

Advisor

The Newsletter of Effective Communication

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Traction or Distraction?

Presentations for the Real World.



For most people nowadays, the most important thing you **make** at work is decisions. You are paid for your ability to think, make good choices and implement plans by communicating with others. Research shows that we spend **70-80% of our waking lives** communicating. Nearly half of that time, about 45%, is spent listening. Surprisingly, only 9% of our communication time is spent writing, while 16% is spent reading other people's communication, and 30% of the time we are speaking.

Many of us spend a considerable amount of time in meetings. And what are the dollars and cents costs of a meeting? Let's do the math. Say there are six people per meeting who make an average \$80K per year. That is \$40 per hour - say about \$50/hr. with benefits. If the meeting lasts about 90 minutes, that is \$450 in salaries per meeting. If a meeting like that happens once each workday, with an average 20 workdays a month, plus donuts and running a little long, that is an easy \$10K per month. Using the salary/hr. calculation, a friend calculated that the "cost" of writing his organization's mission statement came to more than \$100,000!

Cost alone is not the only reason to be clear and efficient with communications. Holding the listener's attention is a more serious challenge than ever before. And yet, you may not have had any speech courses since high school (if ever), and it is likely that no one taught you effective business presentations.

Pity. That is a serious shortcoming in career education.

Take presentations, for instance. While these skills come naturally to a lucky few, the vast majority of us need to learn how to deliver effective presentations, **even if the audience consists of one person**. Fortunately, these are skills easily learned by anyone who wants to do so. Furthermore, research into the field

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Quick Bites

Hope they aren't jamming, too.

Jamming of cell phone signals - what we might like to do at weddings, funerals and movie theaters, is illegal in the US, with exceptions for law enforcement. A quick check of the web shows that, despite their illegality, devices to prevent signals from getting through are readily available for purchase. If you have ever huddled near the window of a hotel room trying to get a signal, you may suspect that hoteliers are jamming your calls. The *New York Times* reported last fall that the ubiquitous nature of personal wireless phones has cut dramatically into hotel revenue. Profits from in-room phones dropped from an average of \$644 per room in 2000 to \$152 last year. In a hotel with 500 rooms, that is a quarter-

expands our knowledge each year, so that we are better able to help our clients become the superb communicators they want to be. Here is a brief look at some of the latest studies.

After listening to a 10-minute oral presentation, the average listener has heard, understood, accurately evaluated and retained only about half of what was said. Additionally, Dr. Lyman K. Steil of the University of Minnesota says that within 48 hours, that 50% drops another half to a 25% effectiveness level. By the end of a week, that level goes down to about 10% or less. The audience may just as well have slept through 90% of it.

Sighing, groaning and eye rolling are all normative responses to meetings, and who can blame people? **Recent data show that professionals now spend nearly three hours per day in business meetings, and more than a third of those polled say meetings are unproductive.** Many employees are so fed up they're simply not attending. More than 90% of workers fess up to having missed all or part of a meeting. And if you wonder whether your peers are somewhat inattentive while in meetings, here is the scoop - 73% say they have done other work when they're supposed to be paying attention. Some other meeting modalities include daydreaming (9 out of 10 employees have daydreamed during a meeting) and snoozing (41% of men have dozed, as have 31% of women). Only 6% of execs go to the trouble to pretend, that is, take notes or doodle to make it look as if they're listening.

In some places, having your laptop open while someone is talking has become perfectly acceptable, even expected. And what about the Blackberries? Who among us hasn't seen (or been) audience members with hands below the table casting furtive downward glances? What could be more counterproductive to a meeting, or more discouraging to the speaker, than to have massive messaging going on? It is no wonder only 10% of what is said can be recalled a week later.

Understanding the best techniques for getting your message across effectively, so that it is understood and remembered, is more important than ever before. If you haven't been trained in how to strategically prepare and deliver a message, get training. If you've been through our presentations course, locate your handout and review it. Ask a trusted colleague for a painfully honest critique. Check our past newsletters for tips and consider our advanced course. Communicating is often both the most critical and most taken for granted part of a career. You owe it to yourself and those who rely on you to be sure it is done well.

- ▶ **The Ammerman Experience has developed a new advanced seminar for people who are already strong presenters but want to be challenged to take it to the next level. In this course, we not only focus on bringing a polish to your presentation style and strategy, but we also tackle issues like best use of technology and techniques to capture the attention of multi-tasking audiences. To learn more about how we can help you or your staff become better presenters, [click here](#).**

million dollar loss annually. (Is that why they added the \$4.00 bottles of water?) While no American hotel has been caught in the act, the UK's *Daily Record* claimed in 2003 that hoteliers in Scotland were buying up Taiwanese-made jammers to force guests to use the hotel's phones. By the way, jamming is illegal in the UK, too.

Where's the frequency, Kenneth?

With the increasing expectation of wirelessness ... if you can't bear the thought of actually plugging in to get your mail, many WiFi locator websites are available. (Here are two: www.jjwire.com or www.wi-fi-zones.com). Things change quickly so accuracy is not a guarantee. Or, if you're ready to add one more thingy to your briefcase, there are many hotspot detectors out there from about \$25 to \$50, and they range in size from a slightly large key chain dangler to a bit bigger than your cell phone. [Click here](#) for a review of these products.

Nice Day for a Fright Wedding.

And speaking of privacy, we were on the road recently when we made a disturbing discovery. While at the hotel's business center to print out an airline boarding pass, we found on both of the computers there a number of Word

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Real World Questions

Real World Answers

Q: I am in the transportation industry and want to make sure our personnel are prepared for a crisis. We have a crisis team, but I know that many other associates, such as facility managers, customer service representatives and other front-line personnel need to be prepared as well. Where do I begin?

A: Congratulations on understanding that it is often the lower-level personnel who first come in contact with the public and the press, for they are often ignored in a crisis plan. First, make sure front-line personnel are familiar with the company's communications procedures and that they know whom to contact and how they will receive instructions. Next, give them the tools to engage with reporters. We offer a seminar designed for those front-line people. It is important for them to know how the press works even if they may never interact with reporters. Prepare them through training, and make sure they are involved in crisis management drills to ensure competence and confidence. During training, crisis and communications managers get the opportunity to see staff members in action, so people can be auditioned for various roles. Also, make sure ALL personnel on emergency response teams are prepared for major media coverage. Specialized training to emphasize your company's priorities in any type of emergency will prepare them to perform in this highly emotional environment.

Q: Product managers at our company seem to be comfortable interacting with people in our industry, but I'm concerned this could be a liability as we approach an upcoming road show where journalists will challenge them. How can I help prepare them?

A: First, impress upon them how important the road show is to the success of the company. It can be a great opportunity to raise the company profile in the most positive way. Consistent messaging is vitally important, and that happens through good preparation. Also, sensitize them to the intensity of the road show environment where extreme fatigue is common, yet they may have to stand and deliver for 12 hours or more! Those who are ill equipped to manage message consistency during multiple interviews could drift away from the plan and sabotage the overall strategy. Conduct mock interviews to prepare them for tough questions. Targeted media training would be valuable, not just for the skills learned, but also to help make the point that this is something the company does not want to leave to chance.

Q: I'm with a company that has a number of franchisees. I'm concerned about protecting our brand if something negative happens at one of our franchises. How should we approach this?

A: Brand protection should be your first concern, not only for the corporate office, but also for the other franchisees and the shareholders. The best way to protect

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documents with shortcuts on the desktop.

Since one was labeled "Jeff," also the name of our own VP/GM, we clicked on it. Then we clicked on the others. One was questions for a witness deposition, one was legal documents in an asbestos lawsuit, and the creepiest of all had to do with a summary judgment concerning a wedding guest who had beaten another wedding guest into a coma.

Let this serve as a reminder - if you must use the hotel's computer, carry a CD and a floppy with you so nothing needs to be added to the hotel computer's hard drive. Make sure you know how to clear out anything that is personal, and close out your email accounts. Then remember to do it! We are still having nightmares about that wedding reception!

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a brand is to do the right thing where people are involved. Most companies truly want to respond with care and compassion during a crisis, but so many things are happening at once that people become confused and fearful. That leads to responses that come off as cold or harsh, flippant or flummoxed. This is where the planning and training prove invaluable. Managers should know to quickly report any incidents or even potential issues to the corporate office. The corporate office should take leadership. This will convey to franchisees that there is a structure in place to contain a crisis situation, and that the leaders of the organization are working to minimize any vulnerability. This also means planning for a worst-case situation. It's also vital to establish specific communications protocols, train spokespersons and be prepared with a corporate "go-team" to support a location during a time of crisis. These steps should make everyone feel confident about the corporate commitment to the protection and the success of all.

Puzzled? Perplexed? Or just pondering the possibilities? [Email](#) your questions on communications issues to The Ammerman Experience. We would love to hear from you!

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2005 Ammerman Individual Enrollment Training Dates

Effective Media Communications

April 29
June 14
August 16
September 13
November 8
December 6

Effective Presentations

June 15
September 14

Advanced Communicators

April 27 - 28
November 10 - 11

Marketing EMC

November 9

EMC Refresher

September 15

The above schedule lists Ammerman individual, public workshops. For available dates for private (buy-out) training dates, please contact The Ammerman Experience at 1.800.866.2026.

The Ammerman Experience public workshops are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis, and are available to a limited number of attendees to ensure maximum personalized attention. To register for a course, contact our office at 1.800.866.2026.

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Our firm is a pioneer in understanding the link between effective communication and professional success. What we've learned and what we teach can improve your performance . . . and that of others in your organization.

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