

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS PRESENTERS COURSE (THE MSP COURSE)

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Speak with Passion

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Speak with Passion

Introduction



I remember somewhere in one of my early Psychology classes, how amazed I was to hear that people are more afraid of talking in front of people than they are of death? Maybe this is how you feel when you have to stand up and talk in front of a large group of people. To speak to people is often a lonely and fearsome task. Do not despair; by reading this book you are already on the right track. The

painting of Jean-Antoine Watteau (1721), *Gilles*, illustrates the lonesome crusade of the communicator. He is lonesome, but also victorious, because at least he is doing his “thing”, which is more than the spectator actors in the background can say. He is acting out his passion for the entire world to see. The other actors, who have no insight into the fact that they are actually the real losers, make Gilles a symbol of their mockery. The donkey, which is also noticeable in the background, symbolises that his prosecutors actually think of him as an “ass”.

If you look closely at Gilles the actor, he doesn't seem confident either. Maybe he accepts the fact that being made fun of is correct, and maybe he doubts himself. However, whether he realises it or not, he is busy conquering the fear – the fear which is stronger than the fear of death. He stands alone in the light – playing his part, and getting his message across.

Imagine what will happen to you if you would have the courage to enter the light. I have asked myself often: What is the difference between the

person who, like the painting of *Gilles*, is facing up to the challenge to ‘do his thing’ and the person who would rather stay in the background only to criticise, laugh at, or diminish the public communicator? In my own life, I have found that the one, who rises to the occasion, is the one who rises to opportunities for growth, self expression, and mastery. I remember in some of my first sermons, I used to pray silent prayers at the pulpit: “Lord, please, I don’t want to do this. Send someone else who will be able to do it better than I am able to do.” Not even once, did He send someone else. I had to do it every time. And every time I had to say to myself: “I am glad that I was the one who had to do it!”

By reading this book you will not only learn how to communicate with passion but you are also opening yourself up to personal growth. You will be able to touch the hearts of people – to inspire and to move. You will be able reach towards the inner being of people. The techniques explained in this book is easy to learn and practical. It can easily be adjusted for a large crowd, a small group meeting or even for a one-on-one conversation. This book is all about the art of persuasion in a world where plenty of voices are clamouring for the attention of your customer/ your employee/ your audience.

As a pastor for 15 years, I have studied the art of communication and have learnt from many masters. It even took me further to a Doctoral Thesis on how to communicate an ancient text in a Post-Modern world. As a MBL graduate I have also found that the struggle to speak in public and to get your message across is a human phenomenon found in all areas of life. Therefore, this work is born from my own personal struggle, of trail and error, tears and laughter. I will also share some of my own personal history in public speaking and how it has grown from where I thought that good content is everything to what I believe today.

After much research I have found that there are basically three key ingredients which a communicator has to master, and that is:

- 1) Content;
- 2) Relationship and
- 3) Method.

In the beginning, content was for me the most important aspect of presenting – the sermon had to be worked out well. Then I came to understand that the content can be excellent, but if you don't adopt certain methods of communication you will never get your message across. It took a while for me to understand the third and most important part – that is to have a relationship with your audience. I always knew that you had to understand your audience; know their interests and so forth, but I never knew how important it really was, until quite late in my career.

I have no doubt in my mind that if you understand these three principles, and you have integrated them to suite your own unique style; personality and your situation you will excel as a communicator. Take heart, passionate communication is also not only meant for a select few – everybody is a listener and everybody is a communicator. If you are serious about getting your message across this book is for you. You will be able to do this. So stick to your guns!

You are a Natural

Everybody is a natural listener

Is everybody reachable? And, is everybody reachable by everybody? Instinctively people say yes to both of these questions because we like to believe in the extraordinary potential of humankind. But when you really put these questions to the test it often tells a different story. Sometimes the speaker just can't manage to communicate in sync with the audience,

but often the audience also needs to listen properly. You heard me correctly. Speaking with passion is often not about you speaking, but about you teaching your audience to listen to you.

I was challenged about this on a very personal level. I was asked by a mother to give special Bible school classes to her son, let's call him Pete. He was leaving High School (at the age of 17) to pursue a career in modelling and could not attend the normal Bible school classes on Sundays. Pete was a handsome young man with the sparkle of youth in his eyes, but he had one major shortcoming – he could hardly read or write. How would he be able to work through the prescribed material?

This was a struggle for me, which kept me awake at night. Then it dawned upon me: If Jesus could educate fishermen – who in most cases were illiterate men, it should be possible to explain the basic Christian fundamentals to Pete. On our next meeting I explained the “new curriculum” to him. We would do it “Jesus-style”. That is to say, by means of illustrations, stories, metaphors and so forth. For the next couple of weeks, Pete and I would engage in a different form of teaching. We would lie on the grass at night, look at the Milky Way and talk about the awesome nature of creation, and the God behind it all. We would watch various video clips about life in general and on religious topics.

From that day on, even my sermons changed from mere argumentative communication to illustrative discovery; which means that rather than trying to put forth a debatable argument with negative and positive points, I would utilise the power of the metaphor. Argument is born from the intellect while metaphor flows from the heart. To speak with passion, means that the head has to make way for the heart.

From that experience I learnt that everybody is a listener and everybody is teachable, but not everybody should be taught or talked to in the same manner. This bring me back to the basics, as stated in the Introduction – 1) understand your **content** and how to arrange it for your unique audience; 2) in **relationship** with your audience discover what will move their hearts and 3) adapt your style according to your examination of points 1 and 2 (which is the **method** of presentation).

Everybody is a natural communicator

If you want to know how to communicate go back in history and see how the first people did it. The strange thing is – the first people did not communicate in neat, ordered letters packed into words, sentences and paragraphs. They just used – yes you’ve guessed it ... body language. That is why your body language makes up the greater part of the communication process and mere words the lesser part thereof.

Body language includes facial expressions; the position of the whole body; the tone of the voices, grunts, arms and so forth. For the caveman basically the whole person was involved in the communication process. Furthermore, they used rock art to leave messages to the coming generations and to the gods. It was this art which became the symbols which was developed into language – a symbol would represent a sound.

We are made to communicate; we are made to convey our message. The problem is that we started to arrange the letters and sentences in such a way that it became complicated for people to understand. Our language has become a set of codes which only people who move in the same living space really can decode. Have you listened to the strange language doctors or economists mumble to one another – particularly if you are not a doctor or an economist? While doing my MBL, the biggest discovery I made, was

that it is actually easy stuff, made complicated by terminology understood by few.

What you can assume is that everybody is a natural listener and that you are a natural “grunter” – just like the cavemen of yesteryear. But never assume that people will just understand your terminology. Always listen to your own language from the perspective of someone who hears it for the first time. In saying this, I also try to make an important point.... USE MORE NATURAL FORMS OF COMMUNICATION. Hence make use of facial expression; body movement; the fluctuation in your tone of voice and animal noises. Think about it: Who would you rather listen to – someone whose face seems to have expression; who moves with his/her words or someone who stands as stiff as a log with no expression and only one tone of voice? Please note I DO NOT mean that you should do unnatural out-of-place body movements. That would be silly and irritating – it is just a matter of finding your natural self and letting it loose. This book is designed so that you can discover the natural communicator within you. This will allow you to connect to your audience on a natural level.

Exercise (session 1) – dealing with the past!

Your past failures have a way to determine how you handle the present and the future.

1) Think of the times you talked to someone or a group in the past that you felt did not work for you. How did you experience it? Try to describe you emotions.

2) How do you think should you have handled the situation better? *(It is quite OK if you can't think of anything – you can come back to this after you have worked through the material)*

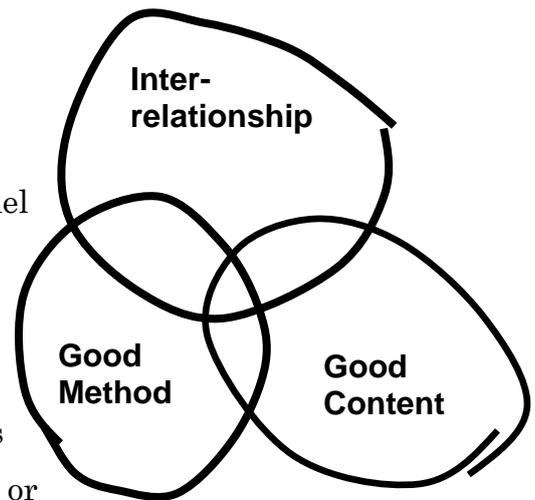
3) See the faces of the people you have let down with your particular style of communication, now explain to them that life is a journey and therefore nobody has all the answers all the time. Your “failure” was part of your growing and learning curve and that you did the best you could with what you knew.

4) Now forgive yourself, put it behind you and let's continue with the good stuff.

Digging in

The weird looking circles

People want models. The concept of a model suggests that the Holy Grail has been found. The answer to all your questions has been confined in a tailor made, one-size-fits-all model. This is not so with this book. This is rather an approach giving three angles or ingredients to transform your presenting skills.



The three circles are also not neatly rounded entities, but are rather crooked, with certain circles not even closed properly. This suggests that there is also no perfect angle. Each circle's shape depends on the nature of the content; the nature of the audience and the nature of you as a communicator. This means that you should rather see how you can adapt the principles of each circle to your own unique personality; style; content and listeners.

Each circle is about the following:

i) Interrelationship: This is about WHO you want to communicate to. Every person as a social being is not without relationship. You are in the first place in a relationship with yourself and in the second place with others. Both of these connections, with the self and others need to be understood and dealt with to transform you in a brilliant communicator. Being at ease with yourself while being connected with your listener is maybe the key to it all – everything else follows.

ii) Good content: Content is all about WHAT you have to say to your audience. This is determined by the way you collect and also arrange your

information. Good content is that which transforms you into the expert of your subject matter.

iii) Good method: Here, you can think about the HOW I transfer the content to my audience. It is all about style and how to make the best of your presentation in accordance with your own unique personality and preference.

The relationship between the various circles

The three circles are not separate from one another, but are inter-related. The intersections between two circles are most important to understand, because it is here where the true power of passion speaking lies. This can be explained as follows:

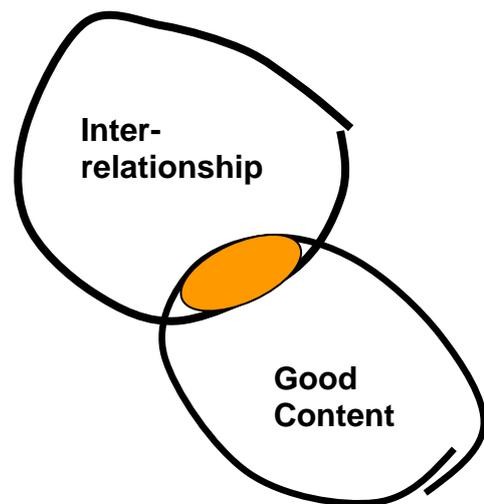
Interrelationship + Good Content

- **Meaning**

The content has been integrated in the life of the communicator. There is a “relationship” between the content and the communicator. It first moved his/her heart long before it was shaped into a presentation.

- **Perceived by the Audience**

The listeners will perceive the communicators’ message as genuine, real, honest and sincere. It makes the message believable, adding credibility to what you want to say.



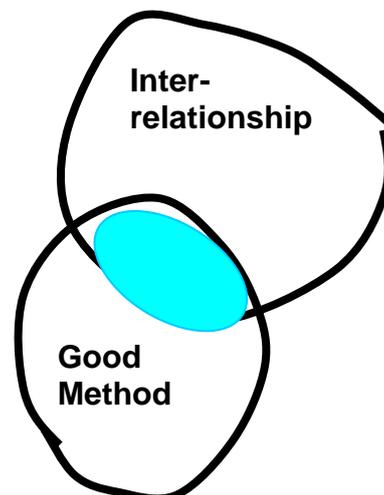
To present a message which has not yet “spoken” to you first means that either you have no interest in the topic or you don’t really believe the material to be true in your own life. In this instance you should consider asking some else to present the message, because if the content is not your interest other people won’t find it interesting and if you don’t believe it other people most certainly won’t either.

There is nothing that diminishes a message such as fakeness. To really have an authentic voice, you need to discover the value in your own message for yourself.

Interrelationship + Good Method

- **Meaning**

This means that your method of presenting will coincide with the relationship which you have with yourself and the relationship which you have with your audience.



- **Perceived by the Audience**

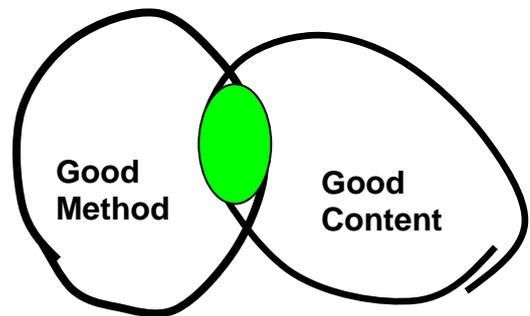
You are talking naturally. You are yourself, while at the same time you are also considering your audience.

Most probably you are now wondering how it is possible to be true to yourself and use your own unique style but at the same time using a style which fits your audience. Well fortunately for us, humans are quite flexible and adaptable. Like singers who have a “range” for their voice, I believe that communicators have a “style range”. It is for instance possible

to speak in a highly energetic fashion to students but in the next instance tone it down to another level for an older generation.

Good Method + Good Content

- **Meaning**

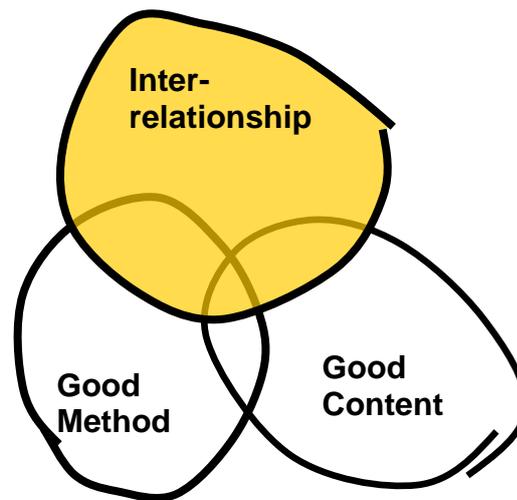


This means that the method of communication which you make use of will translate or decode the content in such a manner to enable listeners to grasp the meaning that you wish to be conveyed. Please note that **CONTENT IS NOT EQUAL TO MEANING**. The meaning is built from all three the circles – method, relationship and content. Content on the other hand is merely the material you wish to present.

- **Perceived by the Audience**

The message will be clear and understandable to the audience. If for instance, you use too much imagery with an analytical person you may not succeed in conveying your message. On the other hand you could use too little imagery with more right brain orientated people. Using a good or suitable method means that the method of presenting **becomes** (part) of the message.

How (Inter) Relationship determines you message



Of the three circles this is may be the most important one. It is also larger than the other two and in a certain sense determining the other two. I also prefer to use the term “interrelationship” to illustrate that is a specific kind of relationship. If I only had said “relationship” it could mean anything from a boss-worker relationship to mother-child relationship. A mere communicator-listener relationship (although this is the way we talk) is also open for misinterpretation. This suggests a superior position of the communicator towards the audience, where the communicator is the expert and the listener (who knows nothing or very little) has to learn from the communicator. The full vessel (communicator) has to fill the empty space of the audience. In this instance the powerbase is shifted towards the communicator, which causes the communicator to “talk down” to people. Speaking with passion is never a “talk down” and not even a “talk to” people. The latter still implies a certain power position. What really needs not happen is a situation where you as a communicator can “talk between” people. This is to say that a process of *interrelationship* occurs where the speaker is also a listener and the listener is also a speaker. Here we have a dynamic web of relationship where you are in the first place in a relationship with yourself and in the second place in a relationship with your audience.

Beating the Ego without killing yourself

The Ego is that inner voice you carry around with yourself everyday. It is that voice inside you which says all kinds of demoralising things to you, when someone leaves the room while you are talking or when someone yawns at the punch line. It is then that the Ego tries to convince you that you are not good enough. The Ego is the voice which encourages you to “make something of yourself” and to prove that you deserve your place beneath the bright yellow sun. The Ego is what urges you to be assertive and which brings you in fierce competition with your fellowmen.

This competition lies on two levels: 1) you are in competition with fellow public speakers and 2) you are competition with your audience.

In Competition with fellow public speakers

The fallacy behind this urge is the notion that there is one right way to do it and that some people are closer to that one way than others. Some people are in other words doing it better than you are. So you are drawn into a world where you compare yourself with others.

Here you need to be reminded that the best way to communicate is to communicate as you and not as someone else. The person behind the communicator must shine through and this is not going to happen if you try to do it like someone else. It is all about authenticity (being true to yourself), and this is absolutely the key to excellent passionate communication. Please understand that I am not suggesting that you should not learn from others. One has to see how others are getting their message across, take note of the techniques they use and learn from it. See what Winston Churchill did, and what John F. Kennedy did; you could even look at the communication techniques of Hitler if you like. In the end you have to integrate that technique and make it part and parcel of who

you are. Remember the circle is not perfectly round. There is no right and wrong way. There is only your way. You have to see how you can do better on your terms and in line with your personality.

When I say that there is no right or wrong way, it is really profound. Instead of forcing a method down one's throat, you now can be guided towards your own goals of being a better communicator. This is also the first step towards coping with a communicator's public enemy number one – unhealthy nerves. I say unhealthy because nerves are good in the sense that it is energy preparing your body and your mind to be sharp for the job at hand. But too much of this is like a poison making your mouth go dry; making your tongue swell up; causing your throat to choke up; draining the power from your legs; putting your breathing into a state of panic and turning your body in one big numb piece of matter. Does this sound familiar? It all begins with the thought: "I have to measure up." Change the thought and you put an end to fear; instead let your thought be: "I have a brilliant message and will let my audience hear it from the authentic me."

Speaking before people need to be done with conviction and confidence, and you can have neither if you keep on comparing yourself with others. Rather look inside, find out who you are and let the powerful genius do the talking from within.

In competition with the audience

This sounds like an incorrect heading, but it is not. Communicators are often, without knowing it, in a kind of competition mode with their audience. This occurs when communicators think that they have to perform to be heard. The truth is that it is not charismatic performance which persuades people but rather genuine care. The performance approach is communicator focussed. When some one is communicator-

focused, questions such as the following are important: “How am I doing?”, “How do I use my voice?” and so forth. The care approach is focused on the wellbeing of the listeners: “How are you doing?” “Are you ok?” and so forth.

The root of all unhealthy nervousness lies here. It is the communicator-focused person who is constantly wondering whether he/she is making the grade. It is this performance-based approach which let’s the anxiety build up on the inside like an unstoppable cancer. If you are someone who, after a presentation is over is eager to hear what the people thought about how you faired with regard to your speech, then I am afraid that you have this cancer. The good news is that it is not as unstoppable as you might think, but the bad news is, that it is hard work to switch from being a communicator-focused to becoming an audience-focused person. Here is how you could do the transition.

Getting over yourself and into them

This is the communicator’s bottom line: **people will only listen to you if they know that you are listening to them!** This implies that you should look in the eyes of the people in front of you and allow your heart to grow warm with love. I truly believe that the positive vibration of your heart resonates with the hearts of your audience. That’s why it is just not enough, as many public speaking books suggest, only knowing your audience. Knowledge of your audience should evolve in your own heart form a point of just knowing to “putting yourself in their shoes.” This is really the only antidote for a communicator-focused approach – love your audience.

This is an important principle I learned from a friend of mine. I felt he lacked some skills relating to the method circle but when he spoke his eyes lit up and he moved the audience. I asked him one day how he approaches his sermons. This was his answer: “When I stand on the pulpit and fear

grabs me, I look out at the audience and pray that God will give me some love for each person listening.”

Well I tried this on myself during a week long camp for students which I had to lead. I was really not in the mood for it. I had to leave my family behind for the week; my accommodation for the week was a small uncomfortable room; late nights lay ahead for me and my student leaders of the previous year (who had become my friends) were no longer in charge of the camp. On my way to the camp I remembered: “Pray for love in my heart for each person.” When I set my foot on the camp grounds I actually was excited and looked forward to the camp lying ahead. And it was truly an amazing week. You see in the end, it is maybe not so much about the prayer as it is about you as a communicator taking the focus away from your own discomfort, sacrifices and fears and rather focusing on the audience, their needs and how you can make a contribution in their lives.

In marketing, the principle is to find and to satisfy the needs of the customer. It is no different with communicating to an audience. Find their itch and be the best back scratcher you can. The German philosopher, Nietzsche, in his well known work, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, tells the story of a man carrying a corpse around on his back. Until one day he decides that he is going to cut the corpse loose and show the rainbow to whoever wants to see it. Show the rainbow to those who want to see it, and show it in such a manner that they will actually see it. To give a long highly technical and intellectual speech at two o'clock in the afternoon (also known as the grave yard period) will certainly not reveal the rainbow to your listeners. Show it to them when they ready for it, or change your tactics by using group discussions or an interactive session. People want to see rainbows and they want their backs scratched, but you have to have a sense of timing and be aware of their needs.

It is important to note that this does not mean that you should be a people pleaser. People pleasers only tell the crowd what they want to hear and not what they should hear. The point is to focus on people's needs and not on their wants.

Becoming a professional back scratcher

The audience becomes the enemy when you have to fight for their attention. Give them your attention and you will have theirs. One way to get their attention is to look for entry points in their life stories. An entry point is the same as walking into a person's office, and you know that you have to build a relationship, look for something which you can identify with. I once had to apply for a loan at a bank and noticed a hole-in-one award framed against the wall. I started to talk about my struggle with my golf swing. The man behind the desk then started to talk about his first love – golf. His needs and his wants were now on the table. This of course got the bank employee interested in me as person and not in my business. I did not get the loan, but I made a friend and got plenty of free advice for next time. Look for entry points, it works.

But please - be authentic. If you don't play golf and you don't know anyone who plays golf, do not use golf as an entry point. An entry point is only an entry point when I, by means of an interest of mine, find a connection with an interest with the other person. You will only embarrass yourself if you pretend. This is also how falling in love works, we bump into each other, we talk about something that we both find familiar or dream about, we go out and love the same kind of food and; voila! – We have a love story.

To find an entry also has become more difficult since 1979. Back then people watched the same television programme; read the same magazines and watched the same movies. In other words you only had to talk about your own world and you were already talking about everybody else's

world. Today there is a large variety to choose from. Some one explained it by saying that years back you only had to look in the mirror and you would know your audience. Today the mirror is exchanged for a window looking out in the market place, and the market place is busy, bustling and diverse. This means that entry points are often far and few between.

But don't despair; fortunately you don't have to be an expert to talk about something. Sticking to golf as an example - a couple of struggles with your putter on the putting green is usually enough to suffice, to use golf as an entry point with an audience that has golf as an interest. You also don't have to use your own life to have an entry point. My brothers are fond of hunting; I on the other hand would rather hug the bunnies than shoot them. Thanks to my brothers and the stories I heard from them I could also use hunting as an entry point. I just tell what I happened to them.

The topic also doesn't have to be exactly the same. In my early twenties for instance, I trained horses; this gives me an entry point with someone who for instance is fond of dogs and needs to train their dog. A conversation in this context would go something like this:

Me: "I see you have trouble with your dog."

Other person: "I love my dog, but she drives me nuts."

Me: "Have you ever considered giving your dog some training?"

Other person: "Yes, but I haven't come round to it yet. Do you know anything about training a dog?"

Me: "No unfortunately I am no expert with dogs, but I have trained horses in the past and I know how difficult it is to train animals. I don't know if it will work with a dog but I used to work with a reward system. When the horse did something wrong I did not make a fuss about it, but when it did something right I would reward and pat him enthusiastically. Try it, maybe it will work with your dog."

So you see it is not all that difficult to bring topics together and ultimately bringing people together. Your main goal with the entry point system is

not to manipulate or take advantage of people but to help you to get your message across. In the first place, you need to fall in the love with your audience, but you also need your audience to fall in love with you. Then you have opened the path to open communication.

Playing with the crowd

Your audience should become you partner working together towards a common cause. In the movie “Gladiator”, Maximus (played by Russell Crowe), is told to “win over the crowd”. So too in “Cinderella Man”, John’s (coincidentally, also played by Russell Crowe) victory in the boxing ring gives hope to people devastated by the 1933 depression. When the hero wins everybody wins and everybody becomes the hero. In this sense the communicator does not “play for the crowd” but rather “with the crowd.” This is also beautifully illustrated by André Aggasi’s words of greeting at his last professional match:

The score board says that I lost today, but what the score board doesn't say is what it is what I've found. Over the last 21 years I have found loyalty. You've pulled for me on court and also in life. I found inspiration. You have willed me to succeed; sometimes even in my lowest moments. And I have found generosity. You have given me your shoulders to stand on to reach for my dreams. Dreams I could have never reached without you. Over the last 21 years I have found you and I will take you and the memory of you with me for the rest of my life.

As a communicator you also will only be able to do it by standing on the shoulders of your audience. Compliment them; love them; feel them and enjoy it to be in their presence. That is the hallmark of a good communicator.

Exercise (session 2) – Getting into them!

1) Can you think of other, excellent communicators, of whom you are perhaps jealous? What is it precisely that you envy? Have you thought of it, that maybe you are jealous of them because your envy is telling you that you should grow in that direction. The table below is to help you identify the people of whom you are jealous; what you envy of them and what you should do to grow:

| Person I envy | What I envy | What should I do next |
|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

2) What are the subjects; people; animals and things you like to talk about. Write them down – these are your most likely points of entry in conversation with people.

Building yourself

Building confidence

The most difficult part is maybe not to love your audience but to love yourself. The truth is that nobody truly succeeds in this all the time. We need to grow into ourselves; be kind to ourselves and break the habit of talking negatively about ourselves. This is the beginning of having true confidence and believing in oneself. Most of us don't have a problem with being too self confident. Even if some one appears egoistic it is often to hide feelings of inferiority. To communicate to a crowd, especially if it is a large crowd, you need to stand tall and proud. Here are a couple of techniques you can follow as to how to do this:

- **Filling the space with you:** I like to think of myself as being made of star dust, which is an important way of looking at yourself. This means that something of the Universe is in you and you are in the Universe. Just as you can see the glory and the beauty of the Universe in the night sky, even without a telescope, so too people can see the vastness and the greatness of the same Universe just by looking at you. That is why you should not think in a belittling fashion of yourself. Small thinkers clench their fists; drop their shoulders; arch their spines and look down. Their entire body language says: "I want to curl up and die." It reminds one of the foetal position in the mother's womb, where everything was safe and warm. You have already been born, and you are born for greatness. You are born to be a reflection of the Universe. Because of this view it should be possible for you to fill the space with you. I do this usually a couple of minutes before I have to go up to speak. Instead of trying to remember my words, I gaze at the back of the hall. I see my inner spirit and passion floating up to the roof, going back and forth, through the room and filling the whole room with

the magic to come. I am present, even before I speak. Try this, next time you have to speak – you'll be surprised what this will do to your confidence.

- **Celebrating success:** People are very quick to punish themselves for a mistake they felt they have made. They focus on what they believe was wrong and diminish themselves for it. To celebrate your success is to get a clearer view of the real truth of the matter. The first time I started to celebrate my successes was after I said to my wife that I felt that I had not achieved anything in my 37 years of life. Her answer was: "Maybe you should start to celebrate your successes." I ran this through my head and began to think about my life. There surely were plenty of reasons for celebration, but how could I do this practically? I then remembered a group of young businessmen who collected bottles of Johnny Walker Whiskey. They would open a bottle, write the date of the transaction on the label, and celebrate.



I devised my own celebration ritual - I took white pebble stones from the garden; I wrote what I wanted to celebrate on the pebbles, with the date the successful event occurred on them; placed the pebbles with the victories written on it in a glass container and I planted a candle in the middle. Then I lit the candle and with a deep sense of gratitude allowed it to burn. After each new victory, I would write a new stone, light the candle again and give thanks. Communicators, who also have lots of critics, need to do something like this. Devise your own ritual and celebrate the names of those who you really touched. This way you will build confidence by remembering the people that were grateful for your words and not build your view of yourself as a communicator on negativity.

- **Finding Identity:** In the Western World, individualism is the way of life. Globalisation has brought this notion even to Africa and the East. Individualism is not necessarily bad, but a major downside of it is the fact that it uproots people. It takes the anchors away letting people drift aimlessly into nothingness. Whenever people say something such as: “It’s got nothing to do with you.” Or: “Don’t poke your nose in my business.” it is Western Individualism talking. Certain things are private for sure, but in Africa and other areas where the values of the tribe are still revered every person belongs to the tribe. Your business is also that of the tribe. Whenever a young man takes a wife it is also the business of his and her parents, it is not only up to them. In the art of communication, it is often this identity which you find amongst the traditional tribes which could also be very helpful. Dig into the past of your family and look for evidence of strength and power. In my family I found a couple of gold nuggets.

1. My great grandfather was a Brit from England but he had empathy for the struggle of the Afrikaner against the Colonialism under the rule of the Queen. He rebelled against his fatherland and fought with the Boers.

I remember this when I know that to conform is not the answer.

2. My father had to work hard for his father on the farm. He had nothing, not even an education – he had to leave school at grade 8. He was in his thirties and still working behind a cash register in a shop in the rural countryside of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, selling basic supplies to farm workers. He married my mom, used her farm as security, bought the old family farm back and died a happy, well-balanced and wealthy man.

I remember this when ever I feel run down and too old to take on something new.

So I have used the lives of my great-grandfather and my father to make my own life stronger. Sometimes when I stand in front of a crowd and I feel scared I remind myself: “You are a Smith, a rebel who does not conform and a fighter against the odds who refuses to lie down.”

Even if you don't find any gold nuggets in your family, even atrocities from the past can be a positive motivation. A friend of mine was abused. He does not use this, as many do, as an excuse to have a miserable life. He uses it as a power of enforcement. I asked him how he overcame this. He said that whenever negative thoughts haunt him he sets himself out to show his offender that he will not be beaten. He is stronger than the abuse, and he will show the world that abuse creates strong people.

Be confident and be proud. You don't have to speak with a meek and timid voice. You can and must allow your authentic voice to be heard. This does not mean that you should overpower and intimidate people with your confidence. Remember a truly powerful person also knows how to control his power, and let it show at the right moment.

Taking Responsibility for your own Inner Being

If we understand the fear of talking in front of a crowd better, we will also know how to take charge of it. Behind that fear lies the notion that what the people say and think of me is the true state of affairs. We are afraid of the hurtful feelings we will have on the inside when people make fun of us; criticise us or make us feel to be a fool. I was struck by an incident told by Victor Frankl, who survived Auschwitz, the German death camp. He recalls an incident where a German guard threw a stone at a Jewish prisoner like one would through a stone at a dog to scare it away. Of this

he said that this was more painful for him than a struck through the face by a German hand. Treating someone like a dog is depriving that person of his/her humanity and that pain is worse than any other. That is why we want to stand up to our fellowmen. We want to be recognised and be revered as a fellow human being. And we also have had enough experience in the human business to know that when we stand out from the crowd, the crowd will seldom love us for it. People will drag you down; even hit you down to their level, if necessary.

It is then that communicators speak and react merely to please the crowd, hence turning themselves into puppets of the audience, the puppet master. In Psychology they talk about your locus of control. If you are more controlled by that which happens outside yourself you have a strong external locus of control. Reacting more on your own thoughts means you have a strong inner locus of control. As humans we actually need both. We do need to react on things outside ourselves because that is the way we protect ourselves against outside dangers. The unfortunate truth is that humans also tend to overdo this. Somebody in a position of power who uses fear to intimidate and rule with an iron fist is also viewed as a threat and therefore people allow the power abusers to have power over them. What we really need is a more realistic view of fear and what we need to be afraid of. When it comes to other people someone once conveyed the following most powerful statement to me. Listen to it, hold on to it and let it be your statement. He said to me: “***Fear no man. If you have to fear, fear then only God.***”

To handle your fear in such a manner is to say that you are taking responsibility for our own inner being. And I just love the word “responsibility”. This means that you have received the ability to respond. People could give you hurtful reactions and you have the ability to respond in a different way. And maybe the best way to react is to react in love. Love sees the best of intentions in the other person’s remarks. Love looks

beyond the hurtful remarks of the person and tries to find the need and the hurt in the other person. Often people hurt others because they themselves are hurting. The opposite of fear is not the absence of fear, but rather the presence of love. Love breaks the competition down and says that we are all in this together and together we can get through it. The we have communication driven by passion.

Share the microphone

The communicator has the ability to break with the competition syndrome; to break with his/her own need to compete, to impress and to put up a grand performance. A very practical way to do this is to look for ways to share the microphone. Let someone, read the poem that you wanted to read, let someone make a contribution. Don't let it all be about you. Make the speech a presentation of everybody present. Give the glory, which all communicators crave for, away to the audience. Then everybody will stand in the light.

If I could use the analogy of Gilles the lonesome actor again - become the director of your own presentation. One of the most probable reasons Gilles is ridiculed by his fellow actors is not because his acting is stupid, but because he is acting alone. He is standing out and he seems to want all the glory for himself. Try to exchange the spotlight for a director's chair. Ask the audience for their opinion and be slow to give your own expert advice. See every member in the audience as someone that you can learn from and make it about them, and in the end it will be about you as well.

Exercise (session 3) – Building a stronger you!

1) Try the “filling the space with you” exercise. How does this let you feel? The more you do it the easier it gets. Try filling your bathroom and then the kitchen and then your whole house with yourself.

2) Make celebration part of your life. Use the method as I described it to you or devise your own method. Make a list of what you would write on your own white pebbles.

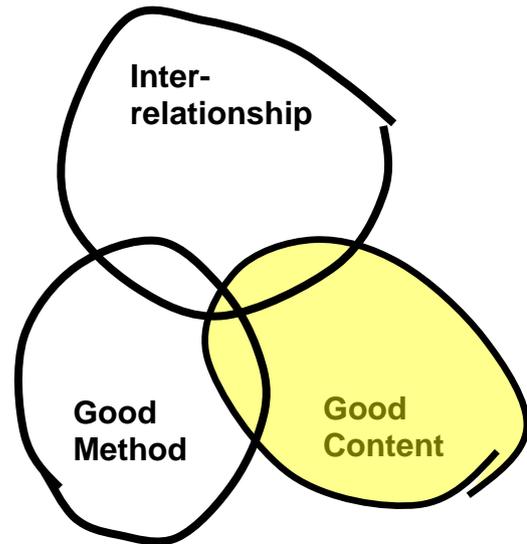
3) Can you find any gold nuggets in your family, which you can use to anchor yourself on? Do some research if necessary. Which are the gold nuggets that are perhaps not so pleasant to think about, but will make you stronger? List them below.

| Positive Family Nuggets | Negative Family Character Builders |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | |
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How Good Content determines your message

Content is reckoned by many to be the most important part of the three circles. Although I believe that good content is immensely important, I still give Interrelationship the top notch because I believe it is the determining factor for the other two. But yes, I will vouch for

the importance of good content. In the end we should, without going into much of a debate, maybe conclude that all three circles have to be considered very important in creating your presentation. The one without the others will lead to an unbalanced speech.



Getting your base right

I once was slaughtered by the editor of a Sunday Newspaper, in the editor's column, because I said that good method has to be seen as part of your content. He wrote that good content is first and that everything else follows. Well this makes sense if you are the editor of a newspaper who has to fill your news paper with good content. But if you are a communicator who has to rely on the spoken word as well, the way you say it is already the content of what you are trying to say. But why is it important for me to tell you this now? Do we not have to talk about content now? You see, the preparation of your content will determine the way in which you present it in the end. It like a chef discovering all the ingredients in the pantry and now has to decide on how he is going to mix and match all the different flavours. This is the content part. Serving your dish to the eagerly waiting customers also needs to be done.

How Extroverts and Introverts prepare

The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality test divides people into two sub-categories – either Extrovert or Introvert. This is the category of the personality test where it is indicated how the person prefers to be energised. Some people prefer to be energised alone in the privacy of their own thoughts, these people are called Introverts. Then there are those who need people around them to be energised. They get depressed when they are alone for long periods of time, these people are called Extroverts. I have found that Introverts and Extroverts tackle the whole communication process very differently.

For an Introvert the speech, meeting or presentation not only begins but also happens where he/she is all alone in the study doing the preparation. They believe that as long as you have the facts straight everything else will fall in place. For the Extrovert on the other hand it all happens the moment when he/she is standing in front of the people. Extroverts often have “slips of the tongue”, because Extroverts like to improvise and often make the message up as they go along. This is often dangerous and you could be seen as being too loose, unprofessional, and unprepared. On the other hand Introverts often come across rigid and pinned to their manuscripts. My one Introvert colleague writes out every single word that she is going to utter. Not only does she have to do hours and hours of preparation (often unnecessary time wasted) but she loses the effect of authentic communication. In other words, her presenting often comes across as a preset recital instead of genuine conversation between the communicator and the audience. Extroverts and Introverts should learn from one another and here are some of the aspects that both the Extrovert’s and Introvert’s should be aware of:

| Extroverts | Introverts |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think through the details of your content. • Don't depend on your communication skills to pull you through • Order your content and decide beforehand where you are allowed to be "side tracked" by other thoughts – thus keeping yourself focused and on track. • Prepare even your "impromptu" remarks. Unprepared spontaneous remarks often lead to the unconscious blurting out of the same things, causing you to lose the spontaneous effect you wanted to create in the first place. • When you struggle to start with the private action of preparation, think of the trouble people go through to listen to you. Make it worth their while to listen to you and give them good content by preparing well. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your speech is not about what you have written/ typed on paper - or about your Powerpoint presentation. • Decide beforehand that your manuscript will only be the tool for you to get your message across. • Create certain points in your speech where you give yourself the opportunity to come up with something spontaneous. You could even think about what the "spontaneous" something is going to be, BUT do not work the details out. The idea is that you should learn to speak freely without constraint. • Decide before hand how you will improvise should: your notes get lost; your microphone fails; your Powerpoint not work and so forth. This should help you to think on your feet. |

There should be further discussion on the communicator's relationship to the manuscript, but I'll come back to this. The important thing to remember here is that Extroverts and Introverts should never underestimate the power of preparation; whilst at the same time not allow the written content to dictate what to say, but rather guide you as what to say.

Understanding your Content house.

I often get asked: "Where do you get all your material from?" This is a question I hesitate to answer because behind this question is the search for a heap of cute video clips; pictures; artwork; stories; and so forth. In

the end, if you just throw cute material together you get one big mushy mess.

Getting material is much like building a house. The foundation, the walls and the roof need to be solid and strong – this is what I call the **Primary information** of your speech.

The primary information is what your subject matter is all about. It is all about WHAT you want to say. Here you should be the expert. This is the hardcore information. Get on top of your game when it comes to the primary information. The true importance of mastering the primary information is often not seen during your speech but afterwards in the question and answer time. It is here where a member of the audience often may ask a question and the presenter stutters because he/she doesn't know the subject matter.

The importance of the primary information is also seen when people leave the auditorium and they actually start to think about what is said. Without good primary information they would think, well I was entertained for a couple of minutes but in the end I actually learned nothing and actually wasted my time. Try to know a bit more than your audience on the subject matter. If you know a bit more you have the ability to surprise them with interesting information which they did not think of before.

A word of hope here - please don't think that you have to know everything. There is nothing wrong to say: "O, I actually didn't know that, I'll go into it." Just make sure that you go back and really go into it. To be an "expert" also doesn't suggest that you have an overpowering position over your audience, it rather means that you have good content to share with your audience.

The **Secondary information** of your speech is what really sells the house - it is the décor; the finishing off touches; it is the golden taps and the imported front door. The secondary information is what gets your speech noticed and which really differentiates it from another speech on the same subject matter. Where primary information is WHAT you want to say, secondary information is all about HOW you want to say it. A good example is the movie clip or the painting or the metaphor you use to get the message across.

The fragile relationship between Primary and Secondary information

The relationship between these two types of information is quite important. They need to blend in such a fashion as to form one seamless whole.

The boundary between these two types of information is sometimes blurred and there has been plenty of debate where one should distinguish between them. Especially in literary circles it has been argued that when we read about a subject, we, who are ourselves a text (we have memories; opinions; pre-judged ideas; and so forth.), get to read another text. When this happens two texts are mingled to create a new text. We then go to the audience, who is also a text; we present our text to the audience. The audience, yet again creates a new text when they try to comprehend what is said. This whole process known as “Intertextuality” - which means that, every text is actually situated between texts.

The important point which we should learn from the concept of intertextuality is that when you put these two types of information together they must be joined in a seamless way. The secondary information should not appear like an add-on to the primary information. A newly-built house should be a neatly planned unit. Too many add-ons

only clutter and annoy the listener because he/she has to work through layers add-ons to learn something of importance.

The relationship between Primary and Secondary information can also be compared to a water bag passing around some water. The water is the primary information and the water bag the secondary information with which I pass the water on. The water also transforms into the shape of the bag ... or is it the other way around?

The lesson to learn here is: PLEASE GO SLOW ON THOSE VIDEO-CLIPS; PICTURES; METAPHORS AND QUOTES. Use them, but they are the Secondary information that should help you to convey the Primary information better.

It is not about a lot of information

Communicators often think that they have to have a lot to say. The interesting thing is that the listener doesn't want to and doesn't have the time to listen to a lot of information. A brilliant communicator is someone who fires the information arrow straight and focused on the target. Just throwing a lot of information at people is like throwing a bunch of feathers in the air and hoping that one will find its target. Many a time you will find that you actually have plenty to say. It often is not a matter of getting more material but actually boiling the material down to the powerful core that your audience need.

In addition, don't feel that you have to say something new all the time. There is not much said in the world that has not already been said. Remember, people don't listen to information they listen to people excited about the information they want to present. In other words passion communicates. But in order to deliver a good focused message you need to

find good information. Without good information you don't have a message and without a message you are silenced.

Wandering cows give the most milk

But how do I get good information. The answer to this question is: Become a wandering cow. Getting the juiciest grass also ensures the best milk. People often look for a one-stop shop where at the click of a finger you can get lots of relevant information. If that were true, your audience wouldn't need to listen to you. They could also just go to "your click of the finger" source. As a communicator you are in the first place a researcher and to be a researcher means that you sometimes have to look for the good stuff in the rockiest of places.

This process of gathering information will differ from person to person, depending on personality, field of interest and topic. I will show you how I go about gathering my information, and maybe there is something here for you as well. Just remember there is no right or wrong way to do it, as long as you get good content:

Getting my Primary Information:

i) **Starting in my own garden:** When I have to talk on something, I go through my own bookshelves first. The reason for this is twofold. First of all, time is of the essence. It is much faster to get the information you already have. Most of the times you already know a lot about the subject and most probably you have already read about it. The second reason I go through my own bookshelves is because if you have read about something before, it is already in your subconscious and you just need to bring it into the forefront. It is in other words already part of you and you will convey the message as such. The message will in other words be authentic.

The process:

- I look at my books and pull those ones out which I think should have something to say about the subject matter.
- I stack them next to me and do a quick scan through each book.
- I mark the pages of the books where I find something which I think I might use.
- I put the unmarked books back in the shelf and type the info I have found in on a Word document.

When I see my information seems a bit on the shallow side, I dig deeper.

ii) Going to the net: Once again time is a big issue for me here. I don't browse more than 5 Google pages. If I find interesting articles I copy and cut, and paste the info in my Word document¹. Check that the information is fresh and relevant. If there is still not enough information at hand I go to Amazon.com to see what the top selling books on the subject are.

iii) Going for Book: If I still lack powerful information I would go to the bookshop or library and do a search. I would look for the books I found at Amazon, and if I don't find any of them I would ask for the latest they have on the subject. Very important, I don't just buy a book if the book doesn't grab me. I look at the info on the back page; I look at index and read a couple of pages. If it appeals to me, I buy it. I just scan the relevant chapters in order to get what I need to know as quickly as possible.

Note:

At all times I type the information in on my Word document, hence already starting with the sorting and sifting process.

¹ Information given for free is information made to use. As long as you acknowledge the author I don't consider this to be plagiarism. The "cut and copy" part is not for the sake of reproducing the information but only to help me prepare my manuscript which is meant to verbally share the info.

Ordering the Primary Information:

The main message:

Before I start gathering movie clips (which is secondary information), I really try to understand what it is I want to say. I first try to understand the WHAT of my message before I go to the HOW am I going to get this message across. A good way to start is to find that ONE message you want the people to hear, and see if you can write it down in one sentence. I let my mind run over that one message and ask myself whether I think people should hear it. Will it be relevant to their lives? Will people be able to act on my message? Having done all the research communicators often tend to think that if they give the audience all the theory, learning has taken place. The theory is sometimes interesting, but don't be fooled: Even if the theory is very interesting it will not have much use if it is not applicable to the lives of the people listening.

The rest of the frame work:

From my centre thought I try to identify (from the info on my Word document) the main points supporting the ONE message. It is like the fence I had to put up as a teenager on my father's farm. The function of the poles is to anchor the fence in the ground whilst providing a free-flow action for the wire, running from the one corner pole to the other. The corner pole's function is like the beginning and the end of your speech, they need to be extra strong. I usually tend to them after my whole structure is in place.

You may use a brain chart if you wish. That is where the central message is written in the centre of the page and all the other supporting words form a web around the one message. I personally don't like this method because it endangers my message of being a central thought with a bunch

of other thoughts just latched on to the main thought. This could lead to a house with a lot of “add-ons”, as I discussed earlier. I prefer that one thought should lead to another. It gives a natural flow to your message, and it makes it easier to remember and easier to deliver. This does not mean that your structure should be one straight line – as long as there is some sort of free flow and rhythm to your speech.

The End and the Beginning

This is power hour. Without a strong end and beginning your whole presentation ends up being weak. It is especially here where, if my search for primary information hasn't already given it to me, I do a search for secondary information to help me look for a strong beginning and ending. Sometimes when I look for information on a subject I find something so appealing and so strong that I know that it should be my beginning or my ending.

This is, however, rather the exception than the rule. More often than not I have to sit down and think: How should I start? And usually then the introduction only comes to me when I am in the shower or running to save my kid out of a tree. These little disruptions life gives you, are sometimes also the creative moments, so don't disregard them.

The ending is worth giving an extra mention, because usually it doesn't get the attention it deserves. The ending is not:

- A new thought.
- A mere summary of what you have just said.
- A closing word before the audience leaves the room.

The ending should be very powerful; it should be the last follow-through of the golf swing. See the ending of the movie: *Sixth Sense* with Bruce Willis in the lead, the twist in the tail makes it a great movie.

The ending is your last opportunity you have as a communicator to really drive the nail through the coffin (sounds dangerous), and make use of it. The ending also doesn't have to be a repetition of the introduction, as many experts believe. It could be, but more often it is the last twist to a marvellous presentation. A powerful ending sends the audience out in awe and that is what you want. It is like the last sling shot, propelling them back into their own situation where they have to live and carry out what has just been said.

Getting the Secondary Information

Here you need anything which can amplify your primary information or main message. Be sure that the information you use here is not just another add-on but is really integrated into what you have to say. As mentioned before, you need a vessel to pass on the water. So where does one start with a search for secondary information?

This is how I do it:

- **From the primary information** I already studied, I pick up the metaphors; analogies; figures; graphs; research and examples given to me. This is usually the easiest route to go, but not necessarily the best. The reason being, when you speak to professionals in that field, the chances are that the books and other primary sources use metaphors; images and graphs which they already know. The key to being a good speaker is to be interesting and surprise your audience with a fresh approach. And therefore you should go beyond your own subject field.
- **Movies:** A good movie can touch like nothing else. For this I usually search the web and look for titles or go to the local video store and

try to find a movie which could illustrate a point in my speech well.

When I use a movie,

- 1) I choose a clip not longer than 3 min.
- 2) I make sure the clip is more powerful than my own presentation. A good emotion stirrer is always a winner.
- 3) I avoid offensive video clips. If a clip has a swear word in and I feel that I just have to use it, I usually warn the audience about the swear word. For some reason a swear word cuts through bone and marrow, in a professional situation.

- **Artwork:** Good art with a lot of symbolism is very powerful. For this I page through art books and do a search on the internet. Try the art books of Sister Mary Beckett – you should find them in your library.
- **Photos:** I never use clipart! It is childlike and not very professional. Good photos are nothing other than art. I also never use a photo because it merely about my topic. The rule is: “If you don’t want to illustrate something with photos or pictures, don’t use them.” To use a photo on Powerpoint for every single word you say is murder – murder to the imagination. The imagination is much more powerful than any photo you show. If you are for instance telling them about your fearful flight, without showing a picture of a Boeing on the screen, you are allowing your audience to conjure up their own picture in their minds of how it could have been. And the thought or picture they receive in their mind is very powerful. Some argue that the mind is able to imagine an event so strongly, that if you were to measure the brain waves, it would be as if the person experienced the event as if it had happened to him/her in personally.

- **Music:** I use music a lot. There are various ways to do this. The best is to use a celebrity artist to come and sing the song in person. Invite the celebrity for lunch with your audience and you have an extra marketing tool. Unfortunately, to go this route will cost you a lot of money. A good song, without the artist present can also be very powerful. Good lyrics and a story behind the song is what I usually look for.

When my friend left for another job, a student asked me if I every heard the song by the famous group, Queen, *The show must go on!* I did a search on the net and found that one of the band members wrote it when the news broke that their renowned leader, Freddy Mercury, had Aids. In other words the band should go on, even after the death of their lead singer. The amazing thing about this song is that Freddy Mercury sang it himself before his death. I told this story about Queen to a group of young, tough businessmen. I spoke about having to deal with loss and mentioned the loss of my friend. I played the song by Queen, showing the words on Powerpoint against a background of a hand reaching out. When the song played, I felt the lump in my throat and noticed the tears flowing in the audience. It moved them and it worked.

- **Other video clips:** Do a search using key words on your topic in youtube.com. You will be amazed what comes up.
- **Testimonials:** I seldom make use of this, because you don't have control over the outcome. Sometimes the testimony is good but the person concerned communicates it poorly – I wouldn't use it in this instance. Someone once told me the story of the Tower of Pizza and how it was rescued by focusing on the strong side and not the weak. This person was verbally strong and I allowed her to tell the story

to the audience – thus doing the inter-relational thing, and sharing the microphone, as explained in the previous section.

- **Quoting people:** This is the most commonly used secondary source that is often misused. People often jump from one quote to another, thinking that this must save their speech. One powerful quote is much better than a string of quotations, often saying the same thing. A powerful quote is first of all a powerful statement by a person that the audience knows about. A quote is even more powerful if there is a story behind it. For example: “How inspiring to hear a man, who called his depression ‘the black dog’, say: ‘We will fight them on the beaches, we will fight them.... We will never give up, we will never surrender.’ This is how Winston Churchill inspired a nation to win a World War.” To use a quote in such a fashion is much stronger than merely saying: “Churchill said ...”
- **Storytelling:** To tell my story effectively I try to tell myself that I am telling this story, as if to a group of friends around a barbeque. One of the main sabotages of good stories is how people tell them. I’ll go into more detail about the how of storytelling in the next section. For now it is important to know that a good story is a story to which people can relate to. Use the power of nostalgia and tell them about; for instance: “When we were kids...” or “When the pioneers had to pull their wagons over the mountains....” Memory and history has a strong emotive power therefore I try to use it a lot.

Getting the most out of Secondary Information

The most common mistake communicators make is to give their audience information overload, by flooding them with images; video clips, stories etc. This creates – you have guessed it – a bunch of add-ons. The following is the process you could follow:

Step 1: The golden thread: Search for a possible image; video; story that you can use to become the unifying golden thread of you speech. If you don't find a metaphor or strong unifying image, don't despair. You don't always need it.

Step 2: A good beginning and ending: If Step 1 doesn't provide a strong enough introduction I would use something else from my secondary hunting phase. A good ending, as already explained, is very important. Most people end with a good quote. Not wrong, but it's too stereotypical. Try something different. For example, sometimes I use a artwork as an introduction, come back to it somewhere in the middle of the speech and end with the audience just being allowed to enjoy the artwork for a couple of minutes (not more than 3 min.) with strong accompanying music. During a week's conference with young people, I was allowed one last word. What could I say that was powerful enough? I walked up; thanked them for a wonderful week; thanked them for being wonderful people and said to them that my last word would be given by Mr Bob Seger. The song by Bob Seger, *Like a Rock*, filled the room and it was inspiring. My last word was better in a song, sung by someone else. This was by far better, than just merely uttering a couple of words and most probably boring them to death by it.

Step 3: Making the middle stronger: Certain points in the speech can be amplified with secondary information. BEWARE – it is here where communicators have to step lightly. Filling the middle of your speech with too much secondary information is like putting too many decorations on a Christmas tree. After a while the clutter makes your eye miss the beauty of it. The rule of thumb is always; LESS IS MORE. I never use more than one video clip, and I go lightly on all the other secondary information as well.

One way to avoid this is to start by looking for that one movie; one piece of music; or artwork; and so forth, which can operate as a vessel to help you present your primary information.

A note on Emotion

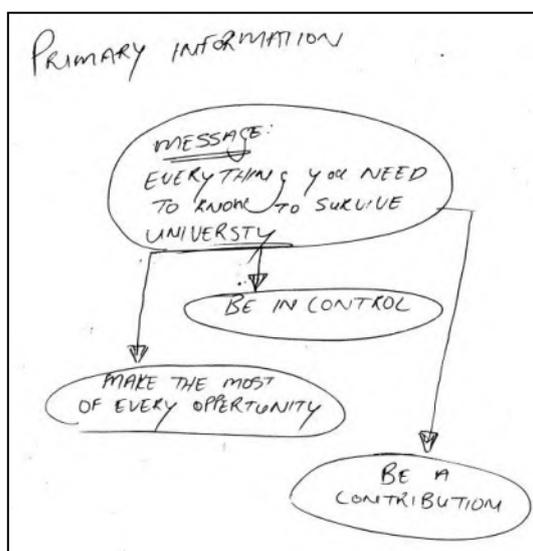
Please note that these media are very powerful. The point is not to get your audience to cry or to laugh. What you are trying to do is to utilise the emotive side of your audience to bring across your message. To stir emotions is not wrong, as long as it is done in relation to the primary message you would like to bring across.

Playing it easy

You should be feeling rather over whelmed by now. Too much info! It is not as tough as it seems. You don't need to read all the books in the library, and go through all the art pieces that exist and so forth. Start with your own life – what moved you; what meant a lot to you and start there.

Go easy on yourself, you can only share what you have and that is more than what you think.

What about an example?



Take a look at my preparation notes:

Before a certain first year camp, I was feeling like an empty shell. I had hold the camp as part of an orientation programme to help prepare first-years students, fresh from school, for their new life. After I had read through a lot of material, I eventually boiled it down and came

up with a basic skeleton as can be seen from my scribbles on the previous page.

I now had a message which unfolded into three parts and each part could be a topic for a different evening. I knew my audience and knew that there was no way in the world that they would sit and listen to a bunch of theory of being in control and being a contribution. I would bore them to death. In other words, I had to use more than mere primary information. I gathered some of the more senior students and asked them if they could think of a movie, story, and so forth, that illustrated the idea of someone who has to make a new beginning somewhere else. Someone came up with the idea of Ratatouille – the movie about the rat who dreamt about becoming a chef.

The same skeleton made up from the primary information evolved into a new intertextual creation when the movie about the rat-chef was introduced.



Note how the message was transformed when the movie as introduced as a metaphor:

| Column A | Column B |
|--|---|
| Main message with just Primary Information used | Main message with Primary Information and Secondary Information integrated |
| Everything you need to know to survive University | If the rat could make it to Top Chef, so can you. |

| Sub messages with just Primary Information used: | Sub messages with Primary Information and Secondary Information integrated |
|--|--|
| 1) Be in Control | 1) Get your kitchen in order |
| 2) Make the most of every opportunity | 2) Stock up your pantry |
| 3) Be a contribution | 3) Create life-changing cuisine. |

If you examine this structure you will notice how the primary information was also shaped by the secondary information. In column A, the main message was only about “surviving”. The focus was in other words on running away from something or defending oneself. In column B the message was changed to include the “top chef” thought. This was included after a struggle to find a good introduction. I eventually found an advertisement on the reality programme “Top Chef”. I liked this inclusion because the movie helped the message to evolve from a survival story to a story where dreams can become a reality.

On the day: When I was called up to talk, I gave the technician the signal; the lights were switched off (creating an expectation of something is about to happen) and he played the “Top Chef” ad. My first words of the evening were: “If the rat could make it to “Top Chef”, so can you.

This is an example where a movie is used as a metaphor carrying the whole message. But it is also an example of where the beginning of the speech was not about the movie. Because no scene from the movie was strong enough for me, I eventually used the Top Chef ad.

From my scribbling (on the previous page) you will also notice how I struggled to get the movie to work as a strong supporting metaphor for the

whole message with its three sub messages. For the first one (“Be in Control”) for instance, I really had to think how “control” fits into the world of a chef. I came up with: “Get your kitchen in order.” In the movie there is no meaningful scene of cleaning up the kitchen. But I reckoned that a chef would need to be in control of his/her kitchen to make wonderful dishes. This allowed me to say in a different way to students that they should have control over their past, present and future.

The second sub message nearly ended up in confusion. “Making the most of ever opportunity” sounded to me as if it could be the long lost dream of the chef to make the best cuisines. Although this might be true, I decided that what was meant by the second sub message of column A was that one should pluck the rich fruits of the tree of life. The pantry image came to mind - you should be able to take the abundance which life offers and fill your pantry. Here I used the scene where the brother of the little rat chef was content to eat rotten food. The message here is: Life is full of the good stuff, don’t settle for junk food.

After the first two sub messages, the third and last sub message really fell into place. Now you can prepare your dishes. The dimension added by making use of the movie, was that of creativity and fun. To make or “be a contribution” sounds heavy and like a serious obligation, while “creating life changing cuisine” taps into our adventurous side. That which you stand for should taste like heaven. There is a beautiful scene of the food critic dropping his fork when tasting his favourite dish – Ratatouille. The message here: “Create your dish; let people taste it; and most of all don’t forget to dish some of it up for yourself as well.”

Not every message happens in the same way. It is really a process of chaotic creation, where anything magical can happen. Do the primary information thing and whip it up with integrated secondary information and you will have a masterpiece.

Juicing up your content

1. Contrast

Opposites give the human mind something to measure or to compare the subject on hand against something else. If I say that the building is selling for 2 million it means nothing to me. But if I say that the going rate in the area is 2,6 million, I know that I have a bargain on hand. Here is an even better example. In the Ratatouille talk I could off said: “Present the best cuisine you can for other people.” Instead I went for contrast and said: “You have a choice you can give people **junk food** to eat or you can serve them **sushi**.” You will notice that I used the word “junks food” and not “take aways” – the first description, “junk food”, makes the contrast even stronger. Go through your content and look where you can build in some contrast.

2. Humour

Humour can be very dangerous if your audience get the feeling that you are trying to be funny. Therefore, beware of telling jokes and hoping that the audience will laugh. The chances are good that many of your audience have already heard that specific joke. There are better ways to use humour and this is how:

- “**Impromptu moments**” of humour work wonders to break the tension and get them to listen again. And the beauty of this is that you can even prepare for it so that it seems as if you have just thought of it on the spur of the moment. For instance, if I could stick with the Ratatouille example, you could say: “A junk food life is bad for you. Your life spins out of control; you start to fail one subject after another; you go on shopping spree’s with you mother’s

purse *(pause; as if you are thinking about what you've just said)* On second thought, that doesn't sound all that bad."

Just remember, after the laughter quietens down to follow it up with something like: "But you understand what I mean, stay away from the bad stuff. The shopping spree sounds like fun, but in the long run it does nothing for a meaningful future."

- **Funny clips:** There are ample clips around which can explain something in a humorous way. There are plenty of examples of how one could use them. There is for instance a clip where the German sailor is listening to his radio. The voice on the other side says: "Mayday, Mayday, we are sinking." The German sailor asks confused: "What are you sinking about." (If you didn't catch it – due to language and pronunciation difficulty the German sailor thought that the other person said that he was "thinking" about something.) The clip is about, over coming language barriers. After the laughter quietens down say: "We laugh about it, but do you know how frustrating it is to be misunderstood?"

3. Strong metaphors

Metaphorical language is very strong. It makes an appeal on the emotive side of the brain, driving a message home with power. Metaphors have the ability to take hold of people's imagination and opening them up to new learning possibilities. Take note that not all metaphors are equally strong. Sometimes metaphors are used over and over again, making them too familiar and therefore weak. This is what Nietzsche called "fossilised language". It is language that lost its ability to be fluid and therefore can't flow freely into the cracks and corners of emotion. Stay clear from clichéd metaphors such as; "running in life's race", "life's storms", "thinking outside of the box" and so forth. The kind of metaphor you'll want to use will also depend

on the audience. If I had to talk to a group of caterers I would for instance not be using the whole chef metaphor.

4. Poetic language

I once listened to someone who was a freelance poet - wonderful, but also terrible. He started off with the most beautiful word play, but after a fifth and seventh word play session he lost me. Use words to give colour to your speech, but overdoing it are stepping outside the real world, into a world of fancy words. You want to introduce people to beautiful language, but remember people only understand something in terms of their own everyday language. You can also read a poem with some soft background music – it is good for the soul.

5. Do it magazine style

The Internet has a downside to it – it has too much information, and people often don't know where to start to climb this large information mountain. In the end they end up not climbing at all. When the Internet came on the scene everybody thought that the printed media would go out of circulation. What actually happened is that more magazines and more newspapers than ever came out. But there was a difference.

What the printed media did was:

- **Focusing on a target market:** Make sure that your content, with its metaphors; pictures and so forth is directed towards the crowd in front of you. People don't have the time to listen to unnecessary information.

- **Do it in slogans:** This is the way newspapers advertise. Short, sweet and to the point. Being creative and telling beautiful stories has the in-built danger that it could take forever to make a meaningful point. A good place to start is trying to make all your sentences as short as possible. Long sentences are often a sign of long, theoretical babble. This is the quickest way to cause a major brain shut down. You want to keep them alive, fresh and awake. Make it to the point.

In conclusion

| | | |
|------|----|------------|
| Make | it | Imaginable |
| Make | it | Relevant |
| Make | it | Simple |

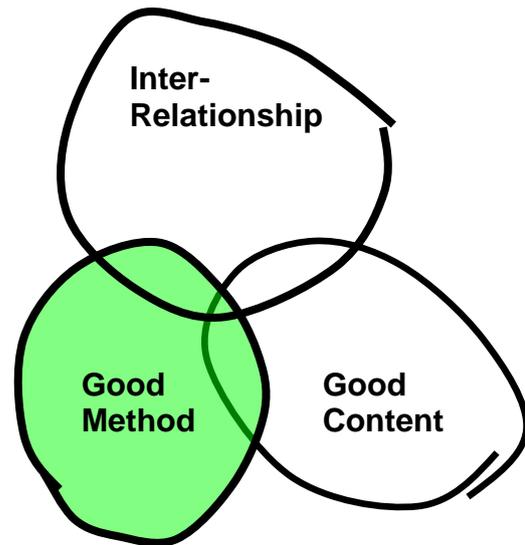
Now it is up to you to create the best content you can. Go big and let your creative juices flow. If you feel that you should first get the content house in order, go through this chapter again before you continue. The best form of practice is to draw up your own speech and try to follow the steps and suggestions given in this chapter.

When you are ready – let's continue!

How Good Method determines your message

Whenever I hear the desperation in the voices of people often talking about presenting, they are actually asking for method. I was once approached by a mother to coach her daughter in debating. They felt that they didn't needed help to better the content, and

they didn't realise that the relationship between all three circles plays an integral role in the process of a good communication. They only wanted the presentation to be a good performance.



If you have come thus far in the basics of good presenting you hopefully would have realised that good method is important but it is only one third of the whole story. I would even go so far as to say that good method grows from good interrelationship and good content. Method on its own is like a child trying to get attention – nobody wants to listen, because it is only noise with no substantial content and is noise focused only on the self and not on the other.

As a pastor it is interesting for me to see how pastors, who want to plant a church, feel that the success of their church planting efforts depends on their ability to give a good preaching performance. There is a church, in the city where I live, which grew because of the charismatic preaching of a particular pastor (so they say). After a year of services he had the brainwave to do the sermons via video satellite. Now the people could appreciate his charismatic preaching without him actually being there. It didn't work, people started to drift away. What happened – did God leave the building? Maybe the answer to this is much simpler than you think:

Although his charismatic preaching was there, he wasn't - that, I believe, made all the difference in the world.

Early in my career, I was cured of the view that it is all about performance, in an instance, which took place one Sunday evening. I was invited to give a talk to some young people. I was introduced by the local pastor, whom I silently felt could do with a pep talk on communication. As I left the church grounds, I heard one teenager girl talking to another. It was clear that they were visitors because they did not seem familiar with the names of the pastor. The conversation went something like this:

Girl 1: "Wasn't it a great evening?" (my heart grew warm with pride)

Girl 2: "Isn't that a great pastor?" (my heart kept on heating up till boiling point)

Girl 1: "Which one? ... Dr. Smith?"

Girl 2: "No, I am actually talking about the local Pastor." (my bubble burst)

I was baffled – how was it possible? The local pastor seemed out of place and in desperate need of a communication course. What is more, I did the speech, he only gave the introduction. What was it?

I couldn't sleep that night. The next morning I had it figured out. Something about the local pastor communicated, and it wasn't his knowledge, it was his caring. I remember I saw him going around during the tea break and talking to everyone. I was the guy who couldn't do that because I had to go through my notes and my focus was on my performance, he was busy building relationships. Someone once said: People really don't care that much about how much you know, but they do want to know how much you care.

You see, I believe that if 1) the heart of interrelationship is there and 2) the passion about your content is present you really have come a long way. I also believe that people need (or think they need) desperate help with method because they think that is what presenting is all about. Don't get me wrong, to get the method right is extremely important, but it is not all about the method.

Because of the importance of interrelationship and content for the message, I believe that method should be used firstly, not for a better performance, but to draw people into your world of caring, and the need to share good content with them. Good method should, in other words, be presented with the forceful powers of good relationship and content behind it.

Once again, take note: I am only sharing an approach and basic principles. You will have to go further and gel the principles in this book with your own style; preferences and personality. Here follows the basics of good method:

Preparing for a good presentation!

Preparation for most people seems to be something which is separate from the presenting part. For them the presenting only happens at the moment when they stand in front of the people to talk. Wrong!! The human mind is a wonderful and powerful invention, which allows you to present even before your presentation. Sounds confusing! We call it VISUALIZATION. It is the process whereby the human mind sees an event even before it happens. A friend of mine is hooked on the whole visualisation thing and helps other people to do it. His view on this is that you don't only see what's happening, but it also happens as an actual event in your mind. In other words your mind actually makes no distinction between the thought of the event and the event itself. Hence preparation is about playing it out

in your mind over and over again before you walk out to talk for the first time. This visualisation, as part of your preparation, is important because it is one of the best ways to beat unhealthy nerves and it builds confidence because in a sense when you walk up to talk you have already done it before.

This process works as follows:

- **Get the context locked in your mind:** If you don't know the venue, try to see it long beforehand. Ask out about the people, their habits, life styles and so forth. This will help you envision the people and talk to them while you are doing the preparation. When it is not possible for you to see the venue before you start working on your content, try to arrive early so that you can get a feel for the surroundings. With the context and the people locked in your mind you are ready to start to work on your content.
- **Getting hooked on an idea:** It helps to start early about what you think you need to say. It is like sticking a piece of wood in the middle of the river early. After a couple of days ideas and thoughts will stick to your initial idea like barnacles onto the quay at the riverside. I usually allow about four days dwelling on thoughts, and then I will start to write them down.
- **Writing the content down:** As already explained in the previous section; it is important to know **WHAT** you want to say (primary content). From there you should work out **HOW** you want to say it (secondary information). The **WHAT** is determined by subject matter and theory and will stay basically the same. It is the **HOW** that asks for plenty of creativity. This will basically be influenced by your own preference, but it will even more so because of your audience. The movie *MATRIX* will for instance work better with a

younger crowd and so forth. To find the HOW of your message it often helps if you **think illustration** – “what will illustrate the point I try to make best?” Write the options down and try to see (in your mind) whether your illustration will stick with the particular audience or not. Choose the illustration that will work best with your audience and keep the others on a separate file for future use. While you write allow yourself to be interrupted – go for a walk in the garden; go for a run; etc. This allows your mind to see; to experience your content in relation to your audience. Remember from the previous section on content: Less is more! Do not use more than one illustration to make a point. And do not illustrate each and every point. Try to have a guiding image; metaphor or illustration that you can use – this will protect you from the temptation to over kill on illustrations.

- **Make notes – speech friendly:** A friend of mine who also gives courses in presenting advocates that one should have no notes in front of you. The reason for this is, as explained before, that notes break the conversation effect between the communicator and the audience. The notes come to stand between you and the audience. However, it becomes difficult when you have to convey detail. Nervousness also causes brain freeze, causing you to forget what you wanted to say. Therefore rather do the “notes thing” than trying to memorise details which might cause you embarrassment when you can’t remember. I’ll explain later how you could organise your notes during your speech to ensure that the notes don’t stand between you, as a communicator and the audience. During the preparation period, it is important to prepare your notes to ensure that maximum free communication takes place. In other words, although you have notes, you should do your speech as if they don’t exist. This is how:

1. Try to type your notes out – this helps for easy reading.
2. Print them out on A4 and fold the paper in half, with the printed sides on the outside. This will allow you to have the first half of the page in front of you. You can then easily turn the page around, revealing the second half. The folded notes allow you to shift the first folded paper up when you done with both sides, to reveal the second paper's first half, and so on.

You can use other methods as well; like flash cards etc. Some people use a notebook or a flip file. I advise against the latter. I once listened to a brilliant communicator who used an A5 sized file and flipped the pages over as he went along in his speech. Afterwards someone commented towards me: "Did you see he spoke to us from his file." People just don't like the feeling that they are being taught out of a book. Rather use loose notes.

3. Number each half as a new page, in case you lose track of which section follows on which.
4. Read through you speech and highlight the key words. Try to follow and mark the rhythm and the logical order of your speech. This will allow you to look into the eyes of your audience and when you lose your place or forgot what comes next, you can then just look down and with a quick glance find your key word easily. You don't have time to read your notes in front of your audience; you do, however, have time to catch the eye (so to speak) of your key words.

- **Do the dress rehearsal thing:** With your notes ready, you are ready for a dress rehearsal. The rule is: If you haven't said it out loud you haven't prepared! Out loud it is different than just reading it in your mind. If you do it out loud you can see which sentences are too long; where the logical flow of the speech falls apart; where the transition from one thought to another doesn't make sense; where you should pause longer; etc. It is when you rehearse that the visualisation of the event is at its strongest. Here you should see the people in your mind's eye, and talk to them. If you do this out loud you will see how often your speech changes to be more speakers-friendly.

1. **Where should you rehearse?** Anywhere is fine, as long as you are not disturbed during this time. Many advise that you should practice before the mirror. I do not advise this, because before a mirror you are so focused on how you look that you lose track of what you want to say and you definitely won't be able to visualise the audience in front of you. If you want to see yourself; put a webcam or video camera on yourself and play it back.

2. **How many times should I rehearse?** As many times as necessary. A good way to measure is to ask yourself, should you lose your notes, whether you would still be able to do your speech? I personally go through it about three times. If it is a tough subject, I'll even go through it as much as six times.

- **Dressing up:** This sounds like an unnecessary detail to discuss, but the fact of the matter is that people often think that when it's about relationship, that dress code doesn't matter. Often, the truth is that the way you dress has a lot to say about the way in which you do

relationship. The way people look is often a mirror of their own self-respect and also whether they regard other people highly or not. So, how should I dress up? The rule of thumb is to dress a step better than the average member of the audience, but not better than the best dressed person there. You don't want to overdress, but it is easier to dress down when you arrive (lose the tie and so on) than to try to dress up when everybody else is dressed formally.

- **Getting in the zone:** Some people think that you have to charge yourself up before going up to talk in front of people. This could be a bad thing because this kind of energy build up could cause unnecessary nervousness and over eagerness. There is nothing so unconvincing than a presenter who bursts with energy but in the end, comes across like an over eager and pushy hawker trying to sell you junk. By the same token it is also very disconcerting when someone talks in front of people but he/she is like a worn tyre whose energy level signal that he/she really doesn't want to be there. As a communicator you have to get into the zone or the right frame of mind before you go up to speak. It is important to get into a healthy and realistic state of mind before you go up to talk to people. You are not a WWF wrestler and need not kick down doors and bang your head against the cupboard in order to get prepared. Here is how you could get into the zone. I say "could", because this will differ from person to person. Here is one way:

1. **Try to estimate your current state of mind:** With this I mean that you should "read" your own emotions. How do you feel? Are you very tense or are you quiet, cool and calm? Are you excited about your coming speech or do you feel that you are not into the mood for it?

2. **Try inspirational media:** There are few things as powerful as **music**. When you feel, on the negative side, scared, anxious or on the positively side excited, exuberant, and so on. you need to bring your emotions down - soft classical music should do the trick. When you feel aloof, tired or never mind – you need a charge up. Any up beat music will work for a charge up. Have you ever heard of a communicator using *The eye of a tiger*, from the Rocky movies, as a charge up. It sounds crazy, but it works. You can also use **inspirational clips**, from movies and other clips to help you to focus on the job at hand. Before an MBL examination, I watched the first audition of Paul Potts. It lifted my spirits and I decided that if he could do it I would also be able to do it. Other examples are the winning scene of Eric Liddle in *Chariots of Fire* or the Battle scene of Achilles in *Troy*.

When to do this: Before you leave the house to the venue where you have to do the talk or else in the car on you way there.

3. **Quiet time:** Arrive early! There is nothing worse for a communicator than to be rushed after arriving to late. Make sure, beforehand, you know how long it will take you to get to the venue. At the venue, try to get a couple of minutes alone where you can adjust your mind for the last time for the task at hand. If you see there is no opportunity or room for you to be alone, try to make another plan - ask to be excused to the bathroom and be alone in the bathroom if it is necessary.

Preparing your surroundings for a good presentation!

Everything communicates

People often don't realise it, but everything communicates – whether or not there is enough parking; enough lighting in the parking; the state of the building; whether or not somebody greets newcomers; whether or not people know where to find the bathroom; how the presenter is dressed and of course the way in which the message is presented. Unfortunately it is true that if the audience feel cramped and the air con is broken and the building is in a state of disorder, the communicator already starts on a back foot.

If you are a visitor, you most probably won't have much say in what the surroundings look like. But if it is in your power you should try to get the surroundings to complement you and not making it worse for you. Here is a check list of things that communicate.

Outside the building:

- Enough parking – keep parking space for visitors
- Walking distance and the experience of approaching the main door – music along the way, lanterns showing the path, a welcoming banner, and so forth, are all things you can do to improve the outside experience for the audience.

Here is an example how to indicate the route to the front door. The glowing dots in the forefront are actually candles burning in paper bags.



- Direction indicators to the bathrooms etc.
- The cleanliness and state of the bathrooms.

5.2.3) Inside the building – Creating sacred space

What you really want to do with the inside of the building is to create a sacred space. Sacredness means “to be set a side”. In other words, when you create a space that is sacred, you want the people to know that this place is special and that something special is going to happen here! With a sacred space you also create an atmosphere of anticipation and excitement of something great that is to come. Your space is in other words doing the talking long before you are doing it.

Creating your sacred space is about doing that little extra without over doing it. Remember the rule of “Less is more” – it is also applicable here. I remember in my early days, I would go to the local municipality and borrow nearly all the plants in their nursery. I wanted to create a jungle effect. That I surely did, but with plants everywhere it was a bit too much. A beautiful decoration with flowers in the entrance hall or next to me would have been sufficient. In the end it also depends who your audience

is – for kids, the jungle effect most probably would have been perfect. That little extra communicates that you are going the extra mile for them. Please note that if you are only the visiting speaker you should fall in with the space your host has provided for you – except if they ask you for any decoration you may need.

It also helps if your décor already is saying something about what you are going to say. If you are for instance by any chance deciding to use the metaphor of construction or building in your speech, place an old wheelbarrow with a flower decoration in it, in the entrance hall or next to the podium.

The following should all be considered when you create your space:

- An information desk.
This helps to give directions and provides answers to newcomers.
- A person doing the welcoming – the communicator could stand there as well.
This is an art in itself. You don't have to greet everybody with a string of flowers around the neck. People don't like to be jumped upon like overeager sales people in a shop. Just be there and be visible. If you do this, you will win plenty of good will even before you start your speech. And if you could include in your speech, some reference to something that happened at the door, even better. For example you could say: "As Pete mentioned to me at the door" Just make sure that your comment won't embarrass the person.
- The entrance hall.
It should be neat and already make an impression when people enter. You could even put some décor, referring to the speech to come here.

- The lighting inside the building.

Dark is bad. Very often people just switch the lights off to create a good atmosphere. A dead globe communicates something about decay – it is the same message that people get when they see a cracked window, which needs replacement. Even if the light burns very dimly, it should burn.

Too bright is also bad. Bright opens up the senses and causes an over stimulation. The best route to go is to think “romantic” – soft lighting, and soft music creates excellent moods.

Here is an example of soft lighting: Notice the tables with the chairs. The crowd consists of students and the idea is to encourage discussion.



You can also use coloured lighting; but remember that colours also communicate – blue says coldness; red says hot and passion. A safe colour is a soft yellow against a wall or as an up-lighter against a pillar. And while you’re at it – don’t allow the technician just to play at random with the light colours as you go along with your speech. The best is to stick to one colour to keep the attention directed towards you. If it must, decide beforehand with the technician which colours will work at what stage in your speech.

- Background music.

When people arrive they often walk into a dead quiet room with technicians running wires and shouting. At least 45 min. before the event starts, the technical stuff should be sorted out - with calm, soothing music inviting people in.

- The arrangement of the chairs.

This depends on the size of the crowd. What you want in an interrelationship approach is to break away as far as possible from the conventional style where the audience are sitting in straight rows ready to listen to the communicator. It is best to go circular and arrange the chairs in a half moon shape around you. Once I even had 300 students sitting in circles around me, while I sat on a high stool in the centre. This makes it friendlier and allows conversation between the speaker and the audience. Even the ways in which we do the cubicle thing have changed. We can actually see some progress:



- The placement of the speaker.

The position of the speaker will obviously depend on the arrangement of the audience. Apart from the positioning there are two other important issues at hand for the speaker to keep in mind.

1. Your body should be as open as possible.
2. You should be allowed to move freely.



Notice: The small stand next to the speaker (that's me). This functions merely as a stand to put the script on, for a quick glance at the key words.

Behind me is a large pulpit. But because of the fact that it covers about half the body and it creates distance and height over and above the audience, I prefer not to use it.

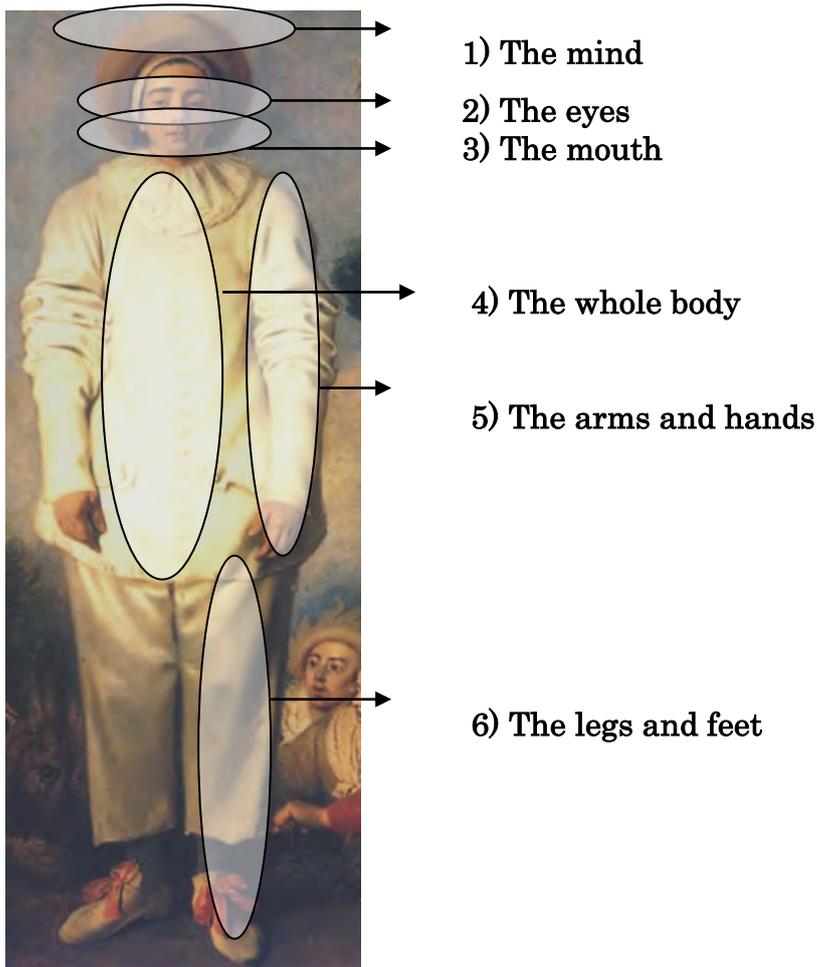
Make sure you know how far you can move, so as not to lose sight of the audience or move out of range of a camera. Mark the boundaries of your space with masking tape and use your full space.

- **Technical details**

The microphone should be tested at least 45 minutes before you go up to speak, and it should be tested on your voice. As mentioned before, it just doesn't communicate positively to be running around with technical detail minutes before the event. If everything is sorted out early, it also allows enough time for you to greet members of your audience. The testing of technical details is also applicable for video clips; music; etc. It is better to test it; pick up problems beforehand and sort them out as quickly as possible.

Making the best of your delivery

It has to be said that this is as unique as each individual. There is, however, a generic system which you can follow to determine whether you are doing the best that you can in this department. It is all about body-language, finding your roots and doing it like the cavemen would have done it. Here are some basic guidelines. This is how it works: You only have to focus on six areas:



1) The mind

There is brilliant scene in the movie, *The Last Samurai*, with Tom Cruise in the lead role. The main character wants to learn how to master the Samurai art of fighting with sticks. He gets beaten every time, until the servant whispers in his ear: “Too many minds!” It is very important for the communicator to present with one mind – that is to say with a focussed mind. Follow the logical arguments in your speech and be in conversation with your audience. This means that you have to present with body and mind. You will not only lose track of your speech if your mind wanders; your audience will also pick up that you are not with them and that is the worst thing that can happen to you. Follow some of the preparation steps to assist you in focusing and you should be all right.

2) The eyes

The eyes aren't called "the windows of the soul" for nothing. The eyes are most probably the main communicating agent of the human body. They say it is also when the eyes meet that two people fall in love. So it is important to make your eyes work for you. Here are some practical pointers:

- **Eye contact** – in almost every book on public speaking the issue of eye contact is mentioned. What is not always mentioned is that if you get this wrong, things will go very wrong. The rule of thumb here is that when you get eye contact with someone, keep the contact. **BUT NOT LONGER THAN 3 SECONDS.** Longer than that will make the person feeling uneasy.
- **Make you eyes more visible:** When you have a large audience, it is difficult for the person in the back row to see your eyes. A simple technique to give life to your eyes is to lift your eyebrows at certain points in your speech. For example after a question:

"Life is too short to be unhappy all the time (pause and lift the eyebrows)?"

- **Use eye contact to encourage yourself:** When you are busy with your speech, you will quickly pick up members in the audience who you can see responds quite obviously by a nod of their heads, and so on. Focus on them! Don't be tempted to focus on the guy who counts the squares on the tiled flooring or stares outside the window. This will only discourage you.
- **Use the magnetic power of the eyes to get them to listen.** Sometimes you can pick up that you don't have the attention of somebody or even a group of people in the audience. The way to get them to

listen is to lock your eyes on to a willing listener from the audience close to this person or group. When somebody close to the non-listener is listening the chances are that this individual or even group will eventually also be drawn in to listen. It is the same effect as when you go to watch a comedy at the movies. When the theatre is full the laughter it will be more fun than when it is virtually empty. The reason for this is that we as humans are social beings who like to follow the group. When everybody laughs, we want to laugh and when everybody listens we want to do the same.

Because eye contact is so important, you would want to have your eyes on the audience as long as possible. This brings us to the following:

1) What about glancing at the script?

Your goal should be to try and look as little as possible at your notes. The fact of the matter is, the more you look at your notes, the less you will be looking at your audience and the more you will lose the conversation effect with your audience. Try to depend less and less on your notes and learn to speak freely. Here are a couple things you can do:

- Play a game with yourself: See how far you can go without looking at your notes. Try each time to better your time.
- When you feel more confident, try to walk away from the table or the stand with your notes on it. You'll be surprised to see how many miracles happen when you are away from your notes. I have found that when you run out of words away from your script and you just have to say something, somehow you find the words – and also the right words.

- Get an excuse to look at your notes and then take the opportunity to look further. For example – no one expects another human to memorise numbers, names, dates and other detail. So when you get to one of these it could go something like this:

“(without notes in front of you) They say the tower of Pizza is high for it’s age, to be exact ... (pause), I have to get this one right for you, just now one of you are from Italy (look at your notes – look further and see what comes after the Tower of Pizza). They say it is high.”

2) What about looking at the screen behind you?

What is true about looking at your notes is even truer for the screen, which is most probably behind you. It is even worse when you look back – that completely breaks the connection between you and the audience. Here are a couple of ways to get handle this:

- Get a monitor installed, at your feet, so that you can follow what happens on the screen.
- Print your Powerpoint slides as handouts and keep them with your script. Also give a copy to the person working behind the computer and communicate when he/she should show a slide, with key words as indicators to show it. A note of caution: It gets confusing when you have a script and slide handouts.
- The easiest, is not to have too many slides. Remember: Less is more. Use only Powerpoint to show illustrations. Then it is easy for you to say something like: “I want to show you a painting. I’ll watch it with you (*walk down a row or two into the audience, look at the painting on the screen, as part of*

the audience)." This makes you and the audience one and creates a stronger interrelationship. Take note; in order to do this you should not show more than one illustration.

3) The mouth

Here a couple of basic's which every communicator should no needs to be said:

- **Pump up the Volume:** I learnt in drama class that you need to project your voice as if you are speaking to the person right in the back of the room. The fact that you have a microphone doesn't change this. The reason for this is not so much for the sake to be heard as it is to appear confident, assertive and powerful. People want to listen to such a person. It is all about, using your voice, to hurl yourself to the back of the room, hence filling the space with your presence. A common mistake communicators make is only to talk to the first two rows. Look back, and throw yourself out there.
- **Getting in the Pitch of things:** We all know that we shouldn't talk in a mono-tone, but that we should vary our pitch. But what we don't know is how to use it to our advantage. Hitler was a master at this, and because of it he had the power to manipulate the crowd.

How Hitler managed to manipulate a crowd:

- He started off without saying a word. He used to look over the crowds, while being introduced. When you look at people they tend to look back, hence creating an aura of mystery around yourself.
- As he walked up to talk, he still did not talk, standing a couple of seconds in front of the people without saying a word.
- Then he would start to talk; slowly and softly. Drawing the people in to listen.
- It would then gradually build up, until he was literally shouting at the crowds.

(Go to Youtube.com and check it out – it is something to see)

A lot has changed since those days, and I think people would laugh at you if you would do it like that today. People are just not into a power play scenario, it doesn't convince any more. Today I would suggest a different strategy for pitch. People tend to think that you must raise your voice at the more important parts of the speech. I would suggest the opposite. This is why: The same aura of mystery and power Hitler created by not saying a word, you can create by saying it softly.

I see this phenomenon a lot with high school kids when I visit schools – the louder the teacher shouts for order; the rowdier the teenagers seemed to get and the less they seem to listen. It is the teacher who walks up - not saying a word, looking at the children, getting a couple of them to realise that teacher is watching, and with a mere “thank you” getting them to quieten down.

Here is an example:

“(In a louder voice) Leaders need to take the initiative. (Going in at a lower pitch) And you are that leader.”

It is important for them to realise that leaders need to take the initiative, but it is even more important for them to know that they are the leaders. In the first part you are making a strong statement, in the second part you are bringing it home.

- **Making animal noises:** This I learnt from a speech therapist, who coached some of the first South African Idols. She suggested that at certain point you could pause and with a “Mmmm” or a “huh”, hence creating the impression that you are thinking. This is what she calls animal noises. In other words people get the idea that you are actively thinking; it is not just a deliverance of a prepared and

pre-auditioned speech. Saying this, you will find that if you are rid of the nerves and you are actively engaged in what you are saying, you will in any case think about your own words and animal noises will come naturally. If it doesn't come naturally to you, try at certain points, just pause as if you are on stage, thinking. Even if the animal noise is not there, do the pause thing. To break the awkwardness you could pop in a question. With raised eyebrows ask for example: "Or am I talking about something that only Martians would understand?"

- **Microphone technique:** Make sure that you get the best possible service out of the microphone by speaking as far as possible INTO THE MIC. With a cone shaped microphone you should hold it against your mouth. Do the microphone kiss – for that presentation session of yours it needs lots of love. With other types of microphones: around your ear, on the jacket, etc. - see that it is secured properly and that your jacket or scarf doesn't interfere with it. The best kind of microphone is one that doesn't cover your face and that allows you to use your hands freely.

4) The whole body

Use your whole body as communication agent. Have you been in a conversation and the person's body is turned away slightly or the person is leaning back? What does it communicate? Correct – I am not interested. Go in there with your body, lean forward and give your audience energy; interest and presence. You often see communicators hanging on the podium – try to avoid this. You need to come across, alive and energetic and doing the hanging thing will only let you look dead.

5) The arms and hands

A friend of mine used the metaphor of a parking garage. Your hands need to be “parked” at the sides of your body. If you look at the painting of Achilles, you’ll see that his hands are in the parking position. Your arms shouldn’t be behind your back, held in front or crossed over your chest like an Indian chief – get in the habit to “park” them along your sides. When you use them, don’t hold back. Use wide movements of the arms. Spread your wings – and you will fly. When finished with your statement put your arms back in the parked position.

The way you use your hands is also important. Palms turned up usually are usually an inviting gesture. You want to show people the inside of your



hands as far as possible – that says: “I want to touch you.” Things go wrong the moment you show people the back of your hands. The next thing from here is to show a fist or point a finger, which are all unfriendly gestures. With the palms upward a clench of the fist then doesn’t appear angry but shows rather that you are feeling strongly about something. Look

again at the pictures of me: Are my hands correct or incorrect? Could I improve?

6) The legs and feet

- **Positioning of the feet:** Experts often communicate that you should stand flat on both feet; if you were playing golf this would work. But talking to (actually a good communicator never talks to, but rather

with the crowd) with a crowd or even a smaller group of people this is not only unrealistic but would also look unnatural. It is human to shift your body weight from the one leg to the other. Don't be afraid to do this. When you lean forward as discussed previously you will also need to put one foot slightly in front of the other to do this. The important thing to remember here is, when you shift your weight, not to use your legs to rock from side to side. Shift your weight as part of a natural movement – putting the glass down, walking to the other side of the stage and so forth.

- **The Talkie-Walkie-Talkie technique:** Moving from a mere behind the podium position to a more free moving approach is one of the most difficult things to do. The podium gives some sort of safety – you can hold on to it (giving your hands something to do) or you can hide behind it. Passionate communicators should declare their independence from any sort of obstruction they feel they need to hold on to. Learn to move freely. But if you do this, you will have to know when to walk and when to talk. Many communicators get confused – should they walk first, or talk first or talk while they are walking.

The rule of thumb is usually not to talk while you walk: 1) Make your statement (talkie); 2) walk to another spot (walkie) and then 3) continue talking (talkie). This is scary for many speakers because they feel that they must talk all the time. The walking takes the talking away. What it actually does is to create a silent space of anticipation – if he/she moves to the new position people also anticipate that he/she is going to say something meaningful next.

There is, however, one exception on the rule of not talking while walking, and that is to talk in a contemplative manner. In other words, you are thinking aloud while you are walking.

For example: You are standing between the people looking with them at a painting on the screen. When you walk back (your back is still turned towards the people) you can say something like: “So what (small pause) does this painting awaken in you?” Walk to the spot where you want to be; stop; turn around; look at the people and repeat the question with slightly different wording: “So what do you think, is this painting doing something to you?”

Try to practise these habits into your communication style. Remember most of what you are doing is habit; teach yourself a new set of habits.

Afterwards

Your presentation does not end with a “good-bye” or a “thank you folks”. People would still like to talk one-on-one with you. Be there for them and be polite. Deal as professionally as possible with difficult customers and if you should get somebody who wants to pick a fight with you, don’t be tempted to do it there. Get the persons detail or ask him/her to contact you for an appointment. Other follow-ups could include:

- It is also a good idea to follow-up your presentation with **a social event** afterwards. Let them socialise; it is often at these occasions where people in conversation with others really decide to put into practice what is said. People like to know that someone else feels like they do and then they commit most easily.
- You could also follow up by getting people to commit by placing a **list in the foyer**, for a task, project or whatever is related to the presentation you tried to convey.
- Another good follow up is to use something like an **sms (text message)**; if you have a database of the cell. numbers of the persons

present. You could sms them a reminder, or a refresher of what was said the next day.

Last minute important techniques

An invitation to a conversation

Try to see each presentation as **an invitation to a conversation**. Although I have used words like “speech”, “talk”, etc. it does not mean that you are a one-man-show. You will remember that from the start the focus was on relationships. It is a two way communication process all the way; whether you have an audience of five or 500. How does this work?

What is meant with a two way process is not that every single person in the audience has an opportunity to talk back; what is meant is that every person must **feel** that they are part of a conversation. With larger crowds it is more difficult, but there are different ways to do this. Here are a couple ideas:

- **Rhetorical question:** This is the easiest technique and can be very effective if you use your body language well. The trick is to ask the questions in such a fashion as if you really would expect an answer. Look at the pictures of myself. In both pictures I am asking a rhetorical question. In the one on the left, the question is being asked with more intensity. Notice that the eye brows in both are lifted and also notice the positioning of the hands. Although I am only using one hand on the right, the hand is open and the palm is visible. The hand in itself is asking: “Wait a minute, did you catch it?” A rhetorical question doesn’t have to be complicated. A mere pause, lifting of the eyebrows and palms turned upwards, indicating a question by means of body language can be enough (just like the cave-people did it.)



- **Let discussion guide you:** In a group of people, not everybody wants to say something, so be very careful not to place people in the spot with this one. You could at a certain point say: “I give you 30 seconds, to hear from the person next to you how he or she feels about the matter – or if you like you can simply sit and reflect by yourself how you feel.”
- **Create moments of participation:** There are several different ways you can do this. You can either:
 - 1) **Ask individuals to help to do a task.** It could be any task from reading something to participating in a practical illustration. There are many examples, here is a simple one, and I did it with students. I called out the biggest guys from the group and they stood in two rows about one metre apart. I asked the smallest girl from the group to walk through the human tunnel of monster men. The guys in the rows were asked to do everything possible to stop the girl, but they were not allowed to stand in her way or to touch her. The guys shouted and jumped and stared. She made it but with difficulty; hunching her shoulders and she seemed scared. The lesson: you don't have to be scared.

Pull up your shoulders and walk proudly through intimidating situations. In this way you make the audience part of the presentation

2) Make the whole group part of a task. It may not be the best idea to do trivial things just for the sake of doing something or merely to entertain the crowds. It is better that what you do forms part of the message you want to convey. Here are a couple of examples:

i) Ask the audience to hold their breath, and let them time themselves. Ask them how it felt to lose for a couple of seconds what they need to live from. You can use the oxygen metaphor for a lot of important things we need to survive as humans, such as friends, self image, God and so on.

ii) I once, by chance, discovered how students dispose of their gum: underneath the benches. I asked them, that they should without looking, feel underneath their seats. Everybody looked confused. I said to them that if they feel carefully they will feel this. And then I showed them this photo I took of the seats:



I used this as a metaphor for the consumer culture we have - quickly disposing of things, even underneath the bench. Disposing is

sometimes a good thing, what is bad is going back and trying to revive the old gum.

A final word on dealing with nerves

I have already mentioned that unhealthy nerves are really the product of a person who thinks that he/she needs to perform. The focus is on the communicator and not on the audience. Sometimes, although, the focus is on the audience, in your mind you see all those critical and intimidating people. One way to deal with this is to think about someone in your audience who you know will be receptive of your message. See the person in your mind, who will laugh at your jokes; who wants to listen to you and who will be eager to learn from you.

Sometimes people also think that you only have to stay calm when you are nervous and up-tight. Try the opposite. Give yourself more up-tightness. What you do is, to lie down somewhere. Starting from your feet to your head – pull every muscle in your body tight, clench your fists as hard as possible, pull your face, etc. Then you gradually start to release your muscles one by one – until your whole body is relaxed. If you still feel up-tight repeat the process.

Where to from here?

Become an explorer

As children we enjoyed the Star Trek series with Captain Kirk and his crew in the likes of Mr Spock, Doc and Scotty, exploring the Universe. I really enjoyed the introductory words: “To boldly go where no man has gone before.” These words are filled with risk; adventure and the excitement of discovering new things. A good communicator is willing to take up a challenge and to explore new horizons. Don’t fall for the fallacy:

“That’s who I am and I can’t do anything different.” The route to greatness, also as a presenter, is to go for the unknown and challenge your own comfort zones.

A friend and a colleague of mine had the belief that he only knows one way to bring his message across. He said: “I have my four points, and that’s the way I like it and that’s the way I do it.” What he is actually saying is that he has nestled himself into a cosy little comfort zone consisting of four points and is not willing to explore further. He fortunately is not saying this any more. But this is something we all like to do. We like to play it safe in some way or the other. Some of us are glued to our Powerpoint, and when the power goes down we’re in a tight spot; others want our notes and without our notes we fall to pieces, and so on.

Exploring, that is the only way to grow. Put the Captain Kirk suite on and go for it. Become the little boy and the little girl again who lie on the ground, poking with his or her little finger at a worm crawling over a leaf. Children know pretty well how to do Captain Kirk. Try it and it will rid you of the urge to compete and draw you into a world of new possibilities. In this world there isn’t only one person winning or only one way to communicate. In the world of possibilities there is a whole Universe to discover.

Exploration also leads to the inevitable and that is the risk of failure. We don’t want to fail and therefore we do not want to take a risk. I read somewhere that Peter Drucker said something along the lines of: “Sometimes you just can’t afford not to...” Whether you take the risk to explore or not, you are going to pay a price. The person who does not explore will lose eventually - lose his/her audience. People are going to get bored with the same old way of presenting and they are going to know what to expect. The person who explores will find that sometimes things will workout and other times it will not work out but at least no one will

be able to accuse him/her of the fact that it was boring. Exploration leads to excitement, to freshness and the anticipation with the audience that something new and magical could happen during the presentation.

In this process of exploring it is important to be kind to yourself. This does not mean that you have to back down every time you get kicked in the teeth. It means that “failing” should be seen as part of the learning curve. I know about presenters who just refuse to try something because they have tried once before and it didn’t work. Maybe it didn’t work because you only tried it once. I remember my worst sermon ever was a children’s sermon in my student days. It didn’t mean that communicating with children wasn’t for me. It only meant that that it was my first time and I needed a lot of practice.

Bottom line: Please don’t stop exploring and trying - that way you won’t bore people to death. Be smart and adopt the notion: “I just can’t afford not to.”

In conclusion

What I gave you in this book is theory with examples and practical things to do. It is up to you whether or not you are going to take the next step, and that is to risk; to practice and put the theory to the test. This is the only way the theory is going to become part of your own make up.

In my sporting days I read a lot of sports psychology and the one important thing athletes are warned about is how they handle themselves psychologically. If you are going to torture yourself for every mistake it’s going to make it worse. What, in actual fact is happening, is the left brain (that knows all the theory) which is scolding the right brain (the practical and creative side) like a parent is doing to a child. Scolding and fighting with yourself should rather be replaced with the need to learn.

The person, who fights with himself/herself about every little “mistake”, divides the world into wrong and right ways of doing things. Try to change this view by seeing every opportunity to present a message as an opportunity to learn and to grow. Because a communicator should be a learner and therefore should never be afraid to ask peers, friends and experts for advice. Ask them to come and listen to you. Good feedback is important.

I have been a communicator for years, and I still think that I need to learn a lot. Stay hungry; never stop learning; never stop trying different things and never stop practising. Good luck, and have fun.