



Everyone Communicates, Few Connect: What the Most Effective People Do Differently

By John C. Maxwell

Why is this book important? Because communication affects every part of our life. If you can improve your communication, it touches all of your relationships including family, friends, coworkers, customers, acquaintances, etc. As John writes: “Everyone communicates. But few connect. Those who do connect take their relationships, their work, and their lives to another level.” If we want to be as effective as possible in our life, work or ministry, we need to be effective communicators!

This summary is comprised of quotes from the book.

I hope it gives you a broad overview of the book or is a helpful tool to review what you have learned. I would HIGHLY encourage you to read the book. It was so good I started immediately reading it a second time when I finished it.

Key ideas from the book:

- Connecting increases your influence in every situation.
- Connecting is all about others.
- Connecting goes beyond words.
- Connecting always requires energy.
- Connecting is more skill than natural talent.
- Connectors connect on common ground.
- Connectors do the difficult work of keeping it simple.
- Connectors create an experience everyone enjoys.
- Connectors inspire people.
- Connectors live what they communicate.

PART I: CONNECTING PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER 1: CONNECTING INCREASES YOUR INFLUENCE IN EVERY SITUATION

CONNECTING CAN MAKE YOU OR BREAK YOU

People cannot succeed in life without communicating effectively. It's not enough just to work hard. It's not enough to do a great job. To be successful, you need to learn how to really communicate with others.

CONNECTING IS KEY

If you can connect with others at every level—one-on-one, in groups, and with an audience—your relationships are stronger, your sense of community improves, your ability to create teamwork increases, your influence increases, and your productivity skyrockets.

Connecting is the ability to identify with people and relate to them in a way that increases your influence with them.

CONNECTING IS CRUCIAL FOR LEADERS

“The number one criteria for advancement and promotion for professionals is an ability to communicate effectively.” — HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

President Gerald Ford once remarked, “If I went back to college again, I’d concentrate on two areas: learning to write and to speak before an audience. Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively.”

You will only be able to reach your potential—regardless of your profession or chosen path—when you learn to connect with other people. Otherwise, you’ll be like a nuclear power plant disconnected from the grid. You’ll have incredible resources and potential, but you will never be able to put them to use.

THE DESIRE TO CONNECT

When you connect with others, you position yourself to make the most of your skills and talents.

IT STARTS WITH YOUR ATTITUDE

The ability to connect with others begins with understanding the value of people.

My desire is first to help you learn the principles behind connecting with others, by:

- Focusing on others
- Expanding your connecting vocabulary beyond just words
- Marshalling your energy for connecting
- Gaining insight in how great connectors connect.

Then I’ll help you acquire the practical skills of connection:

- Finding common ground

- Making your communication simple
- Capturing people's interest
- Inspiring them, and
- Being authentic.

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS

CONNECTING PRINCIPLE: Connecting increases your influence in every situation.

KEY CONCEPT: The smaller the group, the more important it is to connect.

CONNECTING ONE-ON-ONE

- Talk more about the other person and less about yourself. Prepare two or three questions you can ask someone before a meeting or social gathering.
- Bring something of value, such as a helpful quote, story, book, or CD, to give to someone when you get together.
- At the close of a conversation, ask if there is anything you can do to help them and then follow through. Acts of servanthood have a resounding impact that live longer than words.

CONNECTING IN A GROUP

- Look for ways to compliment people in the group for their ideas and actions.
- Look for ways to add value to people in the group and what they're doing.
- Don't take credit when the group succeeds, and don't cast blame when it fails.
- Find ways to help the group celebrate successes together.

CONNECTING WITH AN AUDIENCE

- Let your listeners know that you are excited to be with them.
- Communicate that you desire to add value to them.
- Let them know how they or their organization add value to you.
- Tell them that your time with them is your highest priority that day.

CHAPTER 2: CONNECTING IS ALL ABOUT OTHERS

NOT GETTING THE MESSAGE

Good teachers, leaders, and speakers don't see themselves as experts with passive audiences they need to impress. Nor do they view their interests as most important. Instead, they see themselves as guides and focus on helping others learn. Because they value others, they work at connecting with the people they are teaching or trying to help.

I felt frustrated and unfulfilled. I kept asking myself questions like, "Why aren't people listening to me? Why aren't people helping me? Why aren't people following me?" Notice my questions centered on me because my focus was on me. When I made a call to action, it often began with my interest above everyone else's. Me, me, me! I was self-absorbed, and as a result, I failed to connect with people.

THE LIGHTBULB MOMENT

"If you will first help people get what they want, they will help you get what you want."

Zig Ziglar

I realized that I was trying to get ahead by correcting others when I should have been trying to connect with others.

FAILURE TO VALUE EVERYONE

Today I see my purpose as adding value to others. It has become the focus of my life, and anyone who knows me understands how important it is to me. However, to add value to others, one must first value others.

To succeed in life, we must learn to work with and through others. One person working alone cannot accomplish much. As John Craig points out, "No matter how much work you can do, no matter how engaging your personality may be, you will not advance far in business if you cannot work through others."

When we learn to turn our focus from ourselves to others, the whole world opens up to us.

THREE QUESTIONS PEOPLE ARE ASKING ABOUT YOU

Understanding that your focus must be on others is often the greatest hurdle people face in connecting with others. It's a matter of having the right attitude. But that alone is not enough. You must be able to communicate that attitude of selflessness.

1. "DO YOU CARE FOR ME?"

Think about the best experiences you've had with people in your life. Really stop for a moment, and try to recall three or four of those experiences. What do they all have in common? I bet that the person or people involved in them genuinely cared about you!

Aren't there certain friends and family members you simply want to spend time with? That desire comes from your connection with them.

POLITICS: "If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend." —ABRAHAM LINCOLN, sixteenth president of the United States

2. "CAN YOU HELP ME?"

Nobody wants to be sold, but everyone wants to be helped.

In his book *Presenting to Win*, Jerry Weissman points out that when people communicate, they focus too much on the features of their product or service instead of answering the question, "Can you help me?" The key, says Weissman, is to focus on benefits, not features.

3. "CAN I TRUST YOU?"

IF I WERE YOU . . .

Whenever people take action, they do so for their reasons, not yours or mine. That's why we have to get on their agenda and try to see things from their point of view. If we don't, we're just wasting their time and ours.

If you're willing to learn how to connect, you will be amazed at the doors that will open to you and the people you will be able to work with. All you have to do is keep reminding yourself that connecting is all about others.

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS

CONNECTING PRINCIPLE: Connecting is all about others.

KEY CONCEPT: Connecting begins when the other person feels valued.

CONNECTING ONE-ON-ONE

How can you connect with people one-on-one? By making them feel valued. How do you do that?

- Know what they value by being a good listener when you are with them.
- Find out why they value those things by asking questions.
- Share your own values that are similar to theirs.
- Build your relationship on those common values. In that way, value is added to both of you.

CONNECTING IN A GROUP

The key to making others feel valued in a group or on a team is to invite participation. The smartest person in the room is never as smart as all the people in the room. Input creates synergy, buy-in, and connection.

To connect with people in a group setting . . .

- Discover and identify the strength of each person.
- Acknowledge the value of each person's strength and potential contribution.
- Invite input and allow people to lead in their area of strength.

CONNECTING WITH AN AUDIENCE

One of the reasons speakers fail to connect is that they give the impression that they and their communication are more important than their audience. That kind of attitude can create a barrier between a speaker and an audience. Instead, show your audience members that they are important to you by doing the following:

- Express your appreciation for them and the occasion as soon as you can.
- Do something special for them if you can, such as preparing unique content for them and letting them know that you have done so.
- See everyone in the audience as a "10," expecting a great response from them.
- As you finish speaking, tell them how much you enjoyed them.

CHAPTER 3: CONNECTING GOES BEYOND WORDS

YOUR ACTIONS SPEAK SO LOUDLY, I CAN'T HEAR YOUR WORDS

When people try to communicate with others, many believe the message is all that matters. But the reality is that communication goes way beyond words. In an important study, UCLA psychology professor emeritus Albert Mehrabian discovered that face-to-face communication can be broken down into three components: words, tone of voice, and body language. What may come as a surprise is that in some situations, such as when verbal and nonverbal messages aren't consistent, what people see us do and the tone we use can far outweigh any words we say while trying to communicate.

In situations where feelings and attitudes are being communicated:

- What we say accounts for only 7 percent of what is believed.
- The way we say it accounts for 38 percent.
- What others see accounts for 55 percent.¹

Amazingly, more than 90 percent of the impression we often convey has nothing to do with what we actually say. So if you believe communication is all about words, you're totally missing the boat, and you will always have a hard time connecting with others.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CONNECTION

Any message you try to convey must contain a piece of you. You can't just deliver words. You can't merely convey information. You need to be more than just a messenger. You must be the message you want to deliver. Otherwise, you won't have credibility and you won't connect.

How can you do that with credibility? By making it your vision. By that, I mean that you must first discover how the vision positively impacts you. You must connect with it on a personal level.

This kind of ownership is necessary not only for leaders and speakers, but also for authors. For a book to connect with readers, it must be more than just a book. It must possess a part of the author. Otherwise it lacks authenticity and credibility. It can have great information, but it can still fall flat if the author does not connect with readers. That's what I've always tried to do as an author: put part of myself into my books. I don't communicate anything that I haven't lived and learned from experience.

I work to make every one of my books more than just a book, more than just paper and ink or an electronic file to be offered in the marketplace. Every book comes from my heart and soul. I believe in it and genuinely hope it will help whoever reads it.

As important as it is for a message to be heartfelt and genuine, that of course isn't enough. Your message must also be more than just a message. It must have value. It must deliver on the promise it offers to its audience. It must have the potential to change other people's lives. That's my goal every time I write a book or prepare to speak to an audience.

My goal is never to simply deliver a speech. I want to add value to people.

After I've finished speaking, I also take time to evaluate whether I connected with my audience and helped my sponsor. I do that by going through my Connection Checklist, which includes the following questions:

- INTEGRITY—Did I do my best?
- EXPECTATION—Did I please my sponsor?
- RELEVANCE—Did I understand and relate to the audience?
- VALUE—Did I add value to the people?
- APPLICATION—Did I give people a game plan?
- CHANGE—Did I make a difference?

THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF CONNECTION

1. WHAT PEOPLE SEE—CONNECTING VISUALLY

Eliminate Personal Distractions

Ask family and friends if you regularly display behaviors that capture their attention and take their focus off of what you communicate. And if you do any kind of public speaking, one of the best things you can do is capture yourself on video.

Expand Your Range of Expression.

Even people who take pride in wearing a poker face and who work hard not to crack a smile or let others know what they're thinking are conveying a message to others—detachment. And that makes connecting with others nearly impossible. If your face is going to “talk” for you anyway, you might as well have it communicate something positive.

Move with a Sense of Purpose.

Movement always conveys a clear message when someone desires to communicate.

Maintain an Open Posture.

When I first started speaking to audiences, I usually stood behind a lectern and didn't move. As a result, I felt separated from my audience. When I began to walk around the stage and got out where people could see me, my connection with people improved greatly.

By using the stool, I had more energy than usual—even with an injured back. And I also felt more relaxed and connected with the audience. After analyzing the situation, I came to realize that while sitting, I was more conversational in my communication. That helped me to connect and made me much more effective.

Pay Attention to Your Surroundings.

Proximity of the speaking area to the audience. That's very important to me. It can be hard to connect with an audience if it feels as if there is a gulf between me and them.

Lighting. I want people to see me well onstage because I'm a visual communicator. But I also want good lighting for the audience for two reasons: I usually provide outlines and I want people to be able to take notes, and I want to be able to see the audience while I

speak. Many of my connecting skills are responsive to others. When I see my audience well, I can sense what I need to do in order to enhance their response.

Sound system. Poor sound makes communication nearly impossible.

2. WHAT PEOPLE UNDERSTAND—CONNECTING INTELLECTUALLY

There's no substitute for personal experience when we want to connect with people's hearts. If you know something without having lived it, your audience experiences a credibility gap.

When you find yourself, you find your audience.

3. WHAT PEOPLE FEEL—CONNECTING EMOTIONALLY

If you want to win over another person, first win his heart, and the rest of him is likely to follow.

Leadership expert Rabbi Edwin H. Friedman remarked, "The colossal misunderstanding of our time is the assumption that insight will work with people who are unmotivated to change. Communication does not depend on syntax, or eloquence, or rhetoric, or articulation but on the emotional context in which the message is being heard. People can only hear you when they are moving toward you, and they are not likely to when your words are pursuing them. Even the choicest words lose their power when they are used to overpower. Attitudes are the real figures of speech."

Whatever is inside of you, whether positive or negative, will eventually come out when you are communicating to others.

People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude.

"People will not always remember what you said. They will not always remember what you did. But, they will always remember how you made them feel."

"do you know why some people have charisma and others don't?"..."I don't believe charisma is a function of personality. It's a function of attitude." He then explained how people with charisma possess an outward focus instead of an inward one. They pay attention to other people, and they desire to add value to them.

Here's the bottom line on charisma. You don't have to be gorgeous, a genius, or a masterful orator to possess presence and to connect with others. You just need to be positive, believe in yourself, and focus on others. Do that, and there's a good chance you will connect with others because you make it possible for others to feel what you feel, which is the essence of connecting on an emotional level.

4. WHAT PEOPLE HEAR—CONNECTING VERBALLY

Tone, inflection, timing, volume, pacing—everything you do with your voice communicates something and has the potential to help you connect to or disconnect from others when you speak.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The best advice I can give is for you to learn how to be yourself. The best professional speakers know themselves and their strengths— often learned through trial and error—and they use them to their greatest advantage.

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS

CONNECTING PRINCIPLE: Connecting goes beyond words.

KEY CONCEPT: The more you do to go beyond words, the greater the chance you will connect with people.

CONNECTING ONE-ON-ONE

People often overlook the importance of the nonverbal aspects of communication when trying to connect with one other person. They don't go the extra mile to connect beyond words. You improve in this area if you:

- Connect visually by giving the other person your complete attention. The eyes are the windows of the soul; see the other person's heart and show your heart.
- Connect intellectually by asking questions, listening carefully, and also paying attention to what isn't being said.
- Connect emotionally through touch (being careful to honor boundaries and remain appropriate with members of the opposite sex).

CONNECTING IN A GROUP

Connecting with a group is an excellent way to learn how to think and communicate like a coach. It's an interactive environment where you can actually show people what to do, and then you can ask them to demonstrate while you give them feedback. In group environments:

- Connect visually by setting the example. People in the group will do what they see.
- Connect intellectually by investing in people's growth. Build on what they already understand so they can develop to a higher level.
- Connect emotionally by honoring the group's effort and rewarding its work.

CONNECTING WITH AN AUDIENCE

Speaking to an audience is the most difficult of the three settings when it comes to communicating beyond words. Why? Because almost all of our communication from a stage is in words! However, you can still make immediate improvements to your nonverbal communication by doing three things, especially at the beginning of a presentation:

- Connect visually by smiling. This lets people know you're happy to be communicating with them.
- Connect intellectually by pausing strategically to give the audience time to think about something you've said.
- Connect emotionally through facial expressions, laughter, and tears.

CHAPTER 4: CONNECTING ALWAYS REQUIRES ENERGY

If you want to connect with others, you must be intentional about it. And that always requires energy.

YOU'VE GOT TO BRING IT

“Four Unpardonable Sins of a Communicator”: being unprepared, uncommitted, uninteresting, or uncomfortable. Do you notice the common denominator for three out of four of those “sins”? It’s energy. The first three are a function of effort. It takes energy to be prepared, committed, and interesting! That is true whether you’re speaking to one person or to one thousand. Connecting always requires energy.

Author and communication coach Susan RoAne, author of *How to Work a Room*, describes what it takes to connect with people in social settings. On her Web site she offers “Ten Tips from the Mingling Maven,” skills to be used when meeting new people.

- Possess the ability to make others feel comfortable
- Appear to be confident and at ease
- Have an ability to laugh at themselves (not at others)
- Show interest in others; they maintain eye contact, self-disclose, ask questions, and actively listen
- Extend themselves to others; they lean into a greeting with a firm handshake and a smile
- Convey a sense of energy and enthusiasm—a joie de vivre
- Are well rounded, well informed, and well-mannered
- Prepare vignettes or stories of actual occurrences that are interesting, humorous, and appropriate
- Introduce people to each other with an infectious enthusiasm (there is no other kind) that motivates conversation between the introduces
- Convey respect and genuinely like people—the core of communicating

FIVE PROACTIVE WAYS TO USE ENERGY FOR CONNECTING

I’m not saying that you must be a high-energy person to connect with others. Nor do you have to be an extrovert. You must simply be willing to use whatever energy you have to focus on others and reach out to them. It’s really a matter of choice.

Introverts can exhibit extroverted behavior—[however] it really drains us and we need to recharge sooner than an extrovert.

1. CONNECTING REQUIRES INITIATIVE . . . GO FIRST

“10 Foot Rule.” It said, From this day forward, I solemnly promise and declare that every time a customer comes within ten feet of me, I will smile, look him in the eye, and greet him. —SAM WALTON

“If you wait until you can do everything for everybody, instead of something for somebody, you’ll end up not doing anything for anybody.” —MALCOLM BANE

2. CONNECTING REQUIRES CLARITY . . . PREPARE

Know Yourself—Personal Preparation.

To add value to others, they must make themselves more valuable. You can’t give something you don’t have. You can’t tell what you don’t know. You can’t share what you don’t feel. No one gives out of a vacuum.

Know Your Audience—People Preparation.

Connecting with people begins with knowing people. The more you understand about people in general, the better you will be able to connect.

I ask:

- Who are they?
- What do they care about?
- Where do they come from?
- When did they decide to attend?
- Why are they here?
- What do I have that I can offer them?
- How do they want to feel when we conclude?

Know Your Stuff—Professional Preparation.

3. CONNECTING REQUIRES PATIENCE . . . SLOW DOWN

“The man who goes alone can start the day. But he who travels with another must wait until the other is ready.” —HENRY DAVID THOREAU

4. CONNECTING REQUIRES SELFLESSNESS . . . GIVE

In life, there are people who give and people who take. Which kind do you like to be around? Givers, of course.

Being a giver requires energy, and that’s not always easy, especially in stressful situations.

“I think it all comes down to a communicator who is primarily a giver instead of a taker. The human spirit senses and feeds on a giving spirit. The spirit is actually renewed by a teacher with a giving spirit—this is proven by the fact that when people hear what you have said many times, they are still filled. Your teaching is essentially giving, and people can receive all day from a giver, while they tire quickly of a taker. Think about what Jesus taught—half the time the people didn’t know what he was talking about, but they listened attentively. Jesus was giving—feeding them. Not taking. It was at a spirit (heart) level—he wasn’t just giving information. Here’s how I think it works. If communicators teach out of need, insecurity, ego, or even responsibility, they are not giving. The needy person wants praise, something the audience must give. The insecure person wants approval and acceptance, something the audience must give. The egotistical person wants to be lifted up, to be superior and just a little bit better than everyone else, something the audience must give. Even the person motivated by responsibility wants to be recognized as the faithful worker, to be seen as responsible— something the audience must bestow upon them. Many communicators teach in one of these taking modes all the time and are not aware of it. Then there’s the giver. This person teaches out of love, grace, gratitude, compassion, passion, and the overflow. These are all giving modes. In each of these modes of the heart, the audience doesn’t have to give anything—only receive. The teaching, then, becomes a gift. It fills and renews.” -Dan Reiland

A communicator who had grown bored from giving the same presentations again and again to different groups of people. I reminded him that he wasn't giving the presentation for himself; he was giving it for the benefit of others.

In his book *Presenting to Win*, Jerry Weissman gives great advice on this. He says that speakers need to maintain "the illusion of the first time," a concept that comes from the world of stage actors. Though they may have to play a part dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of times, the audience needs to see a performance worthy of the first time.

5. CONNECTING REQUIRES STAMINA . . . RECHARGE

Communicating with people can be very taxing physically, mentally, and emotionally.

If we're not careful, connecting with people on a continual basis can so deplete us of energy that we have few reserves allowing us to do much of anything else.

Lorin Woolfe, in *The Bible on Leadership*, writes,... "Just when you start to become bored witless with the message, it's probably starting to seep into the organization."

Over the years I have learned how to keep my batteries charged. You'll need to do that, too, if you want to have energy available to connect with people. The first thing to do is to plug energy "leaks" by recognizing and avoiding what unnecessarily drains you of energy.

You must also figure out what kinds of things fill your tank and leave you energized.

"The only thing that keeps a man going is energy and what is energy but liking life?" —LOUIS AUCHINCLOSS

To accomplish anything of value, you must learn to manage and marshal your energy.

Connecting with others is like anything else in life: you have to be intentional about it. That doesn't mean you have to be loud or flashy. Business trainer Clancy Cross observed, "People often confuse energy with volume or speed."

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS

CONNECTING PRINCIPLE: Connecting always requires energy.

KEY CONCEPT: The larger the group, the more energy that's required to connect.

CONNECTING ONE-ON-ONE

Many people get lazy when it comes to connecting one-on-one. They take for granted that people will listen to them. But that's doing a disservice to others, especially the people who are closest to you, such as your friends and family. Avoid that pitfall. The next time you try to connect with someone one-on-one, gear up for it mentally and emotionally, just as you would for an audience. If you bring intentional energy to the conversation, you make it much easier for people to connect with you. If

you're looking for ways to increase the energy one-on-one, then do what Margaret and I have done with each other for many years:

- Write on a piece of paper the significant things that happen to you during the day.
- For important things, tell no one else before sharing it with this specific person.
- Take time each day to go over your lists with each other, which requires intentionality and energy.

CONNECTING IN A GROUP

When you communicate with a group or in a meeting, the energy in the room can vary wildly. Sometimes the group will bring a lot of energy to the process and carry the day. Other times as the leader or communicator, you will need to marshal and generate energy. The next time you communicate to a group, don't allow yourself to become complacent. Bring energy to the process and then continue bringing it—even if the energy in the room is good. Don't coast. The experience will be better for everyone if you remain intentionally energetic. In addition, you will gain people's respect if you take responsibility for the energy level. A few times a year I lead a roundtable leadership session with fifteen to thirty executive-level leaders. Here are the guidelines I always follow with them:

- Before the session begins, I go to each person and introduce myself.
- I ask each individual a question to discover something unique about him or her.
- At the beginning of the session I give them ownership of the meeting. They ask me questions, and I do my best to serve them.
- If some are hesitant to enter in the discussion, I draw them in by telling the others about their uniqueness and how it relates to the subject.
- I end our time together by asking people how I can help them be more successful.

CONNECTING WITH AN AUDIENCE

No audience arrives at an event expecting to provide energy to the speaker. People come to shows, conferences, workshops, and events expecting to receive, not give. If you are the speaker, you must always keep that in mind. The larger the crowd is, the more energy you must provide.

Think about ways you can increase your energy when speaking to an audience. For example, confidence, which comes from preparation, brings energy. Passion, which comes from conviction, brings energy. Positivity, which comes from believing in people, brings energy. The more energy you bring to the process, and the better you are at conveying energy to your audience, the better your chances of connecting with them.

CHAPTER 5: CONNECTING IS MORE SKILL THAN NATURAL TALENT

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE LISTEN?

RELATIONSHIPS—WHO YOU KNOW

One of the quickest ways to gain credibility with an individual, a group, or an audience is to borrow it from someone who already has credibility with them.

INSIGHT—WHAT YOU KNOW

Most people want to improve their situation in life. When they find someone who can communicate something of value, they will usually listen. If what they learn really helps, a sense of connection between them can often quickly develop.

If you have an area of expertise and generously share it with others, you give people reasons to respect you and develop a sense of connection with you.

SUCCESS—WHAT YOU HAVE DONE

I think many people assume that if someone can succeed in an area, he or she possesses knowledge that may be valuable to them in their own endeavors. And if the person's success is in the same area as theirs, the potential for connection is even stronger.

ABILITY—WHAT YOU CAN DO

Excellence connects. If you possess a high level of ability in an area, others may desire to connect with you because of it.

SACRIFICE—HOW YOU HAVE LIVED

If you have made sacrifices, suffered tragedy, or overcome painful obstacles, many people will relate to you. And if you have been able to remain positive yet humble in the midst of life's difficulties, others will admire you and be able to connect with you.

CONNECTING WITH A LIVE AUDIENCE

He Possesses Great Confidence.

He Exhibits Authenticity.

He Prepares Thoroughly.

He Utilizes Humor.

He Focuses on Others.

Max De Pree, author of *Leadership Is an Art*, asserts, "There may be no single thing more important in our efforts to achieve meaningful work and fulfilling relationships than to learn to practice the art of communication."

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS

CONNECTING PRINCIPLE: Connecting is more skill than natural talent.

KEY CONCEPT: The skills you learn to connect at one level can be used to start connecting at the next level.

CONNECTING ONE-ON-ONE

Most people believe that it's easier to connect with people one-on-one than with a group or an audience. I believe that's usually true because they have more practice connecting with an individual than they do with a group. The way to overcome the fear of speaking to larger groups is to practice using the skills you acquire at one level on the next level. The process begins with using whatever gifts and talents you possess to begin connecting with people one-on-one. To connect well one-on-one, you need to:

- Have interest in the person.
- Place value on that person.
- Put his or her interests ahead of your own.
- Express gratitude to and for that person.

CONNECTING IN A GROUP

Once you have begun to connect well one-on-one, take stock of what skills you've developed and what assets you've utilized to succeed in that arena. Now consider how you can use these things to connect in a group. What easily transfers? What must be "translated" or altered in some way to be used with a group? Use those skills. In addition, take the four things mentioned above for connecting one-on-one and expand them to apply to a group:

- Show interest in each person in your group. Do this by asking each person questions.
- Place value on each person by pointing out his or her value to the others in the group.
- Make it your goal to add value to everyone in the group, and let them know that is your intention.
- Express your gratitude to each person in front of others.

CONNECTING WITH AN AUDIENCE

As you become more adept at connecting with groups, once again take stock of what worked in connecting with them. Try to anticipate what could work well with larger audiences. Just remember: the larger the audience, the more energy you need to bring to your communication. To start the connection process, do the following:

- Show interest in your audience. When possible, meet and greet audience members before you speak. While speaking, let people know that you understand that each person is unique and special.
- Place value on each person by letting them know you spent a lot of time preparing your talk because you value them, their purpose, and their time.
- Put the people first by letting them know you are there to serve them. I do this by being willing to answer questions, making myself available to interact with people after a speech, and being available to sign books.
- Express gratitude to them and thank them for their time.

PART II. CONNECTING PRACTICES

CHAPTER 6: CONNECTORS CONNECT ON COMMON GROUND

If I had to pick a first rule of communication—the practice above all others that opens the door to connection with others— it would be to look for common ground.

It's difficult to find common ground with others when the only person you're focused on is yourself!

"If you can learn to pinpoint how those around you experience the world, and really try to experience the same world they do, you'll be amazed at how effective your communication will become." - TERRY FELBER

BARRIERS TO FINDING COMMON GROUND

1. ASSUMPTION—“I ALREADY KNOW WHAT OTHERS KNOW, FEEL, AND WANT”

Jerry Ballard says, “All miscommunications are the result of differing assumptions.”

Too often I have been guilty of making assumptions about people. I have often made generalizations when I should have been making observations. It is easy to label people and then see them only in that light.

We need to remember that all generalizations are false, including this one. Once a person has been placed neatly within a certain box, it becomes more difficult for us to think of him or her as being anything different.

2. ARROGANCE—“I DON’T NEED TO KNOW WHAT OTHERS KNOW, FEEL, OR WANT”

Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis observed, “Nine-tenths of the serious controversies that arise in life result from misunderstanding, from one man not knowing the facts which to the other man seem important, or otherwise failing to appreciate his point of view.”

What’s sad is that most people try to build a case for their competence or their viewpoint when they communicate. As a result, they seldom connect because there is an arrogance about them that builds a barrier between them and others.

You can’t build a relationship with everybody in the room when you don’t care about anybody in the room.

3. INDIFFERENCE—“I DON’T CARE TO KNOW WHAT OTHERS KNOW, FEEL, OR WANT”

Most people appreciate any effort you make, no matter how small, to see things from their point of view.

4. CONTROL—“I DON’T WANT OTHERS TO KNOW WHAT I KNOW, FEEL, OR WANT”

Good leaders and communicators don’t isolate themselves, and they don’t deliberately keep people in the dark. They inform people, make them a part of what’s going on, and include them in decision making whenever possible. You cannot establish common ground if you refuse to let anyone know who you are or what you believe.

CULTIVATING A COMMON GROUND MIND-SET

Anyone can learn to connect better because connecting is a choice. It is a mind-set that can be learned. If you want to increase your odds of connecting with others, then make the following choices every day of your life:

AVAILABILITY—“I WILL CHOOSE TO SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS”

As a leader and communicator, I have always made it my goal to be available to others. When I’m with friends or family, I don’t disconnect; I stay engaged. When I am a speaker at a conference, I sign books and talk with people during breaks instead of resting.

LISTENING—“I WILL LISTEN MY WAY TO COMMON GROUND”

Sonya Hamlin, in her book, *How to Talk So People Listen*, notes that most people find this difficult because of the “Me-First Factor.” She wrote: “Listening requires giving up our favorite human pastime—involvement in ourselves and our own self-interest.

“To make anyone listen while you try to get your message across,” she recommends, “you must always answer the listener’s instinctive question: ‘Why should I listen to you? What’s in it for me if I let you in?’”

QUESTIONS—“I WILL BE INTERESTED ENOUGH IN OTHERS TO ASK QUESTIONS”

“My greatest strength as a consultant is to be ignorant and ask a few questions.” - PETER DRUCKER

Television host Larry King, who has conducted thousands of interviews, says that asking questions is the secret of every good conversation. “I’m curious about everything,” writes King in *How to Talk to Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere*, “and if I’m at a cocktail party, I often ask my favorite question: ‘Why?’ If a man tells me he and his family are moving to another city: ‘Why?’ A woman is changing jobs: ‘Why?’ Someone roots for the Mets: ‘Why?’ On my television show, I probably use this word more than any other. It’s the greatest question ever asked, and it always will be. And it is certainly the surest way of keeping a conversation lively and interesting.”

If you aren’t especially outgoing or have a difficult time asking questions, you can use this trick that Duke Brekhus says he learned from Ron Puryear. Remember the word FORM, which stands for family, occupation, recreation, and message.

THOUGHTFULNESS—“I WILL THINK OF OTHERS AND LOOK FOR WAYS TO THANK THEM”

OPENNESS—“I WILL LET PEOPLE INTO MY LIFE”

LIKABILITY—“I WILL CARE ABOUT PEOPLE”

Roger Ailes, a former communication consultant to presidents, believes the most influential factor in public speaking is likability. He says that if people like you, they will listen to you, and if they don’t, they won’t. So how does a person become likable? By caring about others. People like people who like them.

People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.

HUMILITY—“I WILL THINK OF MYSELF LESS SO I CAN THINK OF OTHERS MORE”

If you want to impact people, don’t talk about your successes; talk about your failures.

“Humility means two things. One, a capacity for self-criticism. . . . The second feature is allowing others to shine, affirming others, empowering and enabling others.”- CORNEL WEST

ADAPTABILITY—“I WILL MOVE FROM MY WORLD TO THEIRS”

Anytime you aren't sure about how to bridge the communication gap, don't start the process by telling people about yourself. Begin with moving to where they are and seeing things from their perspective. Adapt to them—don't expect them to adapt to you.

CONNECTORS GO FIRST

This willingness to see things from others' point of view is really the secret of finding common ground, and finding common ground is really the secret of connecting. If you were to do only this and nothing else, your communication would improve immensely in every area of your life.

1. ASK, "DO I FEEL WHAT YOU FEEL?" BEFORE ASKING, "DO YOU FEEL WHAT I FEEL?"

Effective communication takes people on a journey. We cannot take others on that journey unless we start where they are.

If you want to find common ground with others, the place to begin is with their feelings. If you can connect on an emotional level, connecting is much easier on every other level.

2. ASK, "DO I SEE WHAT YOU SEE?" BEFORE ASKING, "DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?"

"If I could go back to my days as a young father," he responded, "I would work harder on seeing things through my children's eyes." (PAUL REES) He went on to explain that he had missed many teaching moments because he wanted his children to see what he saw first. That day I made a commitment to see through the eyes of others before I asked them to see from my perspective.

3. ASK, "DO I KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW?" BEFORE ASKING, "DO YOU KNOW WHAT I KNOW?"

For years as a leader and pastor, I attempted to help people work through relational conflicts. Most times when I get people in these situations to sit down together to communicate, their greatest desire is to express their point of view from their perspective. They want to make sure they get their point across. When the conflict is with me, I usually let them talk until they "run out of gas," and then I ask them questions. Only after I know what they know, do I try to share my side of the story. The person who gives answers before understanding the problems is very foolish.

Abraham Lincoln said, "When I'm getting ready to reason with a man, I spend one-third of my time thinking about myself and what I am going to say—and two-thirds thinking about him and what he is going to say." If we want to find common ground, we would do well to do the same.

4. ASK, "DO I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT?" BEFORE ASKING, "DO YOU KNOW WHAT I WANT?"

When I want to really get to know someone, I ask three questions. People's answers to these give me great insight into someone's heart. The questions are:

- What do you dream about?
- What do you sing about?
- What do you cry about?

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS

CONNECTING PRACTICE: Connectors connect on common ground.

KEY CONCEPT: Know the reasons you and your listener want to communicate and build a bridge between those reasons.

CONNECTING ONE-ON-ONE

When two people come together to communicate, each of them has a reason for doing so. To connect on common ground, you must know your reason, know the other person's reason, and find a way to connect the two. The bottom line in finding common ground is knowing how to make the interaction a win for both parties. Building a bridge on common ground is easier one-on-one than with many people because you can get immediate and continuous feedback from the other person. To find common ground, ask questions with an eye for common interests and experiences. When you find common ground, tell stories, share emotions, and offer lessons learned from those experiences. And if possible, do something together that you both enjoy.

CONNECTING IN A GROUP

Finding common ground in a group setting is a little more difficult because you can't focus on just a single person. (If you do, you risk losing the rest of the group.) So how do you do it? Begin by asking yourself, "What brought us together?" The answer to that question usually gives you an effective starting point. If the group has been forced to come together, such as a mandatory committee designated by an employer, then ask yourself, "What is the one goal that all of us have?" With that goal in mind, acknowledge everyone's differences but also their ability to contribute to that common goal using their unique skills, reminding them that the goal is more important than the role. And when the group accomplishes a win, celebrate together.

CONNECTING WITH AN AUDIENCE

When people come to hear someone speak, their hope is to learn something that will help them. An anticipating audience has this first and foremost in their minds. A hostile audience may not be thinking about it, but if listening is to their advantage, they will be open to it. Tap into this desire to connect on common ground the next time you communicate in front of an audience. Use the following pattern: Feel, Felt, Found, Find.

- FEEL: Try to sense what they feel and acknowledge and validate their feelings.
- FELT: Share with them that you have also felt the same way.
- FOUND: Share with them what you found that has helped you.
- FIND: Offer to help them find help for their lives.

CHAPTER 7: CONNECTORS DO THE DIFFICULT WORK OF KEEPING IT SIMPLE

WHAT'S WRONG WITH SIMPLE?

I think a lot of people believe that if an individual, especially an author or speaker, bombards them with a lot of complex information or writes using big words in a style that is dense and difficult to understand, then he or she is somehow intelligent and credible.

When students can't understand their professor, they often assume it's because the professor is so smart and knows so much more than they do. I don't think that's always true.

As leaders and communicators, our job is to bring clarity to a subject, not complexity.

“If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it enough.” - ALBERT EINSTEIN

“To be simple is to be great.” —RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Blaise Pascal once wrote, “I have made this letter longer than usual because I lack the time to make it short.”

COMMUNICATING ACROSS CULTURES

After speaking in more than fifty different countries in hundreds of venues, I have developed a “3 S” strategy: Keep it Simple. Say it Slowly. Have a Smile.

THE ART OF SIMPLICITY

1. TALK TO PEOPLE, NOT ABOVE THEM

Once I realized that my “brilliant” talks weren’t helping anybody, I started working to change my style...I went from being a speaker who wanted to impress others to one who wanted to impact them.

Greater complexity is never the answer in communication—if your desire is to connect.

2. GET TO THE POINT

“He is one of those orators who, before he gets up, does not know what he is going to say; when he is speaking, does not know what he is saying; and when he has sat down, doesn’t know what he has said.”-WINSTON CHURCHILL

I ask myself two questions: “What do I want them to know?” and “What do I want them to do?”

I have often needed to confront people. Early on, I was insecure and intimidated by such encounters. Too often my strategy was to either talk about a lot of other things first before sharing the bad news, or I’d hint at the problem instead of stating it clearly. It took me many years to take a more direct approach and say what I needed to as quickly as possible.

“When I have someone in my company who is not doing well, I ask them two questions: first I ask, ‘Do you want to keep your job?’ That lets them know there is a problem. Second, ‘Do you want me to help you?’ That lets them know I am willing to help them.” Now, that’s getting straight to the point.

3. SAY IT OVER AND OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN

If you want to be an effective communicator, you have to be willing to keep emphasizing a point.

“Tell the audience what you are going to say. Say it. Then tell them what you’ve said.”

Andy Stanley...often crafts a message based on a single point—one big idea. And then everything he communicates informs, illustrates, or illuminates that main point. It's a very creative and effective way of making sure he drives his point home, and his audience really connects with the message.

4. SAY IT CLEARLY

“Have an understanding so there won't be a misunderstanding.” In other words, you must be able to see something clearly in your mind before you can say it clearly with your mouth.

There is only so much you can cover in an hour and expect learning to occur...I call it Jigsaw Management. As you lay out your ideas, imagine that you are going to ask your audience to assemble a large jigsaw puzzle from scratch. Your ideas are the pieces. When you are doing a puzzle, the first thing that you do is to look at the boxtop. Your talk should have one of those. It tells you which pieces you want to present...If you have more than a few main ideas, you have too many. I keep my talks to three ideas max, and that can still be too much for an hour...If you were playing with a puzzle and you had only an hour to finish, would you want the person with the puzzle to hide the boxtop from you? Would you want the person to add extra pieces to the pile? Don't be guilty of the same when you do your talks. In other words, no matter how wonderful the idea is to you, don't include it unless it fits exactly into the picture on your boxtop. Second, as you start the talk, be sure to tell your audience what the boxtop looks like. Tell them what you will show them so they know where the ideas fit.

In the end, people are persuaded not by what we say, but by what they understand. When you speak clearly and simply, more people can understand what you're trying to communicate.

Being simple as a communicator isn't a weakness. It's a strength!

5. SAY LESS

When I speak for less time and do so more succinctly, people remember it better and longer.

“Broadly speaking, the short words are the best, and the old words best of all.” - WINSTON CHURCHILL

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS

CONNECTING PRACTICE: Connectors do the difficult work of keeping it simple.

KEY CONCEPT: The larger the group, the simpler the communication needs to be.

CONNECTING ONE-ON-ONE

Helping one other person to understand what you have to say is usually fairly easy. Why? Because you can tailor it exactly to his or her personality, experience, and intellect. And if you're not crystal clear in your communication, you will probably be able to read it in the person's expression. You can also answer any questions the person may ask. Of course, that still doesn't mean you can be lazy. If you want to connect, not just get across a bunch of information, you should still work to keep it simple. The more easily understood you are, the better your chances of connecting with your listener.

CONNECTING IN A GROUP

Communicating in a group is a little more complicated than communicating one-on-one. You have to make your ideas work for more than one person, so simplify them. You should never simply “dump” a bunch of information on people and expect them to sort it out. That’s lazy and ineffective. If you’ve been given the opportunity to speak, do the hard work of making communication simple. To make sure you have been effective, do the following:

- Ask for feedback.
- Ask people in the group to share what they have learned.
- Ask the group to tell how they are going to pass what you’ve said on to others.

CONNECTING WITH AN AUDIENCE

There’s a real art to making communication simple but memorable. It took me years to learn how to do it. Two good ways to approach a message are to ask yourself: “What are the bare essentials that I need to communicate for people to understand it?” and “How can I make those few essential points memorable?”

Another trick that good leaders use to sharpen a message for something important, such as the communication of vision, is to practice first by telling a single person. If it works well for an individual, then they try it with a small, hand-selected group. That way the communicator can read people’s expressions, see what works, and also receive people’s input. (Sometimes when I do this, I’ll even ask people to explain what I just said to the person next to them.) Only after an important communication has been tested do speakers then take it to the masses.

CHAPTER 8: CONNECTORS CREATE AN EXPERIENCE EVERYONE ENJOYS

HOW TO BE INTERESTING

1. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR LISTENERS

In general, there are no bad audiences; only bad speakers.

Your first responsibility as a speaker is to gain and keep the audience’s attention. Whatever your purpose, you have the best chance for success when you know that their attention is your responsibility, yours alone.”

Historian Barbara Tuchman. During all the years she wrote, she had a little sign over her typewriter that said, “Will the reader turn the page?”

If we’re having dinner, I work to create good conversation. I think, What can I say to get others involved around the table? How can I draw them in?

Creating positive, memorable experiences does more to connect families than just about anything else. I strongly encourage you to take responsibility for it.

2. COMMUNICATE IN THEIR WORLD

Too often speakers are unwilling or unable to get out of their own world and say things from the perspective of their listeners. When that happens, not only is it unlikely that a connection will develop; it actually creates distance between speaker and listener.

People don't remember what we think is important; they remember what they think is important.

Talk at me and you'll talk alone. Talk to me and I'll listen. Talk about me and I'll listen for hours.

3. CAPTURE PEOPLE'S ATTENTION FROM THE START

Most of the time, we have an instantaneous reaction to people, and we are either drawn to them or not. I know that's true for me. When people smile, make eye contact, and try to initiate contact in some way, by saying hello or reaching out to shake my hand, it puts me in a much more positive frame of mind toward them.

Start with a Comment About the Situation or Setting.

Introduce Yourself.

Relax.

Begin with Humor.

Create a Sense of Anticipation.

4. ACTIVATE YOUR AUDIENCE

Are people laughing or applauding? If there are signs of life, great! If there aren't, then I get to work trying to get audience members involved. Here's how:

Ask Questions.

I use questions in much less formal settings as well. Before I go to dinner with people, I think of a couple of questions I will ask them such as, "What exciting things have happened to you this month?" or "What good books have you read lately?" I don't wait for people to get involved. I do things that invite them into the process.

Get People Moving.

Getting people moving also works in groups and one-on-one. You can plan activities for a group that will help them to get energized. And if communication is getting stale when you're meeting with a single person, you can go for a walk or change where you're sitting. Physical activity can help create mental activity.

Ask People to Interact.

It's the speaker's responsibility to bring energy to the audience and to work to activate them.

5. SAY IT SO IT STICKS

Link What You Say with What People Need.

People pay attention when something that is said connects with something they greatly desire.

Find a Way to Be Original.

Use Humor.

Anytime someone makes light of himself, it connects him with people rather than putting him above them.

Use a Shocking Statement or Statistic.

Say Things in an Interesting Way.

Learn to Pause

Anytime you engage in nonstop speaking without pausing, people's minds will disengage. However, if you pause, even for a moment, you give people a chance to consider what you've just said. It gives their minds a needed break. And the best time to do this is when you're saying something especially significant.

6. BE VISUAL

Some presenters use film or PowerPoint or graphics. None of those things works especially well for me. Instead when I speak, I often use movement and facial expressions. I also use eye contact.

7. TELL STORIES

Perhaps the most effective way to capture people's interest and make the experience enjoyable when you talk is to include stories.

"All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them." Cold facts rarely connect with people. But good stories have an incredible impact and can help even the weakest communicator improve and begin to connect with people.

"When you speak, you share interesting stories with your audience. You take people on a journey with you."

Abraham Lincoln, perhaps the United States' greatest president, remarked, "They say I tell a great many stories; I reckon I do, but I have found in the course of a long experience that common people, take them as they run, are more easily informed through the medium of a broad illustration than in any other way, and as to what the hypercritical few may think, I don't care."

BE THE COMMUNICATOR YOU WANT TO HEAR

BE THE PERSON WITH WHOM YOU WANT TO CONNECT

Connecting isn't primarily about learning to become a better presenter. It's about becoming the kind of person others want to connect with.

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS

CONNECTING PRACTICE: Connectors create an experience everyone enjoys.

KEY CONCEPT: Work to create the right experience for your communication setting.

CONNECTING ONE-ON-ONE

When people enjoy a one-on-one communication experience, it is usually because a sense of intimacy has been created. That doesn't necessarily mean a romantic intimacy; it just means a connection created by honest communication that benefits both parties. Work to create that by doing one of the suggestions in the chapter, such as asking questions, using humor, or telling stories.

CONNECTING IN A GROUP

The experience that people usually enjoy most in a group setting is teamwork. As a communicator, if you can help people to have a sense of shared accomplishment, the participants will feel connected to you and to one another. The next time you're responsible for leading a group, ask them to accomplish some enjoyable task together. Make sure everyone gets involved. Then observe how it impacts the energy level and rapport of the group.

CONNECTING WITH AN AUDIENCE

When people are part of an audience listening to a communicator, they want to be entertained. Try using some of the many techniques I shared in the chapter the next time you communicate in front of an audience. In particular, use stories as part of communication. Even a dry report or highly factual presentation can be enlivened with a good story. (Perhaps those kinds of communication have the greatest need for a good story.) If you haven't used stories in the past, try using them from now on when you connect with others. If you already use stories, think about ways you can improve your storytelling. Here are some tips from Martin Thielen, who attended the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee. He observed that the best presenters exhibited the following:

- **ENTHUSIASM.** The storytellers obviously enjoyed what they were doing, expressing themselves with joy and vitality.
- **ANIMATION.** The presentations were marked by lively facial expressions and gestures.
- **AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION.** Almost every storyteller involved the audience in some way, asking listeners to sing, clap, repeat phrases, or do sign language.
- **SPONTANEITY.** Although the stories were memorized, storytellers responded freely to listeners.
- **NO NOTES.** This was truly an oral event. Storytellers didn't read their stories; they told them, which allowed for eye contact.
- **HUMOR.** Humor was interjected even in serious or sad stories.

Which of these can you use to enliven your communication?

CHAPTER 9: CONNECTORS INSPIRE PEOPLE

As I look back on my life, I can see that my energy for my work has often been dependent upon the inspirational qualities of the person who led it.

In every case, what made the difference was inspiration. Some people inspire us more than others do.

IT ALL ADDS UP TO INSPIRATION

When someone begins to communicate with others, the first thing people do is start asking questions at a subconscious level. They want to know what's in it for them.

WHAT PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW

In the context of connecting, people need to know you're on their side.

PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THEM AND ARE FOCUSED ON THEM

Good communicators understand that people do things for their own reasons, not for the reasons of the person doing the talking.

Lisa Kirk knew when she said, "A gossip is one who talks to you about others; a bore is one who talks to you about himself; and a brilliant conversationalist is one who talks to you about yourself."

As you prepare to communicate to others, you must let them know that you understand them and want to help them. You must learn their inspirational language and speak it to them. How do you do that? By asking these questions:

What are they thinking?

What are they saying?

What are they doing?

PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW THAT YOU HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF THEM

Inspiring communicators always expect a lot from their listeners.

"Management is about persuading people to do things they do not want to do, while leadership is about inspiring people to do things they never thought they could." -STEVE JOBS

I believe most of the time people respond to the expectations of others. If I see someone as a 5, I'll treat him or her as a 5 and speak to this person as a 5. And more than likely, after a while I'll convince this person to act as a 5. What's the value in that? However, if I see someone as a 10, he or she will sense that and is likely to respond in a positive way. If we treat people as who they can become, they will be inspired to rise to the level of our expectations.

People respond positively to enthusiasm, not skepticism. They want our encouragement more than our expertise.

Everyone wants to be inspired. All people want someone to believe in them. They are waiting for someone to challenge, motivate, and encourage them to be all they can be. If you get an opportunity to communicate to others, why not be that someone who inspires them?

WHAT PEOPLE NEED TO SEE

PEOPLE NEED TO SEE YOUR CONVICTION

Connectors who inspire others possess a conviction that far outweighs their words. What they communicate comes from deep within, from their inner core values. Their mission is to persuade, to change points of view. People can usually sense when speakers are simply conveying information versus when they are passionately communicating from the heart.

If the speaker doesn't have conviction about the subject of his or her message, why should the listeners?

PEOPLE NEED TO SEE YOUR CREDIBILITY

PEOPLE NEED TO SEE EVIDENCE OF YOUR CHARACTER

People want to be able to trust the character of the person who is communicating to them.

WHAT PEOPLE NEED TO FEEL

People will not always remember what you said or what you did, but they will always remember how you made them feel!

PEOPLE NEED TO FEEL YOUR PASSION FOR THE SUBJECT AND THEM

The next time before you speak to people, ask yourself these four questions:

1. Do I believe what I say?
2. Has it changed me?
3. Do I believe it will help others?
4. Have I seen it change others?

PEOPLE NEED TO FEEL YOUR CONFIDENCE IN YOURSELF AND THEM

Presenters who create worry in their listeners don't inspire great confidence. In fact, they don't inspire anything.

Labor Secretary Francis Perkins said that she often "came away from an interview with the President feeling better, not because he had solved any problems . . . but because he had made me feel more cheerful, stronger, more determined."

PEOPLE NEED TO FEEL YOUR GRATITUDE FOR THEM

ACTION—INSPIRATION AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

Some communicators stop there. They encourage people, make them feel good, help them to feel confident, but then they never lead them to action. What a tragedy! It's not enough to help someone

feel good. Understanding changes minds. Action changes lives. If you really want to help others, you need to take your communication to the next level—which is to call people to action.

GIVE PEOPLE AN ACTION PLAN

There is an old story about a farmer who asked his neighbor, “Are you going to attend the new county agent’s classes next week?” His neighbor replied, “Shucks. I already know a whole lot more about farming than I’m doing.” That’s the way most people are: their knowledge far outweighs their follow-through. Good communicators help people to overcome that tendency.

MAKE A COMMITMENT TO CONTINUALLY INSPIRE OTHERS

“Our society seems to go from inspiration to inspiration, looking for the next thing that makes them feel good, but doing very little about it.” - RAYMOND MASTER

What good is our communication if its impact ends the moment we stop speaking?

“The way I like to measure greatness is . . . How many people can you make want to be better?” —WILL SMITH

The true test of inspiration is action.

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS

CONNECTING PRACTICE: Connectors inspire people.

KEY CONCEPT: What people remember most is how you make them feel.

CONNECTING ONE-ON-ONE

All three factors in the Inspiration Equation come into play when inspiring people, but they have different values in different communication settings. One-on-one, what has the greatest weight is what people see. Who you really are inspires (or discourages) the people closest to you. You can’t hide that. Character, above everything else, is what will make the biggest impression on people at this level. What qualities help people to connect with you? Here is what they want to see:

- A heart to serve—people need to know that you want to serve them.
- A person of good values—show your values by words and action.
- A helping hand—add value to others and always try to lift them up.
- A caring spirit—people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.
- A believing attitude—people migrate to those who believe in them.

CONNECTING IN A GROUP

What people know about you counts the most when inspiring people in a group. They want to know what you’ve done. That is what gives you the most credibility. If people know and respect your accomplishments, and you believe in them, then they will believe in themselves and be inspired to perform. People in a group want to know . . .

- that you will go first and lead by example,
- that you will only ask them to do what you have done or are willing to do,
- that you will teach them to do what you have already done,

- that their success is more important to you than your success,
- that they will get credit for their accomplishments, and
- that you will celebrate their success.

CONNECTING WITH AN AUDIENCE

The most important aspect of communication when trying to connect with an audience is how you make them feel. Most times, they can't really know the speaker and anything about his or her character from a distance. They may have been told information about the speaker's achievements, but they can't be sure about them. What they have is their reaction to the few minutes the speaker communicates onstage. If they feel good, they feel connected. If they don't, they don't. So if you're preparing to speak to an audience, be sure you try to connect with them on an emotional level. The following will help you do that:

- They should see that you enjoy being with them and want to help them.
- They should feel that you are their friend.
- They should feel that you are authentic and vulnerable— not perfect, but growing.
- They should feel you are conversing with them, not talking down to them.
- They should feel that you believe in them and they can believe in themselves.

CHAPTER 10: CONNECTORS LIVE WHAT THEY COMMUNICATE

THE TRUST TEST

Stephen M. R. Covey wrote in *The Speed of Trust* about the impact of credibility in business. He asserts, "Trust means confidence," because trust erases worry and frees you to get on with other matters. "Low trust," he writes, "is an unseen cost in life and business, because it creates hidden agendas and guarded communication, thereby slowing decision-making. A lack of trust stymies innovation and productivity. Trust, on the other hand, produces speed because it feeds collaboration, loyalty and ultimately, results."

To be an effective connector over the long haul, you have to establish credibility by living what you communicate.

The bottom line is that the effectiveness of the communication relies more on the character of the messenger than on the content of the message.

YOU ARE YOUR MESSAGE

Whether or not you intend to be, you are the message you communicate to others. That determines whether other people want to connect with you.

Eventually who you really are will show through— onstage, at work, or at home...to connect well with people, you must become the kind of person you would like to connect with. How you portray yourself, what you communicate, and how you live need to be consistent.

CONNECT WITH YOURSELF

Zig Ziglar says, "The most influential person who will talk to you all day, is you. So, you should be very careful what you say to you."

RIGHT YOUR WRONGS

Acknowledge Your Mistakes.
Apologize.
Make Amends.

BE ACCOUNTABLE

LEAD THE WAY YOU LIVE

If you aren't willing to try to live something, you probably shouldn't try to communicate it. That doesn't mean you have to try to be perfect because, of course, you can't be. It just means you have to strive to be what you call others to be. Otherwise, you have no credibility, and your leadership is in trouble.

Adam Jones put it, "Leading with a lack of integrity is choosing to fail before taking your first step."

TELL THE TRUTH

BE VULNERABLE

Parker Palmer, author of *The Courage to Teach*, says, "We all know that perfection is a mask. So we don't trust the people behind know-it-all masks. They're not being honest with us. The people with whom we have deepest connection are those who acknowledge their weaknesses."

"You think your people don't already know your weaknesses," I answered. "They do. By admitting them, you're letting them know that you know them." The reason I told him that with such confidence is that I used to think the way he did. For the first ten years of my career, I tried to be Mr. Answerman. I wanted personally to handle every problem, answer every question, and confront every crisis. I wanted to be indispensable. But I didn't have anybody fooled except myself.

FOLLOW THE GOLDEN RULE

Some organizations are like a tree full of monkeys. If you're a leader at the top of the tree, all you see when you look down is a bunch of smiling faces looking up to you. However, if you're at the bottom of the organization and you look up, the view is not so pretty. And if you stay where you are, you know you're going to get dumped on by everybody who's above you. Nobody wants to be treated that way by others.

Once when I complimented Jim and asked him the key to the organization's success, he told me, "The company has only one rule—the Golden Rule." He went on to say that in the first two years after it was made known that the Golden Rule would be the standard within Synovus, a third of the executives in the company were fired because they weren't treating people properly.

DELIVER RESULTS

I am amazed by the number of speakers, consultants, and life coaches in the marketplace today. Some of them are fantastic, but others have very little credibility. Why? Because they've never actually accomplished anything themselves. They've studied success or leadership or communication, but

they've never been on the front lines, building a business, leading an organization, or developing a product or service. They're selling a promise but don't have a track record of success. It mystifies me.

Nothing speaks like results. If you want to build the kind of credibility that connects with people, then deliver results before you deliver a message. Get out and do what you advise others to do. Communicate from experience.

CREDIBILITY CONNECTS

To be successful in the long run, you need to do more than connect. You need to keep connecting, and you can do that only when you live what you communicate.

I always try to keep in mind this definition of success: "Those who are the closest to me and know me the best, love and respect me the most." When the people who know how you live day in, day out, see that your words and actions align, then they can trust you, have confidence in you, and connect with you. And that makes life a great and enjoyable journey every single day. The true power of connecting with others does not come from superficial interactions with others—smiling at a stranger, being friendly with a food server, or wowing a one-time audience. It comes from connecting with people long-term.

Training consultant Greg Schaffer remarked, "If you do not connect with others, influence is out of the question."

Henry Adams said, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS

CONNECTING PRACTICE: Connectors live what they communicate.

KEY CONCEPT: The only way to keep connecting with people is to live what you communicate.

CONNECTING ONE-ON-ONE

More than 90 percent of all connecting occurs one-on-one. That's usually how you communicate with the people who know you the best: family, friends, and work associates. You are also least likely to be on your guard with these people and most likely to make commitments to them. As a result, they are the people who know your character best. Does your character emphasize what you say, or does it undermine it? Does your character help you to follow through and keep your promises, or does it work against you? Where do you need to improve?

CONNECTING IN A GROUP

When we communicate within a group setting or with a team, people look at our example, performance, and teamwork. Are you doing what you ask others to do? Does your track record support your communication? Can people depend on your performance and your willingness to put the team first? If not, you need to make changes to improve your credibility.

CONNECTING WITH AN AUDIENCE

People are most tempted to take character shortcuts when they communicate to an audience because their listeners don't know them personally. It's easy to show only your best side and minimize or entirely cover up your weaknesses. That creates inauthenticity in your communication. People don't connect with communicators who are fakes. Instead, be vulnerable with people and let them know who you really are.