



Unit 14 Delivering Your Message

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Clarify your message and determine how to present it
- ✓ Successfully communicate your message using various forms of communication
- ✓ Effectively listen and communicate
- ✓ Ensure your listeners hear your message

Unit 14

Delivering Your Message

What is Your Message?

What is the point you are trying to make? What is your goal?

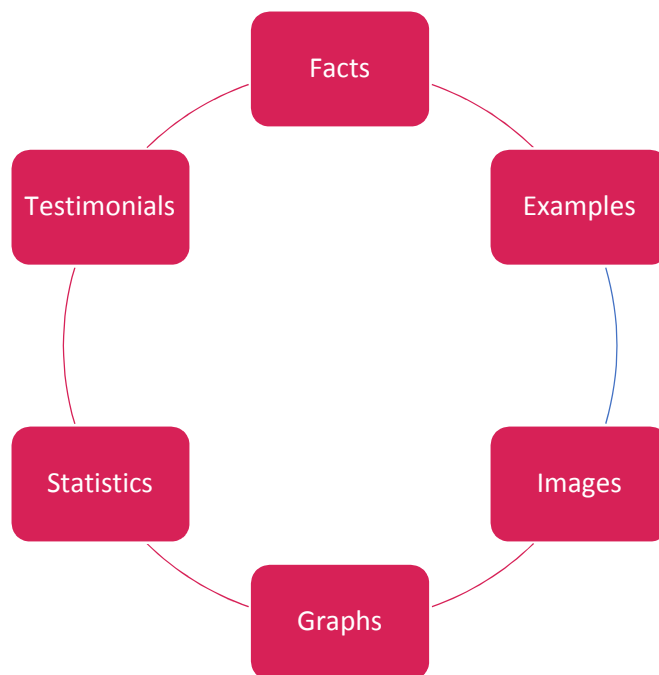
The key to getting your message across is to make sure you stick to what you are trying to communicate. You need to have clear idea of the information you want to convey, supported by relevant details that help to have your message understood.

An old saying is: 'What does that have to do with the price of eggs?' This expression means what does that have to do with the topic we are talking about? How is it relevant to me? Why is this information important? If the information does not help your message, then it is best to leave it out.

Make sure the message you are presenting is clear. Do not include words with hidden meaning that can be misleading or not plainly understood. Do not use jargon or acronyms that are unfamiliar to your audience and that will leave some people feeling left out. If terms are known only to people who work within your industry or in your company, either do not use them at all, or explain what they are before using them. Do not make the assumption that everyone will know what they mean, even if they do work within your industry or your company.

What are some aspects of your message that can be pared down? Keep only relevant information in your message. Often less is more. Readers want information the fastest way they can get it, and this means conveying the information in a simple, fast and effective way. But remember to include important details such as the 5Ws: Who, What, Where, When, Why.

What else needs to be added? Great ways to add meaning to your message include:



Can it be expressed differently? This could include the use of a song, a music video, or a Ted talk video of an expert. There are so many ways that you can hone your message without reinventing the wheel. If someone already has a great message that you are trying to share, use it to get your message across.

How to Present Your Message: Who is Your Target Audience?

When presenting your message, a key consideration is: Who is your target audience? Determining the best way to present your message to your audience may take a little research on your part. If your target audience is children, your message will be presented differently than if your focus is on seniors. For young children, a play or puppet show is a great way to keep the audience's attention while getting your message across, but this would be less effective for seniors. Tailor your message to suit your target audience.

Before crafting a message, you need to think about who you want to hear it. A clear definition of your target audience will help you achieve the best results, as you can shape the message to their specific needs. You must figure out who should hear your message, along with your goal.

There can be multiple goals for a message or plan, such as:

- Cost-effective
- Measurable results
- Increased sales
- More customers
- Good attendance at an event

You will want to take into account such details as:

- Gender
- Age
- Location
- Income
- Job

Also consider:

- What does the audience need and want to know?
- What do they want to do better?
- What problems does your product or service solve?
- When do we need to communicate?
- What is the preferred route for reaching this audience?

Choosing a Communication Route

There are many ways to reach a destination, and there are many methods and media to reach an audience. There is no single right or wrong method, only effective or ineffective methods. For example, if your goal for a road trip was to experience lush scenery and small-town charm, you will be disappointed with a busy highway as your primary route, even though it will get you to your destination faster. However, if you are running late for a family wedding, a high-speed highway will be the ideal choice.

The route, or delivery method, you choose for your business communications is 'right' if:

It reaches
your
audience

It meets
your goal(s)

It meets the
audience's
need for
information
and
engagement

Once you have determined your target audience, then you will need to consider how to present your message to them. Different ways include:

- Press (media) releases
- Blogs
- Email
- Press conferences
- Interviews
- Social Media
- Meetings
- Books
- Guest speaking spots/lectures
- Prepared videos/audio clips
- Advertisements

Press Release

A **press or media release** is an invitation to another outlet to share your message. The benefits include minimal cost, other than your time and expertise. As well, you can leverage their credibility and their audience. The drawback, however, is that you cannot control how or if the message is shared. The media outlet may use all, some, or none of your release. If the message is published or broadcast, it may be with their own slant or context.

Before you start to write, ask yourself:

- Is your topic newsworthy? Some people think everything they do is newsworthy, or that everything outside of the usual routine is newsworthy. Make sure you look at your news from the perspective of the media and the public. If it is not newsworthy, it may be time to rethink your topic.
- Can you write the release in a way that it answers all the questions that it raises? That will help cut down on questions after you release it. It also prevents irritating the journalist reading it, who may not have time to call you for more information.
- Will this release help to meet some part of the organization's strategic plan and move it forward?
- Have you checked every piece of information in the release? All facts, data, dates, links, and references must be accurate.

Once you are in a position to answer "yes" to all the questions above, you are ready to create a draft of your media release.

Eight Tips for a Successful Press Release:

1. Date, location, and topic at the top of the release.
2. Keep it brief, no more than a page or two.
3. One topic per paragraph.
4. Use the inverted pyramid method. Put the most important information at the top and less important information as the press release continues.
5. Use clear and short sentences in language that is easy to understand. Avoid jargon.
6. Quotes are very good to give life to your press release.
7. Keep a copy for yourself and send a copy to anyone who is quoted, or mentioned, in the release.
8. At the end type –30– or –END– and center it at the bottom

Press Conference

A **press conference** can be another way to share your message. One main benefit is that you reach a large number of interested people at once and have a chance to actually see how your message is received. You can see the parts that are strong and the parts that do not work well, thus giving you the chance to amend or update your message as you need to. However, the media or your audience can catch you off guard with questions you may not have considered, or are unwilling to answer and, if this is the case, you may lose credibility with your audience. People may ask you questions that are unrelated to the topics you wish to discuss, and the onus is on you to stick to your message. Extensive preparation is key to a successful press conference.

Interview

An **interview** is another way your message can be communicated to the media — TV, radio or print. The message can be shared to a large number of readers or listeners, but the interviewer has control of the questions that are being asked, so it is important for you as the interviewee to stick to your message.

Book

With a **book**, the message is in your words. However, this can be an expensive and time-consuming way to present your message. There is no guarantee that your message will be read by a large audience either. If your message is one that you believe will stand the test of time, then perhaps a book may be the way to go.

Opinion Piece

Opinion pieces or letters to the editor are much less time-consuming ways of presenting your message in written form. One drawback is you still have to find a print source willing to share them.

Guest Speaking

A **guest speaking spot or lecture** is effective in communicating your message to a specific target audience. If you want to talk to teens about saying no to drugs and alcohol, it might be good to speak at a high school or middle school or even at a university campus. When using this method, be sure you are presenting to your target audience. In a similar vein, being a guest blogger on someone else's platform can be useful as well, and can add credibility to your message.

Paper Letters

A **paper letter** can be directly mailed to a specific audience.

Social Media

Social media is a term used to describe how people interact, create information, share information, and build communities in a virtual environment. Social media in its current state started to evolve with the rise of the internet in the mid-1990s.

Examples of social media that can be used to distribute your message include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest.

Blog

A **blog** is an article, in your own words. Typically, a blog has minimal cost as well, but it gives you more control over the message and how you share it. You will also have the option to share your blog on other blog sites. On the downside, however, it can take much more time to get readers. You need to know how to leverage SEO (Search Engine Optimization) to build your blog audience. As well, your blog may not be widely read or established as credible, causing it to get lost in the vast sea of internet information.

Email

Email is an easy way to get connected with the audience that you already have in your contact list. The harder part will be expanding your current list.

Prepared Video/Audio Clip

A **prepared video/audio clip** can be a wonderful way to express your message either through your words or the words of someone else. This may be accomplished with a music video or an interview that contains the message you want to communicate. This can be a highly effective way to share your message with your target audience.

Advertisements

Advertisements are a type of promotion for which you pay to spread your message. A wide variety of options exist, including print advertising (newspaper, magazine), radio, television, digital (paid advertisements on social media sites) and mobile.

There are pros and cons to each of the methods of presenting your message. You will have to weigh them to determine the best way to get your message heard.

Take the time now to think about the pros and cons of each route. For example, postal mail may be very good to reach an older audience who is not computer savvy, but would be of little use in advertising a sale that starts tomorrow. Record your ideas below:



Version Three:

Effective Listening

Communication involves both giving and receiving information. Good communicators are good speakers as well as excellent listeners.

What is active listening?

Listening is a skill, and it can be practiced. Often, we listen to respond and not listen to the message. When a person is communicating, we have two ears to listen and one mouth to respond, and it is twice as important that we listen to understand so that when we respond, our response is valid or accurate to the message. We need to make sure our feedback helps convey or understand the message the speaker is delivering.

Active listening means that we fully concentrate and try to understand things from the speaker's point of view. It includes letting the speaker know that we are listening and that we have understood what was said. This is not the same as **hearing**, which is a physical process, where sound enters the eardrum and messages are passed to the brain. Active listening can be described as an attitude that leads to listening for shared understanding.

When we make a decision to listen for total meaning, we listen for the content of what is being said as well as the attitude behind what is being said. Is the speaker happy, angry, excited, sad, or something else entirely?

Responding to Feelings

The content (the words spoken) is one factor, but the way that people feel really gives full value to the message. Responding to a speaker's feelings adds an extra dimension of listening. Are they disgusted and

angry, or in love and excited? Perhaps they are ambivalent. These are all feelings that you can respond to in your part of the conversation.

Reading Cues

Active listening means that we are also very conscious of the non-verbal aspects of the conversation.

- What are the speaker's facial expressions, hand gestures, and posture telling us?
- Is their voice loud or shaky?
- Are they stressing certain points?
- Are they mumbling or having difficulty finding the words they want to say?
- Does their body language indicate that they are uncomfortable or feeling like their message is not being heard?

Active listeners watch for these cues and adjust their approach accordingly. Sometimes you should cease to talk and have the other person talk instead. If any tension exists, this may ease it.

Demonstrating Listening

When you are listening to someone, these techniques will show a speaker that you are paying attention, providing you are genuine in using them.

Physical indicators include making eye contact, nodding your head from time to time, and leaning into the conversation.

You can also give **verbal cues** or use phrases such as "Uh-huh," "Go on," "Really!" and, "Then what?"

You can ask **questions** for clarification or use **summarizing statements**. Examples:

- "Do you mean they were charging \$4 for just a cup of coffee?"
- "So after you got a cab, got to the store, and found the right sales clerk, what happened then?"

What is Your Body Saying?

You can keep track of your words and you know what is going through your head, but what about the rest of you? What is your body saying? Are you delivering a message that is opposite from your words?

Body language can be just as important, or even more important, than what you are actually saying.

If you are listening to someone tell you about an idea, and you are leaning away from them with your arms

crossed, it sends the message that regardless of your words, you are not really receptive to their idea.

This can be, and usually is, an unconscious gesture on our part. Physical actions take on a life of their own, in some cases, as a manifestation of inner thoughts. You might think you are being open-minded about the idea mentioned above, but your subconscious is actually saying 'what a load of bunk.'

Body language is an important point to consider whether you are the speaker or the listener. You cannot really sell your message and get your point across if your body is not selling it. If you are hunched over, with shoulders sagged, it is not nearly as effective for delivering your message as standing tall and proud.

When you are in the position of delivering your message in a physical setting, in person, in video, or online, remember how you are projecting yourself.

Sometimes, as the old song goes: "You say it best, when you say nothing at all."

Make a list of things that make you stop listening:

Make a list of things that keep you engaged while listening:

Use Nonverbal Communication

You are confident. You have rehearsed. You have a powerful, logical argument. You are ready to take on the task of presenting your points in a way that does not distract from your argument. In management presentations, the drama should be in the content, not in the person. Once you are aware of the way people react to you, you can further refine the way you present yourself.

Leave the Appropriate Distance between Yourself and the Audience

Although a public speaker may be 12 to 15 feet from the first row of listeners without being viewed as aloof and impersonal, a management presenter (who generally deals with far fewer people) should be no more than

four to five feet away. If you are any farther away, the listeners may regard you as either stuffy or fearful. If you get any closer, people will become uncomfortable.

When you are speaking to a group with which you have a limited personal or professional relationship, start speaking from a position farther away and move in slightly as the presentation progresses and as you establish rapport. But do not get too close. A tall presenter, for example, who approaches within inches of his listeners and leans forward, is expressing dominance more than friendliness. To judge whether you tend to invade others' personal space, recall whether people ever inched away from you when you were engaged in informal conversations.

Physical distance rules vary from one culture to another. Some people often want to be within inches of each other when they speak, whereas others expect even more distance than you might be used to. Make sure that you know your audience.

Stand Erect

Good posture gives the impression of authority. You can correct poor posture by standing against a wall and pressing your spine flat against it. Feel what it is like to be standing straight, and make the most of it.

While you are making your presentation, make a conscious effort not to fold your arms. Folded arms seem to encourage slouching, and it certainly sends a message of defending or protecting yourself. There is a difference between good posture and stiffness, however. If you march briskly to the front of the room and do not move for the rest of the presentation, you signal rigidity more than authority.

Consider Your Appearance

Psychologists have found that attractive people are more persuasive than unattractive people. Anyone can cultivate attractiveness through good grooming and clean, neat, professional dress. A presentation is not the place to make a statement with your clothes – flashy clothes divert attention from your argument.

Standard business dress is suits or jackets and a tie for men, and conservative suits or coordinated outfits for women. Although standards in non-traditional organizations may be more lenient, in general it is safer to stay on the side of conservatism. Anything too far from the norm will cause the audience to fix on the distracting feature rather than your argument. You want to convey competence in the subject matter, and what you wear can support you or undermine you.

When presenting your message, appearance is important because you want to be perceived as an expert in your field, and how you look is the first thing people notice about you. You should have clean clothes that are fitted properly, with nothing too tight or too baggy. Your hair should be clean and tidy. You do not want to present yourself to a group while wearing wrinkled or unkempt clothing, as you can lose credibility with your audience. Think about how many times you have heard the expression 'clothes make the man – or woman.'

Move About and Use Gestures

A presenter who stays glued to the overhead projector, the lectern, or any other one position is quite possibly terrified, and everyone soon knows it. To give the impression of self-confidence, move about the room and use your hands. Behaving like a confident presenter will help you to become more confident.

Take advantage of your natural gestures, but avoid using one over and over. Some presenters, when told that they need to add movement, adopt one gesture (raising an arm, for example) and use it repeatedly. At worst, such programmed gestures send the audience into a hypnotic state; at best, they are distracting. Tailor your

gestures to reinforce your point. For instance, by bringing your hands together, you can assure your audience that your proposal “brings it all together.” Similarly, you can refer to the ramifications of a problem by tracing ever-widening circles in the air.

Because most management presentations involve visual aids, you can add movement by simply pointing out the most important features on the visual. Moving around the room is helpful if it does not deteriorate into the measured pacing of a caged tiger. By pausing completely, you will emphasize the importance of what you are saying.

Control Your Facial Expressions and Mannerisms

Although we all know people who say, “If you cut off my hands, I would not be able to talk,” very few people actually overdo gestures. Facial expressions, on the other hand, are difficult to control and often give an embarrassingly accurate clue as to how you really feel. Beyond checking yourself on videotape, the best way to control facial expressions is to make sure you are comfortable with your material and be prepared to respond honestly and openly to any questions.

Try to maintain an accessible, open presence. Remember that a smile breaks down barriers. When you smile at someone, they generally smile back. Also, as you talk, show interest in what you are saying. If you are not interested, how can your audience be?

Maintain Eye Contact

You will lose support faster by staring at your notes, looking only at the visual, or focusing on a spot high on the back wall than by any mistakes you may make in the content of your presentation. Similarly, if you direct yourself exclusively to the key decision maker in your audience, he or she will feel more uneasy than flattered, and others in the room will feel unimportant.

Try, at some point in the presentation, to look at each participant with the goal of giving each, in turn, the brief message, “I can see that you grasp what I am saying.” Then, for your own comfort, try to focus on people who respond with a nod or smile rather than on people who seem bored or hostile.

The Value of a Pause

If you are speaking within a negative or outright hostile situation, it is easy to become defensive and even angry. Instead of quickly answering every question (which increases the pressure and makes it difficult to maintain your composure), explore the value of a pause. A pause can give you a mini-break to collect your thoughts and deliver them well. It can also stop you from getting caught in an angry or emotional outburst. Use pauses to your advantage. If someone asks a question and you need to collect your thoughts, you can take a moment to glance at your notes if you are using some, take a deep breath (not noticeable to anyone else), and then answer.

Attitude

Attitude is everything. Have you ever listened to someone who is a know-it-all? Someone who does not

actually care if you are listening? If you have, spending a day listen to them lecturing to you can be dreadful and their message is totally lost because you do not care to hear it. Be sincere when you are speaking to your audience. Remember, you have something important to share but you need to respect your audience and be willing to encourage input when needed. A lecture or course is considered successful when the instructor receives questions or feedback from the audience, thereby allowing them to put the message into practice after the presentation. Attitude can be sensed even over the phone.

Presenting Your Message to an Audience

The Elevator Pitch

An elevator pitch is a brief, persuasive speech usually used to spark interest in what an organization does. It can also be used to create interest in a project, idea, or product.

An elevator pitch is typically 20 to 30 seconds long, or the duration of an elevator ride. It should convey important information in a succinct, interesting and memorable way.

Pointers for crafting an elevator pitch for a business:

- Identify your goal
- Explain what you do
- Communicate your unique selling proposition
- Engage with a question
- Eliminate any information that is not absolutely necessary

Using the pointers, choose one of these topics and apply it to creating a 30-second elevator pitch:

- The announcement of a new product
- The real reason Santa can deliver presents around the world in one night
- The closure of a branch plant
- Putting support behind a controversial political candidate

I have these resources to help me:

As a result of what I have learned in this workshop, I am going to...	My target date is...	I will know I have succeeded when...	I will follow up with myself on...

Further Reading:

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