



You've Got 8 Seconds: Communication Secrets for a Distracted World

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Every day at work, people do three things: talk, listen, and pretend to listen. That's not surprising--the average attention span has dropped to 8 seconds. To get heard, says high-stakes communications expert Paul Hellman, you need to focus your message, be slightly different, and deliver with finesse. Through fast, fun, actionable tips, *You've Got 8 Seconds* explains what works and what doesn't, what's forgettable and what sticks. With stories, scripts, and examples of good and bad messages, the book reveals three main strategies: FOCUS: Design a strong message--then say it in seconds. VARIETY: Make routine information come alive. PRESENCE: Convey confidence and command attention. You'll discover practical techniques, including the Fast-Focus Method(TM) that the author uses with leadership teams; how to stand out in the first seconds of a presentation; and 10 actions that spell executive presence. Whether pitching a project, giving a speech, selling a product, or just writing your next email, with *You've Got 8 Seconds* you'll get heard, get remembered, and get results.

You've Got 8 Seconds: Communication Secrets for a Distracted World Details

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The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?Misericordia? ?????? ✨*♥️ says

People should exercise their brains. Making everything even more simple is not a way to do that. Actually, it's ridiculous when you hear supposedly able-minded people saying that they don't understand obvious stuff. **It somehow became fashionable to be a dolt.**

This is overanalyzing and oversimplifying things at its peak. Or course, it's very entertaining. Then again, if people have nothing challenging all day long, their brains deteriorate. And if you are fed with stuff that is simple, you might eventually feel that even simple things are challenging. Watch people. It shows.

For example, here a manager is suggested to simplify what 'a project gone bad' means. And this is simplified to 'a project with a missed deadline'. It's stupid, actually. Project can be fucked up in a multitude of ways: doing the wrong stuff, results of low quality, team gone rogue, half the team going to work for the client, all the team getting sick, expectations and delivery and perception issues, etc etc... A missed deadline isn't the worst thing to happen. There are many other ways for a project to go bad. And making a manager to oversimplify his thinking is a good way to get him to miss all the other ways things go to hell in a handbasket.

Q:

To move more, invest in a really bad chair. Unfortunately, I've got a really good chair, with a cushy seat you could sit on forever. This chair is all wrong.

Your ideal chair is rock-hard and extremely painful. That's the kind you want, one you can't sit on. (c)

Sounds like some of this advice might be very fitting for the masochistically inclined!

Q:

Identify Your "Evil Secret" ...

"The key to what you really want," says David Maister, a consultant and former Harvard Business School professor, "lies in something that you don't like to admit.

'I don't like to admit it but I need to be the center of attention.' Ok; find a job that will let you show off. 'I don't like to admit it but I really want to be rich.' Fine; go out and get rich.

"Play to your 'evil secrets,'" advises Maister, "don't suppress them."

I'm sure there are exceptions, but most secrets aren't evil, they're energy. (c)

Q:

Notice what energizes you. Do more of that. (c)

Q:

"I'm Harriet." But you speak softly, as if you were wanted by the FBI and you suspect that half the room is working undercover. Your volume speaks volumes. Speak up, send the message that your message is IMPORTANT. ...

"I'm Harriet???" You make routine assertions sound like questions by ending every sentence on a higher note. As if you believe that, in this universe, nothing is certain and you just discovered, much to your surprise, that you are, in fact, Harriett. Or at least you could be Harriet. The whole thing is bewildering . . .(c)

Q:

You just realized something bad, there are 79 slides left. Is it too late, you wonder, to go to clown college?

(c)

Q:

He listed the Commerce Department twice, as if to say, “You can’t just get rid of the Commerce Department once. Any idiot can do that. No, I’m going to get rid of it, and then I’m going to get rid of it again . . .” (c)

Q:

As we circled the Toronto airport, the pilot made a disturbing announcement.

...

“Several other planes are about to land. Let’s see how that goes.” ... He didn’t sound confident. And “let’s see how that goes” didn’t sound like a flight plan. A good plan—correct me if I’m wrong here—probably shouldn’t hinge on whether any other planes crash and burn. ...

Stress-test a risky disclosure with two questions about your audience:

1. Upside: What does your audience gain by knowing?
2. Downside: How likely are they to want to jump off the plane? (c)

Q:

Well, that beats saying why it’s the worst, although the latter might be more interesting. “Some of our products don’t really work. A few smell bad. We think they may be carcinogenic.” (c)

Q:

“None of you will remember a single word I say today,” the governor said. That’s how he began his commencement address at my son’s college graduation.

It was a memorable line. (c)

Q:

The governor, for example, opened by thanking people. There was a list:

“Faculty, distinguished guests, undistinguished guests, the guests we really didn’t want to invite but we sort of had to, the people we never even invited—hey, who’s that funny looking guy over there? Sir, what are you doing here?”

Well, that’s not exactly what he said. Too bad. (c)

Q:

You can sequence your info in different ways, but it shouldn’t be random. (c) **Golden!**

Q:

For the same reason, “Sheer driving pleasure” (BMW) beats “Power, Beauty and Soul” (Aston Martin).

Power, beauty, and soul add up to three abstractions—that’s a laundry list, not a car. (c) **I like the list better!**

Q:

AVIS: “We try harder.”

WENDY’S: “Where’s the beef?”

APPLE: “Think different.” And before Apple, the motto at IBM was simply “Think.” (c)

Q:

“Simple,” Bill said. “First, give me your conclusion. Then tell me how you got there. Then give me your conclusion again.”

The next time you’re speaking (or writing) to senior executives, begin at the end. (c)

Q:

To make your accomplishments work, tell their story. But stay focused—use the acronym SOAR. S is the Situation; here’s where you describe the context. OAR refers to that trio we discussed previously: Obstacles, Action, and Results. These three pull your accomplishment along. (c)

Q:

An acronym for the Great Lakes should be relevant, like WATER, or DROWN. Either one would work just fine, we’d simply have to rename most of the lakes to fit. (c) **Gosh! This is patently stupid.**

I think the author forgot that acronyms are not supposed to replace brains. -1 star!

Q:

I also have a soft spot for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac... (c) **So do I! +1 star!**

Q:

1. “I’ll try to rob the bank,” Henry says. From a writing standpoint, that’s ok. But when spoken, it’s weak. Try is a tip-off that Henry will never rob the bank. He’ll probably never even go into the bank, he won’t even use the ATM. (c)

Q:

Imagine a bad day. First, your computer crashes. Then the stock market crashes. Then your airplane crashes. At some point, you might say something stronger than darn. (c)

Q:

You can overuse any word. Sometimes I overuse so. So do others. So, reports the New York Times, is the new sentence opener. ...

Eventually, you may want to go beyond filler words. The simplest solution when unsure what to say next: pause. Pausing marks you as a calm professional. (c)

Q:

“I don’t want to be clichéd, predictable, or boring,” she says. “Or too dramatic, or too rehearsed. Also, I don’t want to wear the wrong shoes.”

That’s the problem, and it’s got nothing to do with footwear. Her internal editor is out of control. (c)

Q:

Write without stopping (similar to the earlier advice about speaking nonstop). Set a time limit, say five minutes, and then keep your hands moving on the keyboard, or your pen moving across the paper...

Commit to writing badly. Make that your goal. The worse your writing is—spelling mistakes, bad grammar, incoherent thoughts—the better. (c) **+4 stars! A cure for perfectionists invented finally!**

Q:

Be the Lightbulb Guy

One day, I was presenting a workshop when, suddenly, a stranger walked in, unfolded a ladder, and climbed to the ceiling. He wasn’t trying to amuse us, he needed to fix a light.

Still, we couldn’t take our eyes off him. He was like a circus act.

What made him so compelling? Variety ...

Sure, we’d seen people fix lights before, but not that day. Plus, he had a ladder. Never underestimate the power of a good prop. ...

So capture attention with variety. Otherwise, your audience will climb the wall, with or without a ladder. (?)

Q:

p.s. Ever wonder where the exclamation point came from? Probably not, but just in case: The Latin word *io* means joy, and “the Medieval copyists used to write *io* at the end of a sentence . . . [over time] the *i* moved above the *o*, and the *o* became smaller, becoming a point.” (c)

Q:

Try this one at your next team-building retreat: “Suppose our group wanted to win an award for being completely dysfunctional. What would we do?” (c)

Q:

Customer Service: “What are the 20 best ways to completely alienate our top clients?” This question is frightening—you may already be doing a few.

Stress: “How could we make working here so anxiety-provoking that you’d need an industrial strength horse tranquilizer just to walk through the door?” (c)

Q:

Turns out, it’s easy to brainstorm worst practices. Most of us have had impressive experience. (c)

Q:

Here’s what you’re likely (and unlikely) to hear:

➡➡ We’re innovative. (The truth is, we have no idea what we’re doing.)

➡➡ We embrace change. (Our priorities change from minute to minute.)

➡➡ Picture one big family. (Picture one big unhappy family.)

➡➡ We work hard. (We avoid frivolous activities like weekends.)

➡➡ Read our core values statement. It says it all. (Read the 207-page report the U.S. Dept. of Justice just issued. Our CEO has promised to turn things around. As he says, “Anyone can work from jail.”) (?)

Q:

When President Bill Clinton was asked in 1994 whether he wore boxers or briefs, you expected him to decline.

(Or to bridge: “I think what you’re really asking is who am I as a person, inside. Let me speak to that.”)

Unfortunately, he answered. ...

I usually advise business leaders to welcome questions, to step into them, and to stay loose and relaxed.

But when the question is inappropriate, do the opposite. Put up your hands (as if stopping traffic), possibly smile (unless the question is too offensive), and say something like, “I don’t think I’m going anywhere near that one.” Then move on.

Or even simpler: “Thanks. Next question.” (?)

Q:

After Janet Yellen became chairwoman of the Federal Reserve, she appeared before Congress to present the Fed’s semi-annual Monetary Policy Report.

...

“I am a sensible central banker,” she said, responding to the question,

“Are you a sensible central banker?”

What kind of question, by the way, is that? Well, for one thing, it’s closed, with either a yes or no answer.

“No” would be intriguing:

“No, Congressman, I’m not a sensible banker. I’m not even, really, a banker.” Then, laugh hysterically. “I’m a wild and crazy person, pretending to be a banker.” More laughing. “Just ask my colleagues, they’ll tell you—I’m completely insane. And I control the money supply. All of it, every last penny!”...

She thanked lawmakers twice that day for calling her unexciting.

But here’s what was unexpected: she offered to stay the entire day.

The head of the congressional committee thanked her for the offer. “Madam Chair,” he said, “you’re in luck. We’re not staying all day.”

But they stayed almost six hours. That’s a long time for Q & A.

And her endurance sent an important message too.

Ms. Yellen’s audience that day was not regular people like you and me. It was the global financial markets, running trillions of dollars, euros, yen, and yuan—an audience desperately hoping for dull (be the audience).

(?)

Q:

Guy Kawasaki, former chief evangelist of Apple (and now of Canva) suggests the 10-20-30 rule: don’t use more than 10 slides, don’t talk more than 20 minutes, and, my favorite, don’t use less than 30-point font. (c)

Q:

Act as if. You can act confident, for example, without feeling confident... (c)

Q:

“If you want a quality, act as if you already had it.” —WILLIAM JAMES, psychologist (c)

Q:

What’s the opposite of executive presence?

Executive absence. (c)

Q:

Pilot to passengers: “Gosh, this is the first time I’ve ever flown such a big plane. Our flight today may be a little jumpy. God knows, I am.”

Doctor to patient: “Cover your mouth, and stop coughing so much. I’m just getting over a horrible stomach virus. I really feel gross—much worse than this stupid thing you’ve got.”

U.S. President to country: “I’ve never given a State of the Union address before, and my schedule has been crazy busy, no rest at all, not even for a second. This is, by far, the worst job I’ve ever had. So please don’t

ask, 'How are things going in the USA?' I really have no idea." (c)

Q:

"Honey, I forgot to duck," (c)

Q:

Confidence: Avoid These Three Mistakes

Mistake #1: Assuming you know what's going on inside others.

Suppose at the next leadership offsite, your CEO stands up and then, in a commanding voice, sings out the quarterly financials.

You're impressed. And yet, you know nothing about the CEO's inner experience. He could be extremely confident, or extremely nervous, or extremely insane.

Mistake #2: Assuming others know what's going on inside you.

Let's say you're at a meeting, feeling stressed. But if your heart is pounding, others can't hear it. And if you've got butterflies in your belly, others can't see them.

Often, the only reason others know you're nervous is because you feel compelled to tell everyone.

Don't.

Mistake #3: Assuming you should feel as confident inside as others appear outside.

"Stop comparing your insides to others' outsides." (c)

Q:

Watch Your Eye Contact

Bad eye contact almost killed me. I was in a NYC subway. A big muscular guy, seated opposite me, had a baseball bat that he kept tapping into his left palm. ...

If this guy were giving a presentation, let's say on "How to Resolve 10 Everyday Problems with a Baseball Bat," he'd be making a classic mistake: looking at just one person in the audience (me!) at the expense of everyone else. (c) **Barmy much?**

Q:

Good eye contact is not continuous. I've interviewed job candidates who thought it was continuous—they never take their eyes off you. Please don't do that. It's scary. (c)

Q:

Even if no one can see you, body language still matters. Stand up (you'll project better), move around (you'll sound more dynamic), and smile (you'll sound more friendly). (c)

Q:

Nonverbal signals. We watch them because they often "tell" the truth, unless you're dealing with a sharp poker player, a trained actor, or a very experienced sociopath. (c)

Q:

Start with tight. Put in the time, effort, and practice to accelerate your performance.

Then, get some marbles. (c)

Chad King says

If you do public speaking in any form -- presentations, speeches, teaching, conducting meetings, etc. -- you'll find this book to be a great little resource. Although there's not a lot of new information in its pages, it provides time-tested techniques in a quick, easy-to-remember format. As a bonus, Hellman's wit and humor make it a pleasure to read.

I speak in public frequently, and over the years I've read a couple dozen books, and many dozens of articles, that provide coaching and tips for better public speaking. This book ranks among my top three books on the

topic. Whether you are just starting to speak in public or you've been speaking for decades, this book will help you fine tune your skills and make you a better communicator.

I'll continue to use it as a reference, and I liked it enough that I bought copies for my college kids. Highly recommended.

Charles Franklin says

I love this book because it is deliciously messy. Unlike other communication books, which try to break communication into fixed areas like "presentation" or "written" communication, Paul meshes it all together. His book gets at the heart of communication in real-life. As I am sure he would agree, what's the point of stressing over whether to use stars or bullets in a PowerPoint presentation, when everyone is half asleep anyway? What's the point of having another meeting where only the talking heads compete for control of the room but no real ideas are happening?

This book goes to the very core of communication, whether you are sending an email, voicemail, or manual. The truth is, you only have a limited amount of time to capture and hold your intended audience's attention. This book will show what principles you need to focus on...and provide a little witty (and sometimes sarcastic) humor from a master communicator along the way.

The book is geared more for executives and people who have to give presentations, but the principles can be used by anyone. As a freelance writer, I like the Fast-Focus method as a way of quickly outlining what I need to say and to reach my audience as a writer. I wish I had this book back when I was taking speech classes in college, i would have been a much better presenter! (Note: Speech classes don't teach you how to present. They only teach how to follow antiquated rules of speech (like making sure your eyes never leave the audience).

I would also be interested in a book like this focused on communication for job seekers.

Sue Mosher says

More for business than library work, community, or church, but still some good points to remember when trying to get your message across, no matter who you are.

Johnny says

A great little business book! I think I got it for \$2 and it only took a couple of hours to read. Som great tips on how to effectively communicate through different avenues. Worth the money and the time.

Gabriel Wong says

Concise and instructional

Provides concrete steps for improvement. Not fluffy and vague like many other books. Great read with appropriate amount of humour.

Stephen Bennett says

There is definitely a few techniques in the book I'm going to try with my team at work. Well worth the read.

Marilena Iauta says

Short and efficient

Easy to assimilate the essential. Good to practice all that you will find in this book. I liked the links in concept with meditation

Jessica says

Thank you to the author, publisher, Goodreads, and all who were involved in making this book available through Goodreads Giveaways. Honestly, I picked up this book believing that there could possibly be some good information but expecting it to be a fairly boring read; I mean, come on, a book on communication...Wow, was I in for a surprise. I am highly impressed with Hellman's ability to share information in a way that is easy to absorb, understand, and keep it interesting by adding some humor. Recommend this book for not only business execs, but everyone. Communication is vital for all types of relationships. Spent a number of years giving what we referred to as "death by PowerPoint" presentations; if only I had this book back then.

Oz Akan says

I will read it again for sure. Not much surprising but lots of reinforcement.

Irene Mallory says

A great read

Loved the writing style and the lightheartedness of the humour. Can't wait to try out some of the tips in practice.
