

Notes and highlights for
Everyone Communicates, Few Connect

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Prologue

Have you ever thought about why you react the way you do when you get disconnected? Being disconnected wastes your time. It interrupts the flow of what you're trying to accomplish, and it undermines your productivity. The bottom line is that connecting is everything when it comes to communication.

Part I: Connecting Principles

Connecting is the ability to identify with people and relate to them in a way that increases your influence with them.

Successful presidents exhibit five qualities that enable them to achieve things that others don't: vision, pragmatism, consensus building, charisma, and trustworthiness.

You will only be able to reach your potential — regardless of your profession or chosen path — when you learn to connect with other people.

The ability to connect with others begins with understanding the value of people.

... mistake as others who don't connect: they see themselves as the center of the conversation.

Good teachers, leaders, and speakers don't see themselves as experts with passive audiences they need to impress. Nor do they view their interests as most important. Instead, they see themselves as guides and focus on helping others learn.

Connecting is never about me. It's about the person with whom I'm communicating. Maturity is the ability to see and act on behalf of others. Immature people don't see things from someone else's point of view. They rarely concern themselves with what's best for others. In many ways, they act like small children.

... only mature people who are focused on others are capable of truly connecting with others.

Today I see my purpose as adding value to others.

However, to add value to others, one must first value others.

THREE QUESTIONS PEOPLE ARE ASKING ABOUT YOU

You must be able to communicate that attitude of selflessness.

1. “Do You Care For Me?”

As Calvin Miller says, when most people listen to others speak, they are silently thinking, I am loneliness waiting for a friend. I am weeping in want of laughter. I am a sigh in search of consolation. I am a wound in search of healing. If you want to unlock my attention, you have but to convince me you want to be my friend.

2. “Can You Help Me?”

3. Can I Trust You?”

You can connect with others if you’re willing to get off your own agenda, to think about others, and to try to understand who they are and what they want.

In other words, when we try to communicate, we must include: More than 90 percent of the impression we often convey has nothing to do with what we actually say.

- Thought: something we know
- Emotion: something we feel
- Action: something we do

I believe those three components are essential to connect with others as well. Fail to include any one of the three and there will be a disconnection from people and a breakdown in communication. More specifically, here’s how I think the breakdown would occur. If I try to communicate:

- Something I know but do not feel, my communication is dispassionate.
- Something I know but do not do, my communication is theoretical.
- Something I feel but do not know, my communication is unfounded.
- Something I feel but do not do, my communication is hypocritical.
- Something I do but do not know, my communication is presumptuous.
- Something I do but do not feel, my communication is mechanical.

... when I include all three components — thought , emotion , and action — my communication has conviction, passion, and credibility. The result is connection.

Nothing can happen through you until it happens to you.

Your message must also be more than just a message. It must have value. It must deliver on the promise it offers to its audience. It must have the potential to change other people’s lives.

Connection Checklist, which includes the following questions:

Integrity — Did I Do My Best?

Expectation — Did I Please My Sponsor?

Relevance — Did I Understand And Relate To The Audience?

Value — Did I Add Value To The People?

Application — Did I Give People A Game Plan?

Change — Did I Make A Difference?

THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF CONNECTION

1. What People See — Connecting Visually

- Eliminate Personal Distractions
- Expand Your Range of Expression
- Move with a Sense of Purpose
- Maintain an Open Posture
- Pay Attention to Your Surroundings

2. What People Understand — Connecting Intellectually

To effectively connect with people on an intellectual level, you must know two things: your subject and yourself.

Effective communicators are comfortable in their own skin.

3. What People Feel — Connecting Emotionally

... people with charisma possess an outward focus instead of an inward one. They pay attention to other people, and they desire to add value to them.

4. What People Hear — Connecting Verbally

“Four Unpardonable Sins of a Communicator”: being unprepared, uncommitted, uninteresting, or uncomfortable.

Author and communication coach Susan RoAne, author of *How to Work a Room*, describes what it takes to connect with people in social settings. On her Web site she offers “Ten Tips from the Mingling Maven,” skills to be used when meeting new people. As you read her list, think about how many of them require energy. She says magnificent minglers ...

- Possess the ability to make others feel comfortable
- Appear to be confident and at ease
- Have an ability to laugh at themselves (not at others)
- Show interest in others; they maintain eye contact, self-disclose, ask questions, and actively listen
- Extend themselves to others; they lean into a greeting with a firm handshake and a smile
- Convey a sense of energy and enthusiasm — a *joie de vivre*
- Are well rounded, well informed, and well - mannered
- Prepare vignettes or stories of actual occurrences that are interesting, humorous, and appropriate
- Introduce people to each other with an infectious enthusiasm (there is no other kind) that motivates conversation between the introducees
- Convey respect and genuinely like people — the core of communicating

FIVE PROACTIVE WAYS TO USE ENERGY FOR CONNECTING

1. Connecting Requires Initiative ... Go First

2. Connecting Requires Clarity... Prepare

Who are they? What do they care about? Where do they come from? When did they decide to attend? Why are they here? What do I have that I can offer them? How do they want to feel when we conclude?

3. Connecting Requires Patience ... Slow Down

Good connectors don't always run the fastest, but they are able to take others with them. They exhibit patience.

4. Connecting Requires Selflessness ... Give

I think it all comes down to a communicator who is primarily a giver instead of a taker. The human spirit senses and feeds on a giving spirit. The spirit is actually renewed by a teacher with a giving spirit — this is proven by the fact that when people hear what you have said many times, they are still filled. Your teaching is essentially giving, and people can receive all day from a giver, while they tire quickly of a taker. Think about what Jesus taught — half the time the people didn't know what he was talking about, but they listened attentively. Jesus was giving — feeding them. Not taking. It was at a spirit (heart) level — he wasn't just giving information.

Here's how I think it works. If communicators teach out of need, insecurity, ego, or even responsibility, they are not giving.

- The needy person wants praise, something the audience must give.
- The insecure person wants approval and acceptance, something the audience must give.
- The egotistical person wants to be lifted up, to be superior and just a little bit better than everyone else, something the audience must give.
- Even the person motivated by responsibility wants to be recognized as the faithful worker, to be seen as responsible — something the audience must bestow upon them.

Many communicators teach in one of these taking modes all the time and are not aware of it. Then there's the giver. This person teaches out of love, grace, gratitude, compassion, passion, and the overflow. These are all giving modes. In each of these modes of the heart, the audience doesn't have to give anything — only receive. The teaching, then, becomes a gift. It fills and renews.

We see others, as José Manuel Pujol Hernández suggested, as steps or bridges. If we see them as steps, we use them to raise ourselves up; if bridges, to connect.

People who want to connect with others must give their all. And that takes energy!

5. Connecting Requires Stamina ... Recharge

Public speaking is listed as Americans' number - one fear, before death at number five, and loneliness, weighing in at number seven. Guess that means that most of us are less afraid of dying alone than of making fools of ourselves in front of others. Fear is a powerful motivator for leadership, which means that you stand above the crowd. There is the fear of being seen as exceptional and different; the fear of the unknown; the fear of being a fraud; the fear of forgetting everything you were going to say; the fear of being at risk publicly; and the fear of being up there, alone. They all come together, for most of us, in public speaking.

... handful of factors they seem to draw upon that cause people to listen to them.

Relationships — Who You Know

Insight — What You Know

Success — What You Have Done

Ability — What You Can Do

Sacrifice — How You Have Lived

You must play to your strengths, develop your own style, and cultivate whatever skills you can in order to connect with people.

Five qualities:

1. He Possesses Great Confidence
2. He Exhibits Authenticity
3. He Prepares Thoroughly
4. He Utilizes Humor
5. He Focuses on Others

Intentional Inclusion

If you did nothing else but intentionally include others in your best experiences and favorite things, you would become a much better connector overnight.

To connect well one -on-one, you need to:

- Have interest in the person.
- Place value on that person.
- Put his or her interests ahead of your own.
- Express gratitude to and for that person.

Part II: Connecting Practices

Look for common ground.

It's difficult to find common ground with others when the only person you're focused on is yourself!

BARRIERS TO FINDING COMMON GROUND

The top four barriers to finding common ground. You must guard against them:

1. Assumption — “I Already Know What Others Know, Feel, And Want”

We need to be like a good tailor. Every time he sees a client, he takes new measurements. He never assumes people are the same as the last time he saw them.

2. Arrogance — “I Don't Need To Know What Others Know, Feel, Or Want”
3. Indifference — “I Don't Care To Know What Others Know, Feel, Or Want”
4. Control — “I Don't Want Others To Know What I Know, Feel, Or Want”

Secrecy spawns isolation, not success.

Good leaders and communicators don't isolate, and they don't deliberately keep people in the dark. They inform people, make them a part of what's going on, and include them in decision making whenever possible. You cannot establish common ground if you refuse to let anyone know who you are or what you believe.

CULTIVATING A COMMON GROUND MIND-SET

If you want to increase your odds of connecting with others, then make the following choices every day of your life:

→ Availability — “I Will Choose To Spend Time With Others”

→ Listening — “I Will Listen My Way To Common Ground”

“Why should I listen to you ? What's in it for me if I let you in ?”

→ Questions — “I Will Be Interested Enough In Others To Ask Questions”

Remember the word FORM, which stands for family, occupation, recreation, and message.

→ Thoughtfulness — “I Will Think Of Others And Look For Ways To Thank Them”

→ Openness — “I Will Let People Into My Life”

Communication is all about the openness of finding commonality with others. In fact, the word communication comes from the Latin word communis, meaning “common.” Before we can communicate effectively, we must establish our commonness — the better we do that, the greater the potential for effective communication.

→ Likability — “I Will Care About People”

How does a person become likable? By caring about others.

→ Humility — “I Will Think Of Myself Less So I Can Think Of Others More”

The humble leader is not weak, but strong ... is not pre-occupied with self, but with how best to use his or her strengths for the good of others. If you want to impact people, don't talk about your successes; talk about your failures.

Rick Warren, who advises that humility comes from:

- Admitting our weaknesses
- Being patient with others' weaknesses
- Being open to correction
- Pointing the spotlight at others

→ Adaptability — “I Will Move From My World To Theirs”

CONNECTORS GO FIRST

Four pointers to help you become a better connector.

1. Ask, “Do I Feel What You Feel?” Before Asking, “Do You Feel What I Feel?”
2. Ask, “Do I See What You See?” Before Asking, “Do You See What I See?”
3. Ask, “Do I Know What You Know?” Before Asking, “Do You Know What I Know?”
4. Ask, “Do I Know What You Want?” Before Asking, “Do You Know What I Want?”

When I want to really get to know someone, I ask three questions. People’s answers to these give me great insight into someone’s heart. The questions are: What do you dream about? What do you sing about? What do you cry about?

Use the following pattern: Feel, Felt, Found, Find.

- FEEL: Try to sense what they feel and acknowledge and validate their feelings.
- FELT: Share with them that you have also felt the same way.
- FOUND: Share with them what you found that has helped you.
- FIND: Offer to help them find help for their lives.

As leaders and communicators, our job is to bring clarity to a subject, not complexity.

Making things simple is a skill, and it’s a necessary one if you want to connect with people when you communicate.

For my needs, a quote or illustration had to fit in one or more of these four categories:

- Humor — something that will make people laugh
- Heart — something that will captivate people’s emotions
- Hope — something that will inspire people
- Help — something that will assist people in a tangible way

Great communicators leave their audiences with great clarity.

After speaking in more than fifty different countries in hundreds of venues, I have developed a “3 S” strategy: Keep it Simple. Say it Slowly. Have a Smile.

THE ART OF SIMPLICITY

1. Talk To People, Not Above Them

I went from being a speaker who wanted to impress others to one who wanted to impact them.

“Pastor, I understood everything you said, and it made sense.”

Greater complexity is never the answer in communication — if your desire is to connect.

2. Get To The Point

All good communicators get to the point before their listeners start asking, “What’s the point?”

Everyone likes clarity.

Your goal should be to get to the point as soon as you have established a connection with people and to make as great an impact on others as you can with as few words as possible.

3. Say It Over And Over And Over And Over Again

4. Say It Clearly

Being simple as a communicator isn’t a weakness. It’s a strength!

5. Say Less

It may seem counterintuitive, but if you want to take your communication to the next level and connect with people, don’t try to impress them with your intellect or overpower them with too much information. Give them clarity and simplicity. People will relate to you, you will connect, and they’ll want to invite you back to communicate with them again.

There’s a real art to making communication simple but memorable. It took me years to learn how to do it. Two good ways to approach a message are to ask yourself: “What are the bare essentials that I need to communicate for people to understand it?” and “How can I make those few essential points memorable?”

HOW TO BE INTERESTING

As you prepare to communicate, no matter whether it’s to one, one hundred, or one thousand, try to do as many of these seven things as possible:

1. Take Responsibility For Your Listeners

I never forget that it’s my job to create interest in listeners, activate the audience, enjoy the experience, and add value to others.

2. Communicate In Their World

People don't remember what we think is important; they remember what they think is important.

3. Capture People's Attention From The Start

Start with a Comment About the Situation or Setting.

Introduce Yourself.

Relax.

Begin with Humor.

Create a Sense of Anticipation.

4. Activate Your Audience

Ask Questions.

Get People Moving.

Ask People to Interact.

5. Say It So It Sticks

Link What You Say with What People Need.

Find a Way to Be Original.

Use Humor.

Use a Shocking Statement or Statistic.

Say Things in an Interesting Way.

Learn to Pause.

6. Be Visual

7. Tell Stories

There are a lot of public speakers who don't connect, and there are a lot of connectors who don't speak publicly. I've tried to provide some tools for people who desire to improve their speaking, but I want to remind you that connecting isn't primarily about learning to become a better presenter. It's about becoming the kind of person others want to connect with.

Here are some tips from Martin Thielen, who attended the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee. He observed that the best presenters exhibited the following:

- **Enthusiasm.** The storytellers obviously enjoyed what they were doing, expressing themselves with joy and vitality.
- **Animation.** The presentations were marked by lively facial expressions and gestures.
- **Audience Participation.** Almost every storyteller involved the audience in some way, asking listeners to sing, clap, repeat phrases, or do sign language.
- **Spontaneity.** Although the stories were memorized, storytellers responded freely to listeners.
- **No Notes.** This was truly an oral event. Storytellers didn't read their stories; they told them, which allowed for eye contact.
- **Humor.** Humor was interjected even in serious or sad stories.

Which of these can you use to enliven your communication?

Inspiration Equation ... What They Know + What They See + What They Feel = Inspiration

WHAT PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW

In the context of connecting, people need to know you're on their side.

+ People Need To Know That You Understand Them And Are Focused On Them

As you prepare to communicate to others, you must let them know that you understand them and want to help them. You must learn their inspirational language and speak it to them. How do you do that? By asking these questions:

- a. What are they thinking?
- b. What are they saying?
- c. What are they doing?

+ People Need To Know That You Have High Expectations Of Them

Inspiring communicators always expect a lot from their listeners.

WHAT PEOPLE NEED TO SEE

- + People Need To See Your Conviction
- + People Need To See Your Credibility
- + People Need To See Evidence Of Your Character

WHAT PEOPLE NEED TO FEEL

The most important factor in the Inspiration Equation is what they feel.

If you want to inspire people, there are three things you need in order to help them feel:

- + People Need To Feel Your Passion For The Subject And Them

When you speak, do you have passion? Real passion is more than just an emotion that you whip up to get listeners excited. It comes from a much deeper place than that. If you're not sure, the next time before you speak to people, ask yourself these four questions:

- Do I believe what I say?
- Has it changed me?
- Do I believe it will help others?
- Have I seen it change others?

- + People Need To Feel Your Confidence In Yourself And Them
- + People Need To Feel Your Gratitude For Them

ACTION — INSPIRATION AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

It's not enough to help someone feel good. Understanding changes minds. Action changes lives. If you really want to help others, you need to take your communication to the next level — which is to call people to action.

When do inspired people take action? When you do two things:

- Say The Right Words At The Right Time
- Give People An Action Plan

I think of myself as a motivational teacher, not a motivational speaker. What's the difference between the two? A motivational speaker makes you feel good, but the next day you're not sure why. A motivational teacher makes you feel good, and the next day you know why and take action. In other words, the first kind of communicator wants you to feel good, and the second wants you to do good.

Connectors inspire people to move from “know how” to “do now.”

Action plan to people based on the word ACT .

- Put a letter “A” beside those things you learned that you need to Apply.
- Put a letter “C” beside those things you learned that you need to Change.
- Put a letter “T” beside those things you learned that you need to Teach.

The true purpose of inspiration isn't applause. Its value isn't in the wonder it may create or the positive feelings it can evoke in others. The true test of inspiration is action. That is what makes a difference.

Credibility is all about trust. Stephen M.R. Covey wrote in *The Speed of Trust* about the impact of credibility in business. He asserts, “Trust means confidence,” because trust erases worry and frees you to get on with other matters. “Low trust,” he writes, “is an unseen cost in life and business, because it creates hidden agendas and guarded communication, thereby slowing decision-making. A lack of trust stymies innovation and productivity. Trust, on the other hand, produces speed because it feeds collaboration, loyalty and ultimately, results.” As time goes by, the way people live outweighs the words they use. Trust plays the same role in all relationships, and it always impacts communication. To be an effective connector over the long haul, you have to establish credibility by living what you communicate. If you don't, you undermine trust, people disconnect from you, and they stop listening. The bottom line is that the effectiveness of the communication relies more on the character of the messenger than on the content of the message.

Zig Ziglar says, “The most influential person who will talk to you all day, is you. So, you should be very careful what you say to you.”

Where some people see a message as a lesson to be given, connectors look at a message as a life to be lived. Where some offer a message that is an exception to how they live, connectors communicate messages that are extensions of how they live. For some communicators, content is the most important issue. For connectors, credibility is the most important issue.