

**HOW TO ACCOMPLISH MORE  
BY SAYING LESS**

**Featuring  
THE  
DIAMOND**

# **MAKE YOUR POINT**

**SPEAK CLEARLY  
AND CONCISELY  
ANYPLACE,  
ANYTIME**



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# INTRODUCTION

## *How this book will help you*

*True story #1:* A young man, the Director of Public Relations for a big firm, ran into the new CEO on an elevator. The CEO said “What’s new?” After six floors of “uh, uh, uh,” the CEO got off the elevator and walked away with an unfavorable first impression of the man.

*True story #2:* The Marketing VP of a consumer packaged-goods company started her presentation with a laundry list of fifteen new programs and then presented them to a completely disinterested audience who gave up concentrating after the first few ideas.

*True story #3:* A top engineering student apologized for the technical detail of his presentation and then proceeded to show a bunch of PowerPoint slides incorporating 300 data points in each. Too bad for him that he didn’t realize that an audience can’t read an “eye chart” and listen to the presenter at the same time.

You talk with people all day long. But do you leave them wondering... What’s his point? What’s she trying to say? Why should I care? What am I supposed to do?

You’re always communicating...on the phone, in an elevator, in front of your boss, or in front of a throng of people. Every time you have the opportunity to speak, you have the obligation to speak clearly and concisely to make your point. How good are you at painting a logical and understandable picture that is orderly as well as interesting? When people listen to you, do they hear a leader?

People who can’t communicate in business don’t succeed. It’s as simple as that. If you can’t make your point, someone else will. But when you can communicate effectively, you project a

much more favorable image: people listen to you, you're more influential, you have less stress, you gain more respect, and ultimately, you're more successful.

Social scientists tell us that people are more likely to comprehend and remember messages that are limited in number, repeated, reinforced and supported with interesting evidence. In this book, we will share with you a simple and unique model that we call *THE DIAMOND*. As you will discover, *THE DIAMOND* is a great tool that will help you develop and deliver your message to any audience of any length whether you're in an auditorium, on a conference call, hosting a webcast or even leaving a voicemail. *THE DIAMOND* will sharpen your communication skills immediately.

*Make Your Point!* was written to help businessmen and women who are smart, honest and hard-working, but feel that they don't present themselves or their ideas as well as they could because either they have a hard time building a logical argument or they don't project confidence.

This is an uncomplicated book about uncomplicating your personal and business communications. It's about organizing, honing and delivering your messages whether they're given formally or informally. We had fun writing *Make Your Point!* We hope you enjoy reading it.

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**Section  
One**

# **Preparation**

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**Make Your Point!**

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**Make Your Point!**



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## Chapter One

# **YOU'RE ALWAYS ON STAGE**

### ***Anticipate the conversation.***

A number of years ago, the receptionist at an ad agency where a friend of ours worked was about to retire. To celebrate her transition, the staff threw a little office party in her honor. As everyone was milling around in the lobby making small talk and enjoying a cocktail, a couple of people came up to our friend and said, "We're about to bring the cake out now and we thought it would be nice if you gave a little toast." Seconds later about fifty coworkers were staring at him awaiting his words. Our friend paused. He stammered. He paused again. He told a lame story. He bombed.

It didn't have to be that way. Had our pal taken a few minutes before the party to prepare his thoughts just in case he might be asked to say something, he could've given the receptionist the sendoff she deserved.

We're always on stage. Whether in an elevator, walking down the hall, on a conference call or at the podium, we should always be prepared to make our point.

Of course, the more formal the occasion, the more time you'll want to spend preparing your thoughts. However, there are countless informal times where you'll be put on the spot. Trust us, you'll wish you had taken a few moments beforehand to gather your ideas.

In the case of the retirement speech that was sprung on our friend, it wouldn't have taken much time to get ready. With five minutes prep time, he could have easily come up with a funny story. Or he could have found an inspiring quote. Or he could



have jotted down three reasons why she'd be missed. Could've  
Should've. Would've. If he had only been prepared..



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## Chapter Two

# A WORD ABOUT SIMPLICITY

***Simplicity beats complexity.***

We are bombarded with messages.

Do you have any idea how many ads Mr. and Ms. Average American are exposed to in one day? About 2,500 give or take a few hundred. 2,500! That means that if we're awake an average of 16 hours a day, that's over 150 ads an hour (this includes TV, radio, the internet, outdoor advertising, and the like).

Add to that all the non-commercial messages such as newspaper articles, TV shows, radio programs, magazine pieces, phone calls, emails, letters, bills, memos, post it notes, refrigerator magnets, yada, yada, yada. It's clear that our brains are under assault. And unfortunately for you, that cacophony of communication is what you're up against when you're trying to make your point.

So how are you going to break through the clutter to help make certain your message gets through?

Simplicity. Knowing what you want to say and saying it simply.

Please don't let your lack of preparation or your own insecurities compel you to say more than you have to. More information doesn't mean better information. The Gettysburg Address had only 261 words. Contrast that to a recent *New York Times* article referring to a Presidential candidate saying: "(He) has been talking for years, and yet such is the thicket of his verbiage that he has achieved almost complete strategic ambiguity.

The average person you talk to has the attention span of a gnat (your authors included). Keep your message simple and you'll have a better chance of getting it to stick.



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Here's a fun brainteaser we found: How would you simplify this sentence? *Visible vapors that issue from carbonaceous materials are a harbinger of imminent conflagration.* Hint: it's a common proverb. (You'll find the answer at the end of the last chapter.)



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## Chapter Three

# **YOU ARE YOUR BRAND**

### ***A walking, talking product***

Just like your neighbor Alice, who buys Wisk<sup>®</sup> laundry detergent because it's the brand she has come to know and trust, your "consumers" (your boss, co-workers, clients, prospects, friends) are more or less likely to buy into what you have to say based on the image they have of you. Are you doing all you can to project your most favorable "brand" image?

Not only are you the brand itself, you're also the brand's product manager. And just like the product managers for Skippy<sup>®</sup>, Cheerios<sup>®</sup>, or Becks<sup>®</sup>, you're in charge of your product, packaging, advertising and promotion.

Your *product* is the content of your message. It's the verbal message you're trying to get across.

Your *packaging* is your non-verbal communications. Not only how you dress, but how you energize your message as you speak – confidently, clearly and with conviction.

Your *advertising* is how you deliver your message so it sticks. Television commercials try to grab you, stay with a single theme and concisely outline the benefits. So should you.

Your *promotion* for the product is your planned communications exposure with an appeal. For you, it's being up to the task of clearly and concisely telling your message anyplace, anytime.

In the chapters ahead, we will show you ways to improve both what you say *and* how you say it. Apply these concepts and just watch how your consumers respond.



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## Chapter Four

# **SEIZE THE MOMENT**

***Be willing to speak up.***

The *New Yorker* heralded Noam Chomsky of M.I.T as “one of the greatest minds of the twentieth century.” The magazine, however, also said that Chomsky had “a voice so quiet that, unless he has a microphone, it is difficult to hear him.” They added, “He gives his words so little force that they scarcely leave his mouth.”

If we all had as much brain power as Mr. Chomsky, we could easily suffer through these vocal shortcomings. But for those of us that don’t hang out in that stratosphere of intelligence, we’d better make an effort to be heard...to raise our voices and increase the regularity of communicating our messages. In short, we need to seize the moment and be heard.

All of us know people that are too aggressive: the loudmouth, the bragger, and the overly ambitious. “He’s so brash.” “She’s so pushy.” “I can’t get a word in edgewise.” But we also know the “shrinking violets” who suffer from benign aloofness. “He’s so withdrawn that I never know what he’s thinking.” Or, “I know she’s very bright, but why doesn’t she say something?” Successful communicators are those who know when to speak, and who look for opportunities to make their point.

Many of us simply need to pick up our energy level, announce our words, and add power to our thoughts. Performance counts. Being prepared with convincing messages to be delivered either spontaneously or formally takes discipline. Take the time to know what messages you want to have ready to deliver at any time. And then organize your messages into bite-sized pieces so you can serve them up whenever necessary.



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Remember the tribulations of George W. Bush in his early speeches? Pundits said that “George Bush’s lips are where words go to die.” Don’t kill words, thoughts and messages.

It is organically impossible and wouldn’t be a good idea to change who you are...your speaking style, personality and thinking processes. But it’s not impossible to enhance all of these by developing a more forceful and ambitious speaking capability.

If you don’t tell your story, someone else will...and it won’t often be the story you want told.



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## Chapter Five

# **ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?**

***Know your audience.***

A major technology firm once hired us to sit in on a number of briefings they were going to give to some prospective customers. In a sense, they wanted us to be the proverbial fly on the wall. The client sensed that they could improve how they conducted these very important meetings and wanted our guidance.

In one briefing, a researcher from the technology company stood up and gave a presentation about Java (for those of you who don't speak geek, Java is a type of computer programming language). The presenter went into great depth about all sorts of minutia about Java such as creating a GUI with JFC/Swing and writing applets. Egad! About 20 minutes into the presentation, one of the prospective customers raised his hand and said: "What's Java?" Unfortunately for the researcher, that prospect felt buried under a boatload of irrelevant information. Had the researcher taken the time beforehand to consider how much knowledge the audience had and what was important (and not important) to them, that wouldn't have happened. Remember, it's not just about what you want to tell them, it's also about what they want to know.

Similar to the above, a friend of ours who has a seven-year-old daughter who plays softball, shared a story with us. He told us that his daughter's team was in the field and the other team was at bat. With all good intentions, one of his daughter's coaches yelled out to the girls: "Force on Second. Force on second." WHAT?! Force on Second? What the heck does "force on second" mean to a seven-year-old? Evidently that coach didn't consider his audience and he was destined to be yet another unsuccessful communicator.



He should've thought more about who he was talking to and said something like: "Girls, if the ball is hit to you, throw it to Claire on second base."

The same thing is true in business. Before making your point, always consider who you're talking to. Here are some of the most critical questions you must consider:

- Who is in my audience? (Demographics: age, sex, education, etc.)
- How much do they know about my subject?
- What is their attitude about me, my department, my company and my subject?
- What issues are important and not important to them?
- What is their objective? (Why are they here?)
- What can I say that will be of value to them?
- How much time do they have?

You may have come up with a sophisticated new anti-friction braking system that cuts down gas consumption, noise pollution, g-forces and lots of other nifty things that you love talking about, but if your listeners are more interested in the color of the car, they're going to tune you out.

If you want to become a better communicator and be more persuasive, you need to really know your target so that you can adapt your message accordingly. As we said before, it's not about what you want to tell them, it's about what they want to know.



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## Chapter Six

### **WIIFM**

#### ***What's in it for me?***

WIIFM stands for *What's in it for me?* Essentially, it's what most everyone you talk to wants to know. Since humans generally act in their own self-interest (we're writing this book for fame and fortune) they want to know: What's in it for me? What will I get out of this? Why should I do what you're asking me to do? If you can clearly show them what's in it for them, you'll be a lot more persuasive.

At The Bronx Zoo in New York City, there's an exhibit called The World of Darkness. Inside it's pitch black and houses nocturnal creatures such as raccoons, skunks, and bats. Years ago, on the line to go into the exhibit, there was a sign that stated: "Please do not run or scream while in the World of Darkness or you will frighten the animals." That's pretty clear, right? But the problem was that people were still running and screaming. Why do you suppose that was? Because the sign was missing something! It was missing WIIFM. The Bronx Zoo hadn't given visitors any compelling reason not to run or scream.

Eventually a second sign had to be added below the first sign. The second sign read: "If you frighten the animals, they will hide and *you will not be able to see them.*" Now that's WIIFM!

The most effective communicators first consider who they're speaking to and then they make a point of telling their listener how the listener will *benefit* from what they have to say. Some of the most common WIIFM's are: you'll make more money, you'll be less stressed, you'll be more productive, you'll lose weight, you'll be happier, you'll be more successful, you'll gain more respect, etc.



You get the idea.

One more anecdote to show that the opportunity to apply WIIFM is around us all the time...a friend of ours wanted his young daughter to get her hair trimmed because he felt it was getting too long and didn't look that good on her. One day, when they were out driving around, he suggested they visit the hair stylist. But his daughter didn't want to. He asked again, but this time he told her that he thought she would look better with a haircut (that was his need), but again she declined. Finally, knowing his daughter, he considered why she might want to get her hair cut and he came up with a new approach: "Honey, if you get your hair cut, it will take a lot less time to dry it." Her response? "Okay, Daddy."



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## Chapter Seven

# KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING

### *What's your objective?*

Imagine you're going on vacation. You've packed up your spouse and kids, you're on the road, you even beat the traffic, but you haven't decided where you're going yet. Doesn't make sense, does it?

As Yogi Berra once said, "If you don't know where you're going, you might end up someplace else." It's the same way when we communicate with others. Pleeeeeease don't start talking unless you have a clear idea in your head what you're trying to say. Sounds obvious doesn't it? But the truth is that plenty of us start talking before we know exactly what we're thinking. It becomes difficult to make your point when you're not quite sure what your point is.

One of the most important questions you should ask yourself is: Is my objective to simply *inform* my listener, or is my objective to *persuade* them to do something? In all the years we've coached people, it seems to us that many people take the easy way out and they decide that their objective is to just give information when really what they needed to do was to persuade. Know what you're trying to say and, whenever possible, frame it as a persuasive discussion rather than just another information download.

Let's say, for example, that you think your objective is "To update (inform) my team leader on xyz project." Well that may be fine, but does your team leader really care about an update? What is the *underlying purpose* of the update? What value does the update have to your team leader? You'd do better to frame your objective as: "To convince (persuade) my team leader that we are



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on time and on budget for xyz project.”

Have a specific purpose.



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**Section  
Two**

**Content**

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**Make Your Point!**





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## Chapter Eight

### **LOGIC RULES**

***Have a beginning, middle and end.***

Have you ever flipped through one of those children's quiz books where they show a comic strip, but the individual frames are all out of order? The challenge is to put the frames back into a logical sequence so that the comic strip makes sense. There are lots of combinations that you could make, but only one is the most reasonable.

Clarity and comprehension will result from the flow of your thoughts and the order you put them in. Your listener's brain may be tired or overloaded, but it always seeks logic. When you speak, you must provide your listener with a *logical* argument. Everything should be in its proper place.

If you've ever had presentation training, you know that nearly all communication coaches will outline a sequence for a good presentation as follows: "Tell them what you're going to tell them (the beginning)...tell them (the middle)...and then tell them what you just told them (the end)." Great advice. Otherwise, a listener's attention will wane if you don't lay out a logical sequence. Don't complicate your message by creating detours in your logic roadmap.

In any message delivery, you're there for a reason...to make a program understandable, to create action, to justify your job or to sell a product or an idea. And your audience is there for a reason, too. They're there to either understand something, to do something or to buy something. Your job is to bring those two objectives as close together as possible. When you have a commonsense sequence, you will be more successful.



Whether it's the thirty second "stop by" message, the five-minute staff meeting report or the forty-five minute conference presentation, comprehensible communication needs a beginning, middle and end. As you'll see in the next chapter on THE DIAMOND, you need to state your main topic upfront, develop the sub-topics in the body of your presentations, and then state your conclusion at the end. This is the way people comprehend things.



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## Chapter Nine

# **THIS DIAMOND IS A GEM**

### ***Organizing your content***

Why do so many speakers wander aimlessly through their presentations thinking that their audience really wants to work that hard to try to follow them? Don't they realize that it's not the job of the listener to do all of the work; it's the job of the speaker? It's the listener's job to *absorb* the information, not decipher it.

As we said in the previous chapter, your listeners will better comprehend your ideas when you present them logically. As communicators, we need to clearly state what our idea is, back it up with evidence, and color it with interesting, provocative concepts.

And so THE DIAMOND model that you see throughout this section of the book was created by your authors. It incorporates the need for order...a beginning, middle and end and the concept of three sub-topics (max) in the main body of your presentation.

Here's how THE DIAMOND works:

First, you need to grab your listener's attention. Without the *attention* of an audience, you don't have an audience. Establish rapport. Tell a personal story, ask a question, throw out a surprising statistic, or use some other device to connect you with your audience. (Insert diagram: "D1 Ch 9" on the first full page that follows the first page of this chapter. It will probably be somewhere around here.)

Then, right up front, clearly and concisely state your main topic. Don't keep anyone guessing. Tell them what they are going to hear and tell them why they should care. (Remember, they want to know *what's in it for me?*)



Next, you should give a very brief *preview* of your three sub-topics. The entire content of your presentation will be wrapped up in these three conceptual ideas. By the way, when you deliver your previews, clearly say: “Number one, Number two and Number three.” If you don’t, your audience won’t be able to track with you easily.

After your brief preview, you need to develop each of the *three sub-topics* within the “body” of your presentation. Each of the three sub-topics will have supporting evidence to substantiate it. This is the meat of your message.

After you finish your third sub-topic, each of the three sub-topics then needs to be briefly *summarized* so that your audience can refocus on the three key ideas. Again, you will want to say “Number one, number two and number three” so that your audience stays in sync with you.

Then comes the *conclusion*, which is a restatement of the “so what?” of the entire presentation that you gave in the beginning. Again, tell them why they should care about what you just talked about. Relate it to them.

And, finally, the appeal or action step. This is where you tell your listeners what you want them to do as a next step. Don’t just leave them hanging.

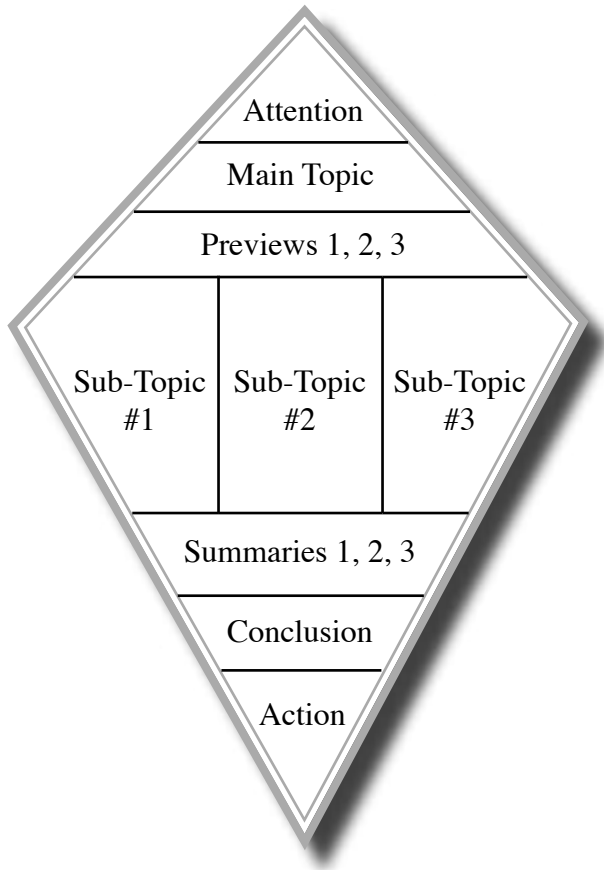
Every listener wants to know where you are, where you are going, and where you reach resolution. So follow THE DIAMOND and it will help you package your message in a clear, concise way. The following chapters will each highlight one section of THE DIAMOND followed by an example of how all the pieces work together.



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# THE DIAMOND

*A simple design for organizing your content*



And one more thing...THE DIAMOND isn't just for formal presentations. It can be used easily to help you make your point on phone calls, webcasts, emails, voicemails and in informal elevator conversations when the boss says: "So what's going on with Project Whatchamacallit?"