
AN SGLN FELLOWSHIP 2026 LEARNING RESOURCE

Talk the Walk

*Conversations with Singaporean leaders
on communication, influence and impact*

In conversation with

Aileen Tan · Bahren Shaari · Sajen Aswani

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How to use this booklet

Read it front to back once for understanding. After that, treat it as a reference: the three pillars on page 5 give you the vocabulary, the three crucible moments give you the situations, and the toolkit from page 14 gives you something to practice before your next difficult conversation.

Every quotation comes from an interview conducted by the SGLN 2026 Fellowship team.

FOREWORD

On Talking the Walk

Most leaders are taught to *walk the talk*. We started off with a thesis that it is equally important for leaders to learn how to *talk the walk*: to speak with the same care and integrity that leaders bring to the work, because sometimes, it is not enough to let the work speak for itself.

We spoke with three senior leaders to gain insights: **Aileen Tan** has spent more than two decades at Singtel, currently as Group Chief People & Sustainability Officer, where she led the people side of the 2021 strategic reset under Group CEO Yuen Kuan Moon.

Bahren Shaari led Bank of Singapore as CEO from 2015 to 2022, including the Barclays Asia wealth integration and the early months of COVID-19. **Sajen Aswani**, former Chief Executive of Tolaram, built consumer brands and businesses across Africa. Tolaram has been in Nigeria for fifty years and recently acquired Guinness Nigeria from Diageo.

This booklet distils what we heard. It is organised into three main parts: the foundations of effective communication; the situations where communication matters most (setting direction, leading through crisis, driving change); and a practical toolkit with key takeaways to guide your own practice. Quotes have been lightly edited for clarity. We hope the voices have not.

– The SGLN 2026 “Talk the Walk” team

The Leaders We Spoke With

*Three senior leaders, three distinct careers. One shared lesson:
communication is not the soft side of leadership; it is how leadership travels.*



Aileen Tan

GROUP CHIEF PEOPLE AND SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER, SINGTEL

Aileen Tan leads Group People and Sustainability at Singtel, drawing on more than 30 years of leadership experience across industries and regions. She joined Singtel in 2008 and set up its Corporate Social Responsibility function the following year, and her work today centres on building a purpose-led culture and driving sustainability impact.

She serves on the boards of the Singapore University of Social Sciences, Globe Telecom, and the Health Sciences Authority, and holds advisory roles with the NTUC-U Care Fund, the Ministry of Finance's VITAL! Advisory Panel, and the Ministry of Manpower's Workplace Safety and Health Council, alongside serving as an ABAC alternate. She holds a BA from NUS and an MSc in Organisational Behaviour from Alliant, and is an IHRP Master Professional. Her honours include the NTUC May Day Medal of Commendation (Gold) in 2022, the Public Service Medal in 2018, and recognition on the Top 100 Women in Sustainability 2024 and Top 10 Sustainability Leaders Asia lists.



Bahren Shaari

MEMBER, COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTIAL ADVISERS | FORMER CEO, BANK OF SINGAPORE

Bahren Shaari serves on Singapore's Council of Presidential Advisers, a role he has held since January 2020 after four years as an alternate member from 2017. He spent over 30 years in banking, most notably as Chief Executive Officer of Bank of Singapore from 2015 to 2022, where he led the bank through a period of strong growth and international expansion.

Before that, he was Senior Managing Director and Global Market Head for Southeast Asia. He currently sits on the board of SPH Media Holdings and serves as a Trustee of the National University of Singapore. He was named an IBF Distinguished Fellow in 2016, holds an accountancy degree from NUS, and has received the Public Service Medal (2008) and Public Service Star (2018).



Sajen Aswani

DIRECTOR, TOLARAM

Sajen Aswani is a third-generation leader of Tolaram, a family-owned group with businesses spanning consumer products, fintech, infrastructure, and industrials. He served as Chief Executive from 2000 to 2024, building over 40 years of experience across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the United States.

He led the reorganisation of Tolaram into a trust, a philanthropic arm, and a family office to secure the group's long-term sustainability, and now serves as a non-executive director across several Tolaram boards. His other board roles include the Centre for Fathering Singapore, chairing the Family Business Network Asia, and chairing B Lab Singapore. He holds a BSc in Economics from University College London (1983) and an MSc in Management Science from Imperial College London (1984).

FOUNDATIONS OF COMMUNICATION

The Three Pillars of Effective Communication

Aristotle identified three modes by which a speaker persuades: **Ethos** (the *credibility* of the speaker), **Pathos** (the *emotion* of the listener), and **Logos** (the *logic* of the argument).

Throughout their leadership journeys, our leaders have drawn upon one or more of these pillars in their extensive communications across numerous scenarios. The leader's unique role, particularly in times where communication is of utmost importance, is to assess and keenly feel which pillar(s) are to be leaned upon.

ETHOS

Credibility and character

Building trust through who you are

WHY IT MATTERS

People believe what you do, not what you say

- ▶ Build credibility by what you do, not the title you hold.
- ▶ Live the values you ask others to live.
- ▶ Be honest, even when it is uncomfortable.
- ▶ Stay humble. Talent is a small part of why you succeeded.
- ▶ Don't commit to values you won't actually live out.

"We tend to prioritise our values over everything else. Even before governance, even before strategy, even before investment decisions, we focus on values."

SAJEN ASWANI

PATHOS

Emotional connection

Reaching people where they are

WHY IT MATTERS

Connection earns commitment in a way compliance alone cannot

- ▶ Listen with the intent to understand, not to respond.
- ▶ Translate the big "we" into a personal "me" for each listener.
- ▶ Acknowledge the present before describing the future.
- ▶ Honour what people are being asked to leave behind.
- ▶ Get on the same boat in a crisis, then lead the way out.

"I still go back to listening. The ability to listen, and to ask very good questions – with the intent to understand more, with the intent to help the person to perhaps even discover more."

AILEEN TAN

LOGOS

Logic and evidence

Structuring belief through proof

WHY IT MATTERS

Evidence helps belief travel across the organisation

- ▶ Lead with a strong storyline. The deck comes later, if at all.
- ▶ Use comparable markets to make the future feel reachable.
- ▶ Use real cases, including cautionary ones, to create a burning platform.
- ▶ Replace false certainty with options and worst-case scenarios.
- ▶ Pair numbers with the human story behind them.

"Facts and figures by themselves don't really matter if they don't connect. The story is the big story. People want to hear it and it must make logical sense."

BAHREN SHAARI

SITUATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Three Crucible Moments: Where Communication Defines Leadership

01 Setting Direction & Vision
inspire the future

02 Anchoring through Crisis & Uncertainty
anchor and steady

03 Driving Change & Transformation
move people forward

CRUCIBLE MOMENT 01

Setting Direction & Vision

WHY IT MATTERS

Direction-setting is the most public test of leadership communication. A leader who cannot effectively articulate where the organisation is going, in a way that people can believe in and act on, has not yet earned the right to lead it. The hard part is rarely articulation: it is getting other people to *walk willingly into a future that does not exist yet*.

LEADER SPOTLIGHT

Sajen Aswani

Tolaram has built consumer brands and businesses in Nigeria for fifty years. What holds that direction together over decades is a set of operating choices that shows up in how Sajen talks about strategy.

The first is the **time horizon**. He treats the short term and the very long term as the *only* horizons worth planning for. “*There’s nothing in between,*” he said of operating in Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, Egypt and South Africa.

We don’t think about the medium term. [Instead], twenty years from now, what will this business look like? What will this economy look like? We play the long game.

– SAJEN ASWANI

The second is how Tolaram **reads a market when the current data says there is none**. The story of Indomie noodles’ success in Nigeria is his favourite illustration. Per capita consumption of Indomie in Nigeria was near zero, and most observers viewed that as a closed door. Tolaram read it as evidence that the door had yet to be opened.

We compared that data with other emerging markets and said, “look, if we can persuade people to eat noodles in Nigeria, and achieve the per capita consumption Indonesia had, this would be the vision of the business.”

– SAJEN ASWANI

The third is that **direction at Tolaram is set through conversation**, not proclamation. Initiatives can come from anywhere in the organisation, and an idea makes it through only if it survives the testing.

There’s a notion of the supremacy of an idea. The only way an idea gets through is if it is genuinely tested and good, not because I said it or my family said it. People do believe that they are heard.

– SAJEN ASWANI

SUPPORTING VOICES

Aileen: Engineer the multiplier. A vision delivered once from a stage rarely travels or has lasting impact. Aileen described Singtel's 2021 strategic reset as a cascade: one Group CEO, communicating onwards to his top 250 leaders, each of them carrying the message into their own teams. The arithmetic only works if the people in the middle believe what they are carrying. *"If I don't think [that even] he believed what he said, there's no starting point."*

Bahren: Acknowledge the room first. Walking in with a vision but no acknowledgement of the present costs credibility before the speech ends. *"Acknowledging the challenges is very important before you try to paint the bigger picture – the vision, and what aspirations will be."*

A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

- 1 Start with the long horizon.** Decide which horizon to communicate about: five, ten or twenty years. The horizon determines the approach of today.
- 2 Find the comparable trajectory.** When the data in front of you says there is no market, look for a similar business case elsewhere that proves it can be built.
- 3 Open the idea to honest testing.** Offer your idea up for testing across senior leaders. An idea earns its place by surviving the conversation, not by simply being announced.
- 4 Earn buy-in before you execute.** Strategy is only as good as how well you execute it, and execution depends on whether people believe in the direction.
- 5 Lead with values, not strategy.** Values bind people across the changes that strategy will eventually require.
- 6 Treat the team as owners.** People who see themselves as owners communicate easily across geographical distances and organisational barriers. People who see themselves merely as employees do not.

CRUCIBLE MOMENT 02

Anchoring through Crisis & Uncertainty

WHY IT MATTERS

Crisis is where a leader's authority is most quickly made or lost. The temptation is to express over-confidence in a plan you have not properly made and a horizon you cannot reasonably foresee.

The key is the complete opposite: tell the truth about what you do not yet know, and in the same breath commit to leading the way out. People do not need their leaders to be right in a crisis. They need them to be steady.

LEADER SPOTLIGHT

Bahren Shaari

Bahren led the Bank of Singapore through two very different kinds of uncertainty. In 2016 the bank integrated Barclays' Asian wealth business – a complex operation, but one with a known endpoint and a clear set of decisions. In 2020, Bahren then further led the bank through the early months of COVID-19, in a period of great uncertainty. He has been deliberate about the fact that those two situations needed different kinds of communication.

Calmness is easier to achieve if you yourself know what you want to achieve and you have clarity in your communication, assuming you know the end state. It's very different in a situation like COVID, where in the thick of it you didn't know where things were heading. You can't necessarily project an image of certainty.

– BAHREN SHAARI

When the end state is not (and cannot easily be) known, what a leader can offer is **empathy and presence, not a plan**. A principle Bahren applies whenever the ground is shifting, whether in transformation or in crisis, is that silence is never neutral:

Over-communicating is better than under-communicating. If you don't communicate, people will come up with their own stories. You must create the narrative; otherwise the void will be filled with other narratives you don't want.

– BAHREN SHAARI

For Bahren, **calmness is a discipline rather than a temperament**. The choice of words, the power behind them, and the calm tone in which they are delivered all carry weight. A leader must be in control of his or her emotions, especially in a crisis.

SUPPORTING VOICES

Aileen: Get on the same boat, then steward through. Her two-beat formula gives a working architecture for honesty without abdication. *“After you assure everybody [that] we are on the same boat, the next thing must be [to say]: I will do whatever I can to lead everybody out of this.”* She also names what most leaders avoid saying out loud: *“Uncertainty is the most certain thing.”*

Sajen: Volatility is not the enemy. For an operator across emerging markets, crisis is sometimes the opportunity, and the way you behave when others retreat compounds into trust over decades. *“When things get really rough, people often hear that Tolaram will stand by its business. That builds trust.”*

A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

- 1 Ask whether the end state can be known.** Some crises have a clear destination, such as managing incidents that carry reputational risk. Others, such as a pandemic or a market crash, do not. The two demand different tones and messaging.
- 2 When the end state is unclear, say so.** Acknowledging uncertainty costs nothing in authority. Instead, it builds trust.
- 3 Get on the same boat.** Name what you are personally carrying, whether it is a burden, commitment or responsibility in the situation. Show you are inside the same situation, not above it.
- 4 Commit to leading the way out.** Same-boat vulnerability without stewardship is paralysis. There must be commitment to steer through the crisis.
- 5 Walk the team through the options.** Continuously ask: What can we do? What are the trade-offs? What is the worst case, and can we handle it? A well-mapped worst case is empowering as you will have clarity on your options.
- 6 Over-communicate.** If you do not fill the void with your narrative, someone else’s narrative will fill the void for you.

CRUCIBLE MOMENT 03

Driving Change & Transformation

WHY IT MATTERS

Change is where leaders most often talk *at* people, rather than *with* them. Most changes fail not because the change lacks merit, but because the human realities of change were not adequately addressed through communication. Change communication requires asking people to give up what they know for something they cannot yet see, whilst acknowledging what they are asked to leave behind.

LEADER SPOTLIGHT

Aileen Tan

Aileen is deliberate about the emotional architecture of change. Two decades at Singtel have given her an extensive vocabulary for difficult conversations and how to communicate sensitively and effectively in them.

Her central insight is that hard messages arrive in tandem with a response cycle known as SARAH – **S**hock, **A**nger, **R**ejection, **A**cceptance, **H**ope – and that a leader's job is to let the cycle happen, and not doggedly push past it.

When the hard message comes, it comes with a beautiful lady called SARAH. You must allow people to vent and say “why is this happening to me?” Don’t jump in and say “you’re more deserving of this.” You are denying people their right to emotion. Allow it. But importantly, get the person to accept the reality, and then give hope.

– AILEEN TAN

This is harder than it sounds. The instinctive approach for most leaders is to manage the emotion away, by reassurance, reframing, and then trying to quickly skip ahead to acceptance. Aileen reads emotional state much more sensitively, and is willing to wait. Where she sees a closed room, she does not push.

When the window is already shut, why keep on pushing? Sometimes you really have to take two steps back before you can take another step forward.

– AILEEN TAN

She organises difficult conversations in stages: build the relationship first, find where you align, talk about what is possible, name the opportunity, and finally agree on the action. When the conversation cannot reach agreement, rather than the usual “let’s agree to disagree”, she favours a closing line that leaves room for gentle closure with grace: “I hear your view, our perspectives carry merits on their own rights, I wish you all the best.”

SUPPORTING VOICES

Sajen: Dilute the ink. Change is a test of patience. Not everyone will come along, but instead of removing sceptics, keep pouring "clean water" - consistent behaviour, honest conversations, results that speak for themselves. *"If you take a glass of water and put ink in it, and then keep pouring clean water into it, over time the ink gets diluted. Just keep doing the good things, and you will dilute what is not so good."*

Bahren: Get personal. The Barclays integration reinforced a lesson: change cannot be led from behind a screen. *"You can't do this through email and memos without a personal touch. People want to hear from the CEO and get assurance at a personal level."* The mindset he brings is not to communicate that one state is better than another, but rather that *"we are here together, and together we will be much better than where we are now."*

A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

- 1 Start with the why.** Be clear, above everything else, as to why this change is happening and why it needs to take place now.
- 2 Translate the why for each level.** Same message, yet different messaging. A leader should always consider: What does this mean for the senior leader? What about for the frontline colleague?
- 3 Get the top team genuinely committed.** A cascade works only when the people at the top actually believe in what they are carrying.
- 4 Make it personal.** Email and memos do not carry change. On the contrary, small groups and individual conversations to provide assurance and seek buy-in do.
- 5 Build each conversation in stages.** These stages should be to first build a relationship, then seek alignment, then consider what is possible, articulate the opportunity, and finally agree upon the action. If you cannot reach a landing on the action, close cleanly without unnecessarily burning bridges.
- 6 Let emotion run its course.** Shock, anger and rejection are part of the process. Accordingly, recognise when a defensive listener cannot move today, and learn to step back accordingly.
- 7 Dilute the scepticism, not the sceptics.** Don't focus on removing people who resist. Keep adding 'clean water' - consistent actions, honest conversations, results that speak for themselves. Over time, the ink becomes less black, without anyone being pushed out.

A CAVEAT

When Communication Alone May Not Work

For all the discipline and craft, every leader we spoke with was honest about the limits of communication in certain situations.

Sajen, when asked about a partnership with a state-owned enterprise in the 1990s that ended in a takeover the company never saw coming, did not flinch:

No matter how good your culture is, and no matter how honest your communication is, you're up against a different level of resistance. There, you just pray.

– SAJEN ASWANI

Bahren, on the question of buy-in, refused the leadership-textbook fantasy of unanimity:

I wouldn't say I ever assume there is buy-in.

– BAHREN SHAARI

Even after the successful Barclays integration, he held the same view:

Even when we successfully completed the transaction, I wouldn't say it was 100%. As long as those who are in between do not disrupt the direction, that is perfectly OK, because you can't expect everyone to buy into your vision and ideas.

– BAHREN SHAARI

Aileen, on the moments when a difficult conversation cannot move forward, is highly practical:

When you really know [that the door is] shut, why even bother? You should already be observing and saying, "Looks like the person's window is shut, the door is shut". You should just say "I appreciate [that] these are difficult messages. Take some time and reflect, and we'll do it another time."

– AILEEN TAN

Ultimately, the leaders caution against pretending that a communication worked when it simply did not. The skill is not in winning every room. Rather, it is in recognising when you did *not* win the room and choosing what to do next.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO COMMUNICATING FOR IMPACT

The Leadership Communication Toolkit

We have taken the best insights and tips shared by our three leaders and organised them in the matrix below, as a quick guide on how you can effectively use the three elements of communication across different types of leadership situations.

Each box contains a guiding principle and a “Try This” tip inspired by the leaders we spoke to. Whether you are thinking of honing your specific skills in building credibility, connecting emotionally, or using evidence and logic to strengthen your argument, or whether you find yourself in a moment that requires the skilful wielding of all three, we hope this serves as a toolkit of sorts to help inspire you to build up your ability to communicate for impact.

AT A GLANCE

The Nine Moves

DIRECTION & VISION

inspire the future

CRISIS & UNCERTAINTY

anchor and steady

CHANGE & TRANSFORMATION

move people forward

ETHOS

building credibility

Your top team reads your conviction before they hear the content.

Calmness is a discipline, not a temperament.

Lead with values, not strategy, and make sure you live out the values you commit to.

PATHOS

connecting emotionally

Translate the organisation's purpose into what it means at each level.

Acknowledge shared difficulty first, then commit to leading the way out.

Allow the emotional cycle to run before asking for commitment.

LOGOS

structuring logically

Read where the numbers are heading, not where they sit.

First determine whether you know the end state.

Lead with the story, not the data.

Each move is set out in full over the next three pages, with a “Try this” prompt you can use before your next conversation.

IN PRACTICE

Direction & Vision

inspire the future

ETHOS

credibility

Your top team reads your conviction before they hear the content.

Rally your top leaders by demonstrating authentic passion and commitment to the strategic vision. The energy must be real before it can travel down the cascade and inspire alignment and action throughout the organisation.

Try this

Before communicating any vision, pressure-test it on your most sceptical senior colleagues before you take it wider. If they can't tell you they believe it, the cascade dies at the top.

PATHOS

emotion

Translate the organisation's purpose into what it means at each level.

Even the biggest vision must be broken down into what it means concretely for each and every member, otherwise it doesn't mean anything to them. Don't leave the grassroots behind; they tell you whether the message is landing.

Try this

Take your organisation's purpose statement and break it down for each level. e.g. what does "empower" mean in practice for someone serving customers daily?

The test: can your most junior team member answer, in their own words, what the purpose means for their work?

LOGOS

logic

Read where the numbers are heading, not where they sit.

A snapshot of today's data often argues against a bold direction. The *logos* move is to shift the frame from the current state to the trajectory: such as when Sajen's team treated Nigeria's near-zero per capita noodle consumption as evidence of opportunity, not proof of no market, by benchmarking it against Indonesia's growth.

Try this

When the data in front of you argues against the opportunity, find a comparable market, era, or peer where the same starting point later climbed, so the low number reads as untapped potential rather than a closed door. Build the vision around where the numbers could go, not just where they sit today.

IN PRACTICE

Crisis & Uncertainty

anchor and steady

ETHOS

credibility

Calmness is a discipline, not a temperament.

Be mindful of your choice of words, tempo and tone of voice – they all hold power. If you lose control of your emotions, it reflects on your leadership. A leader must be in control of their emotions, especially when leading through crises.

Try this

Before the conversation begins, get clear on the end state you want to reach. Calmness is easier to achieve when you know what you want to achieve – clarity of destination is what steadies the delivery.

PATHOS

emotion

Acknowledge shared difficulty first, then commit to leading the way out.

Lead through uncertainty by first acknowledging a shared struggle to show vulnerability and build trust, then guide the team through collective problem-solving so everyone feels empowered and focused on the path forward.

Try this

Use Aileen's two-beat formula:

1. Acknowledge that you are in the same situation as the team and share the same difficulties.
2. Then commit to leading the way out, even without all the answers. Work to map options and trade-offs together.

Without the first beat, you seem disconnected; without the second, you leave people without direction.

LOGOS

logic

First determine whether you know the end state.

A known outcome calls for clear communication of the destination. An unknown one calls for honesty about what you don't know. Projecting false certainty costs more than admitting uncertainty.

Try this

When the end state is unclear, map the options together with the team: What are our options, what are the trade-offs, what is the worst case, and can we handle it? Map it honestly rather than force certainty.

IN PRACTICE

Change & Transformation

move people forward

ETHOS

credibility

Lead with values, not strategy, and make sure you live out the values you commit to.

Strategy drives the change, but values are the anchor that holds people together through it. Leading change means asking people to follow you into a future that does not exist yet, and that trust hinges on your consistency between word and action. Espouse a value you then ignore, and you lose credibility you can't easily earn back.

"If... you speak one thing and do another, that's the end of your leadership journey." – Bahren

Try this

When developing a change plan, make sure that each of your actions and trade-offs are consistent with your values.

And while leaders typically call on the organisational values when communicating change, ask honestly whether you will live it when tested before you do. If you don't intend to live it, don't say it.

Wise words from Sajen: *"It is better to stay silent on a value than to name it and fail to keep it."*

PATHOS

emotion

Allow the emotional cycle to run before asking for commitment.

When a hard message arrives, people will move through the SARAH cycle – Shock, Anger and Rejection before reaching Acceptance and Hope. Jumping in to reassure or reframe before someone has vented denies them their right to emotion. Let the cycle happen; then give hope.

Try this

Make space for SARAH: Let people vent and express their emotions. Do not jump in immediately to shut them down or tell them how they should feel.

Transition to reality: Once emotions are processed, help the individual accept the reality of the situation. Use coaching techniques to "give hope", allow them to reflect and move forward.

If the window is fully shut, step back: *"I appreciate this is difficult. Take some time to reflect, and we'll talk again."*

LOGOS

logic

Lead with the story, not the data.

Facts and figures are important, but on their own don't connect; the story is what carries conviction – lead with real examples before presenting data.

Try this

Lead with the story, not the numbers. Share cautionary tales of organisations that failed to adapt to create a burning platform that makes the case for change concrete. Where you need to show what is possible, use a comparable example where it has already been successfully done.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

The Superpower Question

As a bonus, we asked each leader what one communication superpower they would give every Singaporean leader. The answers converged in a way we hadn't expected:

Aileen, after a pause, returned to the place she always returns to:

I still go back to listening. The ability to listen, and to ask very good questions – with the intent to understand, with the intent to help the person discover. It would be a very big gift to many people.

– AILEEN TAN

Bahren, framing it as a question of posture rather than skill:

Communication is a relationship-building tool. We are, by nature, very transactional. The approach is to understand the individual first. Build goodwill first, before you start with the more difficult conversation.

– BAHREN SHAARI

Sajen focused on the conditions that produce empathetic leaders rather than the individual skill. The superpower, in his view, has to be built into how organisations choose and recognise their people:

Corporate leadership in Singapore needs to think about who they elevate and who they reward. If they reward only pure financial performance, they will never get the right crop of leaders. They have to reward behaviours, conduct, empathy, and values – not just numerical metrics.

– SAJEN ASWANI

Three leaders from three different industries gave the same answer. The superpower is not how polished the speech is. It's the listening that comes before it: the slow business of understanding the person in front of you, before you ask them to come somewhere new. Walking the talk, in the end, starts well before the talking does.

A CLOSING WORD

The Walk Before The Talk

We began expecting to collect techniques: the phrases, frameworks and stagecraft of leaders who communicate well. We found something quieter and harder.

Asked to name one communication superpower, three leaders from three very different worlds gave what amounted to one answer, and it was not about speaking. Aileen chose listening. Bahren chose relationship before transaction. Sajen chose the character of the leaders we reward. None mentioned eloquence.

Perhaps that is the real finding. These leaders are not remembered for what they said in the room but trusted for what they did before entering it: decades of showing up when markets turned, values kept when that was expensive, questions asked to understand rather than to reply. By the time they speak, the audience has already decided whether to believe them.

So the title is not a play on words but a sequence. Walking the talk builds credibility. Talking the walk is what you earn afterwards: the right to be believed when you describe a future no one can yet see.

These techniques will make you clearer. But the leaders who shared them would be first to say clarity is the smaller half of the craft. The larger half is lived, not spoken, and it starts long before the talking does.

– *The SGLN 2026 Fellowship “Talk the Walk” team*

**Walking the talk
builds credibility.**

**Talking the walk
is what you earn
afterwards:
the right to be
believed when you
describe a future
no one can yet see.**

Talk the Walk

An SGLN Fellowship 2026 learning resource

With thanks to Aileen Tan, Bahren Shaari and Sajen Aswani
for their time and their candour.

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