

Getting Others To Do What You Want

Lynne Franklin

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Get Communicating:

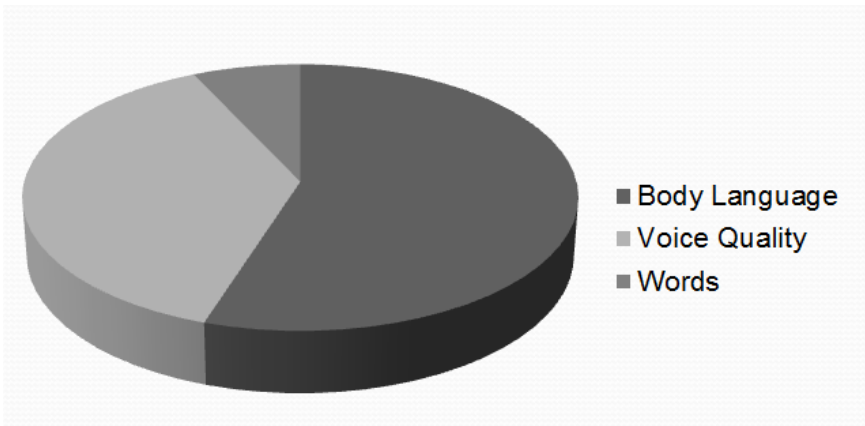
Part Three – Know Your Audience

“The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
but in ourselves ...”
– William Shakespeare

We consider ourselves relatively self-aware people. We think about what we want to say before we say it. Sometimes we even practice our messages before a big meeting or conversation. And often, when something doesn't come off well, we blame others. We soothe ourselves by saying, “I did everything I could. They were too blind to see what a good idea this is.”

When I have those moments, I think of this pie chart. It frightens me every time I see it.

How We Get Information from Other People



Ninety-three percent of the information we get about a person comes from nonverbal communication. This is divided between voice tone and quality (38%) and body language (a whopping 55%). That means words

only contribute about 7% to our impressions. I've spent a good deal of my career helping people get clear on what they need to say—the way we just worked through our messages and handling Q&A—so of course this idea unnerves me. But I can't dispute its truth.

There was nothing more powerful than Fred's body language—standing three feet from me and holding that machete as though he were ready to chop me with it. And that growl in his voice when he threatened to cut me. It really didn't matter *what* he was saying!

Here's the good news. You can use the nonverbal—as well as written and spoken—information people are sending to learn how they think. And then you can add this to your toolkit as part of getting them to do what you want.

Read Their Bodies to Read Their Minds

There are times when you and the people you're trying to persuade will agree on goals and strategies and other times when your opinions will differ. You always want to ensure that the information you provide to them, and the way you give it, increases the chances that they will *get* it. One way to accomplish this is by acknowledging—and working with—their learning and communication styles.

Learning Styles

According to Neil Fleming's VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) Model, there are three primary ways in which people learn.

The "Looker"

These people think mainly in pictures and images. This is the most prevalent style: about 75% of people are Lookers. You can identify them by watching for these signs:

1. They have good posture and their shoulders are tense.
2. They often have thin lips.
3. They frequently have wrinkles on their foreheads. This happens because people generally look up, raise their eyebrows, furrow their brows and breathe faster when they remember something they have *seen*.
4. They look in your eyes while speaking and listening.
5. They choose clothes and decorate their offices and homes for visual impact.

Here is how you build rapport with a Looker:

1. Speak in images whenever possible, since this is how they like to get information:
“I see what you mean.”
“What’s your view on this?”
“Here’s what his comments reveal to me.”
“Show me.”
“Take a look at this.”
2. Look in their eyes as much as possible when listening or speaking. These people literally believe that if you aren’t looking at their faces, you aren’t seeing or paying attention to them. This lets them know they are important to you, and that you are interested in them.
3. If you are *not* a Looker, don’t be unnerved by the amount of eye contact these people give you. They are not trying to be confrontational—this is just how they get information.

The “Listener”

These people think mainly in sounds: words and noises. About 20% of people are Listeners. They share these characteristics:

1. Their shoulders usually are slightly rounded.
2. They frequently hold their heads slightly down and to the side. This happens because people look to their left side, tilt their heads a bit and breathe evenly when they remember something they have *heard*. In addition, it naturally points one of their ears in your direction so they can better hear you.
3. They often put a hand up to their face or ear, called the “telephone posture.”
4. Their lips may move when they are thinking through something, or they may mumble or speak out loud. This is because they are literally talking to themselves when processing information.
5. They most often look away from others when speaking or listening.
6. They frequently “drum” with their fingers and have music on in the background.

Keep these things in mind when communicating with a Listener:

1. Emphasize sounds in your descriptions:
“I want to hear what you think.”
“That sounds good to me.”
“What does that tell you?”
“Let’s talk about that.”
“I’d like to speak with you.”
2. Don’t give them too much eye contact: this makes them feel uncomfortable. Look away then back to them when you speak and listen.
3. If you are *not* a Listener, don’t feel ignored when you are not receiving much eye contact. These people still are paying attention to what you are saying—unless they’re wearing ear plugs!

The “Toucher”

This group processes information through emotions and physical activity. They make up about 5% of the population. In addition to being more likely to touch people than the other two groups, here are ways you can identify them:

1. They tend to lean toward you in a conversation.
2. They frequently look down to their right, round their shoulders and breathe deeply—because this is what people do when remembering something they have *felt*.
3. They generally have full lips and deep voices.
4. Their movements are loose and relaxed.
5. They choose their clothes and design their surroundings based on comfort rather than style.

When conversing with a “Toucher,” use these techniques:

1. Emphasize feelings or tactile words in your conversation.
“How do you feel about that?”
“Let’s get in touch.”
“I’m having trouble grasping this.”
“I’m going to make contact with him.”
“How would you like me to get hold of you?”
2. Feel free to touch them when you want to emphasize a point.
3. If you are *not* a Toucher, don’t feel your space is being invaded if they lean in or touch you. And do your best not to stiffen up if they make physical contact.

Which style are you? Of course your brain is flexible, so you can think in more than one way. But you *will* have a dominant approach. Close your eyes, take a deep breath and remember an important event in your life. How does it come back to you? Do you “see” it—in colors and shapes and pictures? Do you describe it in words? Do you remember

how you felt—or how different objects felt in your hands? These are the important clues that tell you how you think.

Learning the Hard Way

Before understanding the connection between body language and how people think, I made a number of gaffes. Here is the most spectacular.

One of my clients was the controller at a company. We had been in one-on-one meetings across a conference table on many occasions. He never looked me in the eye: he seemed to be looking at the table in front of me. At first I thought it was that he just liked to focus on “the numbers.” My next guess was that he was socially inept. Then I developed the sneaking suspicion that he was looking at my chest, which offended me. The day came when I decided to do something about this.

At our next meeting, I leaned down toward the table—to put my face in his line of vision. “Excuse me,” I said. “I’m up here!” and sat up straight.

Thinking of this still makes me cringe today!

The man was a Listener. The constant eye contact I was giving him made him nervous, making it even less likely that he would look at my face. And, of course, no stunt on my part was going to change that he processed information through words and sounds, so looked down and to the side while doing this. It’s a wonder he didn’t fire me! After all, an essential part of getting people to do what you want is not annoying them.

With the information I have today, I would treat this man much better. This would involve looking at him briefly and then looking away as either one of us speaks. It would mean pointing one -of my ears in his direction most of the time. I also would use more language with sound components in it.

The irony is that I am a Listener, too. I remember movie lines, song lyrics and grammar rules. Because the communication industry, where I have spent much of my career, is filled with Lookers—and they are the

biggest part of the population—I learned to take on those physical characteristics and values. I can also summon images of places I’ve been, but that’s still not my primary mode of thought. As you’re about to see, I have particularly strong “mirror neurons.”

Your Brain is Here to Help

It’s true: giving Lookers more eye contact, giving Listeners less, and reaching for the hand of a Toucher in conversation helps to create rapport. Fortunately, your subconscious mind is also on the case.

We all have something called mirror neurons. They were discovered in studies of monkeys in the 1990s. The upshot is that when the monkeys observed a student eating an ice cream cone, the same neurons fired in the monkeys’ brains as if *they* were also eating something!

Mirror neurons are particularly focused on reading facial expressions. Some researchers even postulate that the mirror neurons in those with autism or schizophrenia don’t function well, which is why they have trouble associating meaning with what they see on people’s faces. Other experts believe that mirror neurons not only mimic movement and facial expressions but *understand* what they mean.

Here is the important idea for us as persuasive communicators. When we’re sitting across from someone, and we see her cradle her chin in her right hand, our brain reacts as though we’re doing the same thing. And a lot of times, that’s just what we’ll do. In a way, our brains are suggesting our bodies copy the behavior of the person we’re watching. In the jungle days, this probably was a great survival technique—helping you fit in with the crowd. Now that you know this, you’ll notice that you’re folding your arms the way the person you’re in conversation with is doing—or vice versa.

Actively mirroring the physical actions of the person you want to connect with *does* help build rapport. Remember: 55% of the information you get from someone comes from body language. When the person you want to reach leans in—and you lean in, too—their subconscious mind registers this as *simpatico*. You help them feel more comfortable

physically, and their brains pick this up as agreeing with them. And you don't even have to think about it. Your brain is automatically helping you to be more persuasive!

Build on this by being aware of the body language of the people you want to reach and mirroring it. Then watch how much faster they are at ease with you.

Knowing Communication Styles

Just as there are three ways that people think and learn, there are four primary ways in which people communicate.

- ***The “Doer”***: This person is action- and results-oriented, competitive, decisive and often a workaholic. His communication style is to quickly get to the point. In doing this, he often can be abrupt.
- ***The “Thinker”***: This person is conservative, analytical, detail-oriented and slow to decide. She wants to consider all of the information before taking action. Her communication style is wordy—in service of wishing to explain the entire picture.
- ***The “Feeler”***: This is a people-oriented person who is concerned with relationships. His communication style is to be persuasive, enthusiastic and creative.
- ***The “Creator”***: This person is scholarly, thinks abstractly and in concepts. Her communication style is to be creative and take longer to get to the point.

Which of these styles is yours? Most people don't bother to ask. They go blithely through their day using *their* approach on *everyone*. Not surprisingly, they can end up shooting themselves in the foot—because they're not paying attention to how other people like to *get* information.

Applying Styles Persuasively

I had a coworker who was a Creator. He reveled in data and was fascinated by minutia. As a financial analyst, he had chosen his career well. He loved developing voluminous reports that explained why and when certain investors would buy a company's stock.

Our client, who was the CEO of a public company, was a Doer. He had neither the time nor the inclination to wade through 20 pages of text to learn the answer to his question. He also had little patience for meetings during which the financial analyst got into the weeds on describing past and future shareholders. At one point he turned to me—when my coworker had left the room—and said, “This guy is the difference between taking a local versus an express train!”

My role became clear. Every time the financial analyst wrote a memo, I edited it. This included reducing the size in general by removing redundant and wordy sentences. It also meant adding subheads to make important points, indicate what was being covered where, and visually break up pages of text.

Then I created a one-page executive summary—with short paragraphs or bullet points that telegraphed the main ideas. The CEO quickly got what he needed and could refer to the longer document if he wanted more details on something.

When we met with the CEO, I became the facilitator. I interviewed my coworker in advance to get a good handle on what he knew—and what we needed to share with the CEO. I presented the information—so we wouldn't get lost on a tangent up front. Then the financial analyst answered the CEO's questions. I watched the CEO's body language (he was a Looker), noticing when he was becoming impatient—by glancing around the room rather than at my coworker. That's the time when I would jump in and move us along.

Using this tag-team approach allowed us to satisfy *our* needs by the satisfying the *CEO's*. He said “yes” to our ideas more often because we were presenting them in a way that appealed to him.

Now that you know *your* style, think about the communication styles of the people you need to persuade. If these are different, what can you do to modify your approach so it appeals to them?

Questioner Styles

As long as we're on the subject of meetings, you'll notice people use different techniques to gather information—and determine what you're willing and unwilling to give. Some may be using this as an opportunity to make themselves look good—or you look bad. Some are genuinely interested in what you have to say, but they are just inept at asking questions.

Always start with the assumption of good will—that people are asking because they want to know something—until you have proof otherwise. Here's how you can deal with difficult questioners and still get your messages heard.

Omniscient Authority

Problem: She expects you to know everything. Sometimes she likes to rub it in when she discovers a question you can't answer. You have the sneaking suspicion she uses this as a way to feel superior to you—or demonstrate this to others in the room.

Solution: We often can have two defensive knee-jerk reactions to this. First, we can make up something—because we don't want to give her the satisfaction of finding the edge of our knowledge. Second, we can tell her the question is off target and try to make her feel some discomfort for asking it. The best approach is to be honest and direct: “That's not my area of expertise, but I'll try to find the information for you.” Then keep your word and follow up.

The Machine Gun

Problem: He fires multi-part questions at you, never giving you time to respond. Ultimately you may feel overwhelmed and not even remember some of what he asked. You may even suspect he does this to make you feel off-balance and somehow benefit from that.

Solution: Eventually he has to stop and take a breath! Remember: you have the information he needs, which means you have power in this situation. You have two good choices. First, answer the question *you* want. If he points out that you didn't answer another of his questions, respond with, "I'm happy to do that" and give your answer. Second, you can listen for the unifying trend in his questions and address that: "I think the larger issue you're getting at is ..."

The Interrupter

Problem: She never lets you complete a thought before stopping you by asking another question or commenting on your—so far—less than complete answer. This gives you the impression she isn't interested in what you have to say and would rather listen to her own voice.

Solution: Of course what you'd really love to do is say, "If you'd just shut up for a minute, I'd give you the information you say you want!" Chances are, that's a little counterproductive. Try one of these two options instead. One: you can ignore the interruption. Keep talking and come back to answer the second question later. Don't talk over her, however, because that invites a shouting match—during which the other people in the room will feel they have to choose sides. Two: stop and listen patiently to the new question. Say, "I'll answer that in a minute," and then go on with, "As I was saying, ...". Remember voice tone and quality here, and keep your voice calm. This helps you keep the power in and control of the situation. Whoever raises their voice first loses.

The Paraphraser

Problem: He unfairly and incorrectly restates what you just said. You think he may be doing this not because he misunderstood you, but because he has some other point he wants to make—and is willing to twist your words to do this.

Solution: Our first reaction is to get angry. You want to raise your voice and say, “You *know* that’s not what I said!” Because you can only guess at his motivation, and don’t want to have people choosing sides in this meeting, just restate your position carefully. Keep your voice calm and low, and say, “I guess I didn’t make myself clear.” Then make yourself clear. Do this as many times as you need to. Ultimately, there will be pressure from others in the room to stop this tactic, and public opinion will support you because you haven’t lost your cool.

The Color Commentator

Problem: She makes a provocative statement without actually asking a question. Often this can come across as snarky, sarcastic or looking for a laugh—perhaps at your expense. You sense she may be doing this to get a reaction out of you, or call attention to herself.

Solution: Don’t take the bait. Here are two good ways to respond. First, if it’s a Q&A session, say, “Sorry, I don’t think I understand your question,” which invites her to ask a real one or bow out. Second, consider using bridging to get back to one of your main messages: “While I can’t comment about that, what I *can* tell you is ...”

The Silencer

Problem: He pauses for several seconds after you’ve finished answering a question. He looks at you—perhaps with raised eyebrows—as though giving you a chance to continue speaking. You’ve seen this a million times on TV “ambush interviews.” It’s usually used to make

people feel so nervous about the silence that they start talking and say something they didn't plan on.

Solution: Often our predilection is to turn to the person and say, “Did that answer your question?” because the silence has made us uncomfortable enough to think we might not be doing a good job. If this is a confrontational situation, you’ve just given up your power. Try one of these two tactics instead. First, fill the void by bridging back to a key message. Try, “I’d be happy to give you a related example of how we ...” Second, if there’s really nothing more to say, then just look at the questioner and smile.

The Investigator

Problem: She asks you for secrets or confidential information. You’ve seen this technique on every good cop/bad cop show on TV. These questions are often accompanied by a soft, conspiratorial voice tone, with the person leaning toward you, implying. “Just between the two of us ...” Her question also may be leading, indicating that she already knows the information and is just looking for confirmation—so you’re really not sharing something that’s secret.

Solution: This plays off the human condition of wanting others to believe we are “in the know” on something. Stick to the information it’s OK for you to share and then bridge to one of your key messages. Try, “While I can’t speak to *that*, what I can tell you is ...”

Sometimes It’s What You Don’t Say

Here’s the toughest Q&A situation I’ve ever been in.

When I worked with the investor relations agency, one of my clients was developing a process for mixing “3-D sound.” This meant no matter where the speakers were placed, the sound would appear to be coming from all around you. I visited the sound studios where the equipment was being tested, talked with the technicians, and the company looked legit.

The management team promised investors it would announce the first use of the new technology with a major recording artist by a certain date. As that time drew near, I began to press them for information so we would be ready to share it. They stopped taking my calls. In the days before email, I sent them faxes, telegrams and registered letters. I warned them of the big credibility problem we would have if they said nothing.

And they said nothing.

The day of the announcement came and went, with no word from the company. I resigned from the account.

Fast forward two years. I received a notice from the head of the Seattle bureau of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). His office was investigating the former client for securities fraud. They subpoenaed all of my records and required me to attend a deposition.

Never having been “deposed” before, I met with our agency’s attorney. He gave me the best advice: “Just answer the questions you are asked. Don’t offer any opinions or additional information.”

The day came. The SEC bureau chief sat at the end of the table. His court reporter—armed with a tape recorder—sat next to him. The attorney was at my side. I was hoping the chief would ask me the right questions so I could give him the information that would put this management team behind bars. We went painstakingly through nearly every document I sent to the bureau—including all of those faxes, telegrams and registered letters.

The chief looked at me at one point and said, “It must have been awfully frustrating to send all of these notices to the company, asking them to talk with investors, and get no reaction from them.”

I gave him a rueful smile.

He got the message—but there was nothing on the official record. And he also got the information he needed to prosecute the company’s leaders.

Knowing your audience really begins with knowing yourself. I’m a Listener and Doer. If I use that style with everyone, then I’ll only persuade other Listener/Doers—which is a thin slice of the population. You’ve probably heard the line, “If all you have is a hammer, then

everything is a nail.” By watching others and noticing how they want to get and process information, I add new tools to my toolbox and can be more convincing with those who have other learning and communication styles. And by paying attention to how people ask me questions—and making sure I give them what they need while sharing what’s important—I keep control of the Q&A session, increasing the chances that I will get what I want.

What You Know

- Ninety-three percent of the information people get from you is nonverbal—through voice tone and quality. Make sure this matches the 7% they get from your messages.
- **Lookers** (75% of the population) think in images and pictures. Connect with them by giving them lots of eye contact and using “visual” words.
- **Listeners** (20%) think in words and sounds. Connect with them by not giving them too much eye contact and using “sound” words.
- **Feelers** (5%) think in feelings and kinesthetically. Connect with them by leaning in, feeling comfortable with occasional physical contact, and using “feeling” and “tactile” words.
- **Doers** are action oriented and like “to the point” communications. **Thinkers** are analytical and like all the details. **Feelers** are relationship oriented and like information presented with passion. **Creators** like abstractions presented in unusual ways.
- People asking questions of you will take many different approaches to get the information they want—or to score personal or professional points. Stay focused on not giving up control of the session, while sharing the messages you understand they want and need to know.

What to Do Now

Analyze Your Coworkers or Family Members Exercise

1. Pick four people who are important in your personal and/or professional life.
2. Determine how they think: Looker, Listener or Toucher. Analyze how they like to get information: Doer, Thinker, Feeler or Creator.

a.

b.

c.

d.

3. Choose one of them. Now that you know how he/she thinks and likes to get information, how will you change your approach to create better rapport?

Being Persuasive in Q&A Exercise

1. Pick one of the questions you created at the end of the last chapter.

2. How would an Omniscient Authority ask this question?

3. How would you answer it?

4. What might a Paraphraser say after hearing your answer?

5. What would you say to the Paraphraser?

6. How will you handle an Interrupter who is peppering you with questions?

7. How will you respond to a Silencer who is looking to make you feel uncomfortable and keep talking?

About the Author

A year and a day, one broken nose and three cracked ribs later, Lynne Franklin got out of social work at Daniel Cottage. Fred and the other boys there had taught her everything she needed to know to survive in the business world. That started her on the path of discovering “how do you get others to do what you want?”

This professional journey took Lynne through positions as a reporter for a weekly banking magazine (“I knew when they said ‘Fannie Mae’ it wasn’t the candy, but I had no clue!”), through a series of jobs with public and investor relations agencies and one corporation, to starting Lynne Franklin Wordsmith—her corporate communications and marketing practice—in 1993.

Along the way, Lynne turned into a neuroscience nerd. She studies how the brain works, how this affects the choices people make, and how to create communications that move their minds to action. (“I want to be more than just another pretty phrase.”)

Today, Lynne works with CEOs, CFOs, entrepreneurs and business leaders on how to create and share messages that are attractive to their customers, employees, investors and the media. She also is a professional speaker and trainer on persuasive business communication strategies. Lynne is committed to helping people laugh, learn, and get strategies they can use right away to solve their problems and get what they want.

Learn more about Lynne at [@LynneFranklin](http://www.linkedin.com/in/LynneFranklin), <http://tinyurl.com/LynneYouTube> or contact her directly at lynne@yourwordsmith.com. And **don’t forget to download your gift**—*Something Funny about Business Communication: 12 Oddball Theories and 38 Tips for Getting What You Want on the Job*—and sign up for Lynne’s monthly *In Communicado* neuroscience communication and humor newsletter at www.yourwordsmith.com.