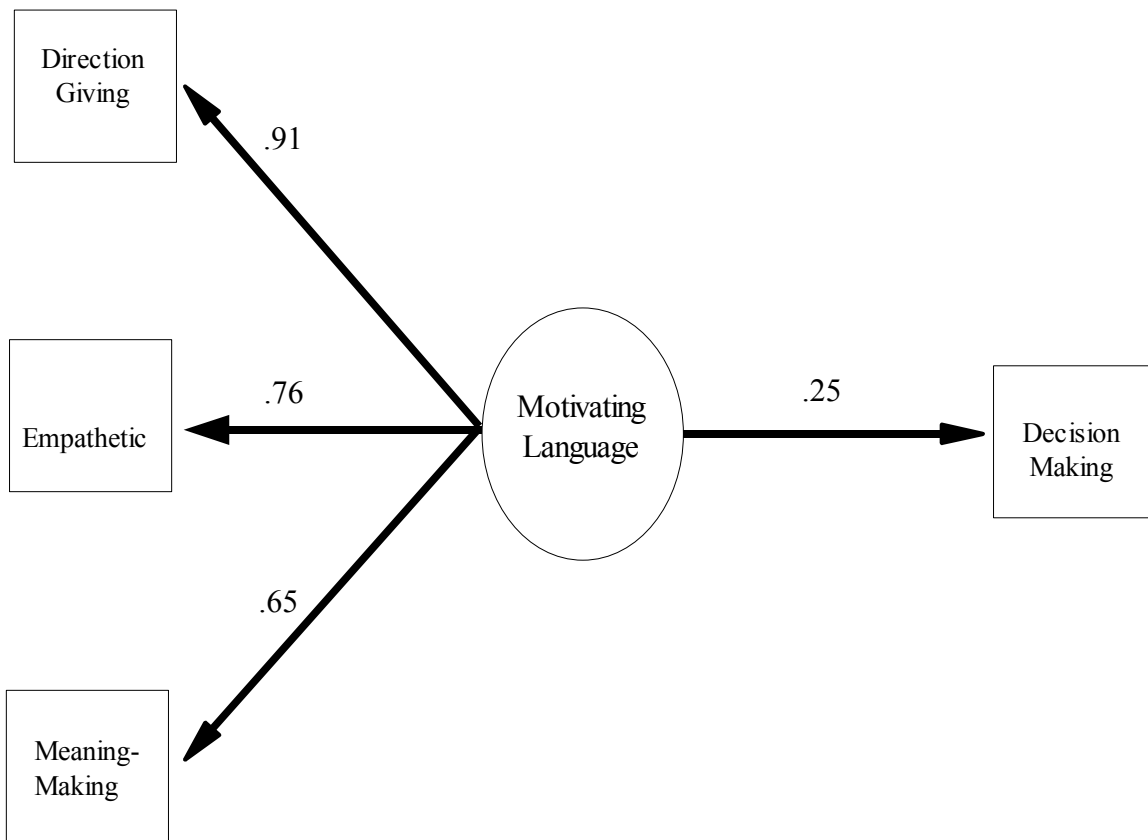


FIGURE 2.
Path Estimates of the Relationship Between Motivating Language and Worker Decision Making



CONCLUSIONS

Study findings indicate a strong and significant link between leader communication and worker decision making. The structural equation model shows a good fit between the hypothesized model and the actual data. Statistical results show an expected 2.5% increase in worker decision making for every 10% increase in leader motivating language use. In addition, ML accounts for over 90% of the variance in worker decision making. These results hold promise for developing improved leader communication practices that foster better worker decision making. Equally

important, these results contribute a useful communication framework to the leadership-decision making research stream.

The ML leader communication framework is multifaceted and interactive. ML concurrently offers a basis for diagnosis and evaluation to guide leaders in enhancing worker decision making. These interventions can be a cost effective way to improve worker decision making. Since leaders have many subordinates, an improvement to a leader's ML use can create tremendous gains in positive organizational performance.

However, further research is needed to determine the best implementation methods for any related leader training programs. In addition, more studies are needed on limiting and moderating factors in the ML-decision making relationship. These studies should examine such effects as overall organizational culture, structure, strategy, reward systems, worker ability, and the general business environment. Understanding these factors can help determine the motivating language implementation methods for optimizing worker decision making.

This understanding is critical for managers in today's rapidly changing business environment. Increased competitive pressures create a demand for better worker decisions at all organizational levels, and in an increased number of daily tasks. Improved leader communication can aid worker decision making, and these improvements are vital for organizations aspiring to world class performance. A better understanding of motivating language use is one method to help organizations attain such goals.

Keywords: Motivating Language, Decision Making, Structural Equation Modeling, Communication, Leadership

The full paper is available from the authors upon request.

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Peanut Mayfield.