

## **Seven Keys to Drive Your Point Home**

Why is it that some people's ideas and points "stick" with others and deliver results while other people's ideas fall flat and ineffective?

Based on 20 years of communication consulting and professional speaking, I've identified seven keys to increase the "stick" of your message, to increase your ability to drive your point home and get the results you want. Some of the keys are about the context of the messages and your relationship with the receiver. Others are about technique.

Follow these seven keys to increase your impact the next time you communicate:

### **1. Strive to Serve Rather than Impress**

Those with the most impressive credentials and the most formal power have the greatest influence, Right? Not necessarily. For instance, the most impressive salesperson doesn't necessarily get the sale. It's the salesperson who shows he or she understands the prospect's needs best who gets the sale.

Try this quick experiment: The same book on job search is described below in two different ways. Which one would you buy?

**"I" Centered Version:** I have experience as a recruiter in a large institution, a specialist in a job-readiness program, and other positions in human resources. I wrote this book for job seekers to share my experiences to help job seekers like you.

**"You" Centered Version:** The purpose of this book is to make your job search easier, less frustrating, and more successful. This book is a quick, easy-to-read guide you can use for any job search. You'll find tips about things that worked and things that haven't worked—in job searches of real people, people just like you.

Chances are you choose the "you" centered version—because the author clearly is out to serve you in relevant and practical ways.

You can increase your impact as a communicator by adopting the same service stance in every message you send.

### **2. Compete in an Attention Economy**

As the number of e-mails in your inbox increases and the internet makes more and more information available, the intensity of competition for your attention heightens. After all, attention is finite and information is not. Some experts maintain we now live in an economy where attention is the scarcest resource.

The most valuable asset in an attention economy is relevance. In order to obtain attention for your message, you must immediately show that it is relevant, even urgent, to the receiver. People pay attention and respond to messages that solve their problems, reduce their frustrations, save them money, protect their assets and help them achieve their goals.

Show your relevance in the subject line of your e-mails, the first paragraph of your documents, and the first seconds of your voicemails.

### **3. Practice Positive and Playful**

We all remember days when our good mood was snuffed out by an angry boss, co-worker, or family member. We know bad moods are contagious. We have been victim to them. We are, perhaps, less aware that smiles and laughter are contagious too. We might be unaware altogether that good mood can build relationships and set a context to drive your point home.

Upbeat and optimistic managers statistically attract and maintain workers more effectively than pessimistic managers do. Daniel Goleman, (well-respected expert on Emotional Intelligence), and his co-authors of Primal leadership, tell us that optimistic people are like magnets for others.

Smiles also act like magnets, drawing others to smile in response. A smile, however, can be faked. Laughter is too complex for faking, and, at a deep, non-verbal level, people know this. Accordingly, we trust people who laugh with us. In a neurological sense, laughing with someone is the quickest way to connect.

You don't have to be a jokester to build positive relationships, to create a context for people to respond to your messages. Simply keep your tone light and find humor in the moment, even in tough moments and hard times.

### **4. Ruthlessly Cut the Clutter**

Visual messages and verbal messages follow the same rule: clutter confuses and simplicity sells.

A simple and uncluttered message that hits the target is more effective than the kind that shoots a quiver of arrows hoping that one has a sharp point. But how do you achieve simplicity?

According to Garr Reynolds, author of Presentation Zen, you create simplicity by the careful reduction of the non-essential. Achieving clarity is an exercise in subtraction. You subtract things you can live without. Then you have the essence of your message.

I once learned a rule of thumb for packing your suitcase for international travel. First, pack what you think you'll need. Next, unpack and subtract 1/3 of the original items. Then, you should have about the right amount in your suitcase.

I've tested this rule and found it works with proposals, e-mail messages and PowerPoint slides!

You are more likely to drive a point home with a simple message than with a complicated one.

## **5. Blend Logic with Emotion**

Logic has its place, but logic by itself has no “sticking” power. Anyone who has sat through a PowerPoint presentation filled with graphics knows this. Where one or two surprising statistics can attract attention, a slew of statistical data puts even the most conscientious audience member to sleep.

Annette Simmons, author of *Whoever tells the Best Story Wins*, claims that it’s easy to put together a 70-slide presentation that tells less than a 3-minute story. Stories carry a multi-level richness that logic does not.

The multiple authors of *Influencer: The Power to Change Anything* note that people have a natural resistance to you when they know you are trying to convince them of something. But even the most sophisticated people set aside their criticism when they listen to a story. “Concrete and vivid stories exert extraordinary influence because they transport people out the role of critic and into the role of participant.”

In most situations, a blend of logic and emotion is the most effective way to drive a point home.

## **6. Think Visual**

Like it or not, our first instinctive test of any message involves appearance. Those who experience success are generally well-groomed and dress appropriately for specific situations. People who don’t bother with their appearance—and those who don’t bother to match an image to a venue—fail the visual test. Sometimes a new suit is an investment, not an expense.

If the first impression comes from a website or a meeting announcement, rather than a personal encounter, we still instinctively assess visual characteristics. We like clean, attractive lines, with plenty of blank space. We are attracted to color, to images, to high-quality photos, and to messages that connect with positive values and emotions. We are also engaged when we perceive relevance at a glance.

When your topic is involved or complicated, test some advice by Bruce Ross-Larson. Make the introduction to the messages light and easy to read. Think of your opening paragraph, your executive summary or your opening slides as your light layer. This is the overview layer that draws your receiver in. Follow this with a second layer that contains more depth, but not so much as to overwhelm. Provide a link or an appendix as your final layer, the one that contains all the technical detail. The formula is simple: *Light, Layered, and Linked*.

## **7. Ask for Action**

Those who ask for what they want receive more than those who do not ask. For example, a key reason women consistently earn less than men is they simply do not ask. This is proven in shocking detail in a book called *Women Don't Ask* by Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever.

Whether it's asking for the promotion, asking for the sale or asking for help on a project, asking is often the missing key to success. Put aside your assumptions that people know what you want; put aside your fears of rejection and failure and ask. Asking increases your success in driving your point home and getting the results you want.

I invite you to receive a free copy of the electronic book, *Secrets to Get Busy People to Respond to Your Messages* (valued at \$9.97) at [www.inCredibleMessages.com](http://www.inCredibleMessages.com).

When you or someone in your organization needs a dynamic speaker or coaching in presenting, writing, or influencing others, Bonnie Budzowski is the perfect resource. She is a professional speaker, seminar leader, and coach, with engagements across the country. Bonnie brings over 20 years experience in increasing business results to your organization. She is author of *Secrets to Get Busy People to Respond to Your Messages* and *Clickety Clack: 86 Ways to Keep Your Speech on Track*.

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