

## Communication Techniques Across the Ages

### **Consume & Converse**

**6/6/17 and 6/7/17**

Robert Frost said, “Half the world is composed of people who have something to say but can’t, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it.” But you have something to say and are looking for ways to say it better and more effectively; that’s why you’re reading this!

Most of the information in this handout was covered in the Consume & Converse session on June 6 or 7. However, since some of you weren’t able to attend, I organized the handout to stand-alone.

### **Craft Your Message to Capture and Keep Attention**

1. Engage your listeners at the outset. Quote someone famous, share an interesting or surprising statistic, or tell an anecdote or humorous story. Regardless of your method, make it relate to the topic. Hollywood has learned to engage audiences immediately and wait to show opening credits; you should too.
2. Identify the payoff you’re delivering. What value are you sharing with them? Are you showing them how they can have more freedom? Have smoother continuity? Save time? Pursue a more meaningful life? Remember that this step is important. As the saying goes, “They don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”
3. Tell them your agenda (main points). How much detail you go into depends on the level of formality of the meeting. A formal meeting may need a printed agenda, an informal meeting may need a verbal listing of the main points.
4. When making your points, illustrate your ideas with stories and anecdotes. Too many statistics and numbers can be perceived as cold and unemotional. Decisions all have an emotional component and our brains remember stories better than numbers. You may even remember the story I shared about my friend, Rick, who suffered the Traumatic Brain Injury! Stories and testimonials will engage your audience’s decision-making better than data.
5. Make your “final ask” very clear. At the end of your message, be very clear in what you want your audience to do. Do you want them to schedule another meeting with you? Send you important files and information? Make a decision by a specific date? Introduce you to someone?

### **Motivate Different Generations**

Remember that these are descriptions of the average person in this generation. As I mentioned, “average” could be defined as “Having one foot in a bucket of boiling water and the other in a bucket of ice, on *average* you’d be comfortable.” This means that you want to get to know your audience better than just their generation.

- Traditionalists – security and respect are key motivators for the oldest of generations still in the workforce. They prefer to receive feedback in subtle and personalized ways.
- Baby Boomers – this is the first generation that actively sought to change jobs. Baby Boomers like to be rewarded and recognized for:
  - K-Knowledge
  - A-Attitude
  - S-Skills
  - H-Habits
- Gen X – more than previous generations, this generation is motivated by money rather than titles. Gen Xers prefer feedback to be more frequent and informal. They are sometimes motivated by working on projects that give them face-to-face time with people higher on the organization chart.
- Gen Y (Millennials) - They may have also been given praise from parents that was person praising more than ethic praising. This has led to Millennials wanting more feedback than other generations (even better if praise is public on social networks). For some additional insight, watch this Simon Sinek [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hER0Qp6QJNU) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hER0Qp6QJNU>)

*Tip: In the training profession, we say, “Audiences never argue with their own data.” With this in mind, you’ll do well if you involve your audience early in your communication, ask them questions and incorporate their answers in your message. This will make them more receptive to your ideas since you’re connecting them with their ideas.*

### **Align Your Body Language with Your Message**

If you attended my presentation, you’ll remember my short activity when I asked you to put your hand on your cheek, but tricked you into putting it on your chin because that’s what I did. This illustrated the importance of paying attention to what your body language is saying. If your body language contradicts your message, the audience will likely believe your body and not your words. Effective communicators do these things to have positive and persuasive body language:



#### Posture

- Sit or stand to your full height. Sitting too straight can appear stiff or authoritarian and slouching looks weak or unsure.
- Keep your torso open and neutral to your audience. Closing off (folding arms or clasping hands) makes it harder to establish rapport and connection.

#### Hands

- Gesture intentionally and specifically to emphasize your most important points. It will take practice and effort to do this as most of us either have a default gesture that we use for everything, or we don’t gesture much at all.
- Keep your hands open and unencumbered. Avoid making fists, keeping your palms down on the table, or fidgeting with pens, paper, or jewelry.

## Eyes

- Include everyone with your eye contact. Resist the temptation to play favorites (the decision maker, the person giving great eye contact, the people directly in your line of sight, etc.).
- Make it random. Most of us move our eye contact around the room like an oscillating fan. This can become tedious and predictable. Making it random will increase audience alertness.
- Slow it down. Deliver a thought to a pair of eyes before moving on to another person. Your audience should feel as though they've been part of a conversation.



## Use Your Voice to Add Meaning

As I mentioned during my presentation, your voice will often be determined by a physical component. In the table below, you'll find a common voice challenge and the physical remedy. Trying to change your voice alone can create an inauthentic sound.

Voice Challenge	Physical "Remedy" and Rationale
Monotone	A boring and lifeless voice can be enhanced by larger, emphatic gestures and a more animated face. This won't come naturally. But if you've ever seen an actor doing voiceover work, you probably noticed how physical s/he was! I tell my clients "motion creates emotion."
Not enough volume	Posture and breath support are critical for good volume. As mentioned earlier, sit or stand to your full height so that your lungs can fully inflate. Also, focus on slowing your exhales so that they are as long as your inhales (or slower!). This will allow you to maintain volume through the end of a sentence.
Speak too fast	Speaking rate is frequently linked with eye contact rate. Fast eye contact increases brain activity and quickens speaking rate. Slow your eyes to slow your mouth.
Frequent (distracting) um & uh	This is also connected with eye contact. "Um" and "uh" most often happen when we break eye contact. Increase your eye contact to decrease these "verbalized pauses."

## Make Your Visual Aids Have Impact

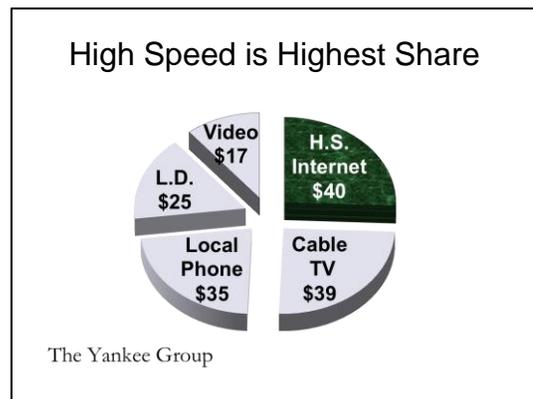
Advancements in studying how our brains learn can easily be applied in visual aid construction. Unfortunately, this news is slow to be adopted by most businesses. Here are some illustrations of converting “old visual design” into “brain-based visual design.”

**Titles → Headline/Assertion:** A title for a slide is just 3-4 words and serves only to identify the general content of the slide. A headline or assertion is a complete sentence that makes a claim; it identifies the key piece of information you need to know from the visual aid.

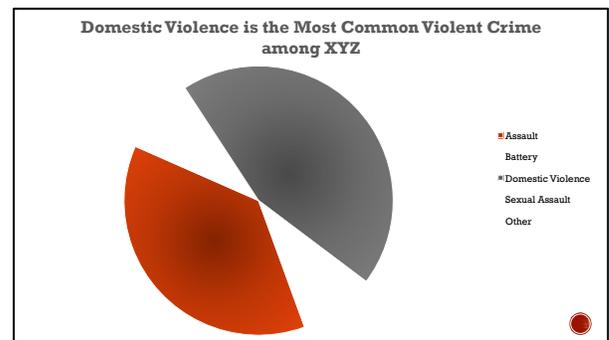
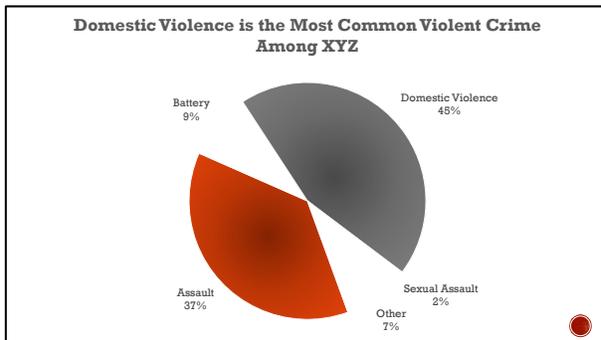
**Table → Chart:** Identify the key data your audience needs to know and create a chart for that. Charts show relationships and trends more readily. If you need to leave behind extensive amounts of data, include that in an appendix or in a detailed handout.

Service	Monthly Spend
Local Telephony	\$35
Long Distance Telephony	\$25
High-Speed Internet	\$40
Cable Television	\$39
Video Rental	\$17
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$156</b>

Source: The Yankee Group



**Legend → On-chart labeling:** Legends slow down the audience’s ability to make sense of the statistics. They have to look back and forth between the chart and the legend to understand it. Make it easier for your audience by putting the labels on the pie pieces, the lines, the bars, or the bubbles.



Bullets → Visuals:

It used to be thought that text on a slide was visual learning. It's not! In fact, text on a slide (other than headline/assertion) creates conflict for the audience. The audience can't listen and read at the same so they have to choose one or the other.

### Benefits and Opportunities

- Convenient Location
  - Berlin – 2 hours
  - London – 2.5 hours
  - Rome – 4 hours
  - Moscow – 8 hours
  - Madrid – 5 hours
  - Athens – 5 hours
- European Union Member
- Increased International Credibility
- Business and Investment Opportunities
- GDP Growth
- Limited Partnership Investment Opportunities

