

INTRODUCTION

When Great Ideas Get Ignored

Four foreigners step off a train in Mysuru, the famous Indian city renowned for being the birthplace of Ashtanga yoga. Guessing their intent, a local man approaches the group and inquires if they want to purchase yoga gear at a good price. The foreigners, myself among them, nod yes and we are led down the street to a building emblazoned with the words, *International Market*.

We enter the mellow-lit building to find Indian carpets and tin statues of Shiva. Not a single yoga item in sight. Our sweet-talking guide hands us off to a smooth-talking shopkeeper who extolls the benefits of these products. Thirty minutes later, the four of us walk out with *more than a thousand dollars in souvenirs*.

How can four people be pulled in by a false promise and walk out having spent four figures on needless products? That's the power of persuasion. These simple shopkeepers are masters at selling products; while on the opposite side of the globe, so many of us struggle to garner even a modicum of support for our game-changing ideas.

I know an expert in microfinance who analyzes emerging economies and offers investment recommendations to her team—the people who actually make investments on behalf of the company. She is most definitely the expert in the room. It is her job to support these economies, and her success is judged on how well the investments perform. Yet her team often ignores her advice. In moments of powerlessness, she thinks quietly to herself, *I don't care. We'll do it your way.*¹ Without the ability to promote her work, her only option is to let it go.

Now consider your goals in life. Consider your experience and your career aspirations. If you can't convince others to support you, are you

willing to settle for less? Most of us like to believe that if we do something great, others will value it. But how often have you invested long hours and emotional energy into a project, only to discover you couldn't make anyone care?

The greatest leaders of our time had more than great ideas; they had the unmatched ability to attract others. They span US presidents like Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama, to business leaders like Steve Jobs and Elon Musk, to social leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Sheryl Sandberg. Their success was, and is, not merely about the quality of their work. They were magnetic.

BECOMING MAGNETIC

Through the years I've trained individuals on how to become magnetic across a broad spectrum of backgrounds, from employees at Google and Microsoft to startups raising capital in support of their life's mission. I helped secure hundreds of millions of dollars of investment for these clients. My first book, *The Startup Pitch: A Proven Formula to Win Funding*, is now used in entrepreneurship classes at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. It's supported countless startups and spawned a plethora of me-too books and workshops by other authors. What I teach changes people's lives. And those people have gone on to change the world.

However, like most of us, my career began with a mix of great as well as challenging moments. After starting out as an engineer, I rose into managing \$100 million in annual revenues at a Fortune 500 company. I possessed the analytical skills that enabled me to do my job well. That was the good side. Now let me tell you about the flip side. Success is always about people, and in this I struggled.

At first I took the courses on interpersonal communication offered by my employer to improve my people skills. I learned a few tricks, but still failed to win continuous support. Eventually I changed direction and began to practice public speaking. I learned to entertain large crowds through storytelling and delivery, outshining hundreds of competitors to win speech contests. But speeches are less effective away from the podium, and when I met a resistant colleague in the hallway, I was helpless.

One afternoon a teammate handed me an article on the science of persuasion. I read that article ten times in the first week, and soon devoured everything I could find on the subject. Persuading people wasn't just a natural talent, it could be learned. The problem was that although these articles explained the psychology behind persuasion, they gave almost no direction on how to actually convince others with words. The little tactics I found focused on stealthy behaviors that were less than useless in the office. That's when I began seeking ways to convert ivory tower research into practical use, and to mimic how the leaders of our time actually conversed.

In one instance, we were developing a new product for a customer in Taiwan. The opportunity was worth at least \$5 million. After listening to the customer's feedback on the design, I suggested to my colleagues that we update the product in order to secure the sale. But the changes would incur significant costs and labor. My colleagues politely listened, and then just as politely went back to their previous conversation as if I hadn't spoken.

I walked to my office, shuffled through my notes on persuasion, and decided to prepare a new approach for our next meeting. A week later, I met with those same colleagues and explained the problems we faced if we continued with our current design. Then I outlined how certain design changes based on customer feedback would ensure the absence of these problems. This time, I captured everyone's attention so thoroughly you could hear a pin drop. After the meeting, the product was modified. Sounds simple. It was, after all this isn't rocket science. But it took conscious effort.

In a matter of minutes, I had shifted the flow of money and power. I was no longer at the mercy of my colleagues. That's when I decided to master this new skill.

After returning to academe and completing a master's degree in psychology, I teamed up with Stanford scientist Antoine de Morrée to create an organization called *Stanford Leaders in Communication*. Over the next several years, we researched a new set of communication skills that allow *anyone* to stand out and win support. We trained these skills to some of the world's best and brightest graduate students. These students are working to make policy changes in government and applying for grants in cancer research. Big stuff. Soon after, we took this to

the business world and began training employees at top Silicon Valley corporations. Our data show that individuals who learn these skills feel significantly more confident and successful in their careers.² And after hearing countless stories of professionals getting promoted and leading new projects, we wrote this book to put the skills into your hands.

THE PATH TO SUCCESS

This book addresses two questions: How do you highlight the quality of your work so you become magnetic? And how do you apply these skills across different forms of communication? The answers to these questions turn out to have interesting social consequences. Through the following pages, you'll come to understand many of life's inexplicable conundrums, such as:

- ▶ Why do people flock to CEOs who are notoriously difficult to work with?
- ▶ What are the secrets to many of the top marketing campaigns of all time?
- ▶ What simple words might have prevented a NASA space shuttle from exploding?
- ▶ How do we get Apple to replace our cracked iPhone screens for free?

You'll also learn how to stand out in job interviews against hundreds of equally qualified candidates, and how to write cold emails that connect you with billionaires.

You might have read how to make your ideas more memorable and eye-catching, but few books focus on how to make your ideas more *convincing*. In fact, the typical advice is to focus on clarity. If you present your ideas clearly, perhaps with a story, others will understand the quality. But how many times have you presented clearly and no one cared? Clarity is important, yes, but it's relatively easy to achieve. It's low-hanging fruit.

Conventional advice also focuses on body language. The idea is that physical delivery skills make a lasting impression on your listeners. Everybody should learn powerful delivery, but it's only part of the story.

Body language prepares you to talk, but it doesn't actually talk for you. You need the right words.

You might have heard that body language and tone of voice account for 93 percent of all communication. However, this is one of the biggest myths of communication, so notorious it even has a name: *The Mehrabian Myth*.³ The number comes from a series of studies exploring what happens when we express our feelings to one another.^{4,5} If you share your feelings with your partner, he or she watches your body language to deduce how you actually feel. This is true in relationships, but it can't be applied to business. Even Professor Albert Mehrabian who published this statistic argues it does not apply to typical business communication. Nobody cares how you feel. Content matters.

Some of history's most powerful speeches by speakers like Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt were made in monotone with minimal movement. When we recall the Gettysburg Address, history books don't say Lincoln delivered it well. The words mattered. Research actually shows that *what you say* impacts people more than charisma and enthusiasm.⁶ A study conducted in 1996 found that when CEOs deliver their company vision to employees—a skill you'll learn in this book—their words influence employee performance more than their presence.⁷ Delivery and words work together like yin and yang, but if you're missing the right words, you're like Hamlet without the prose of Shakespeare.

This book provides you tools to communicate with words in ways that ensure you are convincing. These tools are synthesized from the latest and most powerful research in psychology. Each approach comes from a rigorous study of the field, conversations with other scientists and field experts, and real-world testing, all of which is now codified for the first time into a straightforward model. Some of these approaches will be familiar to readers of persuasion. What differs is the frame in which they are presented, and the exclusive focus on communication.

The model in this book addresses the mediators of persuasion, the roots of what makes you convincing or not. It can be applied to almost any situation. Other books provide dozens of little tips for different situations that are easy to read but hard to remember. Tips such as *saying "because"* or *getting the client to say yes frequently* are good, but fairly superficial. This model moves far beyond such advice.

Perhaps most groundbreaking, you will learn how to overcome resistance. Until recently, this knowledge was virtually unavailable outside the ivory tower. It wasn't until I began working at Stanford Graduate School of Business that I discovered Stanford students are taught how to turn a *no* into a *yes*. With this book, you now have the research taught in the world's most exclusive classrooms.

The model we derived forms the basis for magnetic communication in all professions, and everyone can use it. We have trained thousands of people like you to apply this model across all areas of life. You will read examples from businessmen, salespeople, marketers, engineers, scientists, military leaders, CEOs, and even US presidents.

The stories people share after learning these skills are incredible. A job-seeker secured a position with the US Department of Energy spearheading new policies. An MBA salesman doubled his response rate at cold calling clients. A scientist emailed a Nobel Laureate whom she had never met and convinced him to recommend her work. The president of a small company negotiated his first significant investment from venture capitalists after years of bootstrapping. Or a couple of my favorites: a director at Girl Scouts of America came up with a new strategy, but struggled getting executive management to listen. After applying the skills in this book, she was quickly recognized as a thought leader and promoted to run special projects. A Tesla engineer struggled with third-party suppliers to pull his project in on time. After applying his new skills, he motivated the suppliers to move faster and convinced them to voluntarily absorb the costs. Since then he's received two promotions.

The goal of this book is to empower you so you live your mission and make a real difference with your ideas. The following pages put you in the driver's seat of change.

HOW TO STAND OUT

This book begins by introducing a simple but powerful core idea in Chapter 1 that ensures you become magnetic. In the chapters that follow, you will learn three sets of approaches that apply this idea. They are: how to counter resistance; how to create value; and how to connect. Let's take them one at a time.

Counter Resistance

Philosopher Sun Tzu stated, “Supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting.”⁸ Many brilliant ideas elicit opposition. This first section outlines three approaches you can use to reduce resistance that prevent others from hearing you out. These three approaches are:

- ▶ Align yourself with your listener
- ▶ Acknowledge their freedom to choose
- ▶ Ask advice

Steve Jobs mastered these skills to win over critics. And you can apply them to recruit even the most defiant colleagues to your mission.

Create Value

Everyone who’s been through the education system understands the importance of clarity, even if they don’t always practice it. But clarity isn’t enough. This section outlines three approaches you can use so others understand the quality of your ideas. These approaches are:

- ▶ Establish a problem-solution scenario
- ▶ Set a standard
- ▶ Show the benefits (and vision)

Congresswoman Anna Eschoo used these approaches to win reelection. And CEO Elon Musk used these approaches to inspire his SpaceX team after an early rocket failure.

Relate

Forty percent of hiring managers rate connection over experience as the most important facet when making hiring decisions.⁹ People work with people they like. In this section you will learn three approaches to establish rapport with your listeners in any given moment and encourage them to value what you say. These approaches are:

- ▶ Shift their identity
- ▶ Make them feel visible
- ▶ Put yourself on the same team

Great leaders like Winston Churchill and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella used these approaches to connect and inspire those around them.

These three sets offer you a total of nine approaches to influence your listeners. Each approach includes supporting research and successful examples you can emulate. You'll find the approaches straightforward regardless of your background. In the end, rather than learn a million little tricks that move your magnetic needle a little bit, you're going to learn a few that move the needle a lot.

And then we come to the last section.

Totally Magnetic

In the second part of the book, this is where the magic happens. You don't need to read dozens of other books to learn different skills for different situations. You will learn how to apply the skills in this book universally to everyday situations as well as high-stakes evaluations. These chapters cover:

- ▶ Storytelling and data
- ▶ Presentations
- ▶ Emails
- ▶ Interviews

TED speaker Amy Cuddy applied these skills to garner nearly 60 million views when presenting her passion.¹⁰ And countless others have blasted through difficult interviews to capture amazing jobs.

By the end of this book, you'll be able to counter the resistance of your colleagues so they listen, highlight the quality of your ideas so they act, and build strong relationships so they support you. You'll also be able to quickly analyze your own existing communication to confirm when it's strong and how to fix it when it's broken.

You'll be more effective at changing the lives of those around you, from engaging in business to inciting political change. Although many of the examples focus on business cases, you will read a generous number of examples from everyday situations outside the office like raising children and giving advice to friends.

You might wonder with all the publicity around storytelling, where do stories fit in? Stories are of course powerful. A chapter in the last section goes over great storytelling. However, stories are not at the heart of communication. The power to be magnetic is deeper and simpler.

At Stanford Graduate School of Business, an MBA student and former McKinsey consultant succinctly stated the path to success: *prime-time moments in careers are when we meet with clients, step into interviews, and present in boardrooms.*¹¹ These make-it-or-break-it opportunities pivot your career upwards, or they wipe out your dreams. And success depends in large part on one simple thing—what you say. Whether you are looking to change the world from inside a company or out, you just need the right words so that when you speak, everybody listens.

ALL RIGHTS
RESERVED

Communicate Value

Recall the last time something upset you because it was unfair. Maybe you did brilliant work that was ignored. Maybe you were angered by the political climate and wanted change. Even given your preparation in speaking up—and your emotional energy—around the situation, nothing shifted. It's tough, it's the real world, and it's not fair. It happens between colleagues, managers, and influencers whose support you need. Moral and righteous arguments for fairness are so rarely accepted that there's a cliché response: *life isn't fair*. Well, what if you could change that?

My coauthor Antoine represented over 2,000 scholars as the co-chair of the Stanford University Postdoctoral Association. These postdocs are world-class PhD scientists who graduated but continue doing research on campus. Their work contributes greatly to Stanford's success, but they aren't categorized as campus staff. Stanford gives terrific benefits to staff, but not postdocs. For example, Stanford gave commuter permits to staff that allowed them to commute by public transit for free, but not to postdocs. Handing out permits to postdocs would have cost more than a quarter million dollars annually. It was unfair, it had been unfair for decades, and Antoine wanted to change that.

Antoine leveraged his position to meet and discuss the permit with an associate dean, one of the strong-arms on campus. The dean's support was critical—win it, and he had a shot at changing the permit policy. Fail and he'd have nothing.

When the meeting began, Antoine pulled out all the stops. He explained the importance of postdoc contributions and argued that it was unfair they did not have the permit. After ten minutes of making his case, the dean nodded absently that postdocs were important and

indeed it was unfair. But the dean was not convinced it was worth a quarter million dollars to fix. *Life isn't fair.*

Antoine pivoted to a new argument, pulling out a report about the cost of living around the university. Silicon Valley is one of the most expensive areas in the United States. Postdocs were renting apartments farther from campus to save money, causing stress and eating into their research time. But when Antoine looked up from his data, the dean was staring out the window. Weeks of maneuvering to get this meeting, countless hours preparing his arguments, and the dean wasn't paying attention. Antoine's heart thudded to the floor, and he fell silent.

It was at this point that the dean filled the silence by discussing some of his own ideas. He mentioned new goals that were important to him, in particular the development of a mentorship program to allow researchers to mentor other researchers. The dean's focus was growing the knowledge of the postdoc community through collaboration.

Antoine lit up. Fairness was important, but was not the top concern of an administration with a limited budget. He quickly reframed his message to explain how giving a commuter permit to postdocs would create opportunities for mentorship. He stated that the long drive left postdocs too exhausted to mentor. He shared how the permit would give them more time and energy to mentor others. The dean suddenly leaned in and nodded. Antoine had become magnetic. After thirty minutes of explaining how the permit would support a mentorship program, the dean was won.

Today for the first time in Stanford history, postdocs have access to the permit. Antoine redirected a quarter-million dollars and impacted the lives of over 2000 people. He positioned his idea in a way that won the dean because he understood the dean's needs. Nothing else changed between rejection and acceptance during the conversation. There was no shift in Antoine's delivery, no negotiation. Just words. How would you change the world if you could win support with your words?¹

THE BIG MYTH

Most of us miss out on success for a simple reason: We grew up believing the myth that good communication is about information. We've been

told that if we present our ideas clearly, people will understand the quality of them. But have you ever explained an amazing idea clearly and still failed to win support? Antoine showed that postdocs were treated unfairly, and it went nowhere. Nobody cares about information.

History is rife with high-stakes failures that resulted from this information myth. Take Apple Computer. There's a scene from the movie *Jobs*, a biography of Steve Jobs' life, when Steve Wozniak introduces the first Apple computer to a roomful of engineers.² He explains the microprocessor, memory, and many other details. People yawn, and several stand and leave. And this was a truly revolutionary product! Wozniak's information-based presentation failed to interest others. In fact, Wozniak tried five times to convince managers at HP (his workplace) to sponsor the project, and was rejected every time.³ It took Jobs' magnetism to build excitement and ultimately sales for the Apple computer.

In business, nearly half of executives today say that finding job candidates with technical skills isn't the problem. Instead, the most pressing problem is finding candidates who have good "soft" skills.⁴ Soft skills create change. Of course statements about the lack of soft skills and the importance of learning them are so common that they've become platitudes. But despite the explosion of communication training in corporations, the need persists. The reason executives continue to lament the lack of soft skills is because most people still focus on communicating only clear *information*, and that's not enough. Google delivers information. If all someone delivers is information, how are they better than a search engine? We need to take the next step.

VALUE

Every year at the World Championship of Public Speaking, the ten best public speakers from around the world converge. These are the people who win titles such as *best speaker in Europe*. Suffice it to say, they're really good. Among the thirty years of contest history, many refer to the 2001 winning speech as one of the all-time best. The speaker Darren LaCroix began with these brief words to frame his speech and open the performance:

Can you remember a moment when a brilliant idea flashed into your head? It was perfect for you! Then all of a sudden from the depths of your brain another thought forced its way through the enthusiasm until finally it shouted, Yeah! Great idea, but what if you fall on your face? What do you do when you fall on your face?⁵

Before going into what made this introduction successful, I'm going to swallow my pride and share the opening to one of my earliest public speeches from nearly two decades ago. I was pretty callow back then. See if you spot the difference.

When I first entered the business world, I was really excited to have the opportunity to buy really nice clothing. I've always wanted suits, I've always wanted to look sharp. And of course it's a great opportunity to spend money because this is expensive clothing. So I went out and I went to a suit store, and I looked at the suits.

Both of us started with a story. But stories aren't the centerpiece of communication.

The single most important distinction between a novice speaker and a world-class communicator can be summarized in one word: *you*. The intro to my early speech contained seven uses of the word *I*. Conversely, the championship-winning passage contained eight references to *you*. I talked about myself, the world champion talked about you, the listener. As it turns out, a recent analysis of TED talks showed the single word most correlated with people's favorite talks is *you*.⁶ This word captures the entire philosophy of becoming magnetic.

Communicate value to your listener. Move beyond the details and explain why your message matters to them. Years of coaching startups have taught me that bad pitches focus on the product, good pitches focus on the value of the product to the listener. Antoine changed policy at a major institution because the dean valued mentorship, and Antoine linked his proposal with mentorship to incentivize the dean.

Information is inherently me-focused: *my idea, my product, my mission*. But people rarely listen or act for your sake. Colleagues and customers want to achieve results that advance their own goals. If you don't explain why your ideas are important to others in terms of their goals, there's no incentive for them to care. And if you don't say it, others don't see it.

Starbucks' CEO Howard Schultz (who graduated with a degree in communication) attributes the company's success to its people and not himself.⁷ Pastor Joel Osteen, who attracts tens of thousands of people to his sermons, explains *how God can serve you*.⁸ Bestselling author Marci Shimoff, who sold more than 14 million books including the number one New York Times hit, *Happy for No Reason*, discusses the pathways to happiness and *how they can be applied to you*.⁹

Bruno Leonardo Gelber is considered one of the greatest pianists of the twentieth century. He won countless accolades, including an award by *The New York Times* for making one of the best recordings of the year.¹⁰ Gelber also teaches talented musicians through his *Master Class*, relentlessly helping nascent stars rise to glory. One day a gifted piano student entered Gelber's class and began playing beautifully, moving her body with self-rapture as her fingers danced across the keys. In the middle of the piece, Gelber slammed his hand down on the piano and barked to the startled pianist, "No! Don't play for yourself, play for the audience!"¹¹ Lesson learned.

SOURCES OF VALUE

A top sales representative at Oracle said the key to her success was positioning her product so it communicated value to the person sitting in front of her. When she visited a customer site and spoke with a director, she focused on how Oracle would increase work efficiency across the department. When she spoke with a CFO, she focused on cost savings for the company. And when she spoke with a CEO, she explained how Oracle could further the company's vision. The product was the same, but the sales rep communicated the value differently to different people. The result was that she sold more products than her peers, made a lot more money, and was recognized by management as one of the top performers on her team.¹²

Politicians make careers out of tailoring value to their audience. In 2011, President Obama spoke about the economy to a small crowd in Florida. But the crowd of hardworking Americans, many of them blue collar, didn't come to hear about economic trends, they came to hear about how the economy would impact their lives. Obama focused on what mattered to his listeners. Here's an excerpt of his speech:

I'm here today to specifically talk about the cornerstone, the essence of middle-class security, and that's a good job in a growth industry. We've got to help more manufacturers bring more jobs back to America. We've got to keep creating good jobs in manufacturing.¹³

When Obama spoke about the economy to students at Northwestern University, notice the change in focus:

This is a university that is brimming with the possibilities of a new economy—your research and technology; the ideas and the innovation; the training of doctors and educators, and scientists and entrepreneurs . . . We measure our success by something more than our GDP, or a jobs report. We measure it by whether our jobs provide meaningful work that give people a sense of purpose, and whether it allows folks to take care of their families.¹⁴

Messages to the very wealthy are rarely public, and for good reason. In 2012 we caught a glimpse of Mitt Romney's talk to business leaders who had paid \$50,000 to attend an exclusive fundraiser for the upcoming presidential election.

There are 47 percent of the people who will vote for the president no matter what . . . who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to

*care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it . . . And so my job is not to worry about those people. I'll never convince them they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives.*¹⁵

Romney's talk might have addressed what was on the mind of his audience, but it did not sit well with the event's bartender. The bartender secretly recorded and shared the talk with the media. When Romney's message was heard by a different audience—the general public—it severely damaged his presidential campaign. Value is always in the eye of the beholder.

FLINT WATER CRISIS

Let's take a look at a very public case of how words go wrong and ways to make them right. You likely recall the details of the 2016 water crisis in Flint, Michigan, that led to thousands of children being poisoned.¹⁶ The city of Flint, once a car manufacturing capital of the United States, slowly declined as GM shuttered local factories. As the population dropped, Flint officials switched their water source from the Great Lakes to the Flint River to save money. When residents complained about the orange color of their new water, city officials confirmed the presence of *E. coli* bacteria. More chlorine was added, and people were told to boil the water before drinking. It was like a camping trip, only in your kitchen.

The following year, Flint resident LeeAnne Walters submitted a personal complaint to city officials. Her daughter came out of the shower one day in tears as clumps of hair fell from her scalp. The city tested the home's water, found that it exceeded the limit for lead and other chemicals, and offered to compensate the family for their troubles. However, officials reported that aggregate city data showed the water met all safety standards. The red splotches on children were ignored.¹⁶

Walters took action by enlisting a famous environmental professor Marc Edwards from Virginia Tech with numerous awards, including a MacArthur "Genius Grant." Over the next several months, together

they tested the water meticulously across the city, confirming again and again the presence of lead. Despite the extremely accurate test results by a credible professor, officials dismissed the data claiming that the issue was being made into “political football.” The more Walters and Edwards pointed to the data—and with increasing outrage—the more officials ignored their “hysteria” and pointed to different data suggesting the water was fine. This is the cost of the information myth in spades—it’s not about the data. It took more than a year before the issue snowballed through the press and received enough attention for a state of emergency to be declared.

In the end, the citizens suffered terribly from poisoned water. The city officials also suffered. Their careers were destroyed, and they were branded on the cover of *TIME* magazine as “the incompetent leaders who betrayed Flint.”¹⁷ Everybody lost.

Let’s analyze why this went wrong. Clearly sick children and brown water were not top priorities to Flint officials. These officials were running a near-bankrupt city, and river water was cheap. In addition, admitting that switching to the river was a mistake could have resulted in losing public face and damaging their careers. Do you see the disconnect between the complaints made by citizens and the concerns of officials? Citizens’ health and happiness don’t match up with money and political status. We could brand the officials as evil and bask in our righteousness, but that leaves us powerless without solving the actual problem: the sick people of Flint.

How might activists have reframed their arguments to offer value in the shape of reduced budgets and secure egos? After all, the city ended up losing more money by not taking action, and officials had their public images destroyed. If the situation had been communicated differently, with a focus not on the suffering of families but on how officials would eventually suffer by not fixing the problem, perhaps different choices would have been made. Perhaps fewer children would have been poisoned.

In short, the officials were clearly to blame, but blame didn’t help the activists’ cause. Activists needed to be empowered by offering the officials the *value* that would appeal to them.

INFORMATION IS STILL IMPORTANT

Value is central to success, but information is still critical. Information is the source of value. It is the soil from which value blossoms. The better the soil, the more robust the blossoms.

Years ago a client approached me to improve his pitch. He had a radical new idea for customizable cellphones. Similar to a laptop computer, you could choose your core speed, camera quality, and various form factors. Sports enthusiasts could choose a rugged phone and cool camera. Gamers could go with a blazing fast phone and a big screen. The vision sounded great, and I asked him to explain the technology. But he wouldn't discuss how it worked. He wouldn't even sketch out a model because he was afraid the idea would get stolen. Instead, he just shared how anyone anywhere could have a personalized phone to fit their needs. The pitch showed great value, but there was no clear description of the actual tech. There was no soil. Without understanding the product, I had to turn the client away. I still haven't seen customizable cell phones on the mainstream market. Value without information is a dream.¹⁸

Information is always necessary, but balance it. You don't need a lengthy description of your idea, just enough to cultivate the value. Huge roses can blossom from small pots of soil. Most communication is packed with fertilizer. But it's the flora that attracts attention.

CONCLUSION

Have you ever read those popular comparisons in social media about the differences between managers and leaders? *Managers talk, leaders listen. Managers control, leaders inspire.* You get the idea. We all read these secretly hoping our managers will act like leaders. But when our managers read these things, they don't reflect on how they act; they're hoping their managers will treat them better. Everybody wants others to serve and support them. And this is great news. Rather than wait for support from others, we can initiate the support cycle by communicating value.

Focus on *YOU*. Explain why your work is important to others in terms of their goals. Don't get caught in the information myth, focusing

on *me*. When you know your values, you can speak with passion; when you know their values, you can inspire passion.

The book *Power*, written by Stanford Professor Jeffrey Pfeffer, a global leader on the topic of corporate hierarchy, summarizes fifty years of research on how to rise in your career and be successful. In the very first chapter he states the following:

Great job performance by itself is insufficient and may not even be necessary for getting and holding positions of power. You need to be noticed, influence the dimensions used to measure your accomplishments, and mostly make sure you are effective at managing those in power.¹⁹

Whether you are climbing the corporate ladder or leading a mission to change the world, your success is not about yourself. President Dwight Eisenhower once said, “Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done, because he wants to do it.”²⁰