

**SAY
WHAT?**

**Do You Really Know What
You Are Communicating?**

by

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Forward

This book reflects a lifetime of experiences mostly connected with the media industry. There seems to come a time in some of us when you believe we have reached critical mass from education and experience. Then, if we don't organize, refine, and package that knowledge we are not doing our part to try and help the other passengers in the lifeboat. Such is the case here.

You won't find great numbers of references or footnotes. This is because the comments and observations are mine alone gleaned from interactions over time. However, I have included a few suggested readings at the end that may be of interest.

Media production work is varied and entails tasks from writing and producing to recording and editing but the fundamental skill required in all the work is knowing how to communicate. Whether you write, produce radio ads, television ads, billboards, or print, the task is the same: communicate your message effectively.

This book started out geared toward media students but benefits anyone wishing to get their message across. Media work absorbs its students with communicating a message but the same task is placed before all of us. You discover inside these pages that each of us is a message maker pitching our products to one-another. When you internalize my concepts and reach the end of this book, your personal message will be among some of the best.

Gene Vasconi

QUICK START GUIDE

How to use this book. A special note to techies, geeks, nerds and others not accustomed to interacting with human beings.

1. This is not software
2. Read the book
3. Read it again
4. Remember what you read
5. Use it

INTRODUCTION

What you say and do screams to the world the type of person you are and affects your level of success. You can either shoot craps with how you are perceived or orchestrate your message to your advantage. But you will be judged one way or the other.



You try to communicate something from the first second you draw a breath. At first you do it by crying your lungs out...because you're hungry or your diaper is full or you feel cold or hot. Wow...that's a lot to get across without words. So, maybe you adjust your crying with some wails and throw in a few arm waves for effect. If you're lucky, mom or dad will investigate and take care of your problem before it builds up.

A bit later in life we learn to use words to communicate our situation and now the real problems begin. We're no longer targeting mom or dad; we're communicating to strangers and others who may not know us very well. Crying and waving our arms doesn't do it anymore...even though some people attempt to use this tactic throughout their life. But, real-life folks must bear down and immerse themselves in our collective sea of humanity and work to express themselves in a way that gets results. Gets results? Of course...why else do we want to communicate? We have something to say and we want others to get the point. Most of us want to make our mark. But all too often, our mark is merely a scuff on the shoe of life...a zit that mars our hopes of a flawless public complexion. And it is too bad, because getting yourself to a reasonable level of communication expertise isn't all that hard to do. You simply need to understand how it all happens and utilize the five secrets I am about to teach you.

Now, pay attention because this is life success 101...without this knowledge you will fail to rise to your potential and the small steps you do make will be a lot tougher than they should be to achieve.

Everything has a story to tell. Everything...animate or inanimate. There is a common pattern that everything follows as he, she, or it speaks. It is all based on the desire to express

something and to ensure the originator gets understood. Higher levels (allegedly) of communication stir in many variations of communication theory but, taken down to the basics, it all starts at the bottom. This is how you use it to your advantage and I'll repeat the rules numerous times until you know them by heart...

LESSON:

- 1. We communicate because we have a need to express something.**
- 2. We are successful only when we move another to understanding.**

Pretty simple, eh? And it is all about...YOU or me or whoever is in the center ring. The baby we spoke of earlier has a need...a hunger pang in the stomach. That brings on the crying and the little tike won't stop until his hunger goes away. Or the little kid that almost yells every time he or she speaks (usually in a restaurant next to my table). Maybe this little communicator-to-be is attempting to be heard above his parents so the volume level escalates until everyone is almost yelling. And I bet he doesn't even have anything profound to say ... he just wants to get his message out that he exists. (Don't we all).

The chair you sit on, the pen you write with, the bed you sleep on, the car you drive, all have a story to tell. To hear it ... just listen. Most of these things tell a simple story: how they were made, what they mean to you. But you and other more "complex" entities tell your story as you inch through life in ways you may not be aware of. You might be shocked to swing around and see the mess you are leaving behind.

Communication comes in several forms...

- Purposeful or agenda communication
- Inadvertent or unconscious communication
- Deceitful communication
- Self-defense communication

And these forms are skewed as we receive them because of things like ...

- **Gender**
- **Ethnicity**
- **Age**
- **Health**
- **Motivation**

Let your mind wander for a moment and try to think of all the communications you receive every day. Let's list a few...

- **In-person conversations**
- **Telephone conversations**
- **Letters**
- **Internet and e-mail**
- **Radio/TV programs and advertising**
- **Music**
- **Billboards**
- **Newspapers**
- **Books**
- **Magazines**

Now, add to those a few less obvious forms...

- **Subliminal cues such as body language, vocal tone, eye contact**
- **Warning/signs from inanimate objects**
- **Desires from non-verbal entities like pets/babies**
- **Weather**

These communications happen constantly. They relentlessly bombard your senses and each one extracts a minuscule energy toll from you each time you are impacted. No wonder that by the end of the day you feel drained. You have been in battle all day and probably didn't even recognize half of the ammunition being used on you. You are in a war every day. The second you step into life, you are required to be mentally present for your survival and that means communication. Your ego rises and falls based on how well you perform. Your communication prowess impacts your income, your future, your relationships, your pride, and every single molecule of your being. If you don't have the skills to communicate well, you will lose the war but it is a war you can easily win.

Remember again...

LESSON:

1. We communicate because we have a need to express something.
2. We are successful only when we move another to understanding

What Can We Communicate?

Think about it...EVERYTHING communicates.

Say What?!

No, don't worry I won't be talking about hugging a tree or staring into a bowl of water for a few hours. Even so, trees and water are saying something but you probably aren't listening. We travel through life selectively shifting our focus from thing to thing as it suits us. For example...



Drive down the road. We're on a busy highway and where is your focus. If you're smart, it isn't on your cell phone but on the traffic in front of you. The big truck you are behind is saying something, "I'm big, I can move as fast as you, I can pick up stones and toss them your way and my load could shift and cause a big accident." The final message you get subconsciously is to, "Give the truck some room."

Now for the car that is entering the highway from the onramp. What is it saying? "I'm entering the highway and I have a lot to consider...traffic everywhere, speed limit, matching the pace of the traffic, and if I'm in a hurry or just an idiot, I may dart in front of you and take off." The final message you get is, "Pay attention to the car until you judge it is not a hazard." OK. Enough of the driving lesson. The point here is that even machines send you a message due to the fact that they occupy space at the same time you do. And if cars can send you messages...anything else can as will. One more example.

Time to take a relaxing walk through the park. It is a sunny day...oops...the sun is saying, "I'm bright and the rays I am sending down can give you a sunburn if you don't wear a hat. My brightness will cause you to squint and get wrinkles around

your eyes.” The final message, “Take some precautions when in the sun.” Simple but not an option. Let’s continue the walk.

Here comes a dog walking the opposite way to us. What is his message? Hmm...he’s kind of growling and his fur is standing up. Not wagging his tail. His message is, “I don’t trust you and if you get too close I’m going to bite you.” Your sense is to, “Give the dog plenty of room and don’t threaten him.”



Yes, all this may sound a bit simple. But these messages transmit constantly. We get so overwhelmed that we start to get numb. This is when we are at risk for misunderstanding things. We wearily succumb to the mercy of those wanting to push their message at us. Now you realize that this isn’t unusual or sinister ... they do this because of nature’s rules of our having a need to communicate and not being successful until we get others to understand.

Take a look around you. Realize what has happened in the last 100 years. We have evolved from a world of simple one-to-one communicators by talking and rudimentary devices to being pummeled by vast sources of information from television, radio, newspaper, Internet, e-mail, cell phones, i-pods, Blackberries, and on and on. Add to this that communication techniques have become extremely sophisticated and, if you don’t have a protection plan, you will surely become mired in technology quicksand. Why? Because you are interacting with people who are immersed in this stuff every day. This taints their perceptions and requires you to modify your communication style in order to reach them.

But our goal is to turn the tables on technology; to harness it and use it to make our mark. We can’t afford to let it get the better of us and won’t with some basic understanding.

KNOW YOUR ADVERSARY

The best way to win a war is to understand the adversary. If you don’t know the mechanics of building a brick wall, your wall will fall over when you have finished. I once built a

helicopter...yes an actual do-it-yourself kit helicopter. I saw the finished aircraft in a brochure and had to do it. However, the dream quickly faded when I received several hundred boxes containing several hundred parts. I was paralyzed but a valuable lesson was about to be learned. I had invested so much money in it that I was forced to come up with a way to go about building it even though there were (quite poor) instructions. The lesson I give you now is ...



LESSON:






You can accomplish anything if you take it one small part at a time.

That's right. Break a huge task down into the smallest parts and nibble away until you finish. It always works and I did complete the helicopter and it actually flew.

How does this relate to communication? Break down this huge beast that is communicating at you every day and you'll see how it works and be able to tame it. Knowing the mechanics of the process empowers to resist it, shape it, and ultimately mold it to your will. This must be your first and most important goal every day -- your survival depends on it.

Do I overstate? Absolutely not. It has always amazed me that people believe they can live a safe, secure, and productive life when they cannot communicate with those around them. A good example...you are driving in a foreign country (a dangerous move already) and your spouse suffers a health attack. You become lost. A sign on the road points left and right with words you cannot discern. If you knew the native language, you could head straight to help...but you don't so you risk your spouse's life by this lack of knowledge. Communication with others of your species (that is all of us humans) is ground zero of basic survival.

So, let's break down the act of communication into what I call the FIVE KNOWS...

 KNOW	your target or who you want to communicate to.
 KNOW	what you want to communicate as a simple, single concept.
 KNOW	how long you have to get the message across.
 KNOW	the vehicle of communication and its drawbacks.
 KNOW	your budget - such as time, energy, consumables, etc.

These FIVE KNOWS are the characteristics that apply to any and all types of communication and all of them as a group must be satisfied to ensure a successful transmission. If any one of these KNOWS is not satisfied, your message may seem like it is getting through but the effect will not be as strong as if everything is considered.

After developing these five criteria, I tested them time and time again. They indeed work if you put them in play. However, you need to be sure of them and believe in them.

You will see these FIVE KNOWS many times throughout this book because you need to MEMORIZE and UNDERSTAND THEM. Do not take my word for it that they work. Prove it to yourself by testing them on any communication you are attempting. You will find them printed separately at the end of the book so you can remove the page and keep the FIVE KNOWS with you. Over time you will internalize them and they will become a habit but you must start with the memory aid. You will not be sorry for the small, additional work. So, let's test them.

How about we set out to convince our spouse that we need to buy a big, new big-screen television. Here goes...



KNOW

your target or who you want to communicate to.

- **Simple.** It is our spouse. Identifying this lets us know if we have a lot in common with the person and can draw on that knowledge to make our case.



KNOW

what you want to communicate as a simple, single concept.

- **We need a new, big screen television. Don't cloud the issue with options and choices.** You need a new TV not a new big-screen plasma television, high definition, four channel sound, integrated DVD player, with inputs and outputs for all the electronics you now have or ever will have...and ...whew. Too much information and, when overloaded, our usual response is to just say...NO!



KNOW

how long you have to get the message across.


- **This part of plan is based on your knowledge of the relationship and how the other person processes.** If your spouse needs time to come around to your way of thinking, you make your case in small steps. If they are impulsive, you bombard them with facts, information, and positives and get them quickly fired up.



KNOW

the vehicle of communication and its drawbacks.

- **What is the vehicle or way you will communicate? Again, based on the knowledge of your spouse. Do they like to research a purchase; do they like to do hands-on evaluations? You must provide the proper information in the proper format to be successful. Typically your vehicle will be by conversation so you must prepare facts, figures, examples, comparisons, reasons to make the buy but be aware of any drawbacks to the way to communicating. Don't press your point if the other person is sick, had a hard day at work, or has their own priority item they are dealing with. Be aware of the best time to move.**



KNOW your budget - such as time, energy, consumables, etc.

- **How much time or effort are you willing to expend? Is this just a whim or is it a lifelong desire? Whims are very hard to sell...lifelong desires are a lot easier. Your level of honest commitment goes a long way toward being convincing.**

Try a few tests on your own now that you know how to take the communication process apart. It works every time.

One more?

How about a television ad trying to sell you a "KITCHEN CHICKEN COOKER".



Here goes...



KNOW your target or who you want to communicate to.

- **I bet you don't find this ad running in the middle of wrestling or auto racing. You'll find that they have targeted women whom they believe will be open to buying the cooker. Food shows, morning shows, soap operas, and such.**



KNOW

what you want to communicate as a simple, single concept.

- “How much easier you will find cooking a delicious chicken with their appliance.” Are they going to show you how it takes sixty minutes to assemble it? No chance. You will only see a quick, easy-to-use device and some very enticing shots of a chicken cooking and then being gobbled up by people delighted by the taste.



KNOW

how long you have to get the message across.

- A TV ad usually runs 30 seconds so there is no time to waste. Don't expect a saga...expect quick, well-produced shots with audio copy that is right to the point. It will feature beautiful imagery and seek to keep your full attention from the first second.



KNOW

the vehicle of communication and its drawbacks.

- The vehicle of communication is video and audio. If they do their job properly, they make you want to see more and present an almost amazing sequence of shots depicting how great their product is. Knowing their target is women, they will use a female, middle-aged voice. It is a homemaker-sounding voice and concentrates on the ease of cooking, the time saved, the cost savings, and shows you many ways you win when you buy their product.



KNOW

your budget - such as time,
energy, consumables, etc.

- The producers determined where the ad would draw the most interest and the cost per viewer. The quality of the ad reflects that budget and not a penny more. If they don't get a sizable return on their ad investment, they go out of business.

Bad advertising or any type of communication blooms when any one of these rules is not satisfied. You've seen it many times and, since we're discussing a TV ad, let's pick a few examples:

- The TV ad for a new drug that laboriously drones on about the possible side effects of taking the product. A waste of money.
- The TV ad for a new pickup truck that screams nothing but souped-up trucks jumping cliffs, fording rivers, pulling locomotives, or any of untold idiotic stunts. How many normal pickup truck drivers do that? Exciting...yes. Convincing...no. What they need to show is reliability, fuel economy and (of course) sex appeal from the potential purchase.
- The TV ad (and these are usually locally created) that pastes rambling titles on the screen about this sale or that special while the on-screen announcer talks about something else. It concludes with an ending screen for five seconds that would take sixty seconds to read.

There is a reason this stupidity happens and we'll get into more of this later on.

I suggest that, to practice refining your communication skills, you do home schooling. Don't watch commercials because you want to buy something...watch them and analyze how they do or do not work. Use the FIVE KNOWS and take each one apart. See if it maximizes each of the points. If any one is missing, it will not work. Learn from these short lessons before you need to stand in front of another human who may have your financial future in their power.

Once you digest and create your message with the FIVE KNOWS, we now further refine our message with two *measures*

of communication quality. These two characteristics use bits and pieces from the FIVE KNOWS but give us another way to look at the effectiveness of what we are presenting. Evaluating your communication with these measurements after you have used the FIVE KNOWS to construct it will enable to you fine-tune the message for maximum impact.

Measurement #1:

Your message must be worth communicating.

- *It must have a value to someone and not just be gibberish. I'm not talking about content here. A magazine ad for butterfly elixir may seem stupid to me but it has value to someone. However, talking to someone at a party and saying nothing but, "oggie boogie wanaga dinky booboo" doesn't communicate much except your mental condition.*

Measurement #2: Your message must draw other people's focus.

- *If it does not (and this is what some people get paid a lot of money to avoid) it will get lost in the background. As we have said, we constantly shift our focus to those things that attract us or become important in some manner so being able to grab that focus is extremely important.*

I grew up in the 50s and, believe it or not, as a kid I was entranced by a TV sized chunk of plastic film I received in the mail that allowed me to interact with a character called Winky Dink. I sat about 6 inches from the screen (probably could sue the TV show today) and, when instructed, drew with a wax crayon a bridge or steps or some other help device so the cartoon character could use it. WOW...that was really neat. I'd wait for the whole show to draw my helper and be drooling at the idea of doing it again next week. Take a look at today's television for kids and compare the 50s style of interaction with it. It should dynamically demonstrate to you how times have changed. Today, the action must be fast and hard, characters must be superhuman or have some extra power, and the pace

is not slow. It represents our current state and kids are conditioned to live in it.

Times have changed and we no longer have the luxury of slow, diffuse communication. Sure, most of us have seen Andy, Opie, and Aunt Bea sitting on the porch in Mayberry slowly relating the events of the day. Andy is strumming his guitar and Aunt Bea has just returned from the kitchen with a plate of cookies. It takes what seems like hours for anyone to actually say anything. I suspect that, put in that situation, most of us fresh from a pressure-packed office, 60-minute wait restaurant, or 80 mile an hour freeway trip, would last about 10 minutes before erupting and screaming out of town.

So, we're not in Mayberry and we're constantly vying for the pole position with our messages. Face it, we are all trying to sell something. Doesn't matter if it is a product, ourselves, or our point of view...we're in the business of selling and that means using communicating to push our product.

LESSON:

- 1. We communicate because we have a need to express something.**
- 2. We are successful only when we move another to understanding.**

This book is one portion of the multi-volume owner's manual for a human being. It is not a how-to manual to use Twitter, Facebook, Microsoft Word or any other tool utilized to communicate. These are simply tools that change over time but the foundations of effective communication do not change quickly if at all. These foundations can be influenced by technology but people are still people and interact in the same human way they have for ages. What is different is the new things people must react to.

So, I will give you the understanding and insight here of the concepts to effectively communicate using any format. Your job is to then go out and buy the electronic/mechanical tools you need to get the job done.

CHAPTER 1

MAKING YOUR MARK IN PERSON

Be honorable yourself if you wish to associate with honorable people...Welsh Proverb

Childhood is designed to destroy our little egos. I was no different but I was the recipient of a great gift...I could play a musical instrument. Well, actually I didn't play it all that well until I was allowed to learn a lesson.

Y'see, I was a trumpet player in the junior high (we now call them middle school) band. I sat last chair, second section. I think that too was a gift from the band director who was grooming me for a loftier purpose.

One day he called me over and said the words that struck fear into my heart. "You probably won't make it into the high school band (and that meant the marching band) playing trumpet." If I could have suffered a heart attack at that young age I would have. I was crushed. "BUT," he added, "I really need good tuba players and I think you would be a good one...interested?" Tuba? Tuba? That big, dopey looking, huge oom-paa-paa canon? But I was desperate. I agreed and that fateful decision caused me to learn a strong lesson. It is easier to make some sort of personal mark if you aren't one of a whole bunch of folks doing the same thing. I was able to stand out playing the tuba where I would have been just another lousy trumpet player. It didn't help me get any girls (translation: didn't improve my sex appeal) but it helped me experience a lot of things I couldn't have done without playing the horn.



OK...let's say it. Studies have shown that beautiful people have an easier time getting what they want. The six foot four stud, former football player or the gorgeous and well-proportioned blond have it made, right? Well...maybe not.

I will concede that a handsome or beautiful human package may have it a bit easier getting in the front door of a potential client. However, if the conversation that follows is not superior, they will be exiting just as quickly as the next person. So, let's leave any victim routine in the dust and turn to

maximizing our raw materials...us. First step...take a look in the mirror. Now stop that negative thinking! We don't care if you are a bit flabby or don't have big boobs. None of that stuff is important as long as you have the standard issue eyes, ears, nose, etc. If you have extra or fewer of those things, there are ways around that as well but that is the topic for another book. We'll assume that you are an average person with all of the average characteristics. Here is another lesson point...

LESSON:

Take a look at yourself objectively and come to grips with what you are. Don't be a fake – it never works.

Leave that in high school. You remember...Sue was Miss popularity and the football/basketball jock had it all...it seemed. Now, while I am not being vindictive, I believe in life lessons and my last high school reunion sure taught several of those to the one-time in-crowd of some 40 years ago. I actually felt sorry for them because they learned the lesson late that I learned early on: rely on whom you are and what you know instead of how handsome/beautiful you are. I bet that is a lesson today's kids learn at a later age than we did in the 50s.

As you view yourself in the mirror, picture yourself as a stranger sees you. The first order of interpersonal communication is the physical impact one person has on another. You know what you like in others so become one yourself. What image do you wish to present? Remember the FIVE KNOWS? Number one is to know your target. If you are going fishing your target of communication is your fishing buddy. He or she requires a different level of talk than seeing the vice-president of the Acme Company about a job. Don't wear fishing clothes to the interview and don't wear a suit to the lake.

I always get a kick out of younger types who attend networking meetings. They are there seeking business leads but often they show up in jeans or other sloppy clothes. They have totally ignored their target audience...other business types who now see them as sloppy or non-caring. They have communicated the wrong thing and they will not be successful. Here comes the next lesson and this may be a bit hard for some people to handle...

LESSON:

People with whom you wish to have any financial dealings expect a level of personal responsibility from you and that still means looking like you can be trusted.

We have been trying to modify that human characteristic for many decades but it still remains. The modification police don't recognize that behaving this way is inbred in humans...that is how we survive. It will not change so accept it and use it to your advantage.

I have had lots of occasions to meet business people in all lines of work. Many times I wonder why some of them do what they do. They seem to be making the road much more difficult because they don't understand what they are communicating. All of these things can be easily solved with a good session at the mirror.



Say What?! For example...the Chiropractor who dresses like a 60s hippie. The candy store owner who is overly plump. The pharmacist who acts like she has not only smoked but also inhaled...a lot!

What do these people communicate?

The Chiropractor looks sloppy and I don't want him sloppily adjusting my spine.

The plump candy store owner silently screams that I shouldn't buy candy because I'll get fat.

And the druggie pharmacist scares me because she might put the wrong pills in my prescription bottle.

Knee-jerk reactions? Maybe. But that is the reality of human communication. We are programmed to make quick judgments. Remember that we started out long ago as primitive animal food and to survive we needed to size up a situation and take action. Too much deliberation and we became lunch. It continues today just at a less catastrophic level...or maybe not.

So, oops ... we still have you standing in front of the mirror. Take stock of your weaknesses and do something about them. Wear a sports coat if you have a flab problem. Wear pants that don't highlight your waist. Wear an expanding belt. Have a wrinkly neck? Wear things that cover up. Do the best you can and then put it away. Move on to the next frightening step. Ask a non-friend their opinion and hope they tell the truth. Go all the way. From clothes and style to (gulp) bad breath.

There was a television ad long ago that droned, "even your best friend won't tell you." That is still true. I have a couple of friends that I ashamedly have not mustered the courage to tell them of their breath problem. This is a tough one but we actually do them a favor if we bear down and do it. Just communicate it the right way by knowing your target and the other techniques we're discussing.

So, the bottom line of all of this is that you can't change what you were handed when you were you were born. OK, some plastic surgeons may argue that but most of us won't go that route.

**A special note to ladies (men haven't gone here ...yet)
I know most of you want to look like the most glamorous starlet ever discovered but, depending on your line of work, this can negatively impact you. This comes from a male who admittedly may be quite conservative in how he appreciates women. I still enjoy walking through a flower garden...I just don't want to pick them.**

A person's appearance does three things:

- 1. It broadcasts who you think you are or hope to be.**
- 2. It advertises what you are seeking.**
- 3. It allows others to make a quick judgment of you.**

We center here on women because men usually (at least once they pass their mid-30s) don't stray too far off the centerline of moderate dress or self-promotion. And, men don't have the personal assets they can manipulate to their purpose.

Some quick comments about female appearance in professional situations. In purely social functions the sky is the limit. Heaven help us.

Note #1 to ladies: Clothes. There is an old saying from the P.T. Barnum days of peep shows and carnivals. “Make the suckers buy a ticket – don’t give it all away.”

If you wear a low cut, high hem dress that is skin tight and wish to discuss your book on nuclear physics, do you really believe you will be taken seriously?

Say What?!

As we said earlier, attractive or enticing people might get in the door a bit easier but after that, it is an equal playing field. Wear that kind of outfit and the males in the audience won’t be thinking nuclear physics, and the females will be thinking nasty things because you are making a show.



Please don’t think that your supposedly demure dress (that is the only thing you could buy - they don’t make anything else) with the plunging neckline will not go unnoticed. You are broadcasting to men that you are easy and advertising that you are interested. If you don’t know that, know it now. If the only dress you can buy has a low neckline, wear a sweater with it or find a way to make it less distracting. If you don’t do this, do not even start to say that no one takes you seriously or men only want to flirt with you. You are in control or your personal advertising.

Note #2 to ladies: Cosmetics

Natural is much more appealing to men than plastering gobs of goop on your face or creating huge eyebrows, and slathering on wide lines of eye liner. Save it for the stage where people in the audience sit far away from you. Up close and personal, excessive makeup means you are trying to cover something up. I’d much rather see some imperfections in a face than makeup so thick I worry it will break should you smile.

And lipstick. The original intent of lipstick when it was developed in France was to make the lips more sensuous and inviting. Now, sensuous and inviting doesn’t mean something

that looks like those candy lips you find around Halloween. It doesn't need to be solid, bright red and applied a quarter inch beyond your lipline. If you choose to use it (and I'm not sure it really needs to be used much) be discrete, use it sparingly and choose a color that compliments your face in a subtle pink or red shade. Black is for vampires and teenage girls trying to get attention.

Note #3 to ladies: Piercings and tattoos

Ahh...what to say here. First thing – guys...NO...it looks stupid. Back to the women. Pierced ears have become acceptable for several reasons. They are not in the front of your face; they jam the piercing tool into a non-essential portion of your ear and, unless you dangle a 20-pound ring or gob of junk from them, can be attractive. Besides, women tell me that the clips can be quite painful.

However, piercing a tongue, nose, lip, temple or anything else is something that will cause me to avoid you like the plague. It is barbaric and advertises to me that you are still an adolescent and certainly not a professional I wish to deal with. Maybe it is the norm in Hollywood (what isn't) but not for me.

A tongue piercing is beyond my tolerance. It is unsanitary, looks disgusting and moves you to the category of a teenage girl seeking to be cool. I won't deal with you, look at you, or treat you seriously. I avoid all waitresses who show up to my table with 10 things stapled into their ears, a nose ring, and a Band-Aid over what was once a hole in her lip. No order, no pity, and no tip. Makes me ill. Sorry but you heard it in the privacy of this book so either ignore my advice or accept it and dispose of this idiocy.

Tattoos are a joke. Yeah, OK...if you want to get a little butterfly etched into the skin of your butt, go ahead. I won't see it and you'll be happy. But when you have the Battleship Maine or a scene from some horror movie inked on your back or front or somewhere where it is publicly visible, you've gone over the line of having a meaningful conversation with me. Sorry – call me uncool or an old fogie. The first question I ask myself about you is “why in the world put a permanent thing like that on your body”. I then immediately transport myself 50 years into the future and see you as an old, wrinkled, senior sporting what once was a flock of soaring eagles that now has become a bunch of ugly buzzards dining on a roadkill. What a wonderful scene to take to your grave. Whew. Save mediocre purple artwork for where it belongs...graffiti.

End of special note to ladies...

So, accept your appearance and work to make the best of your raw material while playing within the parameters of what most people expect. Present a reasonable impression so that you can communicate and win over your target and you will win. The most important part of this is to know your stuff and have your message refined.

**CLOTHES AND APPEARANCE OK?
CHECK!**

Let's move on to what we will call our "elevator pitch". This is the brief synopsis of your entire being that you must be able to give at a moment's notice. It is called the "elevator pitch" because you are usually in a group of people and have only a very short time to deliver it. Again, remember your target audience and adjust the pitch appropriately. You can even have several versions practiced and in the can. Use one or another depending on the situation. Too often (and I have done this myself in the past) people respond to, "So what do you do?" with, "I'm in sales," or, "I own a dry cleaning shop." Well, that sure sets them apart doesn't it? Guess we can slot them into a pile with about a gazillion others. Any hope of a meaningful conversation is pretty well lost unless the other person just happens to be looking for a sales person, dry cleaner or (most often) someone they can sell their stuff to.



LESSON:

Practice your "elevator pitch" until it becomes natural and dynamic.

This is the first line of making your mark so don't let the chance go by. What is more dynamic?

Response #1:






"I have a small business that sells windows. We have been in business for 10 years and can usually get you windows from a lot of name manufacturers."

Or

Response #2:

"I am into transforming homes from old, outdated looks into new, crisp decorator style homes. We do it all with windows. Our renovation program uses computer-assisted templates to show our clients what they can expect and we do it at less cost than anyone else does. Same brands but we use our 10 years of expertise. In fact, Mayor Johnson just signed with us to renovate his home. I'd love to have coffee with you and show you some ideas."

The key to this communication is following the FIVE KNOWS and making a mini commercial that shows you to be someone worth speaking with.

 KNOW	your target or who you want to communicate to.
 KNOW	what you want to communicate as a simple, single concept.
 KNOW	how long you have to get the message across.
 KNOW	the vehicle of communication and its drawbacks.
 KNOW	your budget - such as time, energy, consumables, etc.

Don't be a slug or a victim or, even worse, a desperate salesman. We all sense these characteristics and you'll never get your message across.

Here is the checklist so you can develop your “elevator pitch.” It does not need to be about a product or a business you are promoting...it can just be about you. If you are an auto mechanic looking for a job, your “elevator pitch” centers around you and what you can bring to the job. So, the points to consider are...

- 1. Streamline the description of the product you want to sell.**
- 2. Explore the most dynamic and unique features and benefits of your product.**
- 3. Position yourself into a niche or something unique about yourself or product.**
- 4. Customize your pitch to your target audience.**
- 5. Add some credibility such as a past client you have served.**
- 6. Develop a memorable closer line such as, “One of my most fun assignments was repairing the racecar that won the Indianapolis 500 in 2007. I’m actively seeking a career opportunity if you know of one.”**

They key here is uniqueness. Do not be dishonest or over-inflate your abilities.

Uniqueness is defined as “having no equal, highly unusual, extraordinary, rare.” What you seek to do is make yourself stand out from the crowd. Instead of being just another dry cleaner owner, you own the shop that specializes in dry cleaning fine ballroom gowns or Chinese silks. Don’t worry if you don’t add that you also clean Rayon, Dacron, Nylon, Banlon or anything else under then sun. The fact that you specialize in high level work implies that you do it all and are very good. You must seek to make yourself memorable.

These six checklist items all branch off of our FIVE KNOWS. They take into account your target, your optimum message, how long you have to do it, how you are going to do it, and how much time and energy you can expect to use. The “elevator pitch” is anywhere from 30 to 60 seconds long and the shorter the better.

Think back to a social event where you were expected to mingle with others. There was probably someone you remember who, when asked what they did, spent the next 10 minutes explaining it. What was your reaction? Well, unless it was a hugely impressive celebrity (and there are very few) you probably were looking for an excuse to move on. Don’t get into

this position because you will then be avoided and sometimes the word will spread before you.

LESSON:

**(This isn't original)
Always leave them wanting more.**

I once had the opportunity to sit in the audience and hear a very well-known motivational speaker. He was slated to speak for 60 minutes and did reasonably well for most of that time. But, when the session was slated to conclude, he kept going and going and going. He was oblivious to the schedule of the audience that needed to move on. Consequently, few people paid a lot of attention to what he was saying...they were just interested in leaving. I assure you that whatever positives he amassed during the first 60 minutes were negated by the extra time he stole. After that, his title of being a motivational speaker meant motivating people to want to get up and run away.

The same holds true for your “elevator pitch”. Don't try to tell it all or be over-the-top sensational in your 30-60 seconds. You will fail. Your job here is creating a positive and memorable first impression that respects the fact that your target audience is waiting for their turn to do the same thing.

Let's back up for a second to reiterate the most important part of the “elevator pitch” ...the unique or memorable sentence. Be creative and really dig into your experiences. What you may think as mundane could be exciting to others. Before I realized this, I thought that my many years as a television producer/director were nothing special. But I later learned that this was usually of interest to people who often asked what stars I had met or what was the strangest thing I ever had to photograph. Throw a little ham (you) into that stew and you have a lot of material for a unique sentence or two.

For example. Some unique/memorable twists that would spark interest:

- I spent 30 years as a video producer with 5 of those photographing lions in Africa.
- My current project is a new, secret cream I have discovered that will absolutely remove age spots. Care for a sample?

- **Our business selects five people a year for a complete beauty makeover and then we use them in our advertising. Interested in applying?**
- **My latest assignment as a writer was creating a documentary on unique restaurants. I found two right here in the local area that serve the best barbecue on the planet.**
- **My flower shop specializes in wild flowers. We offer glorious arrangements at a fraction of the cost of those using traditional plants.**

The “elevator pitch” breaks the ice and moves you down the road to a more in-depth conversation. The next phase of this interpersonal communication process gets more complicated but still follows the FIVE KNOWS. The only difference is that there are more sub-topics to explore.

NOW THAT YOU'VE TASTED THE CONTENT, BUY THE BOOK.

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**Thanks,
And I look forward to helping you**

Gene Vasconi