

Two Essential Elements for Effective Communication

There are many factors that determine the effectiveness of written or spoken communication. Too many to cover in one newsletter.

There are, however, **two essential elements** that, if *either* is left out, your chances of the writing or speech getting the results you want are greatly diminished. Stated positively, you're almost assured success if you accomplish both of these.

When you communicate, you want, at the very least, acceptance (of you or an idea). Most of the time you want someone to *do something* . . . like buy from you. To get the result you want when speaking or writing, there are **two primary elements** that must be present. You have to **capture your audience's attention** and you must **connect with them on an emotional level**.

We're all guided by our individual beliefs and goals. We act on a message when the information resonates with our values and desires. Marketing experts have long known that people buy based on emotion. It follows that effective, result-getting communication, spoken or written . . . is about connecting *quickly and touching your listeners or readers at a personal level*.

Your message, therefore, must be more than just words engulfed in flashy graphics or fancy PowerPoint slides. Let's dig a bit deeper.

Capture attention

Time concepts like *focus, attention span* and *quality time* have been reduced to stop-watch measurements. Communication is measured in billions - of emails, text messages and tweets. Although I'd argue that calling much of the digital dialogue communication may be a reach, it still demonstrates what has become a world of "sound bites".

To get someone to read a two-page article or scan through a page and a half newsletter is a major challenge. When giving a presentation, you have a few seconds to convince your audience they should listen to what you're about to tell them.

In speech-making, an opening of *"I'm happy to be here. I'm going to talk about setting goals"* will have eyes and minds closing quicker than you can say *"please listen, this is really important"*. Rather, you should *always* open with a relevant story, personal anecdote or some other tactic to draw your audience in. The objective of any speech is to either inform or persuade your audience. If you're informing (just delivering information), start with a "people connection" - what has happened or can happen to someone. If you're trying to win the audience over (persuading), it has to be even stronger emotionally. Whatever you use must, of course, tie into the topic. For more on giving presentations, you're welcome to download ["Presentation Skills 101" on this web page](#).

In email marketing, readers will look at who the email is from and the subject line. If they recognize and trust the 'from', they'll read the subject line and in about the time it took to read it, will decide whether to hit delete or look further. If it says *"News from Bud's insurance agency"* (or whatever Bud's business is), the only people who'll read further (mostly scan) are Bud's relatives and newsletter marketers like me. Give them a reason to read or scan further. For this article, my email subject line was *"writing or speaking - always do these 2 things"*. Isn't that more interesting than *"News from the Write Touch"*?

Certainly any form of advertising must incorporate captivating headlines. Whether you're creating a display ad, direct mail piece, brochure, flyer, even price, service and product sheets, readers will decide quickly how much they'll read. Their decision will be based on what catches their eye first - almost always the headline. A compelling graphic may draw their eye, but words will be the deciding factor.

I've written about headlines in previous issues and will address it again in the future. There are several techniques you can use. Here are a couple suggestions as a starting point for your next headline: keep it to *one main point; promise a benefit or offer something of value*.

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What about operational documents like employee or instruction manuals? How do you gain attention for technical documents, white papers or business plans? Having a compelling opening is easily overlooked since it's assumed the reader chose to read it. Yes, the audience for these mediums is more captive, probably directed to the document for specific education or instructions. It's still important to draw them in; to reinforce the objective. For example:

This instruction manual is your tool for success. Follow the steps outlined and detailed diagrams in the order presented and you'll soon be an expert at [whatever the activity].

Emotional Connection

You know the drill, or at least you've heard the marketing directive, "give them benefits, not just features".

Your reader (or listener) has one thing in mind. What's in it for me? It doesn't matter what you're selling - product, service or idea. He or she is not thinking about how pretty or big it is, how many options it contains or where the idea came from. He or she wants to know how much time or money it will save; how it will make his/her life easier, happier, safer, more prosperous.

For presentations, you connect emotionally with amplifications. You have to bring your main points and sub points to life with illustrations, examples, anecdotes, images, quotes, etc. This is the most important part of the body of any speech. It's what the audience will remember. Like the opening, if your objective is to persuade, the amplifications need to include more human emotion. If you're using statistics, make the numbers mean something in human terms. *"Your property taxes could go up 5% - figure on adding about \$10 per month to your mortgage payment".*

Since people buy based on emotion, your marketing messages need to appeal to their feelings and desires. Make your email, ads, direct mail or other marketing mediums stir up some emotion - such as fear, greed, vanity, pride, laziness, happiness.

It's fine to present features but your prospect cares about what that feature does for him or her, not the feature itself. Here are a couple of examples:

Feature: Our Whiz-Bang Internet Connector will download data 5 times faster

Benefit: Do something fun with the time you'll save - you deserve it.

Feature: Our PowerPac vitamin supplement contains Super Food Micronutrients for weight control without dieting.

Benefit: Take a look in the mirror and smile - you'll like what you see . . . and so will others.

Even with operational documents, you can "speak" to emotions. For example: pride (show others what you know) or laziness (you'll love these shortcuts).

You can miss on many other "best practices" of communication and still get good results . . . if you **capture attention and appeal to emotions**. Put these two elements in your next marketing message or speech. You may just connect with your own pride and happiness!

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