



# As We Speak: How to Make Your Point and Have It Stick

By Peter Meyers, Shann Nix

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**A practical and empowering guide to public speaking and becoming a more effective, persuasive communicator in all areas of life.**

**The world is full of brilliant people whose ideas are never heard. This book is designed to make sure that you're not one of them.**

Even for the most self-confident among us, public speaking can be a nerve-racking ordeal. Whether you are speaking to a large audience, within a group, or in a one-on-one conversation, the way in which you communicate ideas, as much as the ideas themselves, can determine success or failure.

In this invaluable guide from two of today's most sought-after communication experts, you'll learn to master three core principles that you can apply in a wide variety of situations:

**Content:** Construct a clear and lucid architecture of ideas that will lead your listener through a memorable emotional experience.

**Delivery:** Use your voice and body in ways that engage your audience and naturally support your message.

**State:** Bring yourself into peak performance condition. The way you feel when you perform is the most frequently overlooked component of communication.

Accessible, inspiring, and laden with useful tips, *As We Speak* will help you discover your authentic voice and learn to convey your ideas in the most powerful and unforgettable way possible.

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## **As We Speak: How to Make Your Point and Have It Stick** By Peter Meyers, Shann Nix Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #244547 in Books
- Brand: Atria Books
- Published on: 2012-08-14
- Released on: 2012-08-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.44" h x .70" w x 5.50" l, .56 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **Review**

"This book engages the reader not only with the written word, but also with suggested exercises, master tips, feedback forms, and many other tools. Anyone seeking the power to engage need look no further."

--Magnus Bocker, chief executive officer, Singapore Exchange

"I wish I'd had this book twenty years ago when I was first starting out. It is an important work, not just about communication, but about the most effective ways to bring people together. This book has inspired me to become a better leader."

--Doreen Ida, VP, Marketing, Nestle USA

"Drawing from hundreds of years of cumulative knowledge, ranging from great Russian acting teachers to Fortune 500 CEOs and radio show personalities, "As We Speak "is as strikingly modern as it is practical and insightful. There's not a person I know who wouldn't benefit from a close study of Peter and Shann's profound ideas."

--Jack Conte, composer

"Effective communication is critical to success in virtually everything we do. "As We Speak "provides a fresh look and unique perspective that will prove valuable to anyone who needs to improve their communications skills, which is to say, basically . . . all of us!"

--Thomas Rowe, CEO, California State Fund Insurance

"The key to being a good coach is good communication. For coaches, leaders, teachers, or parents--this book will help motivate people to be the best they can be."

--Ronnie Lott, NFL Hall of Famer and sports announcer

"This career-changing book will enable you to overcome your fears and limitations, making you a far more effective speaker and inspiring leader of your team, your company, or your country. Their high-impact strategies have been transformational for me. Simply put, it's the single best guide to public speaking you'll ever read."

--Jon Cowan, president, Third Way, and former chief of staff of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

"Whether you are a seasoned speaker or a novice, the advice here will carry you to the next level, helping you make authentic audience connections, deliver relevant messages, and become a better communicator overall. This book truly helps one master the moment in all kinds of speaking situations."

--Governor Jack A. Markell

"This book is a how-to guide for creating a connection with one person or a thousand. Peter and Shann helped shift my interactions from talking to communicating. Their advice can help you transform your message so it will be received and appreciated."

--Mike Latham, Global Head of iShares

"This is a must-read book for every leader who wants to communicate with deep impact. It can be used as a guide for self-coaching in all situations where leaders need to stand and deliver."

--George A. Kohlrieser, professor of Leadership and Organizational Behavior, IMD Business School, and author of "Hostage at the Table: How Leaders Can Overcome Conflict, Influence Others, and Raise Performance"

"In the new global world, your success is defined by your ability to work across multiple cultures, time zones, and boundaries. This book gives you one crystal-clear universal strategy to do the most important thing of all--create trust."

--Yvon LeRoux, vice president, Cisco Systems

#### About the Author

**Peter Meyers** is the founder of Stand & Deliver Consulting Group. An award-winning actor, he currently teaches performance and leadership skills at Stanford University, Esalen Institute, and IMD-International Institute for Management Development, Lausanne Switzerland.

**Shann Nix** is an award-winning journalist, novelist, playwright, and radio talk show host.

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#### INTRODUCTION

**YOU'RE WAITING** IN the dark, about to go onstage to give your big presentation. Your palms are wet. You're pacing back and forth, thumbing through your notecards. You should have numbered them. You dropped them coming up the stairs, and now they're completely out of order. What does the first slide say? You can't remember. You should have stayed up longer last night. You should have spent more time preparing. Did you choose the right tie? Is the knot straight? You check it again. The suit that looked fine this morning suddenly feels crumpled and too tight.

Your face feels red and hot. What if you forget what you're going to say? What if they don't like you? What if they ask you tough questions? What if they find out that you're not as smart as they think you are? There are people in that audience who know more about this topic than you do, you're sure of it . . .

You peek out from behind the heavy red velvet curtain again. There are still people coming in and finding their seats. The people who are seated look bored already, and you haven't said a word yet. You spot your

boss in the second row, looking worried. He's got high hopes for you. Just this morning, he told you how much is riding on this presentation. Sitting next to your boss is Brad—the guy in the office who's after your job. Brad is leaning back in his chair, arms folded, smirking. He's got a clipboard and a red pen on his lap, ready to take notes and find the holes in your data. He's looking forward to this, you can tell.

You can see nearly all of your colleagues in the audience. If only it were just a customer meeting, where the worst that could happen was that you would lose the account. But these people know you. You will have to face them tomorrow in the elevator, and every morning after that. Whatever you say out there on that stage, you will have to live with for the next few years. It will be talked about, written about, gossiped about. They're already looking at their watches, pulling out their smartphones, poised to text and tweet the results of your efforts around the globe before you leave the stage.

You can feel your heart thumping against your ribs. All you can do is pray that your boss won't recognize the look of terror on your face. You can feel the sweat on your upper lip, and you wipe it off. You notice that your hands are trembling. You shove them in your pockets, then pull them out again.

A sympathetic gray-haired lady introduces you. There is a smattering of applause. You raise your chin, take a deep breath, and walk out onstage. The bright lights hit you like a wall. As you look into the audience, you can feel five hundred sets of eyeballs staring at you. Everything feels surreal, as if you're in a dream. Every nerve in your body is screaming at you to run. Your legs are moving on their own, like some macabre dance step. Why are you here? Why did you ever agree to this? Your hands, despite your best intentions, seem to have wound up in your pockets again. With an effort you pull them out, and grab the podium with white knuckles. Your mouth has gone dry, and you notice, too late, that there is no water glass at the podium. You quickly check the computer screen, and then look up. Your brain is completely blank. You cannot remember your name, much less the first line of your presentation. The silent seconds stretch out like hours. The people in the front row are watching you with an expression that you realize, after a moment, is pity.

Does this sound like your worst nightmare? If you're terrified by the thought of standing up and speaking in front of a group of people, you're not alone. And there's nothing wrong with you. The problem is that as human beings, *we are hardwired to fail* in a situation like this.

Why is that? Well, it's because of two tiny, almond-shaped structures in your brain called the amygdalae. Lodged in the oldest part of the brain, the amygdalae have only one job, and it's not to think—it's to keep you alive. The amygdalae never sleep; they are part of an early-warning system that constantly scans for danger and sends an alert to your body anytime you're under threat. And at the moment, standing on that stage, your DNA tells you that you are in serious trouble. Your mammalian brain, sharpened by millions of years of evolution, knows exactly what it means to feel hundreds of eyes staring at you from out of the darkness. It means you're about to be *lunch*.

Your amygdalae swing into action. They wrest control away from your evolved higher brain, and pass it back to the primitive part of your brain that specializes in survival. The adrenal glands, sitting just over your kidneys, start to pump adrenaline into your system. You breathe more rapidly, oxygenating the blood. Your heartbeat speeds up, preparing you for exertion. You start to sweat, becoming slippery and harder to grab. Your vision sharpens in preparation for battle or escape. Blood flow is redirected toward the large muscle groups in your arms and legs, to help you fight or run. All noncritical functions shut down. Blood is robbed from any organ not immediately necessary for survival.

Unfortunately for you right now, one of these nonessentials is your frontal cortex, where language is processed. The words of your carefully prepared presentation leave your head as the blood drains away from

your forebrain. You blank your opening. You feel stupid because, at that moment, your IQ has actually dropped. You are in the middle of what is called an **amygdala hijack**.

Being smart, successful, beautiful, or talented doesn't protect you from falling prey to an amygdala hijack. In fact, lots of Fortune 500 CEOs, global leaders, diplomats, ambassadors, and political candidates experience the same problem. And when they do, many of them call us.

Who are we? We're two people who come from the front lines of high-performance communication. Peter Meyers is the founder and director of Stand & Deliver, a company that travels the world to coach CEOs and top executives in the United States, Western Europe, Scandinavia, Russia, Japan, Latin America, and the Middle East. Shann Nix is an award-winning journalist, novelist, playwright, and former radio talk show host on a number one-rated radio station, speaking to nearly one million listeners a night. Together we have a combined fifty years of experience working in theater, radio, film, television, fiction, and journalism.

And what do we do? Well, when a leader steps into the spotlight, all eyes are on him. Whether it's the president of the United States or the president of the local library fund, the expectations when he opens his mouth are daunting. He's supposed to automatically exhibit certain qualities of insight, clarity, and confidence.

The problem is that being smart doesn't necessarily make someone a good communicator. In fact, the tragedy of many smart people is that their ability to *think* exceeds their ability to *speak*. And that's where we come in.

We are often called into a high-stakes situation twenty-four or forty-eight hours before the event, to avert a potential communication crisis. We've coached leaders in greenrooms just before they step out onstage, and rewritten speeches through the night before the morning of the presentation. We develop the language and content, put them on their feet, rehearse them, and give them the tools they need to rise to the occasion.

Sometimes we come in when the leaders of an organization need to win the hearts and minds of their people, to influence a team to step up to a new challenge or align disparate groups so that they're working more collaboratively.

We are often asked to work with a high-level executive who is intelligent and experienced, but who is undermining her own authority with old habits. We help her translate her ideas into action, and to speak with a level of authority and confidence so that she will finally get the attention she deserves. We might coach the senior vice president who is brilliant at his job, but falls apart when asked to report to the board. We help speakers provide clarity where there is confusion, credibility where there is doubt, and excitement where there is monotony.

We're brought in to make sure that the thinking gets the expression it deserves: that the quality of the ideas is matched by the vitality of the speaker's presence. We work with smart midlevel people who are getting passed over because they are unable to speak up. We help people who want to communicate better in meetings, who are asking questions like: "How do I jump in?" "How do I fight against the extroverts?" "How do I hold my own in the room if I'm more of a reflective thinker, or a numbers guy?" We're often called in to work with financial or analytical people who need to know how to translate data into memorable, compelling narratives. Often we are asked to work with CEOs who are intelligent but emotionally cold, struggling to connect with their people.

People generally call us for one of two reasons. Either they've already had some success in communication



and, having had a taste of it, want more; or they've had a painful experience like the one we described in the opening, and don't ever want to suffer like that again. A lot of the people who call us are "getting through" their presentations, but the process of preparation is filled with dread. They want to stop the panic, and start to enjoy the process and get better results. There are a lot of people out there who are already *pretty good* communicators. But in the words of Jim Collins, "good is the enemy of great." We work with people who are committed to raising their standards.

If you're reading this book, congratulations. You've clearly understood that if you want to get things done, you need to communicate well. Regardless of the technology available out there, you know that you still motivate people one presentation or one conversation at a time.

You now have access to the same information and practical techniques as the CEOs and organizational leaders who call us in to work with them, or fly around the world to take our trainings. It's here in your hands. This book and the accompanying Web-based links will provide you with a virtual learning experience that's designed to dramatically raise your impact when speaking.

You don't *get* confidence. It's not something you go out and acquire. And nobody can *give* you confidence. Confidence comes from challenging yourself to do difficult things, and coming out the other side. It comes from accumulating a series of victories, both large and small. Having the right knowledge and the right skills, at the right time, is absolutely essential. But your fears can only be conquered by doing the thing you fear the most, getting it right, and demonstrating to yourself that you can overcome it. This book is designed so that when you do face the fear, you will be victorious—time after time.

We will help you demystify the daunting experience of facing a crowd. Our intention is to move you through the fear, into a position of strength and generosity, so that you can offer your knowledge as a gift to others.

Why bother to think of speaking as an opportunity to give a gift?

There are two kinds of speaking. Sometimes we speak purely for our own benefit, to get something off our chests, or to think through something out loud. We may talk simply in reaction to something that has just happened. We usually talk based on what we want to say.

But there's another kind of speaking, in which you speak with the intention of having an impact on another human being. You are giving something, whether it is knowledge, insight, information, inspiration, an experience, or a feeling.

When someone speaks with the intention to impart something that will change the listener, it becomes an act of leadership. She constructs language designed to create something that doesn't exist yet. She asks the question "How do I make this a better situation?" and then uses her words and ideas to bring this about.

Of course it's good for the listener when the speaker has the intention of giving a gift. *But it's good for the speaker as well.* The fear and the monotony that are the bane of public speaking disappear in the face of a generous spirit. It's a mysterious principle of human communication: when you are giving, you tend to be more interesting, and fear is held at bay. Because you're engaged in a purpose that is larger than yourself, a magical effect occurs. You find the compelling reason to do what you're doing, and it draws you forward. The desire to make a difference is more exciting than being scared. The hope of something greater is stronger than the fear. It's the only thing that takes us through terror.

Well, you might say, that sounds great for people who get to make inspiring speeches. But what about me?

All I do is present data for quarterly updates. Will this work for me?

Yes!

Even if what you're doing is sitting in a toll booth and saying thank you after every interaction, it's the **intention** that informs your communication. Performing the most basic routine, including saying "Good morning," with the intention to give a gift will elevate what you're doing. The intention transforms the action.

PETER

**I once sat in a five-star restaurant in Paris, and watched a waiter working. He moved as if he were on skates, gliding so smoothly, with such balance, that it was a pleasure to watch him. As he put the food down on each table, he said something to the people sitting there. Each diner's face would light up as the waiter spoke. I watched the other waiters, and no one seemed to be having the same impact on the people they were serving. I caught this waiter's eye, and he came over to my table at once.**

**"May I help you, m'sieur?"**

**"I know this sounds like a strange question," I said, "but I've been watching you, and you seem to be having a huge impact on the people in this room. What are you saying to them?"**

**He smiled. "As a young man, when I first came to work in a fine restaurant, I was instructed by the headwaiter to say 'Bon app  tit' after I served each table. Because I was in such a rush, I would usually just put the plates down, repeat, 'Bon app  tit,' and leave quickly. One day I noticed that there was one second, after I put the plate down, when the diners would look up at me. I found that in that moment, I could look into their eyes, say, 'Bon app  tit,' and mean it. I could tell them without words, 'I wish that you have a good meal. I want you to be happy.' Through this simplest gesture, I could make them feel wonderful. It took only a moment to do this, to put the plate down in front of them as if I had cooked it myself. I went from serving food to serving a sacrament. I am the most fortunate of men, m'sieur. What an honor it is to host a meal, to bring nourishment to people, to offer things that brought them joy and delight!"**

**That's where I learned that with the right intention, you can transform anything into the opportunity to give a gift.**

This is good news for you as a speaker. What it means is that you don't have to be perfect. Your intention to give a gift trumps the necessity to be flawless. Yes, it's nice to get the words right. But it's okay to flub a line, or to make a mistake, because it's the *overall experience* that will linger in their mind.

We've all sat through the presentation of someone who said the right words and showed the right slides, but still left us feeling cold. Remember the now infamous Tiger Woods apology? He had every phrase and camera angle perfect—and ended up infuriating everyone even more. We can feel it when someone is aligned with serving our needs, and we can feel it when they're out to save their own backside. You can sense the difference.

Then there's the other end of the spectrum—we've all listened to someone who may have made plenty of mistakes, who was rough or raw or edgy, but who moved us in a way that we never forgot. Perfection is not the answer. You don't need to become slicker, glossier, or more "sales-y" to have more influence on the

people around you. You need to be *more authentic*.

Self-consciousness is nothing more than *too much concentration on self*. It's an obsessive concern with questions like: "Do I look good?" "Do I sound smart?" "How do I make sure I don't look like a fool?"

When we relieve ourselves of the compulsive concern with looking good, and put ourselves in the service of the listener, we start asking different questions. We ask questions like: "How can I make a difference to them?" "What knowledge can I share?" "What insights can I offer?" "How can I reassure them, congratulate them, lighten their workload?" "How can I bring them joy, comfort, curiosity, or excitement?"

At this moment, the prospect of facing a crowd stops being paralyzing, and becomes a great honor. Once a person is acting on behalf of another, a different quality shows up. This simple change of focus summons our best intelligence, our best energy. It unleashes expressive powers that were always there, but might have otherwise remained dormant. In the moments when we realize we're living for something larger than ourselves, we become more resourceful. You want more courage when you're speaking? Speak in the service of something larger than yourself. Courage is easy to summon when you're driven by a higher purpose. Any of us can reflect back on moments when we have stood up for something, or stood for something, and found that voice, depth, power, energy, or force of will was there when we needed it.

You engage in hundreds of conversations every week, with people who matter. You might be speaking to one person over the kitchen table, or to five hundred people in an auditorium. Each one of these conversations has the potential to change the course of events in your life, your career, your family, your school, or your organization. It is a bold and audacious act to ask for change.

It is, in fact, an act of leadership. And in order to achieve your desired result, your communication must be effective. It's that simple.

The world is full of brilliant people whose ideas are never heard. This book is designed to make sure that you're not one of them. It's about developing your ability to create change through the power of the spoken word. There has never been a greater need for you to step forward and make your own personal contribution. Now more than ever, we're looking to our parents, teachers, bosses, colleagues, and political leaders for direction, meaning, and trust. If you fall into one of those categories, this book is for you.

No matter what you actually do, you're in the relationship business. Your level of influence is determined by the quality of your relationships. And those relationships are defined by the quality of your communication. Good communication is like good manners: it takes the other person's well-being into account. It's about being clear, relevant, and succinct—crafting your message in a way that's easy for the other person to understand, absorb, and remember.

Once upon a time, information was power. Now that you can get all the data you need in a heartbeat, the information age is over. The Internet ended it, by making information free and equally available to everyone.

Now we are drowning in data, and starved for meaningful connection.

Trying to influence someone by simply offering him information doesn't work. Recent research has revealed the dirty secret of the human brain: decisions are made not on the left side of the brain, which deals with logic, facts, analysis, and sequential process, but on the right side of the brain, which deals with emotions, concepts, metaphors, humor and stories.<sup>1</sup> In other words, we make decisions based not on the facts, but on how we *feel*. We "go with our gut," or "have a hunch." Then we scurry over to the logical side of the

brain—the left side—and gather the facts and arguments we need to back up the decision we’ve already made.

So when you try to influence someone purely by giving him data, you’re speaking to the wrong part of the brain. You’re wasting your time.

We’ve been doing it backward. Now we know better. Expert communication these days is no longer about downloading data; it’s about creating an emotional experience for the listener. Realistically, you will forget 90 percent of whatever you heard today by the time your head hits the pillow—and so will your listener. As Warren Beatty once said, “They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.”

Most of us make our first mistake in communication before we ever open our mouths. We assume that the listener cares about what we want to say.

But they don’t.

Not because they’re selfish or bad people. It’s just that each person’s favorite subject is himself. And the question the listener is asking, as soon as you begin to speak, is: “What’s in it for me?” Still, most of us will go into a difficult conversation and stubbornly insist on talking about what we want to say.

There’s not a shred of evidence that this has any positive impact on the other person.

To truly communicate with another person, you need to think about what *they* need. Not just telling them what they want to hear—but understanding what the other person needs to feel, know, and experience in order to create a shift in their thinking.

***It’s not about you. It’s all about them.***

A leader’s impact is exponential; not just a few, but hundreds or thousands of people are affected by every word he speaks. If you’ve ever left a job because of your boss’s communication skills (or lack of them!) you’re not alone; it’s the reason most frequently given for leaving a position. And yet most people don’t wake up and say, “How can I ruin someone’s day with my words today?” The issue is that they wake up and ask, “How can I get across *what I want to say*?” without thinking about how it’s going to impact the listener. And in the process they often end up leaving people confused, angry, or overwhelmed.

What does this mean for someone who’s about to stand up and give a speech to a tough crowd? What about the parent who’s about to have a difficult conversation with a teenager? What does it mean for you when you’re about to walk into a situation where emotions are already running high?

This book is about how all the knowledge in the world comes down to one point of contact. It’s about your ability to create a bond with the listener so that even in a hostile situation, you begin to shift their experience, overcome the hostility, and instill a sense of trust.

The problem is that the situation itself conspires against us. For hundreds of thousands of years, our amygdalae have thrown us into a relentless scan for danger. We are conditioned to ask the question “How can I get through this without getting hurt?”

We need to recondition ourselves. To overcome this process requires nothing short of rewiring the brain.

So, how do you rewire the brain?

This work begins at the level of **mind-set** and **beliefs**. When you're trying to influence others, the first person you have to influence is yourself. This is the critical part of the process that is neglected in traditional presentation training. Lots of communication coaches will do "trait training," in which they tell you how to use your hands, inflect your voice, where to stand, how to use slides.

We say that speaking is an "inside job." After working with thousands of people across the world, it has become clear to us that generally the problem isn't outside, it's *inside*. Rarely do we come across someone who needs "vocal training." Your voice is fine. Your hands are fine. For decades, you've been using them to communicate effectively with other people. The question is, what are you doing inside your head that makes you behave unnaturally when you're in the spotlight?

Sure, this book will offer you detailed insider information on how professionals use their hands, eyes, body, and voice onstage. But more important, we'll give you the technology to explore and shift your own mind-set and beliefs about speaking, so that you truly begin to experience speaking as an opportunity to give a gift. You will learn to stop worrying about things like "Will they like me?" and look forward to your next presentation as a chance to *connect*.

Real communication can only occur when there is a human connection. Without connection, there is no influence, no rapport, no moving the listener from point A to point B. And this connection is *not* going to be forged during an eye-wateringly boring slide presentation in a darkened room, where someone is repeating text that you've already read on their slides. Connection happens when you show up, shed your armor, and let the listener see the light in your eyes. It's about getting close to the people with whom you're communicating, in such a way that you are able to meet some of their needs. We call this a **bond**.

And this bond can be a powerful and much-needed thing, because we live in frightening times. Many people feel that they are trapped in a downward spiral, in which they have no control over their own fate, and no faith that their leaders can save them. One of the few things you can control is your own ability to communicate clearly. Learning to clarify your outcome, connect with your listener, and make your point in a persuasive, memorable way makes you the master of your own destiny. It's the best possible investment you can make toward your own security. No matter where the future may take you, superior communication skills will give you the greatest possible advantage.

These days, trust is the highest currency. The level of trust that you win or lose is directly proportionate to the quality of your communication. We decide very quickly whether or not we trust someone, based not only on the information they give us but on *the way they say it*. You may have the best data in the world, but if your body language doesn't match your message, your listener will instinctively distrust what you say.

Think about it. During an average week, how much of your time is spent in meetings? And how many of those meetings go on far too long, with people jabbering on meaninglessly until you clutch for any form of caffeine or sugar, desperate just to stay awake?

Well, here's the bad news: those people are *you*. We all use far too many words. We have lost the art of brevity. We have forgotten how to convey our message in vivid, visceral language that makes communication pleasurable. We are draining the lifeblood of our organizations, killing millions of brain cells per hour with sheer boredom.

Look around you the next time you're in a meeting. What do you see? Are people engaged? Are they

contributing? Are they discovering and articulating their ideas with passion? Or are they sitting back and passively attending, waiting for the meeting to be over? For those of us in organizations, it's critical that we redefine these times when we are gathered together in a room as an opportunity to wake up our sense of purpose, excitement, and meaning.

People who consistently achieve results in this field have one thing in common: they've raised their standards. In the last century, you could afford to show up and do an average job. After fifty years, you might well be given a gold watch and a pat on the back. Today if you do an average job, you will simply be forgotten. Having good information is no longer good enough. Each person to whom you speak has thousands of bids on their attention every day, from advertising, TV, Internet, radio, digital billboards, texts, cold calls, etc. It is only at the level of outstanding that your voice will rise above the din. To break through the chatter, you need a strategy. We call this strategy **High Performance Communication**.

Think of it this way: **High Performance Communication gets results. Everything else is just talk.**

High Performance Communication is about creating clarity where there's confusion. It's about creating relevance when people feel disconnected. And most important, it's about inspiring people to achieve things they never thought possible.

As a species, we've spent a lot of time improving our machines, and very little improving our communication skills. In fact, communication hasn't changed much in the two thousand years since the Greeks perfected the art of dialectic in the forum. Over the past fifty years, we've actually lost ground in the art of conversation.

Today we exist in a web of connections, and technology gives us the power to extend that web all over the globe. The challenge is that too often technologies like e-mail, phone conferencing, and video communication can actually distance us from the listener, unless we are skillful enough to use these technologies to enhance the bond. The technology on its own won't automatically connect you to your listener—just as a musical instrument won't play itself. You must learn to use the medium so that it projects *you* through time and space, without dulling and deadening the human component.

In today's high-tech environment, the ability to use the spoken word well is becoming increasingly rare. Master it, and you will have an enormous advantage. Nothing will accelerate your career or your ability to create change in the world faster than developing your ability to communicate. And nothing will handicap you more than a failure to do so. Who hasn't seen the loss of an intimate relationship because of an inability to communicate? Who hasn't suffered the frustration of being unable to communicate clearly with their boss, kids, or colleagues?

For organizations, the cost of poor communication is not millions, but billions of dollars left on the table. Poor communication by senior management is the number one employee complaint.<sup>2</sup> Poor communication between medical professionals is the greatest cause of life-threatening medical mistakes.<sup>3</sup> And poor communication in families produces teenagers who are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors.<sup>4</sup> While the quantity of information we receive every day has increased exponentially, the quality of face-to-face communication has hit an all-time low.

Most of us spend between 75 and 90 percent of our day communicating—and yet we are never trained to do it well. For you, that's about to change. The good news is that the principles of High Performance Communication are universal. Once you've learned them, the very same rules apply whether you are speaking to one teenager or an audience of five thousand.

## GETTING STARTED

In our work, we've discovered an interesting fact: the higher you go in an organization, the shorter your attention span. CEOs don't have time to waste.

Neither do you.

So, we've gathered materials from many different sources, and distilled them into a handbook of core principles that works immediately to raise your level of confidence and your ability to influence. We have drawn heavily from the works of: Constantin Stanislavski, the great Russian acting teacher; psychologist Abraham Maslow, for his insights on needs analysis; and motivational speaker Anthony Robbins, for his expertise on state and peak performance. We have also taken much information and inspiration from the fields of sports, psychology, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, and the martial and performing arts.

We have kept this book intentionally lean and fast-paced, designed to provide you with practices that will make you Monday morning-ready. But there's a world of wonderful theoretical reading to be done in many fields that connect through the discipline of communication. For more detailed information on our sources, citations, and favorite books, please see the end notes and bibliography at the end. A note about gender references: to avoid awkward "him or herself" constructions, we have scattered male and female pronouns through the text at random. None of these references is intended to convey anything specific about males or females. We've also used fictional names in examples throughout.

*This book is not about learning to relax.* As Jerry Lewis said, "If you're not nervous, you're either a liar or a fool, but you're not a professional." You're never going to be relaxed in a high-stakes situation—nor should you be. Olympic athletes, martial artists, and Broadway actors are not relaxed before they go on. Everyone experiences a rapid surge in energy before an event.

The difference between performing and choking is determined by *what you do with that energy*. An amateur locks the energy in her throat, and chokes on the fear. A top performer interprets the energy as a sign that she is ready, and releases it with her breath. German psychotherapist Fritz Perls put it this way: "Fear is only excitement without the breath." You will learn a method for turning your fear into excitement.

This method is based on principles of human behavior. They are universal laws like the laws of gravity, which have to do with the ways that human beings in every culture respond to certain stimuli. Like good cooking ingredients, once you know how to apply these principles, you can combine them in any number of ways to suit a specific situation.

This book is not just about ideas; it's about putting ideas into action. We will explain a concept, show you how it works, and give you the techniques that will enable you to master it. The point of this training is not just to make a little improvement in your communication skills. It's about producing *transformational results* that will have an immediate impact on the quality of your relationships.

How can you learn to communicate from a book?

High Performance Communication requires three things:

1. A clear strategy.
2. Practice.

### 3. Feedback.

This book will give you the strategy. But we can't make you practice—you're going to have to do that yourself. If you want to build muscle, you're going to have to go to the gym and actually lift the weights. Just thinking about it won't do the trick.

You're also going to have to get feedback from your listeners. When you're communicating, the only thing that really counts is *the listener's experience*. Trying to improve your communication skills without getting feedback is like trying to fly a plane without instruments—you don't have the information you need to chart your course. We've provided forms in Appendix One, at the back of the book, to make that process simple and specific. Ask your colleagues, hire a coach, beg your friends, or phone us. But one way or another, get feedback!

Although you can read the book on its own, we've designed it as a multidimensional learning experience, with interactive things for you to see, hear, and do. All of these supplemental items are available for you to download. Before you begin Chapter One, go to <http://www.standanddelivergroup.com>, where you'll see a prompt for "As We Speak." Along with the forms you'll find some bonus audio tracks there to supplement the reading.

Your success in this area, as in any other, depends on your commitment. Read this as if you were taking a training with us, and allow us to be your coaches. Lean into the training, grab it, and pull it toward you. Do the activities. Participate in the exercises. Download the forms, and fill them out. Be willing to stretch to your outer limits. That's how you develop new capacities.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The good news is that there are only three things you have to master in High Performance Communication. They are:

### 1. **Content.**

### 2. **Delivery.**

### 3. **State.**

and they work together, as diagrammed below:

Part One focuses on **Content**, which is the sum total of the information you want to convey. You will learn to rapidly construct a clear and lucid architecture of ideas designed to lead your listener through a memorable emotional experience.

Part Two is all about **Delivery**, or the art of expression. You will learn the principles of performance used by professionals—how to use your body, voice, eyes, and hands in a way that naturally supports your message. You will expand the range and effective use of your voice with the help of vocal techniques that are included in the downloads accompanying this book.

Part Three is about the element that drives both your content and your delivery: your **State**. State is the way you feel when you speak, and it is both the most powerful and most frequently overlooked component of communication. Your state speaks louder than your words. Every professional performer has ways to



jumpstart his system into peak performance condition before stepping onto the stage or field, or into the conference room. High performance communicators learn to direct their state to meet the demands of the event.

Part Four applies the principles you've learned to **specific situations**. How do you handle a difficult face-to-face conversation? How about using technology—what's the most effective way to use the different media of phone conference, video, or e-mail? How do you communicate in a crisis, when all eyes are on you and emotions are running high?

Finally, Part Five supplies you with some powerful **tools** that will help you to create a compelling personal vision, organize and clarify your engagements into a relationship dashboard, and enhance your ability to collaborate and innovate with others.

## START WHERE YOU ARE

Chances are, you're reading this book for one of two reasons. Either:

1. You're already getting results from your communication. The success that you've had so far has given you an appetite for greater possibilities. You understand that the ability to speak well is ultimately the deciding factor between who gets the job or promotion, and who stays behind. For you, this book is about moving to the next level of your potential, and creating the conditions for a breakthrough.

or

1. You've had a bad experience, or are afraid of having a bad experience when you stand up to speak. Something might have happened to you that is so painful, you've decided *never again*. The pain has motivated you to gain some expertise. Maybe you've decided that there's something holding you back, and it's the way you talk. You might be undermining your own authority and sabotaging yourself, because you haven't yet learned to communicate your best ideas with power and speed. For you, this book is about identifying ineffective habits, and getting out of your own way.

Either way, in order to move ahead, you need to know two things:

1. Where are you now?
2. Where are you going?

To accomplish this, fill out the self-assessment on pages 22–23. This will give you specific information about what you're already doing well, and what's holding you back. Go through each question and score yourself, assigning yourself the appropriate number value. *Be rigorously honest.*

## Self-Assessment

**CONTENT PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING WITH:** 5 = *almost always true* 4 = *usually true* 3 = *sometimes true* 2 = *usually not true* 1 = *almost never true* I bring insightful analysis and relevant detail to my presentations. I support my ideas with evidence and examples to illustrate my points. I speak to the emotional as well as intellectual needs of my listener. I use stories and vivid imagery to help people feel and

see what I am describing. I create powerful closings that come full circle with my opening—reinforcing my key point and leaving the audience feeling satisfied. I create a strong opening by talking about what the listener truly cares about, and rarely begin by talking about myself. My talk resembles an engaging narrative more than a series of slides, bullet points, and lists of data. I typically open a conversation or presentation with a central theme or sentence, which I reinforce throughout. I organize my ideas in an integrated and sequential narrative flow with ideas building upon each other, making it easier for the listener to understand. I use brevity, and never go on too long. People leave my presentations knowing clearly what I was saying. I focus on my objective when I'm speaking. I know why I'm speaking and what I want from a particular audience or listener. My listener is consistently moved to new insight, decision, or action. My language is fresh, active, and easy to understand. I rarely use vague or confusing jargon, acronyms, or clichés. <

**CONTENT**TOTAL SCORE **DELIVERY** PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING WITH: 5 = *almost always true* 4 = *usually true* 3 = *sometimes true* 2 = *usually not true* 1 = *almost never true* I am fully aware of what is happening in the room when I'm speaking to people; I can see and read their responses, and I adjust as needed. I am comfortable using gestures in front of a group and never feel awkward about using my hands. I always listen to people and demonstrate that I care about their point of view. I take time to prepare myself mentally and physically, so that when I speak to one person or one hundred, I am in an optimum performance state. I begin by gaining rapport with others. I start by creating common ground before jumping into my agenda. I maintain eye contact while speaking to groups. My language and tone are generally warm, personable, and conversational. I use slides, handouts, or media only to support my presentation; I don't let my slides become more important than my presence. When I speak, I know that I vary my tempo, pitch, and volume to enliven my content with nuance and variety. < **DELIVERY**TOTAL SCORE

Now take the following steps:

1. Add up your scores. You will have two separate totals: one for the content, and one for the delivery. For example, you might end up with a score of 30 for content, and 20 for delivery.
2. Take that score, and plot it on the performance grid below. Content is on the vertical axis, delivery on the horizontal. Put a solid dot where you are now.

## Interpreting Your Score

If you're in the **lower left** box, you're in trouble. You've scored yourself low on both content *and* delivery. Chances are that the listener is having difficulty connecting to your ideas, as well as your style. The result is that they are bored. The danger is that they're disengaging, falling asleep, or getting angry. You need to work on both content and delivery.

If you're in the **lower right** box, you've scored yourself high on delivery, which means that your style—your posture, expression, and voice—are engaging the listener, but the substance is lacking. You may need to work on developing more clarity, relevance, and brevity. People are engaged and maybe even entertained by you, but they're not being nourished intellectually.

If you're in the **upper left**, you've scored yourself high on content, but low on delivery. Most likely your thinking is strong, but your voice and body are not supporting your message in a dynamic way. You are articulating clear points, organizing information well, and targeting your message effectively to the listener—but your delivery is possibly flat and dull, making it difficult for people to stay engaged. The danger here is that the listener wants to hear your good ideas; they are working so hard that they're frustrated. At its worst, there is a level of tedium that produces a negative impact.

If you're in the **upper right**, your ideas are clear, relevant, and organized. Your delivery is dynamic and compelling. You're bringing an appropriate level of energy, passion, and clear thinking that brings value to your listener. You're not only inspiring people, but you're creating results. After listening to you, people are ready to act—to do something. That's High Performance Communication.

See the diagram on the following page for a fuller explanation of the performance grid.

*Note:* The closer you are to the center of any quadrant, the milder the effect you're having on the listener. As you move to the outer edges, the effect becomes more extreme. In other words, if you're in the "frustrated" quadrant, and you're close to the X-Y axis, your listener is mildly frustrated. If you're at the outer edges, they're grinding their teeth when they listen to you!

**Note THE LISTENER FEELS: FRUSTRATED INSPIRED APATHETIC ENTERTAINED** - Great Content - Great Content - Poor Content - Poor Content - Flat Performance - Engaging Performance - Flat Performance - Engaging Performance - Audience is interested in the message but has difficulty staying focused. - Audience is stimulated by ideas and moved to take action. - Audience daydreams or performs tasks while pretending to listen. - Audience is pleasantly engaged but dismisses event as superficial. Notice that the upper right is the **only** quadrant in which you get positive results. Every other quadrant *produces a negative experience for the listener.*

### What Next?

1. If you want to create growth, you need a clear and compelling goal. What are the results you want to create in your relationships at work, at home, and with your friends? In order to achieve that, where does your communication need to appear on the performance grid? Put an X on that spot. (Hint—it should be somewhere in the upper right quadrant!)
2. Draw a line between the solid dot that marks where you are now and the X that marks where you need to be.
3. Note the angle of the line. If the line is vertical, you need to work on content. If it's horizontal, you need to work on delivery. If the line is at an angle, you need work on both content and delivery.

Let this analysis guide you as you go through the book; it will tell you where you need to concentrate your focus first. You become a cocreator in your own curriculum by directing how you want to learn. *We want you to get results.* If you have a limited amount of time, go straight to the place where you need the most work.

But the elements of content, delivery, and state are linked. If you want to achieve a breakthrough in your communication, you need to master all three.

If you want to go deeper and take the assessment process to the next level, we've included an additional tool in Appendix One at the back of the book. This is an assessment survey that you hand out to people you know, so that you can get a 360-degree survey of exactly how listeners are experiencing your communication. The results you get may surprise you! Use the communication feedback data to determine the order in which you pick up the skills.

After two decades of coaching, we know that when you're learning something new, it's essential to acquire

one skill at a time. Don't try to focus on everything at once. Keep the book on your desk and use it as a handbook, a guide, and a reference tool. Like any muscle group, the new skill sets that you are developing will be strengthened over time with practice. If you're stepping into the spotlight within forty-eight hours, go straight to delivery and finish with state. If you are facing a presentation that is a week or more away, start with content. Move on to delivery and finish with state.

## **OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU**

If you're not under a deadline, start by going through the full assessment process. Evaluate yourself, then get the key people around you to complete the assessment in Appendix One. Apply and practice this technology for thirty days. Then hand out the assessments again, to the same people.

Compare the results.

You'll be amazed at the difference—we promise.

Now, let's get to work.

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Donna Macdonald:**

Book is usually written, printed, or created for everything. You can recognize everything you want by a book. Book has a different type. As it is known to us that book is important matter to bring us around the world. Next to that you can your reading expertise was fluently. A book As We Speak: How to Make Your Point and Have It Stick will make you to always be smarter. You can feel much more confidence if you can know about every thing. But some of you think this open or reading any book make you bored. It is far from make you fun. Why they could be thought like that? Have you in search of best book or suitable book with you?

#### **Gary Morrell:**

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#### **Carmela Randle:**

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#### **Franklin Crossland:**

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