



The Fine Art of Communication

Willie Horton

www.Gurdy.net

On many of my workshops, I quote a piece of well known research into the effectiveness and impact of communication. The effect on those with whom we communicate is dictated by body language, tone of voice and our words. Body language accounts for an enormous 56% of the overall effect, tone of voice accounts for another 36% and the actual words we use only account for 8%.

I also discuss acclaimed communicators, like Jack Kennedy, Bill Clinton, Barak Obama and, unfortunately, Adolf Hitler. The effect they have or had on their audiences has been enormous, in some cases mesmeric and historically defining. These guys didn't communicate by email or Twitter – sure Obama uses modern technology to deliver information – but the delivery of information and real and effective communication are two completely different things.

When I work with senior business people, often CEOs, they are concerned to ensure that they get their communication right – communication of key information, corporate vision, the next major sales campaign. As a result, what do we have in large organisations? Email, multiple emails (to cover the email writer's ass!), Blackberries, intranets, forums – a long list of technology-aided dissemination of information. In the process, communication never actually takes place effectively, if at all.

When I work with personal clients, I often touch on personal communications problems – husbands and wives who no longer communicate – sports coaches who haven't the first idea on how to effectively develop their charges' talents, because very often sports people are highly visual and the coach doesn't appreciate the fact.

Regardless of which aspect of modern life you look at, we're all fooling ourselves into believing that we're more effective communicators than ever. People text each other rather than talk. Twitter users are obsessed with getting more followers – quantity matters, quality does not. Same with LinkedIn – when I send a personal message to a contact, I invariably get a reply which, at first sight, seems personal but, in fact, is automatic and generic. Send someone your information and you automatically get their sales pitch back – everyone's emailing, no one's communicating. Friends "chat" on Facebook – but don't actually chat anymore. I admit to being a Twitter user – and saw a wonderful "tweet" a couple of weeks back. The writer suggested that Twitter and Facebook should

merge and be called TwitFace because so many idiots waste so much time and energy “communicating”, while no one’s really listening.

But – and here’s a big but – if you want to be successful and happy, professionally and personally, you can’t get by without being an impressive, real, communicator. To be an effective and impressive communicator, you need to both be present and have presence. First of all, at the very least, stop texting and emailing and pick up the ‘phone! Best of all, create time to actually, physically, be with those whom you wish to impress – that’s about the only way that they’ll be able to appreciate your body language. If you do that, of course, you open up a whole new can of worms. People start worrying about their body language – “experts” teach them how to use effective body language, which invariably comes across as false! If you have presence, however, body language looks after itself. What do I mean by that?

Truly great communicators have presence and, as a result, they are impressive. Presence simply means that they are more present in the moment than the average normal person. Research proves that normal people are never really present, only paying perhaps as little as 1% attention to the present moment. If you want to have presence, all you need to do is be more present – to do that, all you need to do is be more attentive to the here and now. That means that you give yourself space and time to notice and appreciate the present moment. If you develop presence, by your very presence you will become impressive – an inspirational communicator – one whose attentiveness to the moment and to those with whom you are present will simply enable your body language and tone of voice to be effortlessly effective.

We develop presence through calming our mind and re-developing our innate ability to pay attention to the here and now. This can be done through something as structured and formal as daily meditation (highly recommended by the way!) or by simply creating space and time for, for example, going for a stroll to appreciate what you see, feel, hear, smell and taste. If you deliberately set time aside to regularly practice your attentiveness, then you will have the necessary presence when the critical moment demands it. Then, you will be an exponent of the fine art of real and effective communication.