



Creating Content for Clarity

People consume information in many ways. Some individuals choose to read a book, where as others enjoy listening to an audio book or a podcast. Suppose you are someone who enjoys listening to audiobooks. One day you decide to listen to the audio book version of a dense textbook or a research paper, what might happen?

It has been shown that most people absorb a low percentage of information when listening. Which begs the questions, why is it so much easier to understand and learn when reading vs listening to content?

The answer to this lies in time. As someone reading content vs listening to it we have much more control over time. You can control the pace at which you read, you can re-read content which didn't make sense and you can research words and concepts you do not understand.

As presenters we need to understand that our audience does not have control over time. Knowing this fact will motivate us to build content for clarity abiding by the biggest rule of communication.

Communication is not about you its about your audience

Tips for creating clarity

1. Use simple language

- When analysing top level speakers, they found that many spoke at a 6th – 7th grade level. What this means as a presenter is that we need to simplify our language so that our audience can easily follow along and understand our ideas.
 - If you would like to know what grade level language to match, use the fog index :

$$\text{Level (Grade)} = (\text{Average No. of words in sentences} + \text{Percentage of words of three or more syllables}) \times 0.4$$

2. Clear and Concise

- If you are trying to get across a point, do not over complicate it with facts or details that are irrelevant to the main message. Instead use the facts, stories and details that add weight and insight to your message. In short this means using the least words possible to explain an idea.

3. Define terms and acronyms

- If you are not familiar with the entire audience, it is best to assume that not everyone may understand your terms or acronyms. Try to define terms and acronyms upon first use especially if you are building points or logic upon them.

4. Enunciation

- Some individuals get excited or nervous when speaking which can lead to going to fast or slurring over words. If your audience fails to understand what you are saying, then you risk losing them.





5. Volume

- Volume is often something that less experienced speakers fail to consider. If you are too quiet, you risk not being heard or coming across as nervous.

6. Stories

- A good story can help our presentation in many ways. One of the biggest ways that it can help is by building context around an idea, concept, problem or situation. The larger context can help our audience relate personally and emotionally to what we are talking about.

7. Key phrases

- Certain words and phrases can generate a thought-provoking reaction. These phrases become extremely powerful if we want our audience to relate the information to their own life experiences. If you can effectively get your listener to relate your information to their own life experiences, then you can help them to connect the new content to things they already know. Here are some example key phrases.
 - Have you ever experienced this?
 - Have you ever seen this?
 - Have you ever felt this way?
 - What if this happened to you?

8. Analogies

- Analogies are the comparison of two things, typically for explanation or clarification. This is a great tool to help people link new ideas and concepts to images or information they already know. Example: “life is like a race. The one that keeps running wins the race, and the one who stops to catch a breath loses.”

9. Visual aids

- The saying “a picture is worth a thousand words” is the best representation of a powerful visual aid. Visual aids can bring concepts and ideas to life. Our memory is linked to pictures so visuals help us retain what we learn. Try to incorporate props, pictures, graphs or charts into your presentation so that the audience can associate content with imagery.

10. Have a good pace

- They say most radio hosts and great orators speak at 120-140 wpm. This is because it is a good speed for the audience to listen, understand and grasp what you are saying.
 - If you are unsure of how fast you speak. Try recording yourself and playing it back.





Power Point

Almost everyone in the corporate world has seen at least one bad power point presentation. The result of listening to a bad power point presentation is that many people will become disengaged and will leave without ever having really benefited from the presentation. Let's look at a few key tips to creating clarity on the power point.

1. 3 bullets max per slide

- Many presenters like to include all their content onto the slide and then simply read off the slide. Presenters must understand that the audience has come to hear from the presenter. When the audience sees a presenter reading everything off the slide deck, they stop seeing the presenter as an expert.
 - Tip: Use the three bullets to help jog your memory as a speaker. Practice your talk before hand so that you can speak fluently on each of the points.

2. Use it as a visual aid

- As mentioned above many people misuse the PowerPoint, as such it has been banned in some organizations as a communication tool. Presenters should remember this rule.

The power point aids you, you do not aid the power point

It is best to use power point as a visual aid to help emphasise key points or bring to life ideas. The visuals that will work well on a power point are pictures, graphs, charts and diagrams.

