

Advisor

The Newsletter of Effective Communication

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Just Your Type?

A look at dams on the communication stream

Is your job primarily about communications and/or getting others to communicate as well? Do you find yourself having to explain, cajole or even manipulate people who need to be speaking for your organization but do not understand how or why? Even more important, do you [see yourself](#) in one of these descriptions?

Below is a brief typology so that the communications staffers and the folks they work with might come to a better understanding of each other. Plus, we hoped it might brighten your day to know that [you are not alone](#) - we understand. Any of these look familiar to you?

The Decliner

Has no use for the media or anyone who deals with them. Believes that if you just ignore them they will go away. Thinks the company should just “fly under the radar.” Also known as Cro-Magnon Man (or woman) for completely prehistoric views of public relations.

The Delegator

“But this is your job - why should I have to do it?” Does not understand that the communications staff is handling it by choosing a topic expert or appropriate manager to present the message. Thinks a generic spokesperson should be able to do it all.

The Demander

Believes that the media are waiting to hear your story, as in “Why haven't they gotten any coverage on the new parking lot stripes?” Believes that press coverage is something to be ordered up, like a Happy Meal at the drive through. May also be incensed to discover what the media are inclined to pay attention to.



Quick Bites

C.Y.A - Check Your Acronyms

“Hello Peter. What’s happening? We need to talk about your [TPS reports](#).”

Are you absolutely positive that the person you are talking to knows what a TPS report is? How often do you stop to think about your jargon use? What work-only words have become part of your normal vocabulary? While these words make for useful shorthand to those who speak the language, they simply confuse, bore and dismay anyone who does not use the same acronyms that you do.

It is also important to be aware that using acronyms and company industry-specific words can serve to exclude people from the conversation or make them feel uninformed.

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The Droner

Perhaps willing to read a statement, the Droner believes that facts and data speak for themselves. "Can't we just show a PowerPoint?" Duller than dishwater, the Droner fails to see how the delivery of the message could have any effect on its credibility.

The Demagogue

Believes that, through brainpower, persuasion and charisma, all listeners will fall under her spell. Problematic, because she refuses to accept any advice or critique and sees *no need to prepare* - she has all the answers! Closely related to...

The Dervish

Whether simply oblivious or willfully contrary, this type is spinning a story of his own design. May be a very loose cannon. Speculates on anything, gets led down paths, even makes up facts! You never know what will come out of his mouth, and you suspect he doesn't either. Dangerous indeed.

If you need help with any of these creatures or others not yet charted, drop a [line](#). Sometimes an outsider can be your most valued ally in getting the insiders to see things from a new perspective.

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The Understanding Associate

Secret seething and the damage done

Are people angrier these days? It is difficult to measure, but one thing is certain - people are more likely to show their anger and frustration openly. Or are they?

It depends. One place where some people are likely to suppress their feelings is the workplace. As a matter of fact, when there is uncertainty or upheaval, when belts are tightened or the company reorganizes, many people respond by trying to become invisible. Like garlic to a vampire, they believe that being largely unnoticed will ward off a pink slip.

Add to that the fact that there is plenty of bad news to go around these days and you have a formula for fear and loathing. What is the best way to prepare and deliver sensitive and difficult information? How do you ensure that you become more aware of what the audience is thinking? What sort of follow-up should you do? How will you know where things stand if you aren't getting honest responses?

Now for the bullet points:

- Nothing outside of family defines and consumes people like their jobs. For many, a job is their income, health insurance, retirement, social life and sense of self-worth all rolled into one; thus the personal investment is often huge.

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Sociologists have long known that language is often used as a gatekeeper, and the increased specialization of our jobs means that fewer and fewer of us can cross over with ease into another linguistic realm, so even without your meaning to, it is easy to use language that excludes. Your choice of words can make you clear and approachable or make you appear oblivious or arrogant. Confusing jargon - it isn't just for lawyers anymore!

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You Ask. We Answer.

Q. How do business clichés originate?

A. At the end of the day, business clichés come from solution-seeking stakeholders whose core competencies, going forward, are leveraged for maximum scalability.

The Real-World Review

An occasional look at the feet-in-the-mouth that are making news: did they behave in the Ammer - Manner?

Mel Gibson

Already a man in the limelight, Mel Gibson shocked some and confirmed his skuzziness for others when he spewed religious and gender slurs at police officers. Though several of his Hollywood chums came to his public

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- The managers and HR staff tasked with delivering such vital and sometimes devastating news are often ill prepared to do so because they have never received communications training.
- Citizens are equal; employees are not. There is a clear pecking order that changes the communications dynamic. Many people believe they risk censure if they point out problems, suggest alternatives, ask blunt questions or even are honest with their superiors. And sometimes they are correct about that.
- The internal audience will have the chance to feed each other's unrest on a daily basis. They may pine for the good old days or point out what they think is unfair. Expect such grousing to take place behind the backs of those who believe everything is copacetic.
- Every external audience is also an internal audience because employees read the paper, watch TV and own stock.
- Some news should be delivered face to face.
- Regardless of what the news may be, damage to morale and the work environment is a variable that can be controlled. Yes, it can.

It continues to dismay us that information for shareholders or the media is often handled with great preparation and care, while the internal audience is shrugged off. This may be due to the misconception that, as employees, they somehow understand things better. All we can confirm is that they understand things differently.

As we all know intuitively and research has shown, the words themselves are but a small fraction of what is communicated; it is the rest of a message that will make it or break it. Creating the right environment with [knowledge, planning and foresight](#) and knowing how to handle whatever is thrown at you offers the best chance for success. And while none of us wants to be the bringer of bad news, when it is done well, the messenger will have performed a true service.

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Ready for the White Water Challenge?

You have the skills, but you strive for more. Do you want to move to the next level? Would you like to challenge yourself in an environment that is both safe and tough?

Advanced Media Skills is a special Ammerman workshop that takes place only twice a year. It is an intense two days of skills building and think-on-your-feet challenges designed for professionals who must perform in critical communications arenas. This workshop tests skills and builds confidence. There is extensive simulation and role-playing supported by guided critique. Participants also have the opportunity to network with their cohorts - communications

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defense, we found his behavior inexcusable. Apparently Mel and/or his advisors decided the same since no excuses were offered. Gibson went immediately into contrite mode, apologized very plainly and checked himself into rehab.

Verdict

Given the nature of the crime, that it was both ugly and verified by completely sober and reliable sources, Gibson's best defense was to simply admit fault, apologize profusely and then work to get the legalities cleared away ASAP to get himself off the front pages. Be brief, be sincere and then be gone. He did the best he could under the circumstances to mitigate a very unsavory episode. We wish him Godspeed in his efforts at recovery, and hope he is sincere.

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Friends Don't Let Friends...

The Marshall University Information Technology Department has put together a great little instruction manual called [Death by PowerPoint or Twelve Steps to Better E-Presentations](#). It is colorful and clever and offers sound advice on working to end PowerPoint abuse. Remember, admitting you have a problem is the first step.

professionals quite likely in different businesses. You will be able to compare and share experiences and have in-depth discussions on the fast-changing world of impact messaging.

November 9 & 10, 2006

At our office in suburban Houston

Day One Focus: Media Relations

- Strategic Message Development and Delivery
- Mastering the Remote Interview
- The News Media Today
- Communicating Trust and Credibility

Hosted dinner that evening as a group.

Day Two Focus: Crisis Management

- Twenty-first Century Crisis Management
- Crisis Simulation
- The Importance of Human Services Response

This workshop also provides valuable and timely reports

- The News Media Today
- What You Should Know about Today's Crises
- The Language of Trust
- Creating and Cultivating Media-Friendly Management

This workshop is limited to ten participants, so please inquire promptly as to availability.

For details on curriculum and pricing, [write](#) or call 800.866.2026.

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2006

Ammerman Individual Enrollment Training Dates

Effective Media Communications

October 12
November 7
December 5

Advanced Media Skills

November 9-10

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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