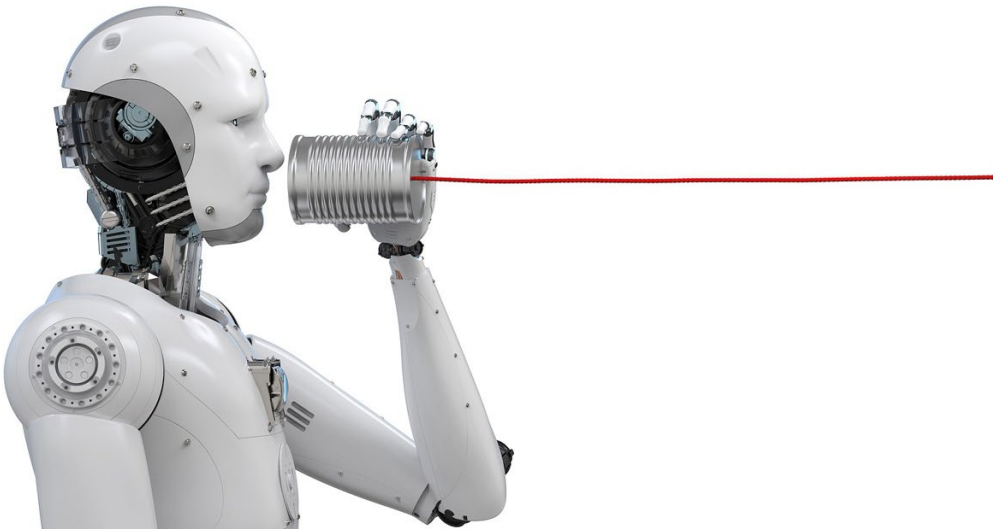




Issue 222 - September 2021



The American poet, Robert Frost, said, "Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep saying it."

Ironically, in today's age of instantaneous communication and social media, communication breakdowns are one of the biggest complaints we hear. It's a complex issue with both cause and effect tightly intertwined. In many cases, people don't have the skills to address tough issues with each other. And so, they do it poorly and raise defensiveness in the other person or stir up conflict that can get personal and quite vicious. People are often afraid to speak up because they have seen others who have been ostracized, nudged off the promotion track, ignored, or punished with the least desirable assignments.

Compounding communication issues is information overload. German sociologist, Hartmut Rosa, calculates that since pre-modern times, communications have increased by a factor of ten million times and information transmission by ten billion.

It's not clear how Rosa delineates information and communication. There is a

In this Issue:

Inspiring with the Power of Persuasion: Do You Have the Write Stuff?

Drowning in Information While Thirsting for Communication

Read *The Leader Letter* in Weekly Installments

Feedback and Follow-Up



Customized, virtual keynote or presentation with Jim Clemmer

[click for details](#)

crucial difference between them. Many managers confuse the two. We're drowning in information, while thirsting for communication.

Many managers confuse "communicating" with "dumping information" through e-mail or "death by PowerPoint." This chokes meaningful two-way communication. Everyone is scrambling to frantically clear inboxes or grind through yet another call or meeting. As publisher Malcolm Forbes said, "before you say what you think, be sure you have." Too often, communication quantity is confused with quality, and little time is given to thoughtful conversations.

And when the organization's structure is badly designed, and processes or methods for moving information, workflow, products, or customers through it are flawed, all kinds of errors, rework, waste, and frustration build up. People will often look at the resultant mess and say, "We need more communication around here." In fact, they may need less, but they need it to be better! In these cases, "communication problems" are a symptom of underlying disconnects of processes, systems, or organizational structure.

This issue looks at two elements of the vast topic of communications: persuasive writing and balancing information and communications. We'll look at how often strong technical or analytical leaders fall into the trap of cold, heartless logic. We're moved much more by our hearts than our heads. Emotionally intelligent leaders use language in powerfully persuasive ways.

Highly effective leaders balance information and communication. We'll define and contrast both. Then we'll give you a few communication pathways and principles to help with your balance.

The best definition of persuasive communication I've ever heard is "logic on fire." Connecting head and heart is a powerful combination. How's your balance?

View PDF Version
Past Issues
Practical Leadership Blog
Visit Our Site!
Let's Connect



Share this!

Please forward this newsletter to colleagues, Clients, or associates you think might be interested -- or on a 'need-to-grow' basis.

Was this forwarded to you? **Subscribe** to receive *The Leader Letter* monthly!

Inspiring with the Power of Persuasion: Do You Have the Write Stuff?



Bob was clearly frustrated. "I keep telling them, but nobody listens," he fumed. As we looked at his 360 feedback on his communication practices, it was clear why nobody was listening to him. Bob's communication skills were awful.

Bob scored quite high on technical expertise and analytical skills. A big part of his communication problem was that Bob believed logical arguments were all he needed. But his analytical approach often created an emotional tone that felt cold and uncaring. His feedback showed Bob often didn't try to learn from others or understand their point of view.

In his book, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman writes, "No matter how intellectually brilliant we may be, that brilliance will fail to shine if we are not persuasive. That is particularly true in fields where entry has high hurdles for cognitive abilities, like engineering and science, medicine and law, and executive ranks in general." As Bernard Baruch, American financier, and government advisor, once said, "The ability to express an idea is well nigh as important as the idea itself."

This month's *Harvard Business Review* features an article on "The Science of Strong Business Writing" by author and writing coach, Bill Birchard. He writes, "Brain scans are showing us in new detail exactly what entices readers...Whether you're crafting an email to a colleague or an important report for the board, you can write in a way that delights readers on a primal level, releasing pleasure chemicals in their brains."

Permission to Reprint

You may reprint any items from *The Leader Letter* in your own printed publication or e-newsletter as long as you include this paragraph.

"Reprinted with permission from *The Leader Letter*, Jim Clemmer's free e-newsletter. For almost forty years, Jim's 2,000+ practical leadership presentations and workshops/retreats, seven bestselling books, columns, and newsletters have been helping hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. His web site is www.clemmergroup.com."

Birchard has found these "eight S's to be the hallmarks of the best writing. And scientific evidence backs up their power."

Simplicity -- short sentences, familiar words, and clean syntax. Use the active voice and cut to the key points (don't perpetuate polysyllabic obfuscation!).

Specificity -- use vivid, palpable language such as punchy phrases.

Surprise -- make your message stick with novelty and unexpected content or unusual wordplay.

Stirring Language -- make emotional connections followed by logic.

Seductiveness -- draw readers in by rousing their curiosity and anticipation.

Smart Thinking -- create "aha" moments with fresh distinctions and new insights.

Social Content -- include human angles with vivid, down-to-earth descriptions. Talk to the reader with second person "you" language.

Storytelling -- relevant and moving anecdotes, examples, and stories can bring the above points alive.

Executive educator, bestselling author, and professor of leadership, Jay Conger, reports from his decades of communication research,

"We have found that the most effective persuaders use language in a particular way. They supplement numerical data with examples, stories, metaphors, and analogies to make their positions come alive. That use of language paints a vivid word picture and, in doing so, lends a compelling and tangible quality to the persuader's point of view."

Communion and communication share the same roots. Oxford dictionary defines communion as "the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially on a mental or spiritual level." This deeper connection is what people are craving today in **workplaces with a higher purpose**.

Is your communication lifting people to a higher level? How do you know?

Drowning in Information While Thirsting for Communication



"Nobody ever tells me anything." "We need to improve communications around here." "Our biggest problem is we don't communicate." "Our leaders treat us like mushrooms -- they keep us in the dark and feed us lots of... (manure)."

Does your organization need to improve communications? Would you like to get more texts, posts, or e-mails?

Almost every hand goes up when I ask that first question in a workshop. Rarely do any hands go up when I ask the second question. But what do most managers do when they hear people in their organization want more communication? They increase texts, posts, and e-mails.

Are you over-informing and under-communicating? Many managers confuse information and communication:

Information Technology/E-Tools	Emotional Connection/ Communication
Speaks to the head	Engages the heart
Quick and efficient	Reinforces mutual interests
Impersonal and tone-deaf	Builds emotional/personal connections
Convinces with facts and analysis	Inspires with stories and examples
Easy to send negative/angry messages	Addresses tough issues with courageous conversations
Broadcast to large groups	Strengthens teamwork and engagement
Provides background and updates	Builds involvement and ownership

Information Technology is critical today. But too often, it's **dehumanizing**. We need both IT/E-Tools and emotional connection/communication. Like management processes and people leadership, it's about **balance**.

A Few Communication Pathways and Principles

- Get out and talk to people. Strong emotional connections/communications are two-way conversations. This is vital during times of major change. Fill your conversations with imagery, stories, and metaphors. Talk with people through one-on-one discussions, meetings, and group discussions.
- Continually connect your organizational purpose to the hearts of people your organization is serving. Bring in their stories and examples. Bring them live into your meetings, calls, conferences, videos, etc., to share how what you do/make has helped them.
- Build a repertoire of teachable stories. Collect and catalogue the best examples of your organization's key principles in action. Circulate those stories inside and outside your organization through social/mainstream media (where appropriate). Write up collections of case studies illustrating tough decisions, trade-offs, outstanding performance, dealing effectively with changes, etc. Embed the stories in training, orientations, and leadership team communications, and so on.

- Incorporate storytelling into your meetings. Devote a section (usually best at the start of the meeting) to having participants relate examples of successful change, values-based decision-making, heroic performance, etc. Capture those stories for your repertoire.
- Develop a strong cause and case for change. Make it "logic on fire" that appeals to the head and the heart. Speak in their terms of experience and what's in it for them. Connect to your organization's values and past successes.
- Work with your leadership team to agree on your major talking points. Your key messages start from the core of your desired culture; where you're going, what you believe in, and why you exist. This provides the foundation for your strategies, priorities, changes, etc.
- Regularly get teams together to review, refocus, and reenergize. Find ways to condense information dumps/updates so you can truly communicate -- talk to, not at, each other.
- Develop highly visible scoreboards and continuous updates on progress toward team and organizational goals.
- Share key performance metrics (including "confidential" financial and operating data) with everyone in your organization. Treat people like full-fledged business partners, and they'll act that way.
- When you're sick of repeating the same messages is about the time that people in your organization are just starting to hear you. First, they didn't understand. Then they didn't believe. If you stop repeating yourself now, they'll conclude that you weren't serious after all.
- Reward and thank people who bring you bad news before it's festered into a catastrophe.
- Build continuous feedback loops from your customers and internal/external partners on your communication systems and practices. Are they clogged or working well? What others could you be using?

From their research with people in more than 100 companies, Harvard professor, Boris Groysberg, and communications consultant, Michael Slind declare that **Leadership is a Conversation**. "Traditional corporate communication must give way to a process that is more dynamic and more sophisticated. Most important, that process must be *conversational* [their emphasis]."

Managers talk at people; leaders talk with people. How's your information-communication balance? How do you know?

Bridging the Distance: Reading, Leading, and Succeeding



Leaders bring hope, optimism, and positive action. That's really tough to do while social distancing and facing an uncertain future. We multiply misery if we allow the pessimism plague to infect us as well.

To counter Headline Stress Disorder and strengthen resilience, I actively scan a list of resources for research, articles, and tips on leading ourselves and others through these turbulent times. I post those articles every day.

Let's shorten our social media distancing. Follow or connect with me:

 [LinkedIn](#) and follow [The CLEMMER Group](#)

 [Twitter](#)

 [Facebook](#)

Together we can Learn, Laugh, Love, and Lead -- just for the L of it!

Read *The Leader Letter* in Weekly Installments



The items in each month's issue of *The Leader Letter* are first published in my weekly **blog** during the previous month.

If you read each blog post (or issue of *The Leader Letter*) as it's published over twelve months, you'll have read the equivalent of a leadership book. And you'll pick up a few practical leadership tips that help you use time more strategically and tame your E-Beast!

Feedback and Follow-Up

I am always delighted to hear from readers of *The Leader Letter* with feedback, reflections, suggestions, or differing points of view. Nobody is ever identified in *The Leader Letter* without his or her permission. I am also happy to explore customized, in-house adaptations (online these days) of any of my material for your team or organization. Drop me an e-mail at jim.clemmer@clemmergroup.com or connect with me on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), or my [blog](#)!

Let's leverage our leadership strengths to work together and get through this challenging time.



Jim Clemmer

President

Phone: (519) 748-5968

Email: jim.clemmer@clemmergroup.com

Website: www.clemmergroup.com



Please forward this newsletter to colleagues, Clients, or associates you think might be interested -- or on a 'need-to-grow' basis.

Did you receive this newsletter from someone else?

Subscribe to ensure you don't miss the next issue!

The CLEMMER Group

476 Mill Park Drive, Kitchener ON N2P 1Y9

Phone: (519) 748-5968 ~ Fax: (519) 748-5813

service@clemmergroup.com

www.clemmergroup.com

©2021 Jim Clemmer and The CLEMMER Group