



HELPING YOU...

COMMUNICATE WITH CONFIDENCE!



www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com



Hello,



How do you train your employees, build their skills, instill them with confidence and help them to aspire to and achieve greatness?

As a speaker, trainer, consultant, author and coach, this is what I do: help professionals like yours in today's workplace to sharpen their communication and leadership skills for success.

I'm Craig Harrison...and I help professionals communicate with clarity, credibility and confidence.

- ❖ Do your employees speak with credibility and make honesty their policy?
- ❖ Have they mastered the forgotten communication skill of listening — actively and intently?
- ❖ Can they design, promote and lead effective meetings to get results for all concerned?
- ❖ Are they responsive and effective in the face of difficult questions from tough customers?
- ❖ Do they deliver concise oral reports, send effective e-mails and use story powerfully?

The photos you see are from my trainings and keynotes where we focus on communication topics such as listening skills, meeting management, presentation skill-building, persuasive skills and related topics.

Find out what the GSA, US ARMY, PFIZER, CLOROX, HLC HOME LOANS CANADA, WILSON SPORTING GOODS, CHEVRON, SGMP, NACE, NAPO, E WOMEN NETWORK, BNI, HILTON HOTELS, SF-CVB, MPI, CAISAE, UNIVERSITIES OF CALIFORNIA, HSMIA and others know: *Craig Harrison's EXPRESSIONS OF EXCELLENCE!™* trainings ROCK!

Trainings are interactive, fast-paced and fun. Through stories, role-plays and fun interactive exercises derived from real life scenarios, we brainstorm and problem solve, create and refine processes and employ best practices to sharpen our communication and leadership skills and ability to communicate for success.

Please peruse the rest of this magalog to gain a better understanding of the types of programs I offer. I have also included past published articles of mine to give you a feel for the content found in my programs. As well, I am skilled at customizing, tailoring my materials to your values, needs and campaigns.

My website contains dozens of sales and marketing articles, reference letters from satisfied clients and supplemental sales and service material. Whether you seek programs on **sales, customer service, leadership, teambuilding** or various aspects of **workplace communication**, I have solutions for you!

I look forward to partnering with you to help your organization *Express Its Excellence.*

Call

Craig Harrison
Founder and Chief Expressionist, EXPRESSIONS OF EXCELLENCE!™



P.S. You may also request similar magalogs on SALES and CUSTOMER SERVICE at (510) 547-0664.



Craig Harrison's
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Communication
Presentations



Inspiring Stellar Sales and Service Leadership



- Speaker
- Trainer
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PRO-TRACK
(Speakers
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Instructor,
UCSC Extension
HR Management
Program
(Business)
since 2001



Past President
INTERNATIONAL
CUSTOMER
SERVICE
ASSOCIATION
for the SF Bay
Area &
Silicon Valley



Develop Your Workplace Communication Quotient (CQ)!

Enhance your **credibility** in the workplace through more **confident and credible communication**. Make honesty your policy, learn how to give and receive constructive criticism, learn to turn rejection into redirection, manage upwards and enhance your reputation in the workplace.



Listening – The Forgotten Communication Skill

Miscommunication as a result of **poor listening skills** costs millions of dollars, countless hours of wasted time. Have we gotten your attention yet? Learn about listening vs. hearing, uncover the meta-message in communications and learn how gender and other variables alter listening skills. Learn to become a powerful listener.



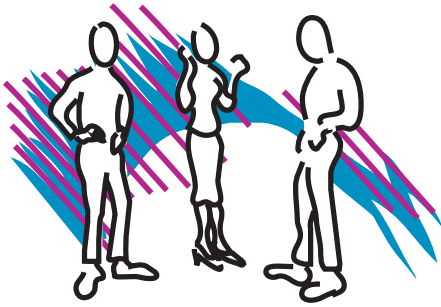
Mastering E-Mail Communication

Learn to send **effective, service-oriented E-mails**. Learn its advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses. Develop your checklist for when you should (and shouldn't) use E-Mail, learn the best use of subject lines, signature lines, white space, CC and BCC, and actually edit real life e-mails for readability and simplicity!



Effective Meeting Management Avoid An All-Meet Diet

Whether you're leading, facilitating or just suffering from meetings, this presentation teaches you everything you need to know to plan, stage and recover from **meetings**, be they weekly, board or the shareholder variety. Addresses agendas, rules of order, addressing challenges, and how to manage meeting monsters!



DEVELOPING YOUR COMMUNICATION QUOTIENT (CQ)

FOR MORE EFFECTIVE WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

WITH CRAIG HARRISON

Communication takes many forms.

In a typical work day you may communicate with customers, clients, co-workers (including superiors, subordinates and colleagues), vendors, and city, state and federal representatives. Do you communicate with interns or volunteers? On occasion you're also speaking with the media, members of your association or even competitors. How well are you communicating with each?



Each form of communication draws on different skills, each requires different approaches and sometimes even a different lexicon. Forget GQ! These days it's your CQ that matters...your Communication Quotient.



Learning Objectives



- ▶ Develop techniques for delivering an effective report in a meeting
- ▶ Elicit co-worker support for a project by speaking the language of benefits; learn how to make "the ask"
- ▶ Learn to speak one-on-one with a co-worker regarding a problem
- ▶ Build and motivate a work team
- ▶ Learn the ABC's of written communication
- ▶ Handle difficult questions and difficult questioners
- ▶ Discover how to give instructions that can't be misunderstood
- ▶ Master the apology and the recovery



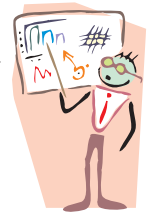
How The Presentation Is Delivered

Definitions, positive and negative anecdotal case studies, illuminating role playing activities and a practical question & answer session all help attendees DEVELOP THEIR COMMUNICATION QUOTIENT.



About Your Presenter

Craig Harrison writes, trains, coaches and speaks about communication and its vital role in professional success. His articles have appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, he has been profiled by *The Wall Street Journal*, and interviewed by 60 MINUTES, BBC RADIO, *Selling Power* and *Business Week* magazines. Craig has trained corporate, academic and non-profit groups to communicate with clarity and confidence. As 2004-05 president of the NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION's Northern California chapter, a past president of the INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE ASSOC. (SF-Silicon Valley chapter), and past district governor for TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL, Craig has helped thousands improve their communication skills.



Craig Harrison's
Expressions of Excellence™
Sales & Service Solutions Through Speaking

PO Box 5965, Berkeley, CA 94705-0965 USA

Craig@ExpressionsOfExcellence.com

www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com

(510) 547-0664 Direct

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Career Search

What you don't want to have is a failure to communicate

By **Craig Harrison**
 SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

It's in every classified ad and most job descriptions: must have excellent communication skills. Worse yet, once hired, it reappears annually at review time: Improve communication skills. What's a worker to do? Communication skills don't require a graduate degree, just some common sense, a bit of homework and a better understanding of the role communication plays — in everything:

Listen. Don't assume that better communication skills mean you have to speak like John F. Kennedy or orate like Jesse Jackson. Listening skills are the most ignored aspect of good communication skills. More misunderstandings occur due to poor listening than to misstatements.

To be a good listener, suspend that urge to speak while others are speaking. Don't begin to prepare what you'll say next. Listen intently, with ears, eyes, mind and body. Are you following what's being said? If so, nod in agreement. If not, a furrowed brow indicates you're confused. Your speaker needs these cues. If you truly heard and understood, repeat it back in your own words. This lets both parties know they're on the same wavelength.

Mind Your ABCs. Some people turn complex topics into simple explanations. Sadly, others' talents lie in the opposite direction: making simple topics complex. I strive to mind my ABCs: Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur once remarked that even more important than giving orders that could be understood was issuing orders that couldn't be misunderstood. Whether or not lives are at stake, your reputation as a communicator may be. People appreciate short sentences; they are often confused by long, convoluted ones. Keep it succinct.

Don't get labeled missing in action. Some excellent communicators are deemed less so for not contributing in meetings. A woman from overseas was culturally uncomfortable speaking up, so others monopolized the meetings, often rudely interrupting to make a point. Her timidity, coupled with self-consciousness surrounding her command of English, resulted in her wallflower demeanor.

Now the night before meetings she reviews the agenda, composes her thoughts and rehearses making powerful yet concise statements about items of the day. To others her remarks appear off-handed. She's thus perceived as a more powerful and effective communicator. She's also developed a nice yet firm statement when she's interrupted, which reminds people she hasn't yielded the floor yet. After a few invocations of this phrase, others respect her opinions better. Her boss has noticed and applauded her new assertiveness.

It takes two. I knew a worker who was fired for her boss's inadequacies as a communicator. Don't pay the price for another's communication shortcomings. It may require some work on your part, but it's worth the effort.

I once had a boss who listened, but never asked questions. After a while I anticipated the questions that needed to be asked and posed them myself, or simply provided responses as if he'd asked them. I would go prepared to each meeting with a list of project-related questions, which showed my foresight and attention to detail. It benefited us both.

Write speech. It sounds like a Buddhist precept, yet remember, writing is a big part of communication. Let e-mails, weekly reports and other writings reinforce your clear thinking, organizational skills, attention to detail and ability to express important ideas.

Make your writing easy to read. Spelling matters, even in e-mail. Use white space, numbered lists and bulleted items to communicate more effectively. Titles, subtitles and lists similarly add cogency. Write your piece, set it aside for a spell, then review it and strike out 25 percent to say it more succinctly.

Speak up. Consider taking a public speaking class, joining a local Toastmasters club or Speaking Circle to improve your oral communication skills. The new skills, offline practice and confidence gleaned will help you in meetings, in giving reports and in making presentations.

Excellent communication skills help in many ways. With practice you can confidently give a speech, make a cold call, train others; conduct a meeting, make a sales presentation, interview someone or be interviewed.

Craig Harrison is a motivational speaker, corporate trainer and communication coach. Call him at (510) 547-0664.

VIEWPOINT



"Communication skills don't require a graduate degree, just some common sense, a bit of homework and a better understanding of the role communication plays — in everything." [▶ Read the column](#)

- [Newsroom Cam](#)
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FORUMS



CREDIBILITY

MAKING HONESTY AND INTEGRITY YOUR POLICIES

WITH CRAIG HARRISON



It's better to *have* character than to be one!

“Character is like a tree
and reputation like its shadow.
The shadow is what we think of it;
the tree is the real thing.”

— *Abraham Lincoln*

As a leader, manager, speaker or professional of any kind, CREDIBILITY is essential to your being hired, promoted, followed, respected and trusted. Are you *credible* in the eyes of your co-workers, employees or managers? Are you believable? Promotable? Electable? CREDIBILITY is the foundation upon which you raise children, build businesses and establish a career. In a world that celebrates what's incredible, your goal should be that which is credible.

Learning Objectives

- ▶ Assess who is credible and who isn't, and why
- ▶ Learn ways of establishing personal credibility in the workplace: via your language, attire, presence, listening skills and patterns of performance
- ▶ Master the ability to say no with credibility and how to deliver bad news credibly
- ▶ Understand the art of the apology and how to recover from mistakes to enhance your credibility
- ▶ Understand the role of key gender and cultural differences
- ▶ Discover ways to build your reputation through words and deeds

How The Presentation Is Delivered

Using stories, examples and historical figures from Lance Armstrong, Bernie Madoff and Joe Paterno to Mother Theresa and George Washington, we explore how credibility is established, enhanced or eroded through words and deeds. Discussions, real life scenarios and a fun credibility game all help attendees assess others' credibility using their own value system.

Who Benefits

Whether you are a new or aspiring manager, a newly elected board member or president, a team leader, new hire or even an intern or volunteer, this training is for you!

About Your Presenter

Craig Harrison writes, trains, coaches and speaks about communication and leadership and their vital role in professional success. His articles have appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, he has been profiled by *The Wall Street Journal*, and interviewed by 60 MINUTES, BBC RADIO, *Selling Power* and *Business Week* magazines. Craig has trained corporate, academic and non-profit groups to communicate with clarity and confidence and chaired various boards of directors. As 2004-2005 president of the NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION's Northern California chapter, architect of its PRO-TRACK Speaker Academy, past president of the INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE ASSOC. (SF-Silicon Valley chapter), past District Governor for TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL and principal of EXPRESSIONS OF EXCELLENCE, Craig has helped thousands become credible and confident communicators.



Be A Credible Communicator

Credibility in the workplace means believability. Simply put, do people believe what you say? Is your reputation based on a track record of telling the truth? Are your estimates accurate, your forecasts realistic and your word solid? Or are you a big talker, a storyteller or a spin doctor? Strive to be a credible communicator.

The Right Way to Write and Speak

From the moment you submit a résumé and then interview for a job, the credibility counter is activated. Are your CV's assertions accurate, your chronology factual and your affiliations, degrees and awards correct? Whether spoken or written, our communication must withstand the test for truthfulness.

Whether or not your inaccuracies are uncovered during the interview process, you can lose your job and damage your career immeasurably when you lie, misstate or misrepresent your accomplishments. Pulitzer prize winning authors have been undone, as have supposed war heroes and many a politician, by aggrandizing or completely falsifying one's past accomplishments.

You're also susceptible to blackmail when you lie and are then threatened with exposure. As we've just seen, there is no "luck of the Irish" involved when you lie about your credentials, even as the head football coach for the Notre Dame Fighting Irish.

Your Word is Your Bond

People listen to what you say and how you say it. In every job situation you have the opportunity to become known as a person of his or her word. Conversely, you can become known for shading the truth, telling people what they want to hear, or parsing words as a defendant might do under cross examination in a courtroom.

We've all heard of the boy who cried wolf so many times that when a wolf finally appeared, people had long since stopped listening. This boy's credibility had long since turned non-existent. The same is true in the workplace. Whether you cry racism, sexism, ageism or favoritism it's important that there be credence to your claims. You do everyone a disservice if you falsely accuse or ascribe such motives to actions that otherwise occur.

Words Are Sticks and Stones

Beyond misrepresenting your own accomplishments or capabilities, be cautious of assertions made about others. Character assassination can be fatal to careers, and not just the person you're blaspheming. Whether or not you're a manager your words carry a weight to them that affects others. Gossiping about others or even spreading half-truths can flag you as dangerous, untrustworthy and ultimately not promotable material.

One of the keys to success in the workplace is engendering trust from your co-workers. If you are gossiping or betraying confidences you destroy your own credibility — as an honorable co-worker, a safe confidante, and an ally.

Take the High Road

Workplaces provide ample opportunities for you to earn credibility. Every time you make a deadline, do what you say you'll do or are there in a time of need for others, the department of the company at large, your credibility rises.

Times when you defend the honor of co-workers who aren't present, refuse to engage in gossip, or caution others to give co-workers the benefit of the doubt, you are showing wisdom and professionalism, which raises your credibility in the workplace.

Similarly, when you "say the right thing" or "do the right thing" in ethical situations your credibility is enhanced.

Tell It Like It Is

Often employees fall down when it comes to admitting mistakes. The credible communicator can admit errors or mistakes in a forthright and direct manner. Everyone makes mistakes, yet the credible communicator can address them and go about rectifying them, restoring confidence in him or herself. Those lacking in credibility might try to cover up, ignore or minimize their folly, often compounding the error of their ways. Ultimately, it's less important that you made a mistake, than that you fixed it and can assure others it won't happen again.

Know When to Say No

The credible communicator doesn't just tell people what they want to hear. Life would be easy if we could say "yes" to every request we received. Yet realistically, agreeing to something you ultimately can't deliver on is detrimental to your reputation. Develop the fortitude to say "no" when it's the right answer, even though it may not be the popular one. Over the long term, you will be respected for the accuracy of your assessments, decisions and determinations, even if the news isn't music to the ears of all who listen. Sometimes the truth isn't popular or pretty, but a person who is a "straight shooter" is respected by all.

Earning Your Stripes

Strive to boost your credibility rating at work and in your professional relationships. You'll know you're succeeding when you hear others tell you they know they can count on you, have confidence in your projections and feel secure in their knowledge you're on the team. Don't be in-credible...strive to be incredible!



LISTENING: The Forgotten Communication Skill



Contrary to popular opinion, the key to communication is not what you say, but what you hear. LISTENING skills, not speaking skills, hold the key to your success. How does that sound to you?

Miscommunication as a result of poor listening skills costs millions of dollars, countless hours of wasted time, and even the lives of others. Have I gotten your attention yet?

Author George Bernard Shaw opined that “the biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” How do you know others hear your message?



Are you hearing theirs? How well is listening valued in your organization?

Learning Objectives

LISTENING isn't a passive skill. It takes intention, concentration and practice. Yet its benefits are tangible: better productivity, improved teamwork, less dissension, higher retention and much much more. In this program you will:

- ▶ Learn the difference between hearing and listening
- ▶ Become expert at active listening
- ▶ Uncover meta-messages embedded within each message
- ▶ Understand gender differences in communication styles
- ▶ Enhance your stature with peers as a powerful listener
- ▶ Master listening skills in meeting situations



How This Presentation Is Delivered

Role plays, scripts, stories, fun assessments and exercises all make this training fun, interactive and replicable.

About Your Presenter



CRAIG HARRISON founded EXPRESSIONS OF EXCELLENCE!™ to help professionals express their sales and service leadership. Through dynamic keynotes, interactive training, consulting, coaching and special events Craig inspires and motivates professionals to shine. Results are immediate and lasting too.

Craig is past president of northern California chapters of the INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE ASSOCIATION and the NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION. His clients include PFIZER, WILSON SPORTING GOODS, CHEVRON, CLOROX, NOLO PRESS, HILTON HOTELS, GSA, HSMIAI, SGMP, MPI, CALSAE, CIBC/HLC, US ARMY and HITACHI AMERICA.



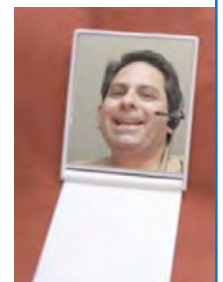
Craig is the author of *Stellar Service!* He also designed and teaches a popular one-day course on listening, as well as related courses on workplace communication skills credibility and persuasion skills.

His articles and columns have appeared in *Support World*, *Transaction World*, *Executive Excellence* and *Customer Service* magazines.

He's also been profiled in the WALL STREET JOURNAL, quoted by *Business Week*, interviewed by BBC RADIO, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Orange County Register*.



Invest in listening skills today!





HUH?

LISTENING

not just for the Faint of Hearing



Three elderly men were walking down the sidewalk, seemingly in conversation. The first proclaimed: “Windy, isn’t it?” To which the second man loudly disagreed: “No, it’s Thursday!” To which the third senior citizen concurred: “Me too. Let’s get some coffee!”

Apocryphal though this story may be, these grandfathers have an excuse. They are hard of hearing. What’s our excuse? Are we tired of hearing? Not listening? Or only partially listening?

Listening is the forgotten communication skill. It helps you understand others, solve problems, convey respect, build consensus and so much more. And in sales situations, listening uncovers needs, helps you hear objections and thus allows you to sell more.

Poor listening costs money, wastes time, breeds misunderstanding and generally leads to less sales and loss of clients. Do I have your attention yet?

Levels of Listening

At any given time we are partially listening to other people we’re in conversation with. In our defense, there are distractions of all sorts: auditory, visual, olfactory and more. There’s ambient noise. There are interruptions. Distractions may come from other people, from cell phones and pagers, and from our own noisy mind.

At a basic level, are you hearing everything being said by the speaker, whether he or she is your conversational partner, or a client, customer or colleague speaking to you?

More than just hearing their words, are you gleaning the meaning of their sentences?

And then, there’s the deeper meaning. Can you listen between the words and sentences for the implied meaning? What is the tenor of the words being spoken? There are often meta-messages embedded in the words being spoken. Not everything that is spoken should be taken at face value.

The basic speaking-listening conundrum

By now you’ve probably heard that we speak at but 200-300 words per minute, but can listen to far more words per minute. The result: as listeners our minds wander as we wait for the speaker to finish expressing his or her thoughts. What’s a listener to do while waiting for the speaker to complete his or her statements? We let our minds wander, we think of what to say next, we ponder our next meal or allow ourselves to become distracted by the scenery, or retreat to the caverns of our own mind. It’s natural.

Painful to Listen To

Add to that the reality that many conversational partners have issues. Some are:

- Long-winded (use lots of words to say very little)
- Mean-spirited
- Tall Tales Tellers (liars)
- Redundant (they repeat themselves)
- Drama Queens (both genders can be melodramatic)
- Kvetchers (they love to complain)
- Impersonating The Four Tops (always singing The Same Old Song)
- Self-absorbed
- Boastful

The net effect: listeners tune out. For others, they’re honorary members of The Four Tops...they’re always singing the same old song!

Active Listening Builds Trust

One way to avoid losing interest or getting distracted while listening is to engage in active listening. Less passive than simply absorbing what is being spoken, an active listener uses ears, eyes, body and mind to engage their conversational partner.

As a person is speaks to you give them eye contact. If you understand what they are saying, you can nod periodically to indicate accord. You can also smile in a show of recognition. Should you become confused by what they’re saying, you can furrow your brow, or tilt your head to indicate, non-verbally, your uncertainty about what they’re saying. In these ways you are listening more actively.

Chinese Wisdom: ListenTING

The Chinese character TING that forms the verb “to listen” includes the characters for Ear, Eye, Mind and Heart. This reflects the reality that, to truly listen, one must involve more than just one’s ears. It’s a whole-body experience! o become a mean, lean, selling machine it’s time you trim the linguistic fat that weighs your words down. Rid yourself of language that diminishes your power. Avoid qualifiers, hedges and other figures of speech that dilute your message and diminish your impact. Speak the language of success... without qualification!



BEING PRESENT IS A GIFT TO ALL

THE REAL MEANING OF REAL TIME

by Craig Harrison

They say wherever you go, there you are. Yet how present are you at any given time and place you find yourself? Many professionals appear in body but little else. Don't get marked as missing in action.

In the last week I encountered the following professionals missing in action:

■ Out of Tune

My local mail carrier arrived each day, wearing her iPod and delivering my neighbors' mail to me. She's in her own world. She dumps the mail in a pile each day. In addition to my mail I consistently receive mail from neighbors up and down my street, as well as mail of neighbors two streets over at the same street number. So much for accuracy. Doesn't she realize close only counts in horse-shoes and hand grenades?

■ Disconnect

An airport shuttle driver who greeted us at our hotel and attempted to drive the entire route to the airport while engaged in a phone conversation he was in when he arrived. True, the driver used an ear-piece so we only had to hear his side of the conversation. Yet whether on surface streets or the freeway the constant was the phone call, not our safety.

■ Sickening Service

I showed up at my HMO for a doctor's appointment and was greeted by a lack of

greeting. The receptionist was on the phone, and without making eye contact, stuck out her hand for my medical ID card, processed it, took my money and returned my card, without saying a single word (to me). Her attention was reserved for her call. The call proceeded long after I paid and sat down to wait for my physician. No greeting, smile, acknowledgment of me as a valued patient, or even as a person. Hers was an extended personal call. (How do I know? I was forced to listen in the waiting room for the next 10 minutes.)

Is it too much to ask that people be present when we interact with them? You say you're multi-tasking. I say you're giving poor customer service.

You say you can do two things at once. I say it's disrespectful and often downright rude to divide attention from a customer or client who has called or is face-to-face. And what's more, the results speak for themselves: errors, omissions, sloppy products and services, missed opportunities to strengthen customer loyalty and allegiance. And a degrading feeling for customers held captive by inattentive service providers.

Are you Present and Accounted For?

Audit your own interactions with customers. Ask yourself the following:

- Do you greet them with genuine affection?

- Do you know and use their name? (Are you pronouncing it correctly? Not sure? Ask!)
- Are you giving them your undivided attention?
- Are you giving good and consistent eye contact?
- Are you preoccupied with a previous client, customer or call?
- Are you easily distracted?
- If the phone rings while you're in conversation, do you let it ring through?
- Do you listen actively and intently or are you "faking" it?

In today's world customers long to be heard, to be understood and to feel others care about them. Help customers feel connected! Show them you care. Treat them as if they're the most important people in the world. For the brief time they're in your midst, give them your undivided attention. Don't just be here now...but hear now! Or, forever lament the loss of treasured customers! ■

San Francisco Bay Area-based Professional speaker Craig Harrison founded Expressions of Excellence™ to provide sales and service solutions through speaking. For information on keynotes, training, coaching, call (510) 547-0664, or surf www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com

Craig@VoiceOfCustomerService.com
 Craig@VoiceOfCustomerService.com
 for inquiries.



Craig Harrison's Popular Storytelling Presentations



- Speaker
- Trainer
- Coach
- Consultant

PO Box
5965
Berkeley, CA
94705-0965
USA

(510) 547-0664

Craig@
VoiceOf
CustomerService
.com

www.
VoiceOf
CustomerService
.com



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STORYTELLERS
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**Past
Chairman,
NSA SALES
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CUSTOMER
SERVICE
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Area &
Silicon Valley**



**Past
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NATIONAL
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Chapter**



Sales Through Storytelling!

Story Tell, Story Sell

Leverage the power of storytelling to powerfully sell your products and services. Share past successes using Craig's simple storytelling format. Your memorable stories will resonate emotionally with listeners, showcase qualities, skills, experience and values, and lead to more sales!



The Leader As Storyteller!

Learn to use stories to lead, inspire and mobilize your organization to success. Whether you tell creation stories about the origins of your company, use cautionary tales, "just so" stories, or powerful personal stories of sacrifice, ingenuity and creativity to inculcate values, you will open hearts and mind in new ways through the power of parables and other stories.



Prospecting Your Past for Hidden Story Treasures

Discover past personal stories you can polish and share with others to teach, inspire and entertain. Uncover "homegrown" humor from your own life, look with new eyes at disappointments, missteps and mishaps, and even tragedy (which, over time may turn into comedy). Explore the universal values, lessons and learning points embedded in your own personal stories.



Become An Improv-Master

Harness the power of Improvisation (AKA "Improv") to unleash creativity, sharpen listening, build rapport, deepen trust and team with success. Learn to *accept the offer*, replace *Yes, but* with *Yes, AND*, and *help your partner look good* in this interactive program full of fun games done as a group, in dyads and triads. It's time you act *in the moment!*

The Leader As Storyteller

HOW TO TRANSMIT KNOWLEDGE AND VALUES & MOVE HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH STORYTELLING



The shortest distance between truth
and a human being is a story.
— Anthony de Mello

Leaders at all levels can apply storytelling in powerful ways — to recruit, enroll, inspire and motivate others. Are you ready to add storytelling to your repertoire?

Leaders who share stories connect with listeners on a heart level as well as an intellectual level. Stories are key to connecting in corporate retreats, strategy meetings, town hall gatherings and even shareholder meetings!

Whether you use folk or fairy tales, myths, personal or historical stories or anecdotal stories, you have the ability to break down barriers, offer new perspectives, help people find themselves in other peoples' plights and dilemmas, and inspire them to tap their own greatness as they create new stories of triumph.

Learning Objectives

- ▶ Learn structures and spines of stories
- ▶ Understand how to echo archetypal themes
- ▶ Discover rich storytelling traditions worldwide
- ▶ Learn techniques for authentic telling in your own voice
- ▶ Explore storylines, character development, conflict and resolution and styles of telling
- ▶ Prospect your past to uncover personal stories with universal appeal and learn how to tell them

How The Presentation is Delivered

This interactive program demonstrates the use of myriad forms of story: the call and response, short personal stories, keynote stories, pourquoi stories (why things came to be), creation stories and more. It also helps attendees uncover their own seeds of stories and assists them in telling theirs.



About Your Presenter

Speaker, trainer and storyteller Craig Harrison has been telling and teaching about stories in keynotes, training, coaching and consulting circles for twenty years. In 2006 he told stories with 40 other NSN tellers in the Peoples' Republic of China on a storytelling cultural exchange, and has told in Jonesborough TN, from the stage at NSA meetings and conferences and storytelling festivals. He's trained docents and meeting planners, financial planners and salespeople in the art and science of storytelling. Read some of his National Storytelling Network articles here:

www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/articles.html#Storytelling

Visit Craig's storytelling site:
www.HackinBoo.com



Leading Call & Reponse
in Gengcun, PRC



Training docents at
Bouverie Nature Preserve in California



YOU'VE GOT STORIES!

Prospecting Your Past to Uncover Your Own Stories

By Craig Harrison

Once you've been a professional speaker for long enough, you inevitably hear countless versions of the Lighthouse Story, the Starfish Story, and other rehashed epic tales, repeated ad nauseam at conferences and meetings. The equivalent of "hack humor" in comedy, these stories are the cockroaches of the speaking industry—they cannot be exterminated and will outlive us all. Every new speaker seems to feel obligated to trot them out as if they're freshly minted.

NSA members are fond of recounting their own horror stories regarding speakers (not all of them newbies) telling OPS: Other People's Stories. What's worse, another speaker telling your story badly from the platform—or telling it better than you do? Either way, it's a serious ethics violation, as well as a signal that the speaker is "not ready for prime time."

Many speakers lower their head and murmur that they don't have great stories since they haven't beaten cancer, founded a Fortune-50 company, or won a Nobel Prize. But you don't need to survive a bullet in the head, turn around a failing airline, or even win a Cavett award to have stories to tell. You've got plenty of stories! You only need to uncover them.

THE BEST STORIES: UNIQUE YET UNIVERSAL

What makes a speaker's story compelling? For starters, it's truly theirs, not gleaned from Reader's Digest, the Chicken Soup for the Soul® series, or another speaker's repertoire. Authenticity reigns. Audiences sense when a story is fictitious or appropriated from other sources. Even when your story is personal and origi-

nated with you, for the audience to embrace it, the story must have universal appeal, a universal theme. If not, then the story isn't serving your audience.

Here are some familiar themes we can all relate to, a short set of universal truths from an almost infinite list:

- Coming of age
- Acquiring wisdom
- The hero's journey
- Finding prince charming
- Haste making waste
- Practice making perfect

HISTORY, HER STORY, OUR STORY

Everyone has stories. Your family has them—about how you were conceived, born, and bred; how your ancestors arrived at this country; about work and love and successes and failures. Your religion has them, as do your religious leaders (who'd better have them if the flock is to stay awake during their sermons!). Your organization has them; about the founders, the incorporating of the business, and its development. Your nation has them; about its founders, wars, famines, transformations, and growth. Cultures have them.

These stories might take the form of myths and legends. Memory changes over time; people are known to elaborate, add details, filtering in their personal perspectives. So what? If it's yours and if it makes an authentic point that will be meaningful to your audience, then it's a good one!

UNCOVERING YOUR STORY GEMS

So how do you find your own stories? It's hard to do by yourself, yet easy to do with the help of others. Make a date to hang out with a friend, colleague, or family member. Have them ask you the following questions and capture what emerges (through notes or recording). Don't be limited by this list, but it is a great start, guaranteed to generate stories.

- First day at school
- First overnight at camp
- First pimple
- First pet
- First girlfriend / boyfriend
- First kiss
- First breakup
- First beer / tobacco chew / mixed drink
- First trip overseas
- First job
- First time you saw your partner
- Meeting your wife / husband / partner
- First million (made or lost!)
- First audit
- First arrest
- First child or grandchild

OTHER PLACES TO FIND STORIES:

What was your family like?

Where did you grow up and what made it distinctive?

Describe your favorites from childhood:

- Smell?
- Food?
- Hangout?
- Favorite relative?

Ever do anything extraordinary?

Ever witness an extraordinary event?

Ever have a brush with fame?

(An encounter with a famous person)

I've generated stories using this process about the Great Dane on the corner that inhibited my paper route, the time in Las Vegas I made Sinbad the comedian laugh, a mishap at a Chinese banquet hall in Hong Kong (my Chinese wedding banquet), how I sold lemonade to the National Guard during the riots in Berkeley in the 60s, and more. Each story has a moral, learning point, or universal truth embedded within it that others appreciate. Listeners will either inhabit your story with you, or it will remind them of their own story. Either way, you've connected! Congratulations.

TYPES OF STORIES

When you are a professional speaker, your use of stories should be strategic. Not simply to entertain yourself and your audience,

your story should tie in to your main theme or to the learning point you're discussing. You may be telling your signature story, or using a story to illustrate a point you've just made or are about to make. You may use a story to transition from one part of a presentation to another, as a change of pace or to focus the audience's attention onto a third party instead of talking directly about them. Stories validate and reinforce your message and offer an outlet for thoughtful reflection.

STORY ON!

Now that I've convinced you that you indeed do have stories in your past you can safely use to benefit your audiences, and helped you uncover them, it's your job to hone them. How?

- Write them out.
- Tell them informally to your friends to see what interests them, what they want to hear more about, and what the stories mean to them.
- Share them at your Toastmasters club, and in your other presentations.
- Find a Story Swap (a regular gathering of storytellers where stories are freely exchanged) and ask for feedback before sharing yours. (Check local libraries or storytelling guilds for more information on local swaps.)
- Record your stories. Now, pour yourself a glass of wine and listen to them. How can you improve them, making them more universally relevant?
- Ask for feedback from your audiences and students, through written evaluations, to learn which stories stuck, which stuck in their craw, and which are their favorites? Why?
- Practice, practice, practice.
- Listen to storytelling on National Public Radio: Garrison Keillor's "Prairie Home Companion," Ira Glass's "This American Life," and the oral histories of StoryCorps.
- Enjoy stories online at www.themoth.org.

Then you, too, will live happily every after!

Craig Harrison tells stories under the name Hackin' 'Boo. He got his start melding stories with silliness when he went door-to-door in his hometown of Berkeley as an eleven-year-old selling Recycled Jokes. Visit his storytelling site www.HackinBoo.com or enjoy story resources at www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com.



Table Topics is a great way to practice storytelling skills.

Two-Minute Tales!

Don't look now but we're surrounded...by stories! All around us, stories are being created, concocted or cooked up. They're being embellished, enhanced and polished. They're being told and retold.

When we were kids, our parents and babysitters used stories to put us to sleep at night. Whether they read tales from books, told family stories passed down through generations or made up stories to suit our fancy, stories instilled values, pride and an understanding of how the world worked. Stories helped us envision what was possible, and cautionary tales told us what *not* to do!

In school, teachers' stories taught about our nation, Greek mythology and Shakespeare's classics. On weekends, we learned stories of our religious heritage. Summer camps, fishing and camping trips were full of stories. And of course, *we* told tales out of school! We were natural storytellers.

As we grow older we learn new ways of imparting information: the essay, the resume, the elevator speech, job interview and the meeting report. Meanwhile our storytelling skills atrophy. The good news: Relief is just a Toastmasters meeting away. And the best way to start is by telling two-minute stories in the form of responses to weekly Table Topics.

It is crucial that you learn the elements of a story. They are: setting, characters, action and reaction – all leading to a resolution. Though making them work together and make sense is not easy, you can do all that, in style, in two minutes, and even receive applause for your effort. The first rule to follow is, never underestimate the power of an

archetypal story, one whose theme, structure or feel we know almost inherently. Those connect the best!

Here are some topics you might receive and examples of how your response can take the form of a story:

- **My Terrible Tumble.** Answer this topic with a story of you as a biker (or driver). Cycle through the scenario, action and outcome. Color the topic with descriptive language. The *whoosh* of the car, jarring of the pothole or the smell of car exhausts in the bike lane.
- **My Vacation from Hell.** Take us along with you as you revisit the vacation from hell – the misery, monotony or malady that overwhelmed your best-laid plans. Give us a travelogue with sounds, smells, moods and local color.
- **My First Kiss.** We want to hear the love story that blossomed... in school, after school or at summer camp. The tension, anticipation and ecstasy involved with the buss. Let us hear your heart beating, smell the sweat and hear the music as you kiss for the first time.
- **My Scariest Ghost Story.** Weave a yarn about a haunted house or other location where spirits dwell. Give us suspense, fear and trepidation. Let us hear the voices, see the apparitions and suspend reality as you conjure up scary monsters.
- **My Favorite Pet.** A love story if ever there was one. Anthropomorphize. Tell us about your relationship with Fifi, Fido or Fedo.
- **My Favorite Food.** Take us dining with you. Your story lets us relive the meal or special occasion. Help us breathe in the savory smells,

taste the succulent dishes and sate all our senses with your story. Give us the anticipation beforehand and the satisfaction that follows. We'll digest it all as you tell it.

According to storyteller Jean Ellison, co-director of the Bay Area Storytelling Festival, "Stories speak! Among of the benefits of story and storytelling: to remind us how to listen. If we could just be better listeners, we'd reduce our workplace quarrels, interpersonal strife, and globally the world would be a more peaceful place." We, as Toastmasters can do our part, two minutes at a time.

Hunt through your kitchen drawers for an egg timer and use it to practice your two-minute stories. Remember, in Table Topics you have up to two and a half minutes! Leave a little sand in the glass. When you're next called for Table Topics, think story instead of speech or stream of consciousness. Whatever the topic, you can likely tell a two-minute story, replete with locale, characters, a challenge and a triumph. As 85-year old Toastmaster and master storyteller Orunamamu often tells her club:

*"I stepped on a pin, the pin bent,
"And that's the way the story went."*

Well, what are you waiting for? It's story time! 📖

Past District Governor **Craig Harrison, DTM**, of Lakeview Toastmasters in Oakland, California, is also a board member of the Storytelling Association of Alta California. Visit him at www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com.

Become An Improv-Master

LEVERAGING IMPROVISATIONAL TECHNIQUES

FOR WORKPLACE SUCCESS!



WHAT IS LIFE IF NOT A SERIES OF IMPROVISATIONAL SITUATIONS?

How we improvise — when flights are cancelled, roads are closed, budgets are slashed or equipment breaks — spells our success or failure.

Wouldn't you like to gain confidence in your ability to create, adapt, and employ flexibility through a series of fun, educational improvisational activities.

Improv games help you improve critical thinking, tap your own creativity, build trust with others, sharpen your listening skills and so much more!



Learning Objectives

- ▶ Learn to generate new ideas with "Yes...and" thinking
- ▶ Experience the joys of brainstorming
- ▶ Sharpen your powers of observation
- ▶ Co-create new possibilities for your workgroup, organization or campaign
- ▶ Build trust through teamwork
- ▶ Help your partner look good; Create win-win situations
- ▶ Embrace the power of suggestion



How The Presentation is Delivered

This highly interactive program uses short, fun improv games to engage and explore. Debriefs after each activity help participants deconstruct what happened and recognize the transferable nature of the skills being developed.



While participants are "always at choice" and don't have to engage, the fun atmosphere and positive feedback lets everyone experience the sweet taste of success.

Games range from collective storytelling for visioning to dyad and triad activities that tap into peoples' creativity and sense of adventure. Participants are encouraged to "make mistakes" and rewarded for participating. A fun and safe environment where judgment is suspended helps people forget about "looking good" and instead go with the flow. Successes are achieved individually and collectively.

About Your Presenter

Trainer Craig Harrison has been using improv games, extemporaneous speaking activities and interactivity with clients for the past twenty years. His improv programs help people in sales and service to be better leaders and team members, inspire resource-strapped managers and support teachers of many ages to connect and create with fellow colleagues, co-workers and customers.

How about you?



To: ALL
Subject: E-Mail Etiquette

Understanding How to Send Effective, Service-Oriented E-Mails and Master E-Comm!



In today's business world, e-Mail is a common and accepted mode of communication.

It has advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses. Are you and your workgroup, department or company using e-mail effectively?



As with any form of communication, there are mores, standards and conventions to adhere to. As a new form of communication, you must be aware of how best to use E-mail, ways it can help you and also ways it can harm you.

Learning Objectives



- ▶ Develop your checklist for when you should (and shouldn't) use E-mail
- ▶ Effective use of the Subject Line
- ▶ Designing appropriate Signature files
- ▶ Use of White Space, Numbered Lists and Tables of Contents to improve readability
- ▶ Understanding Netiquette, Emoticons and E-Mail Lingo and when to use/not use
- ▶ When to Use CC, BCC, Redirect vs. Forward
- ▶ Including a service orientation in your E-mail
- ▶ E-Mail horror stories to learn from
- ▶ Using E-mail Distribution Lists
- ▶ Harnessing E-Mail to facilitate Meetings, Teleconferences, etc.
- ▶ Using Templates for types of E-mails

How The Presentation Is Delivered

This presentation includes the use of actual E-mails to demonstrate effective and ineffective techniques. You are encouraged to submit sample e-mails for use in the presentation. Identities will be suppressed to protect individuals. Attendees will be encouraged to write, edit, and rewrite existing e-mails to improve intelligibility, include a service orientation, and shorten lengthy files.



About Your Presenter

Customer Service trainer CRAIG HARRISON has spent the last dozen years helping Silicon Valley professionals communicate more effectively, in print, in person and via the internet. His clients include SBC, HITACHI, HP, LUCENT, SELECTICA and PFIZER. Craig's customer service and communication articles and columns have appeared regularly in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *Customer Service Newsletter*, *Transaction World*, *Customer Communicator*, and *Toastmaster*.

To read Craig's customer service articles, connect to his website:

ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/articles.html#CustomerService



PO Box 5965,
Berkeley, CA 94705
(510) 547-0664

Craig@ExpressionsOfExcellence.com

www.VoiceOfCustomerService.com





Delivering Better Customer Service Via E-Mail *Nine Quick Tips*

By Craig Harrison



More than ever before, we are and will be using e-mail to communicate with customers, co-workers and others. There are many ways you can deliver great customer service through your use of e-mail. Consider the following:

1. **Descriptive subject lines make a difference to readers.** Here's why:
 - They orient the listener to what the e-mail contains
 - They give readers a heads-up if action is required, and by when!
 - They hasten the filing and retrieving of your e-mail for future reference

AVOID blank subject lines, or ones that say "no subject" or "re: "

Similarly, a subject line that says "follow up" or "about our discussion" runs the risk of confusing the reader with its vagueness.

Don't waste readers' time. Use the subject line accurately.

2. **Personalizing the messages through using the correct name, proper title and tasteful salutation.**

Mass marketers SPAM us with unsolicited e-mails sent blindly. Just as in real life, we respond to the personal touch. We do like to hear our own name. It's also nice in print.

3. **Making your e-mail as easy to read as possible; avoiding long paragraphs with multiple streams of thought.**

Readers appreciate visual cues.

They are subconsciously turned off by long paragraphs and multiple streams of thought within one paragraph that tax eyes and minds.

Make your text easily digestible for your readers.

For long e-mails consider a table of contents such as used by this e-zine, to preview what is to follow and encourage readers to go directly to that which interests them most.

Delivering Better Customer Service Via E-Mail

Quick Tips 4-9

By Craig Harrison

4. **Using numbered lists and bulleted lists to help the reader discern distinct pieces of information**

- Any time you organize information it improves its retention.
- Numbered lists facilitating the recognition referencing of distinct pieces of information.
- Bulleted lists similarly make organizes distinct information for ease of reading and reference.

5. **Using titles, subtitles and sections within long e-mails to help readers digest information**

Subtitles help readers recognize they are in a new section of your thought train. They can descriptively set a context for what's to follow. Use them.

6. **Consider using attachments or links to web pages for voluminous messages.**

You have a great deal of information to impart. Make a text-only attachment or issue a URL and post the information to a website.

7. **Avoid e-mails that tax recipients' systems.**

Sending large sound files, graphics-laden e-mails bogs down users' e-mail programs and ties up their connections, often unnecessarily.

8. **Make judicious use of your Signature file(s)**

You can use your Signature file so as to be of service to the reader:

List your name, title, voice mail, toll free number, a URL for 24-hour assistance, user-group and newsgroup contacts etc. to give readers options and more control. That's a form of service!

9. **Tone matters.**

The language you use counts doubly since your tone of voice cannot be "heard" in e-mail.

Be polite, respectful and thoughtful in the language you use.

Messages can easily be misconstrued due to the lack of visual cues usually attendant to conversations: facial expressions, body gestures, tone of voice.



***Remember, you are imposing on your reader's time.
Be as organized in your communication as possible, to respect their time.***

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To read about Craig's presentation on Delivering Customer Service Via E-Mail, visit: www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/E-mail_service.html

To purchase Craig's workbook on e-mail etiquette, visit www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/prod_customer_service.html



MEETING MANAGEMENT:

Avoiding An All-Meet Diet!

CRAIG HARRISON



Whether you're leading, facilitating or just suffering from meetings, this presentation teaches you everything you need to know to plan, stage and recover from meetings, be they weekly, board or the shareholder variety.

Learn by doing in this interactive program that includes designing and presenting your own ice-breakers, problem solving of real life meetings messes, and utilization of meeting phraseology.

The higher up in a company you rise, the more time you will spend in meetings. Yet you needn't be held captive by bad planning, poor manners and endless meetings. It's time you season your meetings!

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Compute the high cost of meetings in your organization and learn alternatives to meetings
- ▶ Discover how to optimize your meeting environment for maximum effect
- ▶ Identify key elements for your written agendas
- ▶ Construct your Meeting Toolkit
- ▶ Understand the basics of Parliamentary Procedure
- ▶ Customize your own Ice Breakers
- ▶ Learn to recognize and thwart distractors
- ▶ How to build in accountability
- ▶ Evaluate the effectiveness of your meeting
- ▶ Recognize gender and cultural issues at play
- ▶ Learn about Ground Rules and Parking Lots.

How The Presentation is Delivered

Stories and scenarios, role plays and anecdotal examples all play a large part in addressing the good, the bad and the ugly of meetings, and how to generate maximum impact from yours. Attendees design their own ice breakers, take turn conducting the meeting and also playing common meeting roles in mock meeting interludes throughout the program.

about Your Presenter

Leader Craig Harrison has chaired boards of directors, presided over acrimonious council meetings and walked through corporate minefields as he's led, facilitated and guided meetings in high-tech, non-profit and public sector settings. His articles on meetings, listening skills, brainstorming and retreats have been published in *Executive Excellence*, *Transaction World* and *Toastmaster* magazines, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Craig's expert at using honesty, tact and humor, when appropriate, to find common ground with meeting participants, emphasizing inclusivity, respect and dignity for all. *Read related articles of Craig's here:* www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/articles.html#Meetings



Who's In Charge Of Your Meeting?

By Craig Harrison



Do any of these things happen at your meetings?

- People arrive late
- People leave early
- Someone yells BINGO mid-meeting
- People are unprepared
- A key person is absent
- Someone asks for a pencil or pen
- People mysteriously get paged midway through and leave in droves?

Before you blame others it's entirely possible the fault resides with you, the caller of the meeting. As the facilitator, leader or organizer of the meeting you are ultimately responsible for everything that does and doesn't happen in your meeting. What are you doing right? What are you doing wrong?

Allergic to Meet?

Here are 7 things to do before you hold your next meeting:

- Ask yourself if it's really needed. Can goals be achieved by e-mail, fax, memo or conference call instead of a meeting?
- Identify who needs to be there and who doesn't. Respect everyone's time.
- Set the time, location, duration, agenda items and purpose (!) for the meeting.
- Publicize it in advance to insure full attendance.
- Call out responsibilities for the meeting in advance so all can prepare accordingly.
- Set the environment for optimal success. Room layout, supplies, temperature, etc, all contribute to success/failure of meetings.
- Incent attendance through food, fun or other enticements.

About Your Published Agenda:

- Is the purpose of your meeting documented in your Agenda?
- Do you have names next to each item to denote responsibility?
- Are time windows associated with each item?
- Do you make clear what is to be discussed vs. what is to be decided?

Ready, Set, Meet

Here are seven tips to follow at your meeting:

- Start on time.
- Don't start over when latecomers arrive, or take time to recap what they missed.
- Set the proper tone through your opening remarks.
- Remind people of the purpose, goals and expectations for the meeting at its outset.
- When calling on others for their reports you may preface their remarks with your own to frame their contributions and orient listeners.
- Keep a firm grip on the timing of your meeting. As necessary, you can ask for a summary, refer items to committee, request a written report or simply table longwinded discussions.
- End on time!

Make parliamentary procedure your friend

You don't have to be a Parliamentarian to invoke the following procedural phrases:

- I (hereby) call this meeting to order. To officially start the meeting.
- Let's table that. Suspend discussion of the topic or motion at hand indefinitely.
- Point of information. Ask at any time when you are confused.
- Point of clarification. Nice way of asking for clarification at any time.
- I call for the question. It's time to address the previous question.
- Let's refer it to committee. A way of off-loading the current discussion.
- Hearing no objections... A way of moving forward to a vote or the next item.
- Since we're in agreement... Another way of garnering agreement to act.
- We're adjourned. Game over!

Avoid these incorrect (though commonly heard) phrases:

Don't say:

"I want to make a motion that..."

Instead, say:

"I move that..." or simply "I move..."

Don't say:

"I make a motion that..."

Instead, say:

"I move that..."

Don't say:

"A 2/3 Majority"

Instead, say:

"A Majority" or "2/3"

(a 2/3 majority is not a majority. Since a majority is half plus one, 2/3 of THAT is less than half!)

Don't say:

"Our next Order of Business..."

Instead, say:

"Our next Business in Order..."

"Order of Business" is your AGENDA. You're still using the same AGENDA, just moving your way down its list.

Don't Say or Write on Agenda:

Old Business.

Instead, say or write:

Unfinished Business.

Meet Tenderizers

Most meeting leaders equip themselves with a gavel, pointer, markers and white board or flip chart. Consider other tools of the trade such as a talking stick or fun kush ball to toss around to the speaker who has the floor. Use name tents if everyone doesn't already know each other. It also informs people where you'd like them to sit. Consider the use of a fun ice-breaker to get everyone on the same frequency. (E-mail me for a free set of ten ice-breakers you can customize for your future meetings.)

Enjoying The Fruits of Your Labor

Remember, the surgeon general had identified an all-Meet diet as hazardous to your health. Season your meets to make them appetizing and healthy for all! ■

By Craig Harrison's
Expressions of Excellence.
510/547-0664
www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com



Beware of All-Meet Diets!

by Craig Harrison

San Francisco Chronicle

Does the thought of running a meeting make you want to run away? It needn't. You may actually be better equipped than you realize to preside over meetings. With a pinch of preparedness, a dash of common sense and a shot of confidence you can meet meetings head on, and walk away intact!

The Agenda — Your Roadmap to Success

With clear driving instructions it doesn't matter whether you drive a motorcycle, Winnebago or hook & ladder fire truck; the same holds true for meetings, whether in a business, association or public setting. The written agenda is your guidepost for where you and your other participants are going. By sharing, in writing, the planned agenda, all will share your understanding of the day's activities, and can help steer it. Whenever possible, share the agenda in advance for your meeting. Come meeting time it will steer you well.

What About Bob...and his Rules?

Meetings generally follow Robert's Rules of Order, whether participants are Parliamentarians or not. Robert's Rules were conceived to impose order and fairness in meetings. Many of these rules are common sense. For instance, only one person can speak at a time, or that the will of the majority prevails while the rights of the minority are always taken into consideration.

Consider the following: a bunch of your friends are deciding what to do this afternoon. One suggests "Hey, let's roller blade in the park." Another says, "great idea, let's do it." One person has just made a motion and another person "seconded" it. That's Robert's Rules in action. Now others discuss it: some are in favor, some would rather watch the 49ers on TV. Soon it's time to decide what the group wants. (This is a call for the vote.) Five vote to roller blade and two want to watch the 49ers. The majority wins and the announcement is made: "Blading we go." That's how a main motion is handled.

Meet Them at the "Why"

Before you schedule your meeting, be sure you can answer for yourself and others "why" your meeting is necessary. Can its purpose be achieved via memo, e-mail, or a one-on-one meeting? Remember, a twenty-minute meeting with eight others represents three hours of company work time. Multiple that times salaries of the attendees and you can begin to see the high cost of meetings. Do the results justify the expense? As for who is invited, make sure to have the people capable of moving forward with the business at hand. Nothing frustrates like realizing in mid-meeting that key decision makers are missing.

Object to Missing Objectives

One of the primary difficulties in meetings is achieving the desired objectives. When everyone knows the objectives, all can be cognizant of their achievement. Don't lose sight of the reason for the meeting. Post objectives at the top of your agenda. At meeting's end, reiterate the objectives and determine if they've been met. If not, remind people of your focus to keep objectives foremost in peoples' mind.

Reports vs. Speeches

For committee meetings your officers, chairs or attendees should be prepared to deliver summary reports stating the facts as concisely as possible. Prepare to offer more details only if and when requested. Reports cover highlights and address problems or outstanding issues. They aren't speeches! If pictures are worth a thousand words, so too is a brief handout with charts, tables or graphs. Many prefer data in print for further reference so consider a handout in lieu of a longwinded report. My tip to keep speakers focused: ask that each report be given while standing.

The Long and Winded Road

Many well-intentioned meetings get side-tracked by long windedness or out of control discussions better handled in smaller meetings or by committee. If your meeting is being held hostage by such a discussion, appoint someone to chair a subcommittee, promptly refer it to that group, and move on! They can report back without draining the overall group's time.

Before Adjourning

Make sure to review (and have your meeting's secretary record) action items of each attendee before adjourning. This reminder insures everyone leaves with the same understanding, and helps record the group's progress. Also set the time for the next meeting. Remember, the more that gets done between meetings the longer you may be able to go until your next one.

While an all-meet diet can be hazardous to your health, good things can and do come from meetings. When conducting yours, remember to keep them professional, keep them fun and mostly, keep them moving!

Craig's article first appeared in the February 25, 2001 edition of The *San Francisco Chronicle* newspaper

RETREAT TO ADVANCE

How Retreats Advance Your Organization's Causes and Campaigns

by Craig Harrison

Off-site retreats are invaluable tools for furthering your group or organization's objectives. Done well, retreats can set your group up for years of success. Done poorly, retreats can consign your group to frustration, failure and a fruitless expense of time and energy. As one who has planned, led and debriefed a variety of off-site gatherings I know from experience of the good, the bad and the ugly of retreats. Why bother? The benefits to well-run retreats are many.

An effective off-site retreat can help a new team congeal and help existing teams find new ways to succeed. Retreats help participants refocus, renew and replenish their spirit. For boards or teams adding new members or embarking on a new initiative, retreats let you clear the air and start on the same page. Perhaps most valuable about retreats, you often get to know each other beyond official roles. Trust engendered during a retreat on a personal level often proves invaluable down the road when the going gets tough.

Dating Dilemmas

The hardest part about designing a retreat may actually be picking dates that allow for full attendance of your invitees. Yet this is central to success. Take effort to find dates that work for all. Recognize others have various outside commitments and travel time is involved too.

Location, Location Relocation

Once your dates are solidified so all can attend for the duration, site selection becomes critical. Pick a location conducive to your aims. Having experienced retreats at country clubs, a Zen center and in an empty urban office building I can tell you not all sites are the same. To

get out of the box thinking you should get out of the box!

Environment Informs Experience

I find great value in choosing sites with a nature component. It's calming and helps put everything in perspective. Don't underestimate the power of nature to nurture your team. Build in time for walks, contemplation and play, ideally in the woods or fields or on a coastline.

Balancing Focus and Fun

Part of your challenge is to identify overall goals and expectations and then create an agenda to allow for their fulfillment. Make sure your agenda has time for free thinking, problem-solving, strategizing and fun too. If you have birthdays or other milestones occurring during or around your retreat time make sure to build in time for recognition. Don't fill up all your meal time with work. Magic can occur during downtime, "in-between" time and while having fun. Cultivate it through the tone set at your retreat. One board of mine bonded over the byproducts of potent eggplant served during a vegetarian meal. We're still laughing about it two years later.

Retreats Difficile Sans Facilitator

I highly recommend a trained facilitator for part or all of your retreat. Whether internal or external, facilitators can play traffic cop, say things team members can't, and they keep people on their best behavior. Help them help you. Prepare them as to your aims, who people are and about your organization or team's ethos. I've seen facilitators crash and burn in the first 15 minutes of a retreat as a result of lack of preparation or inattention to details surrounding

confidentiality, integrity and impartiality.

A Role for All

Retreats work best when every attendee has both a stake and a role in the outcome. Share leadership of your retreat where possible. Let each attendee prepare and deliver a piece of the programming. It's good for all. Whether you assign attendees to lead ice-breakers, nature walks or serve as scribe and record retreat minutes, get others involved. Additionally, make sure you leave with action items that are publishable, sharable and track-able.

Additional considerations:

- Identify dietary restrictions of attendees in advance and plan accordingly
- Set expectations prior to arrival so tone, protocols and objectives are clear
- If soliciting input in advance make sure to indicate whether or not responses will be held in confidence
- Bring fun items like talking sticks, drums, noisemakers, idea-stimulating games to get peoples' juices flowing. ring a camera.
- Facilitate carpooling and intelligent room-sharing to further foster team-building and camaraderie.
- Make sure to have flip charts, colored markers and writing utensils. Someone always forgets a pen or pencil! Drums are optional. ■

Craig Harrison helps professionals express their excellence through stellar sales and service training. Contact him at www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com, excellence@craigsspeaks.com or call (888) 450-0664.



IT'S TIME FOR PLAN "B" BRAINSTORMING

Playing the Brain Game for Gain

by Craig Harrison

Our workgroup was in the middle of a spirited brainstorming session — a free form session where creativity is encouraged, judgment is suspended, and the best ideas often come after ten or more minutes. The ideas were flying fast and furious, as they should, when the group gets momentum. The energy was intoxicating. And, in a fit of inspiration, one employee suggested, "Why don't we reverse the order of the deliverables!?"

While nine other people energetically accepted this offer as worthy of inclusion on their flip chart of ideas, their manager scowled "That will never work!"

Thus ended a productive brainstorming session. Sadly, the manager was unclear on the concept at play. She replaced a brainstorm with a brain fart and stunk up the entire process.

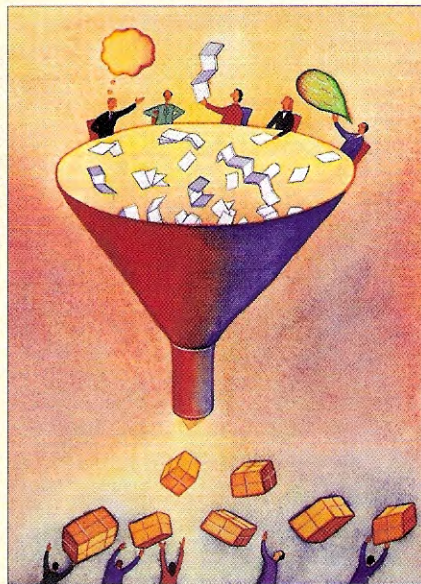
A Different Kind of Collaboration

Brainstorming is a special type of meeting, with its own ground rules, tempo and ethos. It's also an invaluable tool for idea generation, problem solving, innovation, teambuilding and creativity. Whether you are tasked with creating new sales contests, new strategic initiatives or simply trying to break the doldrums of your day-to-day routines, brainstorming carries the day.

Rules That Rock!

By definition, brainstorming is unlike your typical meetings. Its unbounded by traditional rules where pre-determined people speak on pre-determined subjects for prescribed times. Like a jam session of Jazz musicians, all you need to do is begin recording and let the sounds begin. Remember, the key is to record it all. Later you can go back and edit out that which might not be considered beautiful music.

In Brainstorming sessions everyone is equal, all ideas are worthy of consideration, all judgment is suspended and a person's rank or status is irrelevant. The



goal is to fill the air with ideas, depart from conventional thinking, and allow the smorgasbord of strategies, ideas, inspirations and epiphanies to cross-pollinate each other. Think of brainstorming meetings as magnificent melting pots, a veritable giant stew bowl where bouillabaisse bubbles and bursts, unleashing new, exciting and innovative initiatives. Consider a skilled facilitator for best results, though this isn't a requirement.

The B-List: Preparing For Your Meeting

The following recommendations will insure a successful session, whether it's a stand-alone brainstorm or part of a larger meeting or event:

- Adorn your environment with art, toys, games, crayons, colored markers or other stimuli to get the juices flowing and invite fun, free thinking and playfulness.
- Consider special written invitations in advance to set the tone, expectations and goals for the session.

- Create a mental and/or physical ice breaker to loosen everyone up.
- Consider lava lamps, beanbag chairs and even bubble-gum and bubble makers to loosen everyone up.
- Encourage participation by all.
- Language is key. Use sentences such as "What if we...?", "How about...", "Let's try...", or "Suppose we..."
- Check your skepticism, negativity and ego at the door. It's not about who's ideas are embraced. All ideas should be received, for the benefit of the group your mission.
- Employ the "Yes, AND..." approach instead of a "Yes, BUT..." stance in response to others' ideas.
- Remind people to suspend judgment throughout the session.
- Assign a scribe or tape record the meeting.
- Allow enough time for people to loosen up. Often the best ideas occur once the group has gotten over any self-consciousness and gathered momentum.
- Have fun!

Remember, like mastermind groups, brainstorming sessions rely on the reality that when multiple brainpower is applied the results are greater than the sum of their parts. You will generate great results from the blend of talent, experience, ideas and perspectives that naturally result from giving everyone equal footing and freeing them of the usual restrictions of time, structure and rules.

By the way, what if...? ■

San Francisco Bay Area-based Professional speaker Craig Harrison founded Expressions of Excellence™ to provide sales and service solutions through speaking. For information on keynotes, training, coaching, curriculum for licensing and more, call (888) 450-0664 or visit www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com or E-mail excellence@craigspeaks.com for inquiries.





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Call

Craig Harrison has been profiled in the *Wall Street Journal*, quoted by *Business Week*, *Selling Power*, *The Financial Times*, *Bottom Line*, *Benefits Selling* and the *Orange County Register*. He has been interviewed by *60 Minutes*, *BBC Radio* and *RTE Radio1*, and his articles have been published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Support World*, *Professional Speaker*, *Toastmaster*, *Executive Excellence*, *Speaker*, *Customer Service Newsletter*, *Customer Communicator*, and numerous publications worldwide.

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CRAIG HARRISON'S EXPRESSIONS OF EXCELLENCE!™

PO Box 5965

BERKELEY, CA 94705-0965 USA

DIRECT (510) 547-0664

CRAIG@EXPRESSIONSOFEXCELLENCE.COM

WWW.EXPRESSIONSOFEXCELLENCE.COM