
1.5. TOOLS AND SKILLS CATEGORIES

1.5.8. THE COMMUNICATION SKILL

1.5.8.5. ORAL COMMUNICATION

1.5.8.5.1. HOW TO SAY WHAT YOU MEAN AND MEAN WHAT YOU SAY.

For effective oral presentations you must move your audience toward the conclusion you mean for them to come to; and you have to prepare your information portrayal so your audience will know what you mean.

You have to prepare if you want to give an effective oral presentation. When you prepare, you set up the purpose of the presentation and determine the conclusion you want to move your audience toward. In figuring out how to meet your purpose and move your audience, you design your presentation and set up the visual information portrayal to support your presentation. This thinking reflects Lou Middleman's equation for writing: audience plus purpose equals design.

In these nine modules, I'll lay out a set of exercises to follow for preparing an oral presentation. The first three modules set up a set of six exercises. The following six modules describe each of the six exercises. I developed this set of exercises to aid a team of people who were preparing an important briefing as a group. I suggest that you can use these same exercises when you prepare your briefing. You may be preparing an oral presentation on your own for you to present. Or, you may be a part of a group of people who are preparing a presentation for one of the group to present or to present in sequence as a team. In many ways, a participative group presentation is more difficult to do because the participants aren't coordinated in what they think or what they do. These exercises are especially good for group presentations. I expect you to review the exercises and reflect on the text supporting each exercise. When you have a presentation to prepare, you'll work out the exercises.

The purpose of the set of exercises is to come

up with drafts of charts to use as visual aids for the oral presentation and for everyone involved in the presentation to know and influence the contents of the charts. You should work step-by-step through your briefing and iterate as necessary. The result of the set of exercises will be a coherent and agreed-upon basis for anyone to use to prepare a professional-quality briefing.

Many of the ideas in the exercise worksheets were taken from a workshop by Robert Perry and from texts by Louis Middleman and Rudolf Flesch.

I designed the exercises as a two-hour participative session for a group of a dozen people. The group was a team of people who worked together and were working on a briefing to be presented by the team leader. Working as a group brought in the added dimension of getting the team members aimed in a common direction toward a common conclusion without gaps or overlaps. Preparing an information portrayal as a team is a common situation. We'll see the situation again in a team-writing exercise later.

What often happens in team preparation of an information portrayal is that the briefing or document is disjointed because of the different approaches, conclusions, biases, styles, and perspectives of the team members. In this case, the team leader often throws away the work (or at least most of it) of the team members and does the briefing or document himself

or herself. Then, the team leader, by disregarding the work of the team, disempowers the team members.

Many of us do team briefings and documents when we work on a team project even when we're in school working on design projects.

1.5.8.5.2. PREPARING TO PREPARE.

Before we can effectively design an oral presentation information portrayal as a team, we each need to do our homework on the purpose and the audience of the presentation. In this way, we're preparing to come together to prepare the presentation.

The purpose of the oral presentation worksheet in this module is preparing to prepare. When we bring the team together, we need for each of the members to do some thinking about the briefing before they get together and influence each other. We'll want the team members to influence each other shortly. However, at this point, we want to collect their independent thoughts. The worksheet focuses on five issues: 1) Who is the audience? 2) What is the purpose of the presentation? 3) To what conclusion do we want to move the audience? 4) What are the preferences of the audience? and

5) What's the size of the presentation?

Figure 1.5.8.5.2. contains a leader's review sheet. The purpose of the review sheet is for the leader to see and to share with the team members the amount of consensus the team has even before they come together in terms of the purpose and desired conclusion of the presentation. If you will, this exercise including the worksheet and the review sheet is the homework the team should do before they come together to share their thoughts about the presentation.

ORAL PRESENTATION WORKSHEET

1. Write one sentence naming and describing the one person to whom you're speaking. [For very large audiences, you may be speaking primarily to a group or category of people (e.g., budget analysts, congressional staff).]

2. What is the single overall purpose for making this presentation? Write a sentence describing why you're making this presentation.

3. What single conclusion do you want your audience to come to as a result of your presentation? Write a sentence clearly stating your conclusion.

4. What three or four important points do you want to make in your presentation? Each one must be written as a sentence.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5. If you know any, list your audience's preferences for presentation style, information formats, or content topics.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

6. How many minutes are you considering for this presentation? And for questions?

Presentation: _____ minutes Questions: _____ minutes

Total: _____ minutes

LEADER'S REVIEW SHEET

If you're planning more than one presentation in a single sitting, you want the presentations to work together to meet a common purpose. To keep the presentations from working against each other, review each purpose and conclusion of all presenters. Make sure they agree with or support your central purpose and conclusion. If they don't agree, you must adjust theirs or yours.

<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Purpose Agrees</u>	<u>Conclusion Agrees</u>	<u>Adjustments</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Unless the total presentation is extremely long—several hours to several days—you shouldn't have more than five presenters.

Of secondary importance, review the important presentation points and audience's preferences from the worksheets. You may gain some additional insight for yourself or have the opportunity to redirect presentations obviously in trouble. Aside from consistent conclusions and purposes, be sure to allow presenters freedom in preparing their presentations. They'll speak their own words best.

Figure 1.5.8.5.2. *The leader should see and then share the independent thoughts of the team members before the team develops their collective thoughts.*

1.5.8.5.3. ORGANIZE THE PRESENTATION.

We'll use a set of six exercises to prepare a worthy message and hold your audience's attention. A solid purpose, a good conclusion, a worthy message, and holding the audience will give us a successful presentation.

Figure 1.5.8.5.3. includes the topics for the set of six exercises and shows the relative amounts of time a group should spend on each exercise and on each step within that exercise so the group can complete a good draft of the presentation in two hours. As we organize our presentation, we'll work through the steps to build an effective result.

Both oral and written presentations are formal communications. Communication is a means for transferring information. If you go to the trouble of preparing and presenting a formal communication, you must have a purpose.

A presentation is a device for securing a *predetermined* audience response. You use a time-constrained spoken message. This set of exercises will help you produce a complete message to be cued by reinforcing visuals. Often we fool ourselves and refuse to admit we have anything to sell. Let's at least agree that you want to persuade someone of something. Sometimes you make a presentation because you're told to—but a smart person will identify a purpose anyhow.

Once you have a purpose, you need to know your audience and the object of your purpose: your conclusion. Otherwise, your presentation will fail.

Every presentation needs two things: 1) a worthy message and 2) entertainment. To entertain means to involve or to draw close. In short, you want both to draw your audience close with entertainment and to move him or her to a conclusion with your message. The important items in your presentation, in priority order, are:

- 1) know your audience and purpose,
- 2) define your conclusion,
- 3) develop your message, and
- 4) entertain.

Entertainment is what the definition says; and only in certain cases should entertainment be frivolous. The best entertainment reinforces your message. Variety will be your primary weapon in holding your audience's attention.

For a short presentation, you may have no time for entertainment, which is no problem. You'll hold the audience for several minutes just because of the difference in the audience's environment when you get up to speak.

For a presentation longer than five to ten minutes, we'll consider entertainment, but we'll work on the message first.

LIST OF EXERCISES AND STEPS

- Exercise I **LAST THINGS FIRST.** (40 minutes)
- Step I (a) Start with the title for your last chart. (13 minutes)
 - Step I (b) Put your ideas into your conclusion chart. (17 minutes)
 - Step I (c) Clean up your ideas. (3 minutes)
 - Step I (d) Prepare your conclusion presentation chart. (7 minutes)
- Exercise II **YOUR PURPOSE AIMS YOU AT YOUR CONCLUSION.**
(20 minutes)
- Step II (a) Say why you're there. (9 minutes)
 - Step II (b) Put your ideas into your purpose chart. (7 minutes)
 - Step II (c) Prepare your purpose presentation chart. (4 minutes)
- Exercise III **YOUR AUDIENCE CAN HANDLE NO MORE THAN FIVE CONTENT
POINTS.** (20 minutes)
- Step III (a) Prepare titles for the content points in your presentation. (6 minutes)
 - Step III (b) Put your content ideas into your content charts. (10 minutes)
 - Step III (c) Organize your presentation. (4 minutes)
- Exercise IV **DETAIL CHARTS EXPAND CONTENT POINTS INTO MODULES.**
(15 minutes)
- Step IV (a) Develop titles for your ideas to expand one content point. (6 minutes)
 - Step IV (b) Prepare detail charts for a content point. (6 minutes)
 - Step IV (c) Organize your module. (3 minutes)
- Exercise V **SUPPORTING CHARTS ADD LIFE AND EMPHASIS TO YOUR
PRESENTATION.** (24 minutes)
- Step V (a) Review your content points. (1 minute)
 - Step V (b) Consider additional information. (7 minutes)
 - Step V (c) Review your presentation for highlights and emphasis. (7 minutes)
 - Step V (d) Plan for detailed data used in supporting charts. (2 minutes)
 - Step V (e) Identify ideas for support. (6 minutes)
 - Step V (f) Associate supporting charts. (1 minute)
- Exercise VI **FIRST THINGS LAST.** (1 minute)
- Step VI (a) Start with a formal title.
 - Step VI (b) Consider an informal title.

Figure 1.5.8.5.3. *The six exercises and the detailed steps within those exercises will build a good draft for an effective presentation in two hours.*

1.5.8.5.4. BRING THE AUDIENCE TO YOUR CONCLUSION.

The hardest and most important part of preparing the oral presentation is working out the conclusion we want our audience to come to and the supporting points for coming to that conclusion. We'll do this chart, which is our presentation outline, first.

This is the first of the set of six exercises. Developing the conclusion we want the audience to come to is the hardest and most important part of constructing the oral presentation. Therefore, we'll spend most of our time on what turns out to be the first in importance and last in sequence of our briefing charts. Since

the conclusion is what we want the audience to end up with, by doing this chart first and foremost, we're doing last things first. We'll do four steps in completing this exercise. I've identified the steps as Step I(a) through Step I(d).

Exercise I - LAST THINGS FIRST. (40 minutes)

Step I (a) - Start with the title for your last chart. (13 minutes)

You'll first prepare your conclusion and final briefing chart. All other charts will lead your audience to this chart. On your oral presentation worksheet in Module 1.5.8.5.2., you wrote the single conclusion you want your audience to come to as a result of your presentation.

Now work with this sentence until it has ten or fewer words and clearly makes your point. Keep the verb "to be" out of your sentence. You'll strive to include in your sentence the topic and what's in it for your audience.

Using a 4x6 card, write your short sentence at the top of the card. The sentence will be your chart title. (The reason for a 4x6 card is to limit the number of words you use and to set up your overheads.) (3 minutes)

Discuss conclusion titles together with others in your group. The objective is to be sure your sentences are active (not passive), make the points you want, and are easy to understand. (10 minutes)

Step I (b) - Put your ideas into your conclusion chart. (17 minutes)

Write no fewer than three and no more than seven ideas to expand, clarify, prove, justify, support, emphasize, or reinforce the chart title. If you want a push to get started or want help if you

get stuck, read in Figure 1.5.8.5.4. about two concepts to develop and organize your ideas.

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

- 4) _____

- 5) _____

- 6) _____

- 7) _____

If you believe there are more than seven ideas, pick the best seven (or fewer) and save the others for later. Research shows that any conclusion can be proved in six points. Any more points are simply diminishing returns. You should anguish over any seventh idea. (7 minutes)

Discuss conclusion ideas together with others in your group. For the conclusion chart, your ideas start best as sentences. You want all the ideas to work together.

The order of these ideas in leading your audience to your conclusion is extremely important. Use an inverted pyramid style—the second concept described in Figure 1.5.8.5.4.

As you discuss the ideas, you'll want to mark through the numbers for the ideas and re-number them. (10 minutes)

Step I (c) - Clean up your ideas. (3 minutes)

Now review your ideas and combine, clarify, or eliminate as necessary. If an idea is good but

doesn't strike you as supporting the title, eliminate that idea from this chart and save the idea for later. If two ideas are similar, combine them—not with the word “and” but by writing an idea including them both. Write each idea with as few words as possible. Eliminating words brings you to the “meat” of the idea and will clarify the idea.

One by one, evaluate whether each idea supports or leads the audience to your central conclusion. We suggest you look at each idea and ask yourself the question, “So what!” If you can't answer yourself, your idea needs work. Together, your ideas supporting your conclusion should say what and so what—what is the conclusion and why your audience cares.

As a functional part of your presentation, the conclusion chart is used to tell your audience what you told them. You want your conclusion to be a tangible stimulus to action.

Consider again the rank order of the ideas. Re-order and re-number them to clean up this, your most important, chart. (3 minutes)

Step I (d) - Prepare your conclusion presentation chart. (7 minutes)

Bullet Forms

Each of your ideas will become a bullet on your final chart. A bullet is a fast, accurately-directed missile. That's how you must fashion each of your ideas.

An advantage of the method you're now learning for preparing charts is that in addition to being effective for the audience, the charts are wonderful crutches for you. Since your title is the sentence that “says it all” for your chart, read the title to your audience. Your audience won't notice you're reading because they're reading the same thing. Seeing and hearing the same thing at the same time has been proven to be *ten times* as effective in remembering a point as in seeing or hearing by itself. The bullets for the audience become, for you, ticklers. The bullets remind you of your ideas during the stress of the presentation.

You may prepare each of your bullets in one of three forms: 1) words, 2) phrases, or 3) short sentences with periods. Your choice of form should be a combination of your preference and your audience's preference. The shorter form is generally better. If you're scared to death, a longer form may be the least of all evils. If your audience is going to review a hard-copy version (hand-out) of your presentation before you present the briefing, he or she may prefer a longer form. Write your bullets on the 4x6 card with your title from Step I (a). *Don't number the card yet!* (5 minutes)

Parallelism

Check for parallelism. If you chose the word or phrase form, make sure all bullets on the chart are either noun-based, adjective-based, or verb-based. Mixing bases is distracting. If you chose the sentence form, make sure your tenses are consistent. Sentences end with periods. Words and phrases don't. (2 minutes)

You've now completed the hardest and most important part of your presentation (at least in first draft form).

TWO JOURNALISM CONCEPTS WILL HELP DEVELOP AND ORGANIZE YOUR IDEAS.

Each briefing chart tells a story. All charts together tell a larger story. The news media uses a form of communication that both is effective and efficient and is familiar to your audience. I'll briefly describe two concepts taken from the news media to help you both in constructing a chart and in organizing your charts when preparing your presentation.

“AIDA” is an acronym used by journalists:

A - gain your audience's *Attention*;

I - arouse your audience's *Interest*;

D - bring your audience to *Desire* the benefit of what you offer; and

A - request an *Action*.

A good journalist uses AIDA in every piece he or she writes. It works. Try it!

The inverted Pyramid style of writing *does not* keep the audience in suspense. When competing for readership, newspapers found they had to “spill the beans” early.

Technical specialists have learned to write by beginning at the beginning and going on to the end. It's the obvious and easiest way to organize your material. The trouble is that what's easy for you is hard on the audience. Don't build your audience's impatience and subconscious resentment by holding him or her off.

Notice in your newspaper that the headlines are arranged with the broadest headline in the biggest type on top and successively narrower headlines with smaller type below. The news story itself follows the same principle. Start with a summary of the result. Follow this with important details. Continue with explanatory details and background. Each step fills in more and more details of less and less interest and importance.

Arrange your bullets with the most important and inclusive one on top. (People often forget to *have* such a bullet!) Follow with important details. The limit of seven (or fewer) bullets may force you to drop some details. Good! You don't read all of every newspaper article. You stop when you have the level of detail you want. Your audience will stop listening to you when he or she has the level of detail he or she wants. If necessary, you can abandon your chart part way down the bullets—if you use the inverted pyramid style. You abandon bullets when your audience's attention has obviously wandered. You and I have both experienced our audience's attention wandering. We used too many bullets. We must stop overdoing the amount we want to communicate. We always will want to tell the audience more than he or she will want to hear. We shouldn't do what we want to do, in this case.

Figure 1.5.8.5.4. *As you figure out the story you'll tell with each briefing chart and that you'll tell with all the charts together, you'll be wise to use two journalism concepts.*

1.5.8.5.5. KNOW YOUR PURPOSE.

The first thing our audience should see is the purpose for the oral presentation and that purpose should answer for the audience the questions: So what? and What do you want from me?

This is the second of the set of six exercises. This chart will come first in the briefing (after the title, of course). We'll do three steps in

completing this exercise. I've identified the steps as Step II(a) through Step II(c).

Exercise II - YOUR PURPOSE AIMS YOU AT YOUR CONCLUSION. (20 minutes)

Step II (a) - Say why you're there. (9 minutes)

You'll now prepare the first chart after your title chart. You're going to tell your audience why you're there.

You'll prepare your title chart last. Forget about your title for now! Your title will be obvious when the time comes.

On your oral presentation worksheet, you wrote the single purpose for making the presentation. Now work with that sentence until it has ten or fewer words and clearly makes your point. The words "My purpose is" are not allowed in your sentence. Again, include the topic and what's in it for your audience.

Tell your audience why you're there. Aside from leading your audience to your conclusion, you're there for a reason. "I want to convince you to fund XYZ Project;" "I need you to support me on the DEF issue;" "You need to know about the ABC problem;" "I find that most people in your position believe RST." Answer your audience's question "What do you want from me?" right now.

Your audience suspects that they're there for a reason. Your audience won't relax and be open to you and what you're saying until they know that reason and what's expected of them. So, put your audience at ease and tell them up front why you're there and what you want from them. By the way, you *do* want something. Figure it out, and tell your audience up front.

Using another 4x6 card, write your short sentence at the top of the card. The sentence will be your chart title. (3 minutes)

Discuss purpose titles together with others in your group. The objective is to be sure your sentences are active (not passive), clear the air with your audience on what you expect of him or her, and are easy to understand. (4 minutes)

Step II (b) - Put your ideas into your purpose chart. (7 minutes)

Write no fewer than three and no more than seven ideas to expand, clarify, prove, justify, support, emphasize, or reinforce the chart title. Remember the news media ideas from Figure 1.5.8.5.4.

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

- 4) _____

- 5) _____

- 6) _____

- 7) _____

If you believe there are more than seven ideas, pick the best seven (or fewer) and save the others for later. Remember, after six points you get diminishing returns. (5 minutes)

Combine, clarify, or eliminate those ideas that need improvement. One by one, evaluate whether each idea helps your audience see the importance of your being there and what you expect of them after your presentation.

Your audience may have biases or objections to where your presentation is taking him or her. If you know the biases or objections, you must acknowledge them. You don't have to answer them now, but you can put your audience at ease by recognizing that he or she has concerns. Recognize them as soon as possible. Try your purpose chart.

When working in a group to prepare a presentation, review your purpose ideas together. Again, your ideas should start as sentences. You want all the ideas to work together. *The rank order of ideas is always important.* Based on the review, you'll want to reconsider your purpose ideas. (4 minutes)

Step II (c) - Prepare your purpose presentation chart. (4 minutes)

As you did for your conclusion chart, prepare a bullet for each idea in your purpose chart. Pick a form (word, phrase, or sentence) for your bullets and check for consistency and parallelism. Clean up your ideas. Ask yourself, "So what!" for each idea. Write your bullets on the 4x6 card containing your title from the purpose chart. Number the 4x6 card #2. This chart follows your title chart and is therefore your second chart. (4 minutes)

As a functional part of your presentation, this chart is used to tell your audience what you're going to tell them. Your purpose is a formal statement of why you are there. There are similarities between your purpose and conclusion charts. One similarity is that your purpose chart tells the audience what you're going to tell them, and your conclusion chart tells them what you've told them. The charts you'll develop in the next exercises will tell them.

If your presentation is five minutes or less, you're probably finished. You may want to add your title chart or one or two supporting charts—not content points. Later, we'll discuss illustrations, graphics, tables, photographs, and diagrams as supporting charts. Then we'll discuss title charts. If your presentation is five minutes or less, skip to supporting charts in Step V (a).

1.5.8.5.6. CONTENT POINTS CONTAIN THE MEAT OF THE PRESENTATION.

We need to support our purpose and conclusion with facts, ideas, and examples. Our content points give the audience the reasons for coming to the conclusion we chose for them.

This is the third of the set of six exercises. These several charts follow the purpose chart. We'll do three steps in completing this exer-

cise. I've identified the steps as Step III(a) through Step III(c).

Exercise III - YOUR AUDIENCE CAN HANDLE NO MORE THAN FIVE CONTENT POINTS. (20 minutes)

Step III (a) - Prepare titles for the content points in your presentation. (6 minutes)

The content of your presentation will present facts, ask questions, and review principles. Choose no more than five content points. Recall the important points you listed in the oral presentation worksheet in Module 1.5.8.5.2. Write each content point as a sentence. Remember the topic and what's in it for your audience.

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

- 4) _____

5) _____

One by one, evaluate whether each point supports or leads the audience to your conclusion. If one point doesn't, change or eliminate the point. Remember, rank order is always important. (4 minutes)

You may have selected as many as five content points. If so, together with your purpose and conclusion charts, you now have seven charts. The minds of your audience can hold no more. Psychologists have proven that with more information the brain accepts less than if you have seven or fewer ideas. (This fact affects the maximum of seven bullets we allowed on earlier charts.) To insist on more ideas will significantly reduce the effectiveness of your presentation.

My friends at Citibank tell me that to communicate something you must tell a person three times. I believe they expect some time between tellings. However, you told them what you told them in the conclusion chart, told them what you were going to tell them in the purpose chart, and now you'll tell them. That's three times.

Rewrite each of your content-point sentences in ten words or less. Write one of the sentences at the top of a 4x6 card, one for each point. The sentence is the title of your chart. (2 minutes)

Step III (b) - Put your content ideas into your content charts. (10 minutes)

For each 4x6 card, titled with a short sentence, prepare no more than seven bullets. Pick a form (word, phrase, or sentence) for your bullets and check for consistency and parallelism. Be very careful. Each bullet must clearly support the title of the chart. If it doesn't, consider discarding the bullet, combining it with another bullet and restating the new bullet, moving the bullet to another chart, or creating an entirely new chart to hold the bullet in question.

When creating a new chart, your total can't come to more than five content points. You may decide to combine two content points to keep from discarding the bullet. Also, when creating a new chart, you'll need more than the one (and really more than two) bullets. The bullet, in fact, might be an important content point deserving a series of bullets.

Now is a good time to consider the extra bullets you may have saved from your conclusion and purpose charts. If you can't find a place for the saved bullet on the content-point charts, you probably don't need the bullet.

Evaluate each content-point chart to be sure your point is clearly made. If you prepared the conclusion and purpose charts properly, each of the well-made points should draw your audience closer and closer to your conclusion. We'll check that now.

Step III (c) - Organize your presentation. (4 minutes)

Lay your seven (or fewer) 4x6 cards out on a table. Lean back and review and evaluate your entire presentation. With your #2 (purpose) card in first place and conclusion card in last place, arrange the content-point charts in the order to most effectively lead your audience to your conclusion. Remember the news media ideas from Figure 1.5.8.5.4. AIDA and the inverted pyramid style apply to organizing your content points within your presentation as well as ordering your bullets on a chart.

When you have the cards in order, number the cards following your #2 (purpose) card from card #3 to the conclusion card.

If your message isn't clear from the cards in front of you, you must re-think the presentation. Is your problem purpose, conclusion, content points, order of charts or bullets, or consistency? For a long presentation, you may produce many more charts (and 4x6 cards). If the charts you've already finished aren't effective, more charts won't help. Make the charts you've finished effective, and more charts can bring more information to your audience.

If your presentation is fifteen minutes or less, you're almost finished. In a presentation this long you'll want two to five supporting charts, and of course, a title. Making your presentation more detailed will get you into trouble. Everything we do from now on spices up the presentation.

Later, we'll discuss illustrations, graphics, tables, photographs, and diagrams as supporting charts. We'll also discuss your title chart. If your presentation is fifteen minutes or less, go to Exercise V.

Sometimes a photograph, illustration, table, graphic, or diagram can make your content point best. In this infrequent case, the chart makes the point of one of the five sentences that you began this exercise with. The short version of that sentence becomes the title of your chart and must appear as a title on that chart. For a photograph, you should precede the photograph with a title chart.

1.5.8.5.7. DEVELOP REINFORCING DETAILS.

We'll add a measure of clarity and reinforcement to our presentation through the way we handle our detail charts that expand on the content points of the presentation.

This is the fourth of the set of six exercises. These several charts make up a module to clarify and enhance one or more of your content points. With these reinforcing charts, we'll have the oral presentation laid out. We

only have a need for adding excitement to our laid out presentation if we have time left in the presentation schedule. We'll do three steps in completing this exercise. I've identified the steps as Step IV(a) through Step IV(c).

Exercise IV - DETAIL CHARTS EXPAND CONTENT POINTS INTO MODULES.
(15 minutes)

Step IV (a) - Develop titles for your ideas to expand one content point. (6 minutes)

After you've been preparing bullet charts for awhile, you'll find the best way to develop a bullet for any chart is to write a sentence first. Then choose the words for the bullet.

For a longer presentation, you don't want to make more content points. You want to expand on one or more of them. In expanding a chart, start with the bullets on the chart. The sentence form (ten words or less) of each bullet to be expanded becomes the title of a new chart.

Pick one content-point chart. Choose the ideas you want to expand and to drive home more forcefully. Write each idea as a sentence. Remember the topic and what's in it for your audience. (4 minutes)

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

- 4) _____

- 5) _____

- 6) _____

- 7) _____

You can have no more than seven sentences because seven is the maximum number of bullets on your content-point chart. Each of these detailed-chart sentences must support or lead the audience to the content point because you developed the bullets that way.

Write each of the detailed-chart sentences in ten words or less. Do so on one 4x6 card for each detail chart. (2 minutes)

Step IV (b) - Prepare detail charts for a content point. (6 minutes)

Pick a form for the bullets and check for consistency. Be very careful. Each bullet must clearly support the title of the chart. Otherwise, as before, you must do something with the bullet. Remember, rank order is important.

Visuals as Alternatives

Quite often, at this level of detail, you can communicate the title of the detailed chart best through illustration, table, diagram, graphic, or photograph. If so, remember the chart must be titled with your sentence. Most people in the world are sensing rather than intuitive. Illustrations, diagrams, graphics, or photographs don't clearly make the point for them. Your title will.

Step IV (c) - Organize your module. (3 minutes)

Lay the cards for your detail charts out on a table with the content-point chart they were derived from. Lean back and review and evaluate this module you've just created. Arrange the detail charts in the order that best supports the content point. If the order you choose is different from the order of the bullets on the content-point chart, change the content-point chart. When you have the cards in order, the content point has a number, let's say #4. Number the detailed chart cards #4-1, #4-2, and so on, in order. If you want, you can lay the entire presentation out before you to evaluate your presentation. The primary reason for using 4x6 cards is to offer you this benefit. The other reason is to reinforce your attention to the brevity needed in what you put on each chart.

Now you have a module in your presentation. You can choose to use the content-point chart alone or supported with its detail charts. The extra charts will add ten to fifteen minutes to your

presentation. The rule of thumb is that seven charts should take from ten to fifteen minutes to present. Clearly, for each detail chart in bullet format, you can develop another level of detail. The procedure is the same as before. Always use a sentence as a title. Make sure each child chart supports its parent and all children are in the proper order. Number more-detailed charts with more-detailed numbers: e.g., #4-2-1, #4-2-2, and so on.

At this level, you'll be using more and more illustrations, etc. and must consider variety to hold the audience's attention. We'll do supporting charts next.

1.5.8.5.8. DEVELOP ENTERTAINING SUPPORT.

We'll add a little spice and excitement to our presentation through the way we handle our detail charts that expand on the content points of the presentation.

This is the fifth of the set of six exercises. These several charts make up a module to clarify and enhance one or more of your content points. With these entertaining charts, we'll add to the laid-out presentation by including entertainment. Our intent is to do more to bring the audience close to us so we

can bring the audience to our conclusion. If we're giving a long presentation, we'll need a few charts to add spice and keep the audience's attention. We'll do six steps in completing this exercise. I've identified the steps as Step V(a) through Step V(f).

Exercise V - SUPPORTING CHARTS ADD LIFE AND EMPHASIS TO YOUR PRESENTATION. (24 minutes)

Step V (a) - Review your content points. (1 minute)

Before starting to develop supporting charts, review the important points you listed on your oral presentation worksheet in Module 1.5.8.5.2. Make sure you've made them in your message or that you've decided not to make them. Chances are slim you'll be able to work these points in now. Supporting charts generally add variety and emphasize a point already made. List these points now as sentences.

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

Try to put the points into the primary part of your presentation and cross them off your list. We'll try to work the others into your supporting charts. (1 minute)

Supporting charts usually reinforce a point already made or add information to support a point. Sometimes they can effectively make the point by themselves. This happens mostly for detail charts.

You have many options for the form of your supporting charts. They include quotes, illustrations, photographs, diagrams, structures, matrices, graphics, and tables. We'll first find the

additional information, the highlights, or break points needed in your presentation. Then we'll think about which form to use.

Step V (b) - Consider additional information. (7 minutes)

Write down ideas for additional information you believe generally will strengthen your presentation. You might want to highlight something or include facts or concepts you have in your documents or have seen that strike you as significant. An important issue or concern could be on your mind. Do you have a war story that will make an important point? Is there an aspect of your logic that is particularly intense, strange, or visual—from which humor or emotion might spring? Write these ideas now.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

Step V (c) - Review your presentation for highlights and emphasis. (7 minutes)

Review your 4x6 cards representing your presentation. Look for points (titles, bullets, implications) that don't seem to stand out but should. Look for points you believe the audience may not buy without justification or explanation. Look for points that have subtle implications or impact. Do any of the points stimulate emotion in you? Anger, humor, concern? Write these ideas now.

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

11) _____

12) _____

13) _____

14) _____

15) _____

Step V (d) - Plan for detailed data used in supporting charts. (2 minutes)

Review the two sets of ideas from Steps V (b) and V (c) and indicate whether you can find any detailed numbers, tables, diagrams, or pictures you need to provide input to the ideas.

- | | | |
|-------|---------------|----------|
| _____ | 1) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 2) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 3) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 4) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 5) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 6) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 7) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 8) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 9) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 10) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 11) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 12) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 13) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 14) Yes _____ | No _____ |
| _____ | 15) Yes _____ | No _____ |

Step V (e) - Identify ideas for support. (6 minutes)

For each of the ideas you've listed, take a 4x6 card and write a ten-word or shorter sentence at the top of the card. The sentence is the title identifying what the idea says. *Don't write any bullets under the title yet.*

Place the 4x6 cards on a table in front of you; arrange and then number them in sequence. In the spaces for the other bullets, indicate any needed detailed data. Use your detailed data list from Step V (d).

Gather up your 4x6 cards. These cards represent your supporting charts. Deciding among illustration, diagram, table, photograph, or graphic is another concern and, for each chart, depends on the title and the detailed data available. You'll consider the best visual after you place each chart in your presentation.

Step V (f) - Associate supporting charts. (1 minute)

Place your 4x6 cards representing your primary presentation charts on a table in order in front of you. Take your 4x6 cards representing your supporting charts and match them to your primary presentation charts. Number each of the cards first with the number of the chart it supports and write an "S" after that number.

For each primary presentation chart with more than one supporting chart, figure out the sequence of the supporting charts. Write the number of the supporting chart in the sequence after the "S." For example, if you have three supporting charts for chart #4-2-3 and this is the second supporting chart in the sequence, write the number #4-2-3 S 2.

Lay your entire presentation out in front of you. Think your way through the presentation. If you see a place where the presentation drags, has too much detail, or just needs a break for relief, put a 4x6 card in that place. Write the word BREAK across the card. Consider that card a supporting chart and number it properly.

Your supporting charts will be more visual than your bullet charts. Consequently, many of them are lighter in attitude and will entertain. Primarily, the variety will help keep your presentation moving and give it life. Additional entertainment can help at these break points. At times being a little frivolous can help change pace, break the intensity, and relax the audience. Cartoons, illustrations, photographs, or quotes do this job best when used with war stories or examples to help make your point. Don't start or end your presentation with a war story, example, or joke unless it makes your entire point.

Work with your 4x6 cards to develop the best form for your supporting charts. Review the supporting cards together with all your other charts. (1 minute)

1.5.8.5.9. FINISH THE PRESENTATION WITH A TITLE.

We'll finally know what to title the presentation based on the purpose, conclusion, and content points we've worked so hard to develop and integrate into a tight package.

This is the sixth and final exercise of the set.
This chart is what the audience will see first.
We'll do two steps in completing this exercise.

I've identified the steps as Step VI(a) through Step VI(b).

Exercise VI - FIRST THINGS LAST. (1 minute)

Your title is the lead to your persuasive story. The title should stick in your audience's mind and say everything. The bottom line is at the top.

Step VI (a) - Start with a formal title.

A formal title includes three, and maybe four, items. First, state who you are. This attitude seems assertive; but, in any presentation, you must identify yourself and establish your credibility first. Second, state your presentation statement. Your presentation statement should paraphrase your conclusion statement. Third, state who the audience is. Finally you can add the date and place of the presentation. Write the four items below.

- 1) WHO YOU ARE: _____
- 2) PRESENTATION STATEMENT: _____
- 3) WHO THE AUDIENCE IS: _____
- 4) (optional) DATE AND PLACE: _____

Step VI (b) - Consider an informal title.

Try to develop an informal alternative for your title. Decide which title to use.

This set of exercises has a formal title: An Oral Presentation Exercise. I added an informal title which could have stood by itself: How to Say What You Mean and Mean What You Say.

1.5. TOOLS AND SKILLS CATEGORIES

1.5.8. THE COMMUNICATION SKILL

1.5.8.5. ORAL COMMUNICATION

1.5.8.5.10. LISTENING

1.5.8.5.10.1. LISTENING IS THE IMPORTANT PART OF COMMUNICATION.

We do more listening than any other communication skill, listening is the skill that makes or breaks the transfer of information (communication), and we don't receive instruction on effective empathic active listening.

To be good at communication, listening is the important skill. Why? Because even a poor sender (speaker) sends some message and a good receiver (listener) can pick up important information from that message. Because of all the time we spend communicating, by far the greatest is spent listening. Because, if we spend so much time listening, any amount of ineffectiveness is costly. Because listening is the most effective connection we can make with another person.

Everyone who discusses listening distinguishes between the physical act of hearing and the emotional or mental practice of listening. You may hear a sound or a word, but if you don't listen, you don't get the meaning or the message. Hearing is but one of a number of senses we can use as the first step in a listening process. I'll discuss communication and listening processes and models in the next module. Here, I want to highlight the extent to which we spend our lives listening—either well or poorly, mostly poorly.

Shortly, I'll list for you the facts about listening. Everyone who writes about listening reports these data. To give you an idea of the breadth of interest in the elusive listening skill, I'll list a number of places you can find these data. You can find the data in Leroy L. Lane, *By All Means Communicate*, Prentice Hall, Second Edition, 1991 p. 29; Deborah B. Strother, "On Listening," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 68, April 1987, pp. 625-628; Lyman K. Steil, et. al., *Listening, It Can Change Your Life—A Handbook for Scientists and Engineers*, John Wiley and Sons, 1983, pp. 2-3; Clare Sproston

and Glenna E. Sutcliffe, *20 Training Workshops for Listening Skills*, Glower, Aldershot, 1989, Chapter 1, p. 11; Madelyn Burley-Allen, *Listening, The Forgotten Skill*, John Wiley and Sons, 1982, p. 2; Diane Bone, *The Business of Listening: A Practical Guide to Effective Listening*, Crisp Publications, Inc, 1988, p. 34; and Larry Barker, et. al., "An Investigation of Proportional Time Spent in Various Communication Activities by College Students," *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 8, November 1980, pp. 101-109.

Here are the data. From studies done many years ago, we find that we spend 70 to 80 percent of our waking lives communicating. Of that time we spend 45 percent listening, 30 percent speaking, 16 percent reading, and 9 percent writing. (I believe these data are originally from studies summarized by Dr. Ralph Nichols in his book, *Are You Listening* published by McGraw Hill in 1957.) Listening is the skill we use most in learning. Consider how much you learn both inside and outside your school classes. Without good listening skills, you're a handicapped learner. Ironically, listening is the least understood communication skill. We assume that listening is understood instinctively from infancy, so we make little effort to improve our listening skill. When faced with the data, the numbers seem correct on the face of it.

Let's play with these numbers some. Consider which of the skills you spend most of your time in school learning. We receive instruction and assisted practice in inverse proportion to the need to use the skill. (Madelyn Burley-Allen

reports 12 years formal training in writing, 6-8 years in reading, 1-2 years in speaking, and 0-1/2 years in listening. (p. 31.) If we add the 45 percent of our communication time we use for listening to the 30 percent we use for speaking and consider approximately 80 percent of our time is spent communicating, then for 60 percent of our waking lives we're either listening to someone or hoping someone is listening to us. Most people average a 25 percent efficiency rate in oral communication. Then, we are wasting 45 percent of our waking lives.

The average speaker talks about 200 words per minute and the average listener can process about 300-500 per minute. So, it's easy to spend time thinking about something other than what you're hearing.

When we receive a message from listening to another person, we get 7 percent of the message from the words; 38 percent from vocal cues like tone, inflection, and so on; and 55 percent from facial expressions, posture, and gestures. (Albert Mehrabain quoted in the article, "Communication without Words," *Psychology Today*, September, 1968, p. 53.) The 55 percent is commonly called body language. Then, most of receiving a message from a sender lies in something we see rather than hear.

Listening comes before reading. Both are the receiving part of information transfer, or communication. The ability to listen affects our ability to read. (Robert Watson and Henry Clay Lindgren, *Psychology of the Child*, John Wiley and Sons, 1973.) Language is instrumental to communication and to our culture. We initially acquire our language from our ability to listen, before we have the ability to speak.

The content of what we communicate is relatively insignificant in oral communication when compared to the tones we hear and the

body language we see. Then, listening to a person face-to-face has as much to do with the sense of sight as it does the sense of hearing. (However, we can't today see the person we're listening to on the telephone.) So, listening is something more than hearing. Listening includes sensing what the other person is communicating, and hearing is one of the senses we use. We know we use sight. How about smell? I understand animals can smell fear, anger, or friendliness. Can you recognize those feelings in another person without hearing or seeing them? Can you feel positive or negative energy around a person you're dealing with? When you hug someone you haven't seen in a long time, do you receive a message? Perhaps the sixth sense is most important when listening. In short, listening has to do with recognizing a message from someone and requires that we're tuned in to the message they're sending. I'll talk about models for listening that include more levels or stages in the listening process than sensing in the next module.

What is listening? From "The Human Use of Human Beings," Norbert Weiner says, "Speech is a joint game between the talker and the listener against the forces of confusion. Unless both make the effort, interpersonal communication is quite hopeless." (Madelyn Burley-Allen, *Listening, The Forgotten Skill*, John Wiley and Sons, 1982, p. 1.) Madelyn Burley-Allen says, "Listening is (a) taking in information from speakers, other people or ourselves, while remaining nonjudgmental and empathic; (b) acknowledging the speakers in a way that invites the communication to continue; and (c) providing limited, but encouraging input to the talker's response, carrying the person's idea one step forward. This definition stresses the listener's responsibility in the communication process. While listening is one of the most demanding aspects of communication, it is also one of the most rewarding." (pp. 2-3.) Burley-Allen's definition expands

Weiner's to describe effective listening.

According to Sproston and Sutcliffe, "Listening is to hear and to consider with thoughtful attention: a complex procedure involving interpretation and understanding." (p. 13.) I believe this definition of listening is good for telephone listening, where the hearing sense is all we have to go on. I believe that listening face-to-face whether geographically face-to-face or in cyberspace involves a sense of recognition and awareness, leading to understanding and acknowledgment, in the context of interpreting, evaluating, remembering, and responding to support the communication leading to meeting the speaker's needs. Perhaps I've defined listening, but I believe the models in the next module will help with our definition.

Listening is much more than hearing. Listening has to do with how you handle what you perceive and how you interpret and respond. Imagine that you go to a car dealer and ask for a particular model in green. The salesperson takes you across the lot to look at that model in black. "We believe black is best for you and that particular model doesn't come in green because there's not enough interest in that color." How would you feel? The salesperson obviously heard you say which model and the color green. By not listening to your need or intent, the salesperson first ignored and then insulted you. Would you go back to that car dealer? Whether you're selling cars or ideas, coats or yourself, effective listening is crucial to your success.

Listening is a learned skill. For effective listening, the listener must be active and en-

gaged, not passive and distant. Empathic listening is more than listening for facts like we often do in the classroom when we are bored by the instructor. Listening includes listening for comparisons between what you're sensing and what you sensed yesterday or somewhere else. Listening includes listening for meaning and listening for feelings, which requires that we be empathic and tuned in. Listening includes sensing what's not present as well as what is. Just as we must read between the lines, we must listen to the silence. Sometimes, the kind and length of silence tells us more than the sound. Listening for the silence is an example of the holistic perspective in communication.

Here's a story commonly used to help define listening (e.g., Lyman K. Steil, JoAnne Summerfield, and George deMare, *Listening, It Can Change Your Life: A Handbook for Scientists and Engineers*, John Wiley and Sons, 1983, p.9.) "Two men were walking along a crowded sidewalk in a downtown business area. Suddenly one exclaimed, 'Listen to the lovely sound of that cricket!' But the other could not hear. He asked his companion how he could detect the sound of a cricket amidst the din of people and traffic. The first man, who was a zoologist, had trained himself to listen to the voices of nature, but he did not explain. He simply took a coin out of his pocket and dropped it on the sidewalk, whereupon a dozen people began to look about them. 'We hear,' he said, 'what we listen for.' Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, *The Discipline of Transcendence*." (Madelyn Burley-Allen, *Listening: the Forgotten Skill*, John Wiley and Sons, 1982, p. 112.)

1.5.8.5.10.2. THE ELEMENTS OF LISTENING

Listening is more than sensing the content of what a speaker is sending; it means supporting, interpreting, and being responsive and responsible.

Listening is a process. In fact, effective listening is a closed-loop process. We've learned that closed-loop processes bring continual improvement, learning, and empowerment. In Figure 1.5.8.5.10.2., I've shown a closed-loop process model of listening as an oral communication model. You can replace the speaker with a writer and the listener with a reader and have a written communication model. The model has six elements: 1) speaker (sender), 2) message (information to be transferred), 3) channel (means of information transfer), 4) noise (barriers to transfer), 5) listener (receiver), and 6) feedback (verification that what was received was what was sent). Leroy Lane leads up to the presentation of this model by saying, "The need to analyze and understand oral communication has inspired many models of human communication. In 1960, David K. Berlo, in his book *The Process of Communication* [Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960, p. 32.], published one of the most influential of these models. It has six ingredients: (1) the *communication source*, (2) the *encoder*, (3) the *message*, (4) the *channel*, (5) the *decoder*, and (6) the *communication receiver*. He applied his model to various practical situations. As his title suggested, Berlo viewed communication as a *process*, one that he saw as 'ongoing, ever-changing, continuous,' and without beginning or end.

Berlo's words remind us that linear models—which show a source sending to a receiver—cannot adequately represent a dynamic communication process. They can, however, sharpen our awareness of the essential elements that contribute to that process. Further-

more, they can help us to perceive speech communication in concrete, practical terms rather than in abstract, theoretical ones; thus, we can apply them to our speaking and evaluate our performance. Models help us to identify and connect the elements of speech communication and use them consciously." (Leroy L. Lane, *By All Means Communicate*, Prentice Hall, 1991, pp. 2-3.)

If you put information portrayal in place of the sender and information perception in place of the receiver in Lane's model or in Berlo's description, you can see the complexity of matching the information portrayal to information perception interface of the Management System Model. The Management System Model has three components and three interfaces, each of which is a process. The result of this process, the communication process, is a change in state of the receiver. When you listen, do you recognize that you have been changed as a result of the communication process? In what ways are you changed?

In Figure 1.5.8.5.10.2., you'll see two additional boxes. The encoder box consists of selecting and arranging symbols to develop a message of appropriate content for the listener. You combine words, vocal cues, tones, and body language to symbolize the message. The decoder box reverses the process. Noise is any disturbance that influences the transfer of information.

Lane makes another interesting point when considering the context of information transfer within the communication process in Fig-

ure 1.5.8.5.10.2. He discusses the context of communication as including intrapersonal communication (inner dialogue or inner feedback), interpersonal communication (two people exchanging messages), small-group communication (gaining consensus), and public speaking (sharing information). For individual decisions, listening is only important in listening to yourself. Effective listening includes not only listening to others, but tuning in to ourselves. Listening effectively to what we say to ourselves and how we say these things tells us a lot about ourselves. (Next time you talk to yourself, silently or aloud, pay close attention and try to figure out what you really mean.) However, as we move to matched decisions, consensus, and teams, listening to others becomes the crucial skill.

Madelyn Burley-Allen sets up a framework for listening. She uses three levels of listening. She indicates that we listen at different levels at different times and in different circumstances. We listen better in some situations than in others. We may listen better to our friends than to our family or to our colleagues at work. Her argument is that we should control our level of listening and not fall into an ineffective level by default. Each successive level requires more concentration and sensitivity. The levels approximate a continuous variable of effective listening as three discrete levels, with level 3 being the least effective. As you consider the three levels, consider your personal listening style. (Burley-Allen adapted these levels from Dr. Anthony J. Alessandra's article, "How Do You Rate as a Listener?" in *San Diego Realtor*, February, 1980. Effective listening is crucial to effective sales. I've adapted the levels from Burley-Allen, *Listening: The Forgotten Skill*, John Wiley and Sons, 1982, pp. 10-11.)

Level 3 includes listening in spurts, tuning in and out, focusing on yourself, half-listening, keeping up mostly to interject your thoughts,

passive listening without encouraging or acknowledging the speaker, faking attention, and being more interested in talking than in listening.

Level 2 includes hearing sounds and words; not really listening; staying at the surface without listening for meaning or feeling; tracking what the speaker is saying but not really understanding; not sensing the deeper meaning or intent of the speaker; listening logically to the content, not for feelings; and remaining emotionally detached from the discussion and not participating in the interaction.

Level 1 is active listening; showing empathy with the speaker; seeing things from the speaker's point of view; acknowledging and responding; paying attention with all senses; putting aside your ego; not judging the speaker's words, intent, or meaning; and listening for intent, meaning, and feelings.

Level 2 is dangerous because the inattention in level 3 is more obvious than in level 2 and the speaker can get a false sense of connection in level 2. Most of us listen at each level at one time or another. Sometimes level 2 or 3 listening is appropriate for a given situation. However, most of us aren't able to control the level.

We want to learn where each level is appropriate. Most of all we want to learn how to spend more time at level 1. To listen at level 1, you have to recognize and eliminate physical, emotional, and semantic barriers between the speaker and the listener. Burley-Allen suggests that you avoid being critical and judgmental; be attentive; be interested in the speaker's needs; listen to the underlying meaning of what is said, empathetically and nonjudgmentally; be a mirror or sounding board; don't ask a lot of questions and hold your questions until you've listened empathetically a level 1; don't discount the

speaker's feelings; don't solve the speaker's problem or do his or her thinking for him or her; don't let the speaker get you angry, hurt, or upset; don't jump to conclusions; be encouraging and acknowledging by using brief expressions of acknowledgment and body motions of encouragement; and don't interrupt, take the discussion on a tangent, interrogate, teach, or give advice. She says, "Keep two important ideas in mind when interacting with others: (1) people prefer talking to listening, and (2) the listener actually controls the conversation. To listen effectively and be in control of what is being said, check your understanding regularly by summarizing what the other has said. Then, wait for feedback—either confirmation that your understanding is correct, or clarification of what the speaker intended." (p. 101.)

Burley-Allen introduces another listening framework based on the concepts of attention, reception, and perception. She says, "Listening is a highly selective, subjective experience. Information that conflicts with the listener's present ideas and beliefs may simply be tuned out. When we expect to hear certain things, we don't listen to what is really said. Present in each situation is attention, reception, and perception. Depending on the situation and the listener's motives, different mental interactions between these three and the listener may be activated. For example, we sometimes pay attention only to what interests us or what we like about the talker. On the other hand, the more we are receptive to people or to their point of view, the more we will pay attention to what they say. These factors—attention, reception, perception—happen unconsciously. Often, people aren't aware of the internal process that distracts them from listening at Level 1. Once we pay attention to something the speaker is saying, our feelings about it and the way it sounds to us will influence our perceptions. When you feel good about what is said and it makes sense to you or

sounds right, you are receiving the information through your five senses. Using your five senses allows you to get fully involved with the information and be open to listening at Level 1. Even smell and taste affect how and what we listen to. For example, have you ever tried to listen to someone with bad breath or body odor, or while eating something you find really delicious or distasteful?" (pp. 40-41.) My interest in this framework is the emphasis on perception and the relationship of perception to the information portrayal to information perception interface of the Management System Model. Also, note that the framework is influenced by all our senses. So, once again, we confront listening as using more than the hearing sense. Listening is more an holistic blend of the senses into a sense of recognition.

Steil, et. al. and Bone offer what Steil calls the SIER model. Steil et. al. say, "The model we have developed here describes the four main aspects of listening: first, the ability to *sense* (in this case to hear, in some cases to get a reading through facial expression of body language) what is being communicated; second, the ability to *interpret* to understand what is being communicated; third, the ability to *evaluate* what is being communicated, to decide its relevance to us and its validity within the context of what we know; and fourth, to *respond*, to complete the cycle of communication by indicating in an appropriate way that we have sensed." (Lyman K. Steil, et. al., *Listening: It Can Change Your Life*, John Wiley and Sons, 1983, pp. 11-12.)

As result-oriented people, we tend to want to skip the first three steps and respond immediately. By skipping sense, interpret, and evaluate, we ensure our response is at best irrelevant or inappropriate, even though the response may be correct. Bone suggest the three keys to sensing the message as paying attention, choosing the important features, and recognizing the emotional messages.

Interpretation has to do with matching your meaning with my meaning, that is to understand, to grasp, to comprehend, to recognize—a step that has been the cause of more trouble in our lives than any other. Interpreting is the most mysterious and difficult of all the listening faculties because we really don't know how we understand something. We can't analyze how to understand something. To validate interpretation, Covey and others suggest that in dialog we strike a bargain. You can talk after I've talked if you can tell me to my satisfaction what I've just said. And I can talk after you've talked when I can tell you to your satisfaction what you've just said. Covey claims he can resolve the most bitter conflicts with this simple method for ensuring the interpretation step in listening. Bone asks the difference between the following two statements. "When I look at you, time stands still." "You have a face that would stop a clock." (p. 16.) She says the three keys to interpreting the message are knowing yourself, wanting to understand, and asking for clarification.

Evaluating is assessing or appraising what we've sensed and interpreted. Of course, wrong sensing or interpreting leads to faulty evaluation. Evaluation puts value or utility on what we've sensed and interpreted. One of the critical evaluations is whether we're listening to the right person about the right issue. The way the issue is presented will affect the evaluation. We're back to the concern over who should bias the information. The way the information is biased and portrayed will dictate the decision. Bone's three keys to evaluating the message are: ask questions, analyze the evidence, and don't jump to conclusions.

Responding is the fourth step in listening. Responding completes the cycle. We usually think of response in terms of action. However, response can be simply in the form of acknowledgment. No response is offensive. No response means that the speaker and the

speaker's message are of no value. Being offensive affects the relationship between the speaker and the listener. Being responsive means paying complete attention; supporting the presentation of information, meaning, and feelings; and being nonjudgmental and ensuring that the speaker feels as though he or she has had his or her say. Bone suggests effective response depends on the desire to reach a common understanding (not necessarily agreement) between speaker and listener, giving feedback in some way, and avoiding confusing messages.

Steil, et. al. also describe five purposes for communicating orally: the binding purpose, the cathartic purpose, the informing purpose, the persuading purpose, and the entertainment purpose. The two least obvious purposes are the binding purpose and the cathartic purpose. In the binding purpose, we use phatic speech, which is also known as chitchat or passing the time. The primary result of phatic speech is to establish or evolve a relationship with another person. Phatic speech recognizes a person as a human and is therefore more important than the other purposes. Busy people tend to look at phatic speech as a waste of time. Nothing could be further from the truth. The relationships you build now will save problems and time later. The trick, of course, is to know how much phatic speech to engage in. Cathartic speech is for venting emotions. The sooner emotions are out and resolved, the fewer problems the emotions will cause. Even though we may prefer to have anger, frustration, or hurt feelings submerged, they will eventually be seen as sick days, time spent complaining, or just plain non-productivity.

Knowing what to do to be an effective listener isn't obvious. The various models or frameworks that help define effective listening give us a foundation for what to do but don't necessarily lay out the procedure. I'll set up a procedure in the next module.

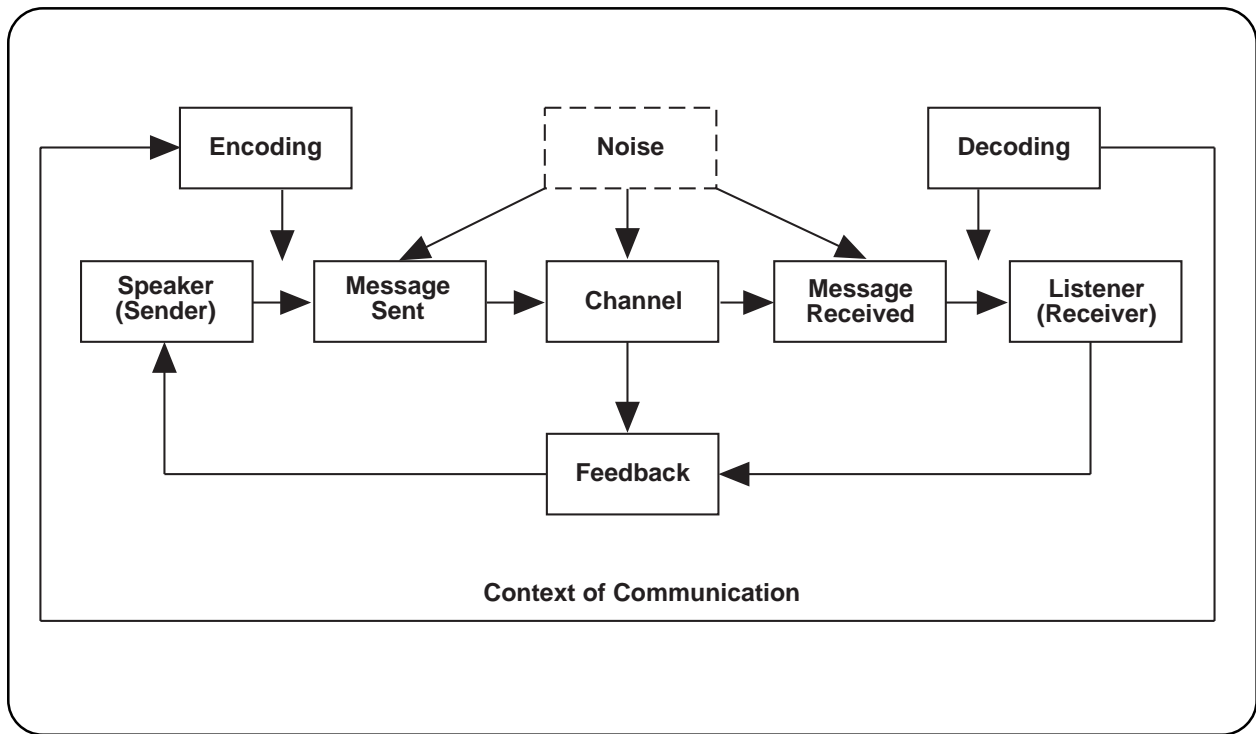


Figure 1.5.8.5.10.2. *The model for oral communication is a closed-loop process in which the listening process plays the role of the receiver, or in the standard control loop, the role of the plant. (taken from Leroy L. Lane, *By All Means Communicate*, p. 3)*

1.5.8.5.10.3. SEQUENTIAL ACTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING

To be an effective empathic active listener, you need to open yourself up, set aside your ego, and connect with the speaker.

I've constructed a procedure to follow in implementing the several models and the advice given by those who understand effective listening. The key to remembering the procedure is that each skill or action begins with the letters *Re*. I've grouped the actions into five broad categories: *Relate*, *Remember*, *Reflect*, *Respond*, and *React*.

RELATE

As an active listener, you must first and foremost open yourself up and connect or *RELATE* to the speaker. If you're not accepting of what the speaker has to offer, the speaker will feel less confident and more anxious and will try too hard to find your hot button. As the listener, you'll be controlling the dialogue, which is always the case. However, not being alert or involved in the exchange will control the dialogue in nonproductive ways. I include a number of actions and related skills to the idea of relating to the speaker. These actions condition the receiver of the exchange to stimulate and enhance the information transfer to follow.

The first action is to *Receive*. Be in a receptive mode. Be *open* to the speaker. Put aside your bias for the moment and try not to have your personal filters working to select out the information you may not prefer to receive. Show him or her, you're in an *accepting* frame of mind—to accept both the speaker and the content of the message. Being receptive doesn't mean you have to agree. Being receptive means you're willing to try the ideas on for size. You want to *absorb* what the speaker has to offer and are eager to receive his or her issues, concerns, creative ideas, or plans as a

gift. In being receptive, you're *alert* and *attentive*. The speaker knows that if you act tired, bored, or distracted, you're not receptive. You want to connect with the speaker and get *involved* in the exchange. You want to be *focused* on the speaker and the message and indicate that you're *nonjudgmental* of the information and are willing to receive the information for your thoughtful and fair *consideration*. (I've italicized the words that describe the conditions of the action to *Receive*.)

The second action is to *Request*. Draw out the speaker. *Encourage* him or her to express himself or herself without hesitation or concern. Show your *interest* in the speaker and the message. *Acknowledge* the speaker, the exchange, and his or her content, intent, and feelings. *Invite* the speaker to continue. Willingly *permit* the speaker to communicate whatever is on his or her mind or in his or her heart. Eagerly *anticipate* the value, importance, and usefulness of the message. Be *inquisitive* with encouraging and clarifying questions without interrogating or quizzing the speaker.

The third action is to *Relax*. Allow yourself to receive the message. Be at your peak of performance because listening takes effort—your best effort. *Concentrate* on being just at the interface between anxious and bored where you're *excited and relaxed*. That interface is where you maximize your performance or your concentration. Being too eager or anxious makes you nonobservant and more self-oriented. Being too laid back makes you nonobservant and disconnected. You want to be *tuned in* and *not distracted*.

The fourth action is to *Relate*. Develop the bridges between you and the speaker and between you and the message. Keep your *perspective* in the connection between you and the speaker. *Internalize* the message for thorough and even-handed consideration. Be *unselfish* and *introspective*. Look for what the speaker most wants to get across to you. Seek out the speaker's *needs* over your own. Make sure you *perceive* the information, meaning, motives, and feelings in the message. *Connect* the needs and the message to your life—your experiences that *nurture* the ideas and your interests that *celebrate* the ideas. Identify the value to you and help the speaker recognize the value and your *appreciation*. Perhaps not all the message is what you need, but in there somewhere is value to you, at least in your relationship with the speaker, or the speaker wouldn't have offered his or her thoughts to you.

The fifth action is to *Recognize*. Show your *awareness* of the speaker, the message, and the value of both. The speaker is *worthy* of your consideration. The message is intended for you. If the speaker knows that he or she has your *acceptance*, he or she will expose more of himself or herself and his or her deeper thoughts. Disclosing ideas on the edge of your understanding is threatening; and your awareness and acceptance provides a level of *safety* and *comfort* for the speaker to disclose ideas and feelings that are sensitive or aren't fully germinated. If you and the speaker didn't have a relationship before this exchange, you do now. Show the speaker that you recognize the relationship. Be aware of the *speaker's* body language. Tune in to what isn't said to identify what's missing. You'll want to better understand the gaps and absences to fully *appreciate* the importance and meaning of the message.

The sixth action is to *Reciprocate*. *Return* some of the thought process offered by the speaker by interpreting the message and the

speaker. Ask questions to *clarify* and *reinforce* the message. Use sounds and body motion to show your *interest* and *desire* to receive more. You really don't want the speaker to hold back. If you worry about what you want to say or do, you may want the speaker to stop and let you get on with your own interests. When you do that, you close the door before the speaker discloses the idea he or she is most concerned or sensitive about. Then, you haven't received what the speaker set out to send. Make sure the speaker feels a *sense of give and take* over his or her issues, concerns, information, and feelings. Stay away from cross talk. Watch for the quizzical look or the tilt of the head or the tone of voice that communicates a need for *recognition*, *reinforcement*, and *continuation*. Your desire is to secure the message well enough so you can reciprocate with a statement that shows you've understood the message to the speaker's *satisfaction*. At this point, you can check to clarify what you heard, gather additional ideas or information for completeness, explore the ideas further, or make sure you understand the assumptions and delimitations on what you're receiving. Your questions seek to find out more about what, how, or when for information you've already received.

The key to the *RELATE* category of skills and actions is that they lay the groundwork for sensing and interpreting the speaker and the message. If you sense or interpret wrong, the *foundation* for evaluation and response is weak or misplaced. From here on out, you're wasting your time and the time of the speaker. If you do these skills and actions correctly, you have a chance to make the 60 percent of your time you spend listening or being listened to productive for you and for the speaker. The concentration, effort, and personal change required to do these skills and actions is large, but the payoff is much higher.

REMEMBER

Once you've set up a fertile relationship between you and the speaker and are receiving unobstructed ideas, information, and feelings, then you need to store what you receive in your memory. You want to *REMEMBER* the ideas, information, and feelings. You'll need to access your short-term memory to respond when your turn comes. You'll need to access your long-term memory to carry out the parts of the message that are important in your life. The primary problem with your memory in listening is your shifting of attention to what you want to say. Always remember that the other person will never know what you forgot to tell him or her. You'll gain more from the exchange if you know you received what was important than if you know you sent what was important. In this case, you'll get more than you give. Isn't it interesting that our conversations with other people may be the one place where we typically try to give more than we get and is the one place where we should get more than we give?

The seventh action is to *Retain*. Without retention of what the speaker has sent to you, there is to be no exchange. You may speak your piece; but, without retention, your piece doesn't relate and the discussion isn't an exchange. You may be two or more people speaking at each other or past each other, but there's no connection or relationship. To retain what you receive, you must *connect* the ideas, information, and feelings to what else you know about the speaker or the message. You must develop *mental images* of what you're receiving.

REFLECT

If you're open to the speaker and have remembered what you received, you need to return to the speaker what you received so the speaker knows whether or not he or she was successful in transferring the ideas, information, or feelings. This return to the speaker verifies his or

her part of the transfer process. You and the speaker can check out whether you've accurately and completely received the message and whether you understand what you received. You can *REFLECT* the speaker's feelings and restate the basic ideas, emphasizing the facts. In mirroring what you received, you acknowledge that you were involved with and connected to the speaker.

The eighth action is to *Reflect*. You want to present an *unbiased, nonjudgmental, and accurate reflection* and *feedback* of what the speaker sent to you. This kind of reflection comes from a mirror. One of the gifts you can *return* to the speaker is to be a *faithful and kind mirror*. We seldom get to see ourselves accurately. Reflect the speaker's feelings to ensure accurate communication of his or her feelings by *matching* your understanding of the meaning of the message to the speaker's meaning. You can reflect by starting statements with words like, "You feel that" "It seems to me that" or "I sense that"

The ninth action is to *Restate*. Try to *repeat* what you received. You'll receive more than words. Your job is to restate the message in different words, using a different tone and facial expressions, with different feelings and capture the meaning of the message to the speaker's satisfaction. *Ask*, "Did I capture your meaning?" "Do I understand how you feel on this matter?" Chances are, the speaker will restate the message more crisply in different words with different nuances from the original communication. Don't worry if the words and expressions change. You want the *meaning*. You're being offered that same meaning from a different *perspective*. The more perspectives you get of the same meaning, the better you'll understand the message and the message behind the message. *Paraphrase* in your own words what the speaker sent to you. When both you and the speaker are comfortable that you've received what the

speaker intended to send, then you've been successful. To restate is not to state your ideas in relation to those of the speaker. To restate is to *verify* you received the message. When you *rephrase* the message and capture the meaning, you'll *reinforce* the speaker and the message.

The tenth action is to *Recap*. To recap means to *recapitulate*, *review*, or *summarize*. When you summarize, you cut through all the explanation, background, and justification to focus on the real message. To be successful at summarizing, you'll have to *evaluate* what you've received. You'll need to evaluate, not based on your own assumptions and premises but based on the premises and delimitations of the speaker. You'll summarize the major ideas and feelings of the speaker. Then, you'll not only verify that you heard the message, but you'll verify that you listened to the message and understood. Based on your summary of the message, the speaker can determine if he or she is satisfied with what you got out of the message.

When you REFLECT, be careful that you never recite (even though recite is another word beginning with Re). You don't want to be able to mouth the speaker's words. You want to be able to reflect back to the speaker what he or she intended to send.

RESPOND

We have to complete a cycle for effective listening. The closing of the loop occurs when the speaker receives a response to his or her message. Sometimes the return on the investment of exposing himself or herself is a sense of relief. Sometimes the return is more tangible in the form of emotional or physical action. The response is not a retort or argument. The response is an acknowledgment or support. When we *RESPOND*, we ensure a closed-loop process for continual improvement, learning, and empowerment.

The eleventh action is to *Relieve*. By responding *empathically*, You've allowed the speaker to get off his or her chest what he or she brought to the table. Because the speaker has an opportunity to vent his or her feelings, his or her emotional level is *relaxed* and his or her concerns are relieved. Often, communication is initiated over a problem. Most problems are best *answered* by the person who raises the problem and usually the problems are exacerbated by lack of effective communication. Merely by listening openly and reflecting the ideas, information, and feelings of the speaker, you can *reduce* the problems, support the speaker as he or she figures out his or her own solution, and relieve the feeling level in the relationship between you and the speaker. If you are a good listener, more people will *remember* you. The speaker remembers you because of the sense of *comfort*, *satisfaction*, and *relief* he or she feels about the exchange. Listening to the speaker tells him or her that his or her feelings and ideas are *legitimate* and *worthy*. Most people worry about being worthy and legitimate. Listening relieves these worries. Relief is an immediate result of your response of listening well to the speaker's message.

The twelfth action is *Respond*. Respond is what we, in our culture, tend to default to. Even when the time has come for response, we respond poorly. Our response is not a retort or argument. Listening does not include the message we want to send. We'll get our chance to send our message later, after we've completed the listening process. Therefore, the response here relates to the speaker and his or her message. How can we respond to *support* the speaker and the message? We can *acknowledge* the legitimacy of the idea, information, or feeling. We can *reflect* that we've received and understood the message. We can indicate some level of support, such as further consideration, providing resources, or action. Often the need for response is *resolved* by the

speaker himself or herself as he or she talks through and figures out his or her own issue or problem. This *result* comes as a form of relief. Sometimes, however, the listener needs to follow through and follow up on the message. Now is the time to commit to that follow through and follow up.

REACT

Throughout the listening process, you not only need to do things, you need to be. How you are as you listen reflects how you *REACT* to the speaker and the message. You'll notice that the thirteenth and fourteenth actions include the words *to be* along with the *Re* word. You need *to be Responsive* and *to be Responsible*. As with any powerful tool, when used well, you do great good and when used poorly you do great harm. You must use the powerful listening tool well and must recognize when another person isn't using the listening tool well. When another person is using the powerful tool poorly, you must protect yourself for your own safety. Use the listening tool well so the speaker won't have to spend his or her energy protecting himself or herself from you. Few people listen well. Therefore, when you listen well, you'll find that people will seek you out as a listener. Since, the process of listening places you in *control* of interactions and people are the key resource in a domain of responsibility, you'll find great *influence* and *power* in your group. Handle that influence and power well.

The thirteenth action is to be *Responsive*. Throughout the actions and skills of effective listening, you need to show that you're *eager* to receive the speaker's message, you're *willing* to be open and work to understand the message, and are *enthusiastic* about following through and following up from the message. Often, responsiveness is related to timeliness. Although you need to be there for the speaker at the time the speaker is sending his or her message, I see responsiveness as much more

than timeliness. Responsiveness has more to do with an attitude of encouragement, excitement, and support.

The fourteenth action is to be *Responsible*. If you've done a good job of the listening skills up to this point, the speaker has quite possibly exposed himself or herself and his or her sensitive issues. You must handle that *exposure* and *vulnerability* with great *care*. You must be *kind* with feelings. You must be *gracious* with ideas. You may be carrying a creation of the speaker in your hands. You must be careful not to abuse or damage the creation or the speaker. When you handle exposure and vulnerability with care and kindness, you'll support the speaker so he or she can empower himself or herself.

Bone provides a checklist for evaluating your attitude for listening. Consider these: I'm interested in most topics and wouldn't tune out anything knowingly. I listen carefully for your main point and supporting points. I take notes when appropriate so I don't miss something important. I'm not easily distracted. I keep my biases, emotions, concerns, and issues under control. I concentrate and don't fake attention. I wait for you to finish before evaluating your message. I respond appropriately with a smile, nod or word of acknowledgment or encouragement during your message. I'm aware of and put aside distracting mannerisms, whether yours or mine. I don't interrupt. I maintain eye contact about 70 percent of the time. I often restate, paraphrase, or summarize what you send to make sure I have the meaning you intend. I listen for feelings and meaning as well as words. I ask clarification and encouragement questions. I don't finish your sentences or ideas. I attempt to set aside my ego and focus on you. I don't judge you whether or not I agree with your message. I'm patient and caring for you, your message, and our relationship. (Diane Bone, *The Business of Listening: A Practical Guide to Effective Listening*, Crisp

Publications, Inc, 1988, pp.30-31.)

In Figure 1.5.8.5.10.3., I've restated the fourteen Re words and grouped the words into the five broad action categories. By reading the statements an active listener would make to a speaker, I expect you to get an understanding of the attitude of active listening. Even though listening is a process, to do the process effectively, you need to have a certain attitude, or be in a certain state. The state is unselfish, inquisitive, caring, open, and helpful. As I'll

discuss later, when you're in this state and a speaker sincerely wants to send you a message, you'll set up conditions where you'll support the speaker as he or she empowers himself or herself. Notice in the explanation of the fourteen Re words in this module the introduction of even more Re words, such as reinforce, review, resolve, result, and reduce. Not all Re words fit effective listening, but one way to recognize and remember the skills and actions for effective listening is to think of Re words.

RELATE		REFLECT	
Receive	I want to listen to what you have to send to me.	Reflect	I'll be a mirror for you to view what you've sent.
Request	I want you to send me everything on your mind and in your heart.	Restate	I'll return to you in words what you sent.
Relax	I'm ready and able to receive what you are sending to me.	Recap	I'll summarize the ideas so you can decide if you're satisfied with what I got out of your message.
Relate	I'm connected with you and relate your message to my experience and my interests.		
Recognize	I'm well aware of you, our relationship, your message, and your desire that I accept you and your message.	RESPOND	
Reciprocate	I'll return energy to you to renew and re-energize your desire for me to understand your thoughts.	Relieve	I want to share your concerns and issues and will relieve you of some of the burden of carrying them around.
		Respond	I'll do something to support you and your message.
REMEMBER		REACT	
Retain	I'll hold on to what I received so I can support you.	Responsive	I'm eager to receive your message and will willingly and enthusiastically reflect and respond to your message.
		Responsible	I'll care for you, your message, and your feelings with kindness.

Figure 1.5.8.5.10.3. *If you had a message you wanted to send to me and I convinced you I believed the statements in this list, how would you feel about my receptivity and probability I would understand what you intended for me to learn from your message?*

1.5.8.5.10.4. LISTENING STYLES

Just as we have different personality types, we have different styles we exercise as we listen to a speaker. We can characterize and diagnose those different styles.

A number of people have developed instruments for measuring your listening style. The instruments consist of questions or checklists for you to offer your perceptions of yourself. Based on your answers, you are placed in one of a number of categories.

Bone identifies five categories: Vacant Vincent who is a daydreamer, impatient, pencil or toe tapper, easily distracted, and pretty much missing in action; Critical Carrie who finds fault, concentrates on specific words and details of the message, asks threatening questions, and misses the meaning or intent; Compliant Curtis who is passive, is interested in getting along, reacts little, fakes attention, and generally doesn't contribute to the exchange; Arlo Active who is involved and committed to good communication, participative and listens for meaning and intent, and actively encourages and acknowledges the speaker; and Lisette Listener who listens carefully, pays close attention, and asks clarifying questions to accurately interpret the message. (Diane Bone, *The Business of Listening: A Practical Guide to Effective Listening*, Crisp Publications, Inc, 1988, pp.30-31.)

A more-serious version of listening test is Watson's and Barker's listener preference profile. (Kittie W. Watson and Larry L. Barker, *Guide to Using the Listener Preference Profile: Tips for Trainers and Facilitators*, Spectra, Inc, 1993, pp.5-16.) They identify listeners who are people-oriented, action-oriented, content-oriented, time-oriented, multiple preferenced, and listening avoiders. "Listeners demonstrate people-oriented preferences when they: show care and concern for others'

feelings, identify the emotional states of others, internalize/adopt emotional states of other, or try to find areas of common interest. Listeners demonstrate content-oriented preferences when they: test or evaluate facts and evidence, welcome complex and challenging information, listen to facts before forming judgments and opinion, or favor listening to technical information. Listeners demonstrate action-oriented preferences when they; jump ahead and finish thoughts of speakers, get frustrated by unorganized speakers, focus on inconsistencies and errors in messages, or show impatience when speakers ramble. Listeners demonstrate time-oriented preferences when they: let others know how much time they have to listen or tell others how long they have to meet. Individuals with multiple preferences may switch back and forth among preferences in different situations and/or with different people. Listening avoiders show no clear listening preference(s). Listening avoidance can come from disinterest or listening burnout. Each of the types have advantages and disadvantages. (pp. 4-5.) Watson and Barker report research findings that suggest the female listener is people-oriented and primarily relational rather than task oriented. Male listeners are more content-oriented or action-oriented and thus task oriented.

Madelyn Burley-Allen describes five listening styles: the faker, the dependent listener, the interrupter, the self-conscious listener, and the intellectual or logical listener. (Madelyn Burley-Allen, *Listening: the Forgotten Skill*, John Wiley and Sons, 1982, pp. 48-51.) The faker is a listener who fakes attention and pretends to listen while he or she is thinking

about his or her own interests. The dependent listener is a listener who is highly dependent and lives vicariously through the ideas, opinions, beliefs, wishes, and feelings of other people. The interrupter is a listener who won't let the speaker finish offering the message, usually because he or she is afraid he or she will forget what he or she wanted to say. The self-conscious listener is a listener who is so concerned about how well the conversation is going or how well he or she is coming across that he or she loses track or spontaneity and becomes involved with his or her own issues instead of being open to the message. The intellectual or logical listener is a listener who receives the message mostly with his or her head and receives only what he or she wants to hear and blots out feelings and meanings.

Woody Ashton and Harold Gilbert of Virginia Tech's Training and Development Division include a communication style worksheet in their *Improving Communication Effectiveness* workbook. This set of styles is from James H.

Brewer (1989) and includes the bold listener (assertive, likes bottom line, goal oriented), the expressive listener (persuasive, talkative, optimistic), the sympathetic listener (people-oriented, patient, team player, cautious), and the technical listener (controlled, precise, rule-oriented, logical). Ashton and Gilbert include a Norbert Weiner quote from "The Human Use of Human Beings:" "The good Lord blessed us with two ears and only one mouth. This should serve as a constant reminder that we need to listen twice as much as we talk."

As with all tests that look for preferences, we have to be very careful with the results and not to pigeonhole people. You may prefer one style but be very competent in another. The value of considering the different categories is to note your own preferences and to know that other people could approach listening differently than you do. So, if you notice a style that seems strange to you, the difference may be style or preference and not being right or wrong or an issue of competence.

1.5.8.5.10.5. PRACTICAL EFFECTIVE LISTENING HINTS

In everyday life, practicing effective listening includes a multitude of little thoughts or acts that implement the fourteen actions or steps in the effective listening procedure.

I've made a numbered list of helpful hints for effective listening. I've numbered the list so you can identify a hint for your discussion. You may want to add some of your own ideas to the list.

1. Practice listening skills by listening to yourself.
2. Don't mentally abandon the speaker by daydreaming, going on mental tangents, or forming a rebuttal or questions to confuse the speaker.
3. Don't tune out the speaker if you don't agree or aren't interested.
4. Don't assume you know what the speaker is going to say and stop listening.
5. Repeat in your own words and summarize what the speaker has said and ask for verification before you begin on what you want to say.
6. Make sure you know what the speaker means when he or she uses words that could have multiple meanings.
7. Don't fake listening. If you can't listen, apologize and reschedule.
8. Listen for the main idea, the meaning, or the real issue, rather than just words or facts.
9. Make eye contact about 70 percent of the time.
10. Know which words and phrases have emotional impact on both you and the speaker.
11. Take notes when appropriate.
12. Don't judge or criticize the speaker or the message.
13. Restate instructions and messages to ensure you understand.
14. Be aware of your listening filters (values, assumptions, beliefs, memories, prejudices, expectations).
15. When someone says, "Yes, but", he or she isn't listening.
16. Don't attempt an important dialogue when the speaker or listener is tired or the energy level is low.
17. Eliminate external distractions, such as room conditions, noise, acoustics, interruptions and phone calls, and time and work pressures.
18. Don't fidget, blink, yawn, doodle, bite your lip, frown deeply, play with your hair, look at your watch, tap your foot or a pencil, read, jingle money, slouch in your chair, or talk to someone else.

19. Listen for pitch, rate, timbre, and subtle variations in the tone of voice.
20. Don't give advice to the speaker unless in response to a direct request.
21. Face the speaker with an open, relaxed posture.
22. Acknowledge the speaker and the message by nodding your head, leaning forward, or making facial expressions that match the speaker's feelings.
23. Summarize what the speaker says by using your own words and then ask if the speaker is satisfied that you've captured the meaning.
24. Don't ask why questions.
25. Listen for new ideas everywhere.
26. Become personally involved with what the speaker is saying.
27. Listen for the essence of the message (the holistic perspective).
28. Search for an idea you can use.
29. Use encouraging, noncommittal acknowledgments to stimulate the speaker, such as "Hmm," "Uh-huh," "I see," "Right," "Gee," "Oh," and "Interesting." (People prefer vocal stroking to silence. But don't overdo it.)
30. Invite the speaker to say more by saying things like "Tell me more," "I'd like to hear what you're thinking," "How do you feel about that," "Would you like to talk about it?" "Let's talk about it," and "I'm interested in your ideas about that."
31. The listener should take responsibility for at least 51 percent of the total communication process.
32. Listen to the speaker on his or her own terms.
33. People who listen well spot the "value moment," which is the information or the part of listening that proves most relevant to the listener.
34. In a conversation, balance speaking and listening, where balance means the right mix.
35. Wait for the speaker to finish before finally evaluating the message.
36. Don't finish the speaker's sentences.
37. Build rapport and pace the speaker by imitating or mirroring his or her gestures, breathing, voice rate, vocabulary, favorite phrases, and facial expressions. (Don't mimic, however.)
38. Stick to the speaker's subject.
39. Keep an appropriate distance.
40. Don't interrogate, teach, or give advice.
41. Overlook a poor speaking technique to get at the message.

1.5.8.5.10.6. EXERCISE ON EFFECTIVE LISTENING

To understand the fourteen actions of the effective listening procedure better, you can identify which of the actions is best served by each of the helpful hints for effective listening.

On the form below, list the helpful hints for effective listening (You can use the numbers.) under the action where the hint fits best.

RELATE

Receive

Request

Relax

Relate

Recognize

Reciprocate

REMEMBER

Retain

REFLECT

Reflect

Restate

Recap

RESPOND

Relieve

Respond

REACT

Responsive

Responsible

1.5.8.5.10.7. PRACTICE IN GOOD LISTENING

By doing one or two group exercises, you can gain practice in the principles, skills, and acts of good listening.

The first and easiest exercise to try is to play the game of gossip. Gather four or more people together. Find a short paragraph of about 50 words of facts. Have one person read the paragraph to the second. Then the second must repeat the message to the third person without benefit of the written paragraph or any input from the first person. The third person tells their understanding of the message as faithfully as possible to the fourth and so on. When the last person has received the message, he or she should repeat the message as faithfully as possible and the first person should compare that version of the message with the written paragraph. Usually the last version of the message is so different from the written version that the two aren't comparable. You can try the exercise again with a very short story based on general ideas and feelings rather than facts and see what happens.

I'll describe another exercise you can try in your mind or with a few friends. The objective of the exercise is to illustrate some of the skills for active listening. The exercise needs three or more participants. One person is the monitor. The other people converse with one another on a controversial topic the group agrees to discuss. The job of the monitor is to remain out of the discussion and focus on the skills for active listening.

In the typical discussion, we concentrate on what we intend to say next and don't really listen. In this exercise, before any person can speak, he or she must summarize the essence of the previous speaker's statement to the satisfaction of the previous speaker. The monitor will make sure people don't speak until

they have satisfied this requirement.

Here's an example discussion.

George: and that's why I favor the quarter system over the semester system in our university.

Sally: Okay. You're saying you favor the quarter system because you can take more electives and the students and teachers won't get so drug out in the five weeks of the semester after the quarter would be over. Do I have that right?

George: Yes. I also like the idea of the late quarter system so I get to include

Paul: But that's ridiculous. Why would you want

Monitor: Hold it, Paul. You didn't let George finish his point. You shouldn't make value judgments about his point. You need to summarize or restate George's message before you can make your point.

George: Well, my point is that I want to include the beautiful month of September in my summer vacation.

Paul: How can you care about when your summer vacation ends. The beginning of the summer vacation is more important.

Monitor: Stop, Paul. You again didn't restate George's point.

Paul: Okay, okay. George is worried that he won't be home for his birthday in early September.

Monitor: Let's see if George is satisfied that Paul understands his point.

George: Paul doesn't understand my point at all; and I'm not sure Sally fully understands my point either.

Monitor: Paul, do you want to try again to reflect George's point of view to him? Or do you want George to repeat his point?

This exercise can last as long as the group wants. As the discussion continues, other skills for effective listening will arise. The more people who enter the discussion, the more complicated the monitor's job becomes. One way to keep the monitor's job in bounds and give a number of people a chance to participate is for the monitor to let different people play the discussant roles as the discussion continues.

I'll discuss listening three more times. First, I'll discuss listening as an important ingredient in group interaction and decision making. Second, I'll discuss the importance of listening in being an effective leader. Third, I'll discuss active listening as an important ingredient in supporting people as they empower themselves.

1.5. TOOLS AND SKILLS CATEGORIES

1.5.8. THE COMMUNICATION SKILL

1.5.8.6. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION II

1.5.8.6.1. REMOVING CLUTTER—HENRI EMILE MATISSE.

1.5. TOOLS AND SKILLS CATEGORIES

1.5.8. THE COMMUNICATION SKILL

1.5.8.6. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

1.5.8.6.2. STOP

1.5.8.6.2.1. THE IDEA BEHIND STOP.

Once you've written 500-700 words, you've changed topics and should show the change by separating topics into modular presentations.

The STOP Method (Sequential Thematic Organization of Publications) produces a topical presentation of material. Based on the idea that if you write more than a 500-700 word reasonably-crisp text, you've changed topics, STOP sets out to organize your topics sequentially. If you organize what you have to say topically and you state the thesis of each topic, your audience will be able to find and follow what he or she needs more easily. Multiple writers can coordinate their thinking through topics and theses so their writings don't conflict, overlap, or leave gaps in a multi-author document.

Lou Middleman describes your thesis as the leading idea of your writing. Your thesis specifies "The connections you will have perceived and subsequently intend to make clear to your reader." Lou distinguishes topics and theses by saying, "Topic comes from a Greek noun meaning 'places' and *thesis* from a Greek verb meaning 'to put into place' or 'organize' so your topic is 'where you go' to look for your thesis, and your thesis is 'what you do when you get there' in order to make sense—your sense—of that place. The topics provide the subjects of the thesis sentences, and the predicates, with verbs and their objects, say something about the topics that specifies the nature of the connections to be developed in [the writing]." (p. 18-20.)

The thesis relating to each topic becomes paramount in writing and reading in STOP. Lou says, "Because the thesis is your 'point'—that is, it marks the point on the reader's mental map toward which you intend your essay to lead him or her—it contains, implicitly or explicitly, both the route to be followed and

the sights along the way." (p. 22.) If you've organized your topics and subtopics, have a thesis for each one, and have a list of the important sights along the way, you can storyboard your writing. By storyboarding, I mean you can lay out what needs to be written to make the point of the topic in such a way that anyone can write the text to support your thesis. Each topic contributes to the point of the document you're writing. The topic, thesis statement, associated 500-700 words of text of describing sights along the way and, if useful, a figure highlighting a landmark of the thesis are combined in a two-page format. When read, the two pages of a topical module should be facing pages, so the reader has the entire topical exposition in vision all at once.

If a group of people are working together on writing a document and they develop the storyboards together, each person can write up any one of the topics in harmony with others writing other topics. If one person is writing the document, he or she can clearly make points through theses and associated text and can connect points logically through the structure of the topics.

Not only are the thesis statements valuable, but the list of topics becomes the map to the document. The reader can look at the map of topics (organized topic list) and read from the beginning, middle, or end of the document. The writer can write according to what moves him or her in a creative moment and connect creative moments through the map. I've found that people will read more of a STOP document than the traditional alternative. With STOP writing, the reader starts with the topic of greatest interest to him or her and moves

through the document from topic to topic until they have all they need.

The classical alternative is called river raft to indicate a river of words interrupted randomly by rafts (figures). With river-raft writing, the reader starts at the beginning searching for topics of interest, never sure where he or she is in a sea of often-overlapping topics, and quit when he or she decides he or she can't find what he or she needs after all.

I've attached a set of briefing charts about STOP. The charts describe the procedure for writing in STOP and the advantages of STOP. I've also attached a storyboard form and hints for writing topic headings and thesis statements.

I first heard about STOP in 1985 from Frank Falci, a Department of Energy (DOE) manager, who had discovered STOP years earlier when working with Hughes Aircraft Com-

pany. Frank had recently been introduced to the Perry Method for oral presentations and saw the connections to STOP. Much later I was told (I don't remember by whom) that Robert Perry was part of the team that started STOP. I brought copies of Frank's notes back to MSL for our people to study.

In 1988, Lou Middleman revived STOP when he was responsible to bring the writing of dozens of people together covering hundreds of topics for the DOE's first environmental management Five-Year Plan. Lou's job was to coordinate the writing of the large team of people writing new material all in a couple of months. Lou realized the job was impossible without STOP. The resulting document was praised by the National Academy of Sciences as one of the best written documents they had encountered. As a result, many other government documents have recently been written in STOP.

1.5.8.6.2.2. STARTING TO STOP.

STOP ORGANIZES DOCUMENTS INTO TWO-PAGE TEXT-AND-FIGURE MODULES.

- Topical rather than categorical outline precludes “river-raft” documents
- Spoon-feeds reader in bite-size chunks
- Turning page means changing topic
- Permits group organization and review before writing or redrafting
- Can be applied “from scratch” or to “quantize” a river-raft document

AN UNDERLINED THESIS SENTENCE BEGINS EACH TOPICAL MODULE.

- A specific, arguable point or contention
- Contains key words and premises
- Module paragraphs and figures demonstrate thesis
- Line of argument always evident
- Prevents reader (and writer) from wandering
- Reader can skim or scan without confusion

THE OVERALL STOP PROCEDURE HAS FIVE STAGES.

- Making a subject list
- Storyboarding
- Group review of storyboards
- Writing the modules
- Converting river-raft material

FOUR RULES OF THEMATIC UNITY GUIDE MODULE FORMULATION.

- Have a point and get to it.
- Treat it completely.
- Keep out extraneous matter.
- Relate figures to text.

TOPICIZING RIVER-RAFT MATERIAL IS A SIX-STAGE PROCESS.

- Spread out manuscript pages
- Mark figure/table reference to define art/topic relationships
- Obtain copies of figures
- Locate true topic boundaries
- Cut manuscript on topic lines and reassemble as mock-up modules
- STOP Critique
 - Write new topic headings
 - Extract or create thesis sentences
 - Check modules for thematic unity and copy fit
 - Identify gaps and overlaps; add, delete, combine, separate, substitute, transpose

STOP PROVIDES THREE UNAMBIGUOUS LEVELS OF CONTENT EMPHASIS.

- Less important content occurs within a topic module.
- More important content occupies a whole module.
- Most important content occupies multiple modules.

HOW TO WRITE TOPIC HEADINGS

1) Since they are not written to, Section and Subsection headings are OK as plain noun groups:

- System Tradeoff Analysis
- Data Processing Equipment Description

2) But, the author, reviewer and reader all need to know “what about?” the Topic Heading:

- “Receiver Design”—what about it?
TRANSISTORIZATION OF RECEIVER DESIGN
- “Target Tracking”—what about it?
NEED FOR REALISM IN TARGET UPDATING

3) Hence, the Topic Heading should be a phrase (a sentence fragment of 4 to 8 words) containing prepositions:

- DESIGN OF TOW CABLE FOR LOW DRAG
(not “Tow Cable Design”)
- REDUCTION OF NONSYSTEMATIC ERRORS
(not “Nonsystematic Errors”)

or infinitives:

- THREE WAYS TO SIMPLIFY ANTENNA DESIGN
(not “Antenna Design”)

or “ing” verbs:

- CONTROLLING CHARACTERISTIC IMPEDANCE
(not “Characteristic Impedance”)

4) If you can take a position, show your attitude with qualitative words:

- ADVANTAGES OF INTERLACING INSTRUCTIONS
- LIMITATIONS OF ANALOG AZIMUTH CONVERSION
- PITFALLS IN PROGRAM SCHEDULE CONCURRENCIES

5) If at first you don’t know “what about?” the topic heading, go back and revise it for greater pertinence after you have written out the Story board (or rough draft).

(taken from Hughes Aircraft Company document, 1965)

HOW TO WRITE THESIS SENTENCES

- 1) The Thesis Sentence should state your proposition concisely, and it must boil down the theme body to 25-30 most informative words, showing the whole proposition and proof (or substance otherwise) at a glance.
- 2) Make the Thesis Sentence an argument, or arguable hypothesis:
 - irrefutable, weak: “TRL gating circuits have been designed to meet the requirements.”
 - Refutable, strong: “TRL gating design has been adopted because active circuits are the best way to achieve increased fan out at the required speeds.”
- 3) There is a “design thesis” behind every block diagram or circuit write-up. So, no matter how low the level of detail, you never have to write equipment descriptions that merely describe. Contemporary proposal evaluators consider straight descriptions tedious and nonpertinent. Since important technical detail must be included, find the original design issue, or invent a point (even if it’s “advantages of using a conventional and proven design”).
- 4) The purpose of a unit, especially if difficult, makes a good thesis sentence for some block-diagram discussions because it reveals why the unit is organized the way it is:
 - “The telemetry system must be capable of multiplexing the outputs of 20 hydrophones and transmitting the information without degradation in a form suitable for time-compressed signal processing.”
- 5) If the topic merely embraces a collection of ideas or items unrelated by a single, definite proposition, then either summarize all the facts, or call attention to one or two most important and noteworthy ideas. Go back and check the Thesis Sentence for its summarizing function after you have filled in the Story Board (or written the draft).
- 6) Tests for a good Thesis Sentence:
 - Does it state an issue that can be refuted?
 - Does it repeat the key words of the theme body?
 - Does it embrace the major substance of any accompanying figure?
 - Does it contain adverbial conjunctions which show a train of reasoning (because, since, so, therefore, however, but, moreover, etc.)?
 - Does it contain comparative adverbs and adjectives which show attitude and conclusions (more, least, highly, almost, too, very, good, better, only, etc.)?

(taken from Hughes Aircraft Company document , 1965)

1.5.8.6.3. DISCLOSING PROGRESS

When disclosing progress, start with the end (the bottom line), then disclose what led up to the end.

Put the bottom line on top. If your objective is to communicate, you'll need to change some of your old thinking. You'll need to concentrate more on information portrayal and information perception. You'll need to perfect your ability to design your information portrayals to meet your purpose and suit your audience. If you're a senior in the Industrial and Systems Engineering Department, one information portrayal you'll soon deal with is your first senior design progress report. I'll use this senior design requirement of yours as a vehicle to emphasize and demonstrate a way of thinking about clear communication for decision making.

As an engineer, you're taught to start at the beginning and end at finish—all logical and in the proper sequence. Not here. I'll try to convince you to spill the beans. Say it and then explain it. Not vice versa.

What's the purpose of the senior design progress report? The purpose is to communicate your progress. Your progress is the difference between where you are and where you were based on what you've done since then. Where you were is your situation that last time your audience reviewed your project.

For your audience—whether faculty or corporate sponsor, your statement of progress should have more to do with results than with activities. That is, your purpose in the progress report should be to show accomplishments, not effort. You really want to communicate more about your output than your input because output is what your audience expects to see. Input is nice, yet is necessary but not sufficient for output. You'll be tempted to

focus on input because input reflects all the effort you've spent on the project. Don't give in to the temptation. Step back from your effort, critique your results, and state your progress. Use discussions of your effort, represented by activities involved in getting your results, to build confidence in your audience that your results are valid.

Distinguish between your means and ends. Your activities are your means and your results are your ends.

“But,” you may ask, “I'm not finished; what results do I have?” You have interim results, milestones along the way to your final results. The relationships of your interim results to where you started and to your final results show your progress. Before you know those relationships, you must know what your interim results are.

If this is your first progress report, anything you understand about your company, anything you know about your project, and anything you've accomplished is progress. Remember, you started with nothing. But, after the first report, progress is only what you understand, know, or have accomplished since the last report.

Your progress report has a different purpose from your proposal, for example. Your proposal talks about what you plan or want to do. You talk about what you will do. Your progress report talks about what you accomplished. You talk about what you did do. If your progress report sounds like what you will do sometime in the future, your audience won't believe you've accomplished anything. Be

sure to modify what you've written when you copy material from your proposal. Change the material to clearly show you've completed something. I've seen progress reports I knew were copied over in part from the proposal. Everything was in the future tense. Don't do that. The purposes of the two information portrayals are different. You did a proposal written about what you were going to do; now you should change it for your progress report written about what you did do.

I've just talked about the purpose part of the equation for designing information portrayals. Now, let's talk about the audience part. You have several audiences, and each audience is different from the others. To explain my point, I'll discuss three audiences: your faculty advisor, your company contact, and the senior design faculty coordinator.

Consider first your faculty advisor. If he or she expects a stereotype, bland, stilted, long, pompous report, that's exactly what you should give him or her. This particular audience may know what you've done because they meet with you every day. They may look at the report as documenting the steps they already know you've taken to get the results they already know you've obtained. Their purpose is documentation. Then give them that documentation. They aren't finding out for the first time what you've done. They just want a hard copy data base to store what you've done in a logical sequence.

Consider next your company contact. They may want a crisp, clear, easy-to-read business report. Then you should give them what they want.

Finally, your senior design faculty coordinator may want to know what you've done compared to other design groups. They may want to know what you've done compared to their list of things they want you to do and learn in

this course. Then you should help them find what they want in your report. You should highlight what they want to see so they can fill in their check sheet.

Your audience (or in this case, audiences) will have unique personality types, interests, capabilities, experiences, and expectations. As a specific example, recognize the difference between detail and bulk. Three-fourths of the people in the world are sensors. They like detail. Detail gives them confidence they have all the information they need for decision-making. Detail allows them to dig in wherever they feel they need more information. Many of us don't like to go to the trouble to give all the details and we also have trouble sorting and organizing all the details. Some of us are intuitive and don't see any value in all that detail anyway. Give the sensing person the detail they want.

Be careful! Don't bulk your audience. Don't pad your report with pages of some documents you found laying around the company on your last visit. A detail person wants to know how many visits you've made. When did you make them? Who on your team went? Whom did you meet with? What did you do while you were there? How did that help? And so on. My point is these details are germane. They're important to a detail person. Give them what they want.

But details will bore an intuitive person to death. An intuitive person will skip over the details. If the bottom line of what you've accomplished is buried either at the end of the detail or randomly imbedded deep in the detail, the intuitive person will mentally (or physically) abandon your report long before they get to the bottom line. I've been known to flip pages of seemingly detailed information (physically abandon the report) and miss bottom lines. The detail person will abandon your report too. They'll just spend more time on the details.

How do you know what your audience is so you can factor that into your information portrayal design? Ask them. Your audience will be happy to tell you what they want. And if you spend the time to figure out and ask the right questions, they'll tell you all you need to know about their unique traits as information perceivers and decision makers.

My recommendations are purpose and audience dependent. However, I'll make the following recommendations. Write a "users manual" for your document. Call it an executive summary, a foreword, a prologue, or even an abstract. (I personally wouldn't call it an abstract.) Title a section "Developments Since the Last Report." Title subsections 1) What we accomplished since October 10, 1988 (or whatever the date of the last report was), 2) How this report was improved, 3) What has happened at the company, and 4) What has changed in project management. Then put specific items of tangible progress in "bullet" form under each of the subsections. For each bullet identify the page in the progress report where the audience can find the discussion, background, and justification for the bullet.

As you discuss each accomplishment, improvement, or change, remember you want to state two things. First, state what you did or what changed. Second, state the usefulness or significance of what you did or what changed. You're not only telling the "what" you're also telling the "so what."

Notice how what you've written is actually a user's manual for using the progress report. That is, you've shown the audience how to use the report. For the senior design faculty coordinator, they can fill in their check list right from your executive summary. If they're not sure they want to take your word you've accomplished what you said in a short bullet, they can check out the appropriate pages in the progress report. After they've tried several

times and found your report substantiates several of your bullets' claims, they'll probably stop checking. They'll love you for saving them time.

For the company contact, they can see the differences between where you were and where you are at a glance. They can easily check an item out more closely if they wish by flipping to the pages you've identified for that item.

For your faculty advisor, by using your executive summary containing a "map" of the locations of accomplishments in the report, they can distinguish what they haven't yet reviewed from what they already reviewed. As a faculty advisor, I get tired of reading the company description again in the fourth progress report—unless, that is, you've changed or added something; and if you have, you told me in the executive summary what you changed or added.

As an aside, any time you have someone review a long document several times, be sure to tell them what changes you made. If you tell them what the changes are and where they are, the reviewer only has to find and review the changes. If they don't know the changes you made, they have to check every word of the long document to make sure it's right.

Your faculty advisor and/or senior design faculty coordinator probably have an evaluation matrix either on paper or in their mind. The matrix lists the design groups on one axis and their evaluation criteria (and maybe the relative weights of the criteria) on another axis. You shouldn't care about the other design groups, but you should care about what the evaluation criteria (and weights) are.

I'm saying here that if you want a high evaluation, knowing what the criteria are comes before (and in that sense is more important than) putting the substance into the report to be

evaluated against those criteria. You can usually figure out the evaluation criteria from the assignment document or class discussion (both information portrayals) about the progress report. Your faculty advisor or senior design faculty coordinator most likely will go to those information portrayals to figure out which criteria to use for their matrix. If you're not confident you know what those criteria are, I'd ask.

Now, put yourself in the shoes of your faculty advisor or senior design faculty coordinator. How well does your progress report satisfy the criteria you guessed? What I'm telling you is that you can figure out the criteria and look at your report without bias and come close to determining the grade you'll get. The reason you might get different grades from the two people is that they have different criteria or weights. After guessing (maybe by just listening or asking) the different criteria, you can determine the different grades. Try it. Hopefully, in trying this technique you'll want to fix your report when your report has nothing in it to meet, or is weak in meeting, a particular criterion. Now you're affecting your own grade before the fact.

Often, when a decision maker is making a qualitative evaluation or comparison among candidates, they use a matrix. Your senior design project is such a case. Your application for a job is another. Your prospective employers won't compare your height and weight or other quantitative measures. They'll generate some criteria like "communicates well" or "is poised" and give you a score of, say, four out of ten. I advise you to find out what the criteria are before you're evaluated. The same thing holds true after you go to work. Your supervisor will evaluate you. That's how they decide whether to fire you or to give you a raise. Ask your supervisor what the criteria are! Most people don't want to ask about the criteria because people don't like to think about being

evaluated. Also, your supervisor won't offer the criteria without being asked because people don't like to evaluate others.

My midterms and exam are qualitative. So, I use a matrix to grade them. You can guess the matrix from the statement of the midterm or from criteria I think are important based on what I've said in class. You can also guess the number of criteria. Let's guess ten. Now try to guess what they are. Since you don't know for sure, you may come up with a few more than ten. Try it. You won't come up with many more. If you came up with, say twelve, why not write your midterm to provide substance for meeting all twelve. Chances are, the effort won't be wasted. Figuring out the matrix helps you not only get a good evaluation (grade) but it also helps you think through what constitutes a comprehensive, clear, and complete midterm.

I've discussed how to figure out the evaluation criteria so you can get a good grade. How crass! Let's look at the situation more idealistically. The evaluation criteria are your advisor's understandings of what makes a good report (or a good project). Do you want to do a good job? Then by definition, you want to address all the criteria in your report. If you think about and find out what your audience wants and thinks is important before you prepare your report (or even before you do the work you're reporting on), you can write your report (and do your work) on the right things.

Research proposals are evaluated qualitatively. Usually there's a formal matrix and that matrix is spelled out when the proposals are requested. Most faculty write proposals to suit their own interest in a technical approach. In their proposals, they ignore the matrix. Most proposals fail. One technique to succeed is to figure out the matrix, identify the criteria on one or more cover sheets or foreword, state clearly you've met the criteria, and identify where the sub-

stance is in the proposal to substantiate you meet the criteria. Now, the person evaluating the proposals can easily give you high scores on his or her matrix. Other proposals may have better content. But the evaluator never sees the content and never sees that the proposal meets a given criterion because their mind wanders at exactly the wrong time when reading dozens of proposals. I've gone so far as to use different color paper for the pages when I state I've

met their criteria and when I show where to find the supporting information. I want to make it easy for the evaluator to put high marks in his or her matrix.

The senior design faculty coordinator also reads dozens of rather long documents. What can you do to make sure your document has the substance to meet every criterion the evaluator is diligently searching to find?

