

HOW TO IMPROVE --- **YOUR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION** ---

70 TIPS FROM A
COLLECTION OF EXPERTS



Compiled and Published by
Tips Products International
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INTRODUCTION

This booklet brings you practical and immediately usable insights in bite-size pieces for you to improve your business communication whether spoken, written, online, or offline. Whether you are a seasoned business person or just beginning your professional journey, you are sure to find one more idea you had yet to consider.

Each author in this booklet offers tips from his or her expertise. These well-tested tools and techniques are sure to get you thinking about what works best for you now and in the future.

You'll see suggestions about everything from how to use common business software and strategize your company website content to negotiating to speaking one on one or to a large audience, to overall excellence and developing leadership qualities. Find all of that and more right here in this booklet. Test one thing at a time. See how it suits you.

Contact these authors. They remain successful, inspired, and inspiring by contributing to your life. Plus they are really terrific and interesting people you'll want to know and have in your life. Interview these authors in your publication if you are a journalist. They are professionals, ready to share what they have with those who find it useful.

Multiple sources and bulleted content are all in one place right here for your article, radio or television interview, blog, or website.

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BECOME MORE FREQUENTLY QUOTED

- 1 Compare to what?** “With this pill, you’ll feel relief faster than a Porche goes from zero to ninety.” This characterization of a medicine to ease aching muscles after extreme exercise makes an apt word picture connection for the market it serves.
- 2 Speak first to their need: You-Us-Me.** Most ads and sales conversations begin by describing a product. Instead address the situation in which your product is helpful. Describe the better option. Give specific detail proving your product is best at providing that better option.
- 3 Reward those giving testimonials.** Ask three happy, diverse customers, “May we give you a present for helping us improve? Please tell us what you most value about our product.” Display their responses everywhere.
- 4 Rip from the headlines.** Like the TV show, *Law & Order*, piggyback on breaking media stories. Tie some benefit of your product to what’s happened. Contact relevant media covering that story. Discuss it in your social media outreach.
- 5 Praise customers and their success.** Make their business success the center of your story, where your product played a part, and sometimes when you aren’t part of the story.

Emmy-winning former Wall Street Journal reporter, Kare Anderson consults on becoming more quotable and forging profitable partnerships enabling you to become top-of-mind in your market.

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TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY

- 1 Automate! Automate! Automate!** Use tools such as mail merge and templates in Microsoft Word to automate the communications you do on a regular basis.
- 2 Use the contact management tools in Outlook.** Before investing in expensive CRM programs explore the little known advanced contact relationship management tools built into Microsoft Outlook.
- 3 Create dynamic product and services presentations.** Few people realize you can create a PowerPoint presentation with custom narration with a few pieces of equipment – that you probably already have! Burn disks for distribution, create a company training library on your network, or post to your website.
- 4 Share across many platforms.** You can create blog posts in Microsoft Word. Microsoft Office allows you to create documents, presentations, spreadsheets, flyers, memos, booklets, brochures, and so much more! Share them as blog posts, PDF eBooks, email attachments, web pages, for example.
- 5 Explore the programs without being intimidated.** The trick is to know what these programs can do and then to know how to go turn the features on.

Media Baldwin helps companies make the most of technology. Known for practical, creative solutions, she takes the complicated out of computing. Get free tips, articles, videos, and downloads at her blog:

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LIFE LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

- 1 Be yourself.** Live your core values. Be authentic, transparent, and real. Truth builds trust.
- 2 Exude confidence.** Believe in your capacity to succeed. Make others feel confident in you. Build others' confidence in themselves. Breed hope, optimism, and enthusiasm.
- 3 Influence others.** Positively impact the thoughts, feelings, and actions of those around you. Seek to gain buy-in, cooperation, and commitment. Translate your vision into action.
- 4 Capture hearts, minds, hands, and feet.** Engage the entire person through emotion and empathy ("heart"); knowledge and intelligence ("mind"); collaboration and teamwork ("hands"); and motivation and momentum ("feet").
- 5 Remember that leadership is a journey.** Leadership is all about successfully getting yourself and others from point A to point B. And it usually doesn't happen overnight. So travel well. Enjoy the trip. Learn from mistakes. And take the time to celebrate successes along the way. The next journey will come soon enough. Lead the way!

Todd Cherches is the co-founder and CEO of BigBlueGumball, a NYC-based consulting firm specializing in leadership development, management training, executive coaching, and presentation skills. With their motto, "We make training entertaining,"™ Todd and his brother, Steve, use their patented 3 E's method to Educate, Entertain & Excite™ their clients worldwide.

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WINNING WEB CONVERSATIONS

- 1 Identify a range of visitor “personas.”** Create profiles of typical visitors - age, gender, education, understanding of your industry, what they need. Walk your site “in their shoes” – it’s eye-opening!
- 2 Speak in language they’ll understand.** Avoid jargon and “geek-speak.” Write conversational, first person copy directly addressing their issues. Consider adding sections in other languages that your major markets speak.
- 3 Show them who they’re talking to.** Visitors feel more connected to you if they can see you. Add details of your ownership, management, key account and customer service reps – with photographs if that’s practicable.
- 4 Motivate them to take action.** Place a clickable link to the next step at any point where the visitor might say “How do I get this?” Every page of your site should have a strategy.
- 5 Make it easy to talk to you.** Conversations are 2-way – include easy to find (and easy to complete) contact forms, invite and respond to feedback, display your phone number and street address prominently.

Philippa Gamse helps business owners and executives to optimize their Web and social media presence. Clients report significant improvements in quality traffic, visitor engagement, customer loyalty, and qualified sales leads within 30 days of implementing her recommendations.

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MASTER THE ART OF DELIVERY

- 1 Remember communication is a two-way exchange.** Make being understood your primary goal. Look to yourself to improve choice of words, phrasing, and delivery if others misunderstand your message's intent.
- 2 Create balance between what you want remembered and what you want to say.** Just because a fact or statistic is interesting or vital to you doesn't mean it must be included in your message.
- 3 Respect your audiences.** Trust their ability to understand what you say. Use easily understood words and phrasing. Minimize clichés, jargon, adverbs, and adjectives. Use them wisely and deliberately.
- 4 Be yourself.** You will be understood and respected when your message is clear and delivered with purpose. Maintain credibility by focusing on what you know and whatever credentials you have.
- 5 Understand that people often interpret words differently.** "Yes, okay" can mean *I understand, I agree, or I heard but don't agree*. Seek clarification rather than assume.

Clear communication is vital to your success. Off target messages become obvious when feedback stings or sales sag. Kat is an award-winning author and Certified Guerrilla Marketing Coach™, excelling at combining intuition, creativity, and top-notch skills to help create messages that reach their marks.

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HOLD EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

- 1 Be sure you need a meeting.** Determine this by considering group size, availability of the right people, and whose input is required. You may realize that email exchanges work or fewer people must attend than anticipated.
- 2 Get clear on desired outcome.** If the meeting were over and you were delighted with it, what would your results be? Share that objective early in the meeting.
- 3 Plan a meeting process.** The most overlooked yet critical aspect of a meeting is how it will be managed. The focus is usually on the task while how to run the meeting gets cursory consideration, if any.
- 4 Start and finish on time.** Honor the time commitment you made to participants. If you frequently start or end meetings late, people will find reasons not to attend or excuses to leave early.
- 5 Use a flipchart or whiteboard.** Focus a group's attention, or re-focus when off-topic, by referring to the agenda. Have it visible to make that easier. Use the flipchart to record all decisions.

Peg Kelley makes your meetings effective AND enjoyable. Her blog, Meeting Tools and Jewels (www.meetingtoolsandjewels.com) offers techniques to improve meetings. She trains people in businesses and non-profits in meeting management, creative problem solving, and personally facilitates meetings that matter.

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MAKE WHAT YOU SAY PAY

- 1 Watch your pronouns.** Compare: “Our product can...” to “When you work with our product, you’ll be able to...” “I” and “our” reflect what’s in your mind. “You” language paints pictures in your listener’s mind and gets you better results.
- 2 Master metaphor.** The human brain is wired for images. Persuading or explaining without metaphors is like owning a Ferrari and trying to drive without gas. You won’t get far. Metaphors open minds, close deals, and wow crowds.
- 3 Save a sinking ship.** Lost your listeners? Say, “My sense is I am not talking about what is most important to you.” Take your cue from their response: continue, change topics, or decide to return with another presentation.
- 4 Make presentations dialogues, not monologues.** Pause after key points to ask a question, get a reaction, check for acceptance, or otherwise involve your listener in your material.
- 5 Leave them singing your tune.** After Q&A, return to a brief summary of your presentation. People remember the last thing they hear. You want that to be your main message and not the answer to a particular question.

Anne Miller, speaker, seminar leader, coach, helps business people in high stakes situations successfully sell and present their ideas and services. She is the author of *Make What You Say Pay!* and *Metaphorically Selling*.

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SECRETS OF EFFECTIVE NEGOTIATING

- 1 Determine your top and bottom line before negotiating.** Figure out the best deal you can get realistically and also decide your walk-away point.
- 2 Tally your bargaining chips.** Understand the cost to you of each chip and the value to your opponent. Maybe you can trade something of low cost to you but high value to the other in exchange for something you really need.
- 3 Trade rather than give something away.** Always get something in return for a concession.
- 4 Listen more than you talk.** Information is power, so ask open-ended questions and listen for details.
- 5 Walk away when bargaining falls below your bottom line.** Your bottom line reflects intelligent thinking about the consequences of negotiating a poor deal.

Susan Onaitis is president of Global Learning Link, a sales training firm specializing in helping corporations improve the performance of their sales professionals since 1996. Susan has negotiated hundreds of deals from both the corporate and small business sides of the table. She has trained audiences all over the world for companies such as Colgate Palmolive, Chanel, Bank of New York Mellon, Scholastic, and Prudential. Susan is the author of *Negotiate Like the Big Guys* and contributing author to *Fortify Your Sales Force*.

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A FEW INFLUENTIAL BEHAVIORS

- 1 Ask rather than tell.** When a fact, idea, or opinion comes out of your mouth, your listeners' knee-jerk inclination is to doubt it. However, when you ask questions that can only elicit a "yes" or other favorable response, they convince themselves.
- 2 Get aligned.** When you stand or sit facing the other person, the stage is set for confrontation. Try angling yourself next to the person so you face the same direction. This sends a subtle signal that "you're on his side," and helps you get to agreement.
- 3 Talk less, listen more.** You have two ears and one mouth. Use in those proportions with subordinates, superiors, colleagues, and clients, and be amazed at your results.
- 4 Speak their language.** Ordinarily you want to jettison jargon. One of the quickest shortcuts to credibility is to show you understand their reality. You can do that by using their acronyms, buzzwords, and insider phrases. Just make sure you're using them correctly!
- 5 Repeat what you heard and summarize the points in a follow-up email.** You'll impress the other party with your attentiveness. As important, you'll have an email accountability trail that covers your bases.

Akweli Parker helps companies use better communications to drive bottom-line results. He blogs at www.digitaldeltamedia.com.

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THE ART OF EXCELLENCE

- 1 Keep your word to others and to yourself.** Promise what you can deliver. Your life is one of excellence when living in alignment with who you are.
- 2 Present yourself well.** You are excellent in who you are. You are the best YOU on the planet. Presenting yourself with authenticity naturally conveys your excellence.
- 3 Consider excellence to be a habit rather than an act.** Aristotle offered that very advice centuries ago. It remains valid today.
- 4 Make choices that transcend mediocrity.** Excellence may require more from you and delivers more in return.
- 5 Create an excellent life by heeding the words of the famous dancer, Kathryn Graham:** “To do what you love, and feel that it matters, what could be more fun?”

Ellen Reid, Beverly Hills' Premier Book Consultant and Book Shepherd since 1998, has built her career on excellence. She is the author of the award-winning book *Putting Your Best Book Forward; A book shepherd's secrets for creating award-winning books that sell* and consults with authors and people who want to self publish.

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P.O.P. FOR POWERFUL POLISHED PRESENTATIONS

- 1 Prepare.** Ask “How do I want my audience to **feel?**”, “What do I need my audience to **know?**”, and “What do I want my audience to **do?**”
- 2 Organize.** This helps you and your listeners focus and recall your most important points. Group 3-5 ideas together by clear, concise categories. Overwhelming your audience with too much or disordered information makes them stop listening before you make your most compelling points.
- 3 Present with *Passion*.** It makes you credible, engaging, and compelling. Vary your tone, pitch, and speaking pace.
- 4 Use pauses to help you and your listeners process thinking.** Pauses also allow for breathing (a must when nervous) and course-correction if needed.
- 5 Realize eye contact can make you appear shifty and anxious or warm and credible.** Speak as if you are having an individual conversation with each listener for a few seconds. Then move to the next conversation. Conversations are less anxiety-producing than presentations!

Deborah Grayson Riegel is an internationally recognized expert in presentation and communication skills who works with clients that span industries and the globe. As a Professor of Executive Communications for Peking University’s MBA program, Deborah teaches international business leaders how to successfully present their ideas in a growing global marketplace.

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KEEP IT SIMPLE

- 1 Role model simple yet effective rules of communication.** Simplify and articulate your message until it is very clear. Long rambling paragraphs means others must figure it out.
- 2 Clarify the expected results.** Ensure you understand what is being requested of you. This eliminates loss of time and surprises. This applies to your requests of others as well.
- 3 Document actions, agreements, and who is responsible whether it's a meeting of two or two hundred.** People forget or misinterpret what was agreed upon if not written down.
- 4 Facilitate results-oriented meetings.** Create agendas that include the intended objective(s) for the meeting, time frames for each topic, keeping everyone focused on actions to be taken, and decisions reached.
- 5 Listen fully to what is being said rather than framing your response.** When you're waiting to talk, you've stopped listening.

Chris Sier, of Executive Potential Plus, coaches people using a process-focused, results-driven methodology to help you chip away at complex change. She works with her clients to expand their thinking and explore their potential. Working with Chris allows leaders to achieve personal and business success with work becoming a balanced part of their life, not their entire life.

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THE OBVIOUS AND BEYOND

- 1 Improve your business communications skills with self-awareness.** Take inventory of your communication strengths and weaknesses. Develop your self-improvement action plan.
- 2 Recognize that your perceptions impact communications.** Perception differs from individual to individual due to personal, socio-economical, and cultural differences. Ensure that your perception filters do not become obstacles to communicating effectively.
- 3 Use the ABCs of good communication.** Be courteous (have good manners), be clear (get to the point), and be concise (give only needed information).
- 4 Develop your listening skills.** Listening requires that you stop talking, concentrate, pay attention to body language, paraphrase, and ask questions. Poor listening causes 60% of all communication problems in business.
- 5 Be aware that 93% of your message is nonverbal.** Nonverbal communication is messages not spoken or written and includes body movement, physical appearance, voice qualities, physical contact, and personal space. Pay attention to nonverbals!

Jacqueline Sirota, president/CEO of Workforce Skills Gurus is a learning development firm that provides relevant, applicable solutions to inform, educate, and support your customers, employees, and business partners.

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MAKING MENTORSHIP COUNT

- 1 Develop an authentic relationship with your mentee.** Ask questions to understand their background and career aspirations. To help them get where they're going, be sure to know where they've been!
- 2 Listen attentively to what is being said.** Listen carefully for what is not. Critical data points are easily hidden beneath the surface. Ask difficult questions to learn the facts before dispensing advice.
- 3 Be candid in your feedback.** You help no one by keeping quiet when an opportunity for learning presents itself. Seek out those "coachable moments." Express your point of view.
- 4 Share personal experiences of both successes and failures.** Often mistakes or errors provide the greatest opportunities for growth and learning.
- 5 Promote action steps that stretch mentees beyond their comfort zone.** By helping them move beyond their own perceived limitations you broaden their perspective and help them to think innovatively.

Sandra is a certified coach and personal brand strategist. Having spent many years as a CPA for a global professional services firm, and serving as Chief of Staff to members of their U.S. leadership team, Sandra is now focused on helping young professionals and mid-level management in similar organizations achieve personal and career success.

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