

Excerpts from

You Are The Message

by **Roger Ailes**

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WORKING WITH WORDS

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The First Seven Seconds

Research shows that we start to make up our minds about other people within seven seconds of first meeting them. In the first seven seconds, we also trigger in each other a chain of emotional reactions, ranging from reassurance to fear.

Mirror Image

Look in a mirror and study your face. Begin to talk about a political issue and see which part of your face moves and which doesn't. Using the same subject matter, repeat the same conversation; however, imagine now that you're speaking to a child. See if your face softens and if your eyes become more expressive, and if there is a tendency to care more that the listener understands what you are saying. Most people do tend to use more facial expression when talking to children.

Quick-Cut Communications

Today we're all tuned to receive information much more quickly, and we get bored in a hurry if things slow down. The video age has sped up our cognitive powers. We get to the point faster. Videotape and its editing process have tightened up the way we communicate. This has contributed significantly to making us a more impatient society.

That's why sometimes changing your rate of speech, your movements, or how quickly you get to the point can help you gain control of the situation. People who watch the evening news see entire cities collapse under earthquakes in 60 seconds or less. So if you're just talking for 60 seconds, you'd better be good *and* interesting.

See It and Say It

Images help. If you can see a picture in your mind and describe it, others will stay tuned in. The trick is to go beyond the deadly abstraction of numbers and relate what you have to say in a way that brings the numbers to life.

The Composite You

When you communicate with someone, it's not just the words you choose to send to the other person that make up the message. You're also sending signals about what kind of person you are—by your eyes, your facial expression, your body movement, your vocal pitch, tone, volume and intensity, and your commitment to your message.

Trust Yourself

The truth is you already have the magic of good communications within you, because nobody can play *you* as well as you can. Think back...remember the times you communicated successfully. You were, no doubt, committed to what you were saying, you knew what you were talking about, and you were so wrapped up in the moment you lost all feelings of self-consciousness.

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The Speaking Game

Think of speaking as a kind of challenging game or sport, like...golf or tennis, that involves (1) a knowledge of how to play the game; (2) learned skills; (3) good timing; (4) correct moves; and (5) yes, practice and discipline.

How to Come Across as a Leader

[Lee Iacocca, Jack Welch, John Sculley, and Norman Schwarzkopf]...brought more than just competence to their jobs. All four shared three characteristics which combine to create what I term *supercompetence*:

- (1) **Competence:** You have to be at least fairly good at what you do. More than that, you have to have a few extra skills handy: computer skills, for example...
- (2) **Clarity:** You've got to be able to see beyond the job. ...Your belief that you know where you ought to be going, we will call having a *vision*.
- (3) **Communication:** This is the element most often lacking in the equation—the element that says you've got to be able to share your knowledge with other people.

You can't have competence and clarity without the vital third element—communication. Those who talk well thrive. Those who talk best lead.

Where you find a leader, you will also find the power of persuasion. And where you find persuasion, you find someone who can speak with authority.

[Charismatic leaders] add value to what they are saying by taking a position. They have a point of view. They translate situations into *positions*. They present evidence to back up their position, then propose a course of action. They speak simply. They answer our objections before we can raise them. They press their case with conviction. They *believe*.

First Steps to Organizing Your Presentation

Our aim is simplicity, economy, and focus. Your first responsibility to your audience is to serve as a *translator*. This is the *added value* that any good presenter brings to the party. The translator demystifies the esoteric to the lay audience.

Important questions that determine effectiveness: What does this really mean? Why is this important? Does this add anything? Am I speaking in a language everyone can understand? Am I using examples that fit? What is the point?

A good translator always tries to find opportunities to identify legitimate needs that people may have in any given audience. Once you think you know the need, you may have your message. Once you have your message, you can stand for something. Once you stand for something, you have set yourself apart from the average speaker.

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The Language of Leadership

Do you think Lee Iacocca would have become the head of Chrysler if he hadn't known the language of leadership? If Winston Churchill saved his country by his speeches, so did Iacocca save Chrysler by his words. Ronald Reagan may not have been a hands-on administrator, but when the "Great Communicator" spoke, people did not sit on their hands. He motivated; he inspired; he led. What was his secret? Like Churchill, he knew the language of leadership.

Fear

Helen Hayes, with more than 60 years as a performer on stage, admitted that she still got butterflies at 80. But nervousness before the curtain rose was not a foe, but a friend—"a familiar companion that nagged me to do my very best."

"Don't think of fear as a fear or deterrent," she said. "It's a kick in the rear to prepare." Fear [is] your conscience telling your mind and body to get in gear.

Don't Make Excuses

When a speaker opens with "I'm not a very good speaker" or "I didn't have much time to prepare," he is not taking out an insurance policy in case he flops; he is only planting in his audience's mind the likelihood of his failure.

Know More About Your Subject Than Anyone in the Audience

When you narrow your subject, you're making sure that you know more about it than anyone else in the audience. How can you be scared when you know more about the subject than anyone else on that particular day?

If you give the audience information on something it doesn't know about—in a simple, easy-to-take-away form—you've done all that was expected of you.

The Moment You Start Caring

Churchill said, "There is in that act of preparing the moment you start caring." Only then are you ready to speak to an audience. Because an audience can be convinced only when they see you *care* about what you are talking about.

On Writing for the Ear

When you read, every word may reach your eye, but when you listen, not every word registers in the ear. [Consequently,] if being repetitious is a *vice* in an article, it is a *device* in a speech. An article is like an ordinary lamp, but a speech is like a tensor light. A tensor light covers a much smaller area than a lamp, but it does it more brightly, more intensively.

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Supporting the Message

Intonations, gestures, audiovisual media, and other delivery techniques have no value in and of themselves. They are simply tools for the purpose of adding expression to the content. So whatever you do in the way of enhancing delivery, make sure it supports the message.

What You Project Visually

If you're skeptical about how powerful such visual signals are, try this little test. Speak to someone about an issue on which you want to gain their agreement. Say something like, "I think that's a good idea. What do you think?" As you are speaking, ever-so-subtly nod your head up and down, signifying yes. Chances are she will mirror your behavior and start nodding up and down, too.

Presenters should be acutely aware of what they're projecting through head movements and facial expressions, platform behavior, and by the presence they project overall.

In the 1930s and 1940s, film makers lacked special effects that are available to directors today. Much more had to be communicated facially. When you watch some of these old movies, turn off the sound. Observe the expressions on people's faces. You'll become more sensitized to the power to communicate that's in your own face.

To make and maintain eye contact is more than just looking at people. It's been said the eyes are the mirror of the soul. If in your soul you dislike what you're doing, that will show through your eyes. On the other hand, if you're enthused about your subject and you care about your audience, your eyes will reflect your enthusiasm and caring. And the audience will respond in kind.

Platform Behavior

There are thousands of people in this country who present. But there are few who do so optimally. Just about anyone can speak. But only the real pros transform pieces of information into movements that communicate meaning. They're the ones who deliver a presentation with panache—much to the delight of audiences.

For a presenter, gestures add physical expression to the spoken word. They illustrate or reinforce the points you are making. They give emphasis and energy to a presentation. In that way, they also serve to sustain the audience's attention.

To Optimize Your Presentations

You deliver your message through three channels of communication: visual, vocal, and verbal. Whatever you project should fit the setting, support your message, awaken the audience, and be done in moderation. Remember to present in a style that energizes, enthuses, and encourages.

Excerpts from

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by **Ron Hoff**

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How to Warm Up an Audience

The audience reflects the attitude and manner of the presenter. Start by focusing on a friend—one who is committed to your support. It must be a legitimate member of your audience who is not a member of your handpicked team. Once you have made a friend in your audience, you can move on to another face, lock in, and read the reaction. It's a little like calling the roll—only doing it by eye contact.

Then let your manner show you're saying something that you really enjoy, that it is relevant, and that it is important.

On Using Natural Gestures

Stand in front of a full-length mirror with a large book in each hand. Then, talk. At times, you'll raise one hand or the other in a gesture even though the books are heavy. Those are real gestures. Save them. Eliminate all others. Those are nervous gestures.

Head movement should be dictated by the individuals in your audience. You move in response to them, on a personal basis, not a mechanical rotating system. Let your body demonstrate your enthusiasm for your subject and your interest in your audience. Move.

On Establishing a "Presence"

Presenters with "presence" usually walk briskly, with a sense of purpose. They carry themselves well. Their attitude is outward, aware of their surroundings—not inward. When they speak, they are concerned about you, not themselves.

They project an attitude of positiveness about their own abilities that may border on arrogance, but the audience never worries about them. "Presence" guarantees that the speaker can handle anything. "Presence" is something that the audience feels about the presenter, often before the presenter even appears. In a sense, the audience creates an aura of expectation that the presenter simply fills.

Reading Your Audience

Cab drivers have taught us something about eye contact. Without it, it's impossible to tell if anybody is listening. In a very real sense, listening isn't done with the ears, it's done with the eyes. And as the eyes "listen" they respond. Eye contact is a matter of punctuation. It's the registration of an idea, a phrase, maybe even a single word, during a continuous linking-up of the eyes.

Eye contact is doled out by words and thoughts, and measured by body language. But somewhere near the unfathomable core of it, there is a bonding that is deeply alive and unique to the eyes.

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Like it or not, every manager is in the business of communicating. It is no secret that business leaders increasingly deplore the poor oral and written communication skills of their managers and employees.

What's All This Got to Do With You?

...unless English is your second language, any writing and speaking deficiencies are usually perceived by your boss, your peers, and your clients as a lack of dedication, education, attention to detail, or diligence. In other words, your career options are D-E-A-D.

The Importance of Speech

"If all my talents and powers were to be taken from me by some inscrutable Providence, and I had my choice of keeping but one, I would unhesitatingly ask to be allowed to keep the Power of Speaking, for through it, I would quickly recover all the rest." --Daniel Webster

Silence Is a Golden Opportunity

Just as words, body language, facial expressions, and inflections convey meaning, so too does silence. In business presentations, silence can be your best friend and ally. Any speech or presentation is a combination of voice and silence. Just as the length and placement of silence is every bit as important in music as the notes themselves, silence is very effective in creating a compelling presentation effect. Most of us have been conditioned to treat silence with anxiety and embarrassment. But silence can focus the attention of the audience by providing accent, provoking thoughts, or creating anticipation.

The Performance Paradox

In worrying about how to give a perfect performance, you create the most serious mistake of all: you aim at the wrong target! You should be enthusiastic about speaking, not because it gives you a chance to show off, but because you can share what you have learned with others.

Getting Psyched Up

If you know your subject and you know your audience, then the single most important remaining factor is enthusiasm. An audience will forgive many sins if the speaker is prepared, loves what he/she is talking about, and is having fun. When you love the subject, the audience gets into it with you. If you think back to the people who influenced your life most, it's a sure bet they were passionate about their subject.

The Parts of Your Delivery

As the speaker you have four basic commitments to the audience: 1. To be clearly understood; 2. To gain and maintain interest; 3. To provide information that will help your listeners; and 3. To encourage them to take the desired actions.

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Three Important Questions

1) What does your audience really want?

Problems are the key. Everyone has problems and everyone is looking for help with them. Your starting point should be to look for the problem of concern to your listeners that you can alleviate. It's not slick words that make a presentation sparkle. It's the use of shoe leather to go out after all the facts that may be vital to your audience.

2) What do you really want?

You should be able to state it in one sentence. If you can't, you haven't yet thought about it sufficiently. When you begin your outline, write that one prime goal across the top of the paper, so you'll be sure to keep focusing on it. And *repeat* it throughout your presentation.

3) What action is desired?

Whatever you want your listeners to do, make sure they've committed themselves to it before you step off stage. No matter how smoothly the show goes, if you don't get action at the end, you've struck out.

You're Giving a Talk—Not a Reading

You can't hold your audience's attention, or gain its respect, if you read all your material. You encourage a lack of attention when you read to an audience, because you can't maintain eye contact. There's no rapport. And there's a lack of respect if you read everything, because your audience assumes you don't know the material very well, and you can't really be an expert.

Your Role as an Entertainer

Whether you like it or not, whenever you're on stage, you're in show business. Yes, your primary mission may be as a teacher bringing important information. But even in our educational institutions, the best teachers know they must liven up their presentations if they expect to hold attention and get their message across. So make use of proven techniques of professional entertainers; make your audiences perk up and maintain rapt attention.

The First Minute is the Most Important

In that first minute or so, you either get off to a running start or you cause your listeners to slump down in their chairs. And it's slow, hard work getting them perked up again.

How to Introduce a Personal Touch

Don't be afraid to use personal pronouns. Tell the listener, "This will help *you*." Tell what you know that will affect *them*. You needn't hesitate to use the word "I" either. You are not being conceited when you tell about yourself. That's what people came to hear—your experiences and your knowledge.

Stories about you and your friends are especially useful. They let you get a point across in a palatable and memorable way. One of the most successful "speechmakers" of all time, Jesus, mostly told stories called parables. A parable is nothing but a brief story illustrating a moral attitude or a religious principle.

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Say It in Six

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The Style of the Six-Minute Speaker

- Starts fast. You know who's got the floor.
- Speaks at a rate of about 150 words per minute.
- Starts where most "speeches" finally get going: about halfway through.
- *Almost* memorizes.
- Never leaves any doubt about his or her position.
- Rivets people with eye contact.
- Gestures only when making a point. Every movement has a purpose.

Ways to "Say it in Six"

- Go to the big issue instantly.
- Make conciseness your trademark.
- Use short, stubby words.
- Concentrate on what the audience wants to know.
- Write and speak like people talk; avoid literary style.
- Practice making things clearer by deleting words, not by adding.
- Stop when you are finished. Don't just fill the time with unnecessary words.

What's the Payoff for You?

When you finish your first six-minute talk, what have you said about yourself?

- (1) You have shown your audience that you have listened. They have been saying for years that they are fed up with long, dreary speeches.
- (2) You have put forth an effective effort to save your audience precious time. You've done a lot of work to compress a great deal of information into a form that is easy to grasp and lasts only six minutes.
- (3) You have cleared the way for a decision to be made. You've increased the likelihood that it will be the right decision.

Understanding When and Where Nervousness Strikes

In a six-minute presentation, the chances of your being nervous are far less than during a long, complicated speech. However, there are possibilities for nervousness in a six-minute presentation. They include:

- (1) At the start. This means just before you start and just after you have begun.
- (2) When you feel your audience is slipping away from you.
- (3) When your memory betrays you and you are lost within your own presentation.
- (4) When you fear for your audio/visual equipment.

Nervousness is selfish. Nervousness occurs when you are deeply concerned about yourself. The sooner you transfer the deep concern you feel for yourself to the deep concern you should be feeling for your audience, the sooner you will be over your nervousness.

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Ability

Neglect not the gift that is in thee.
—New Testament, I Timothy 4:14

Don't learn the tricks of the trade.
Learn the trade.
—Anonymous

Aim

In the long run men hit only what they aim at. Therefore, though they should fail immediately they had better aim at something high.
—Henry David Thoreau

Aspiration

If you would attain what you are not yet, always be displeased by what you are. For where you were pleased with yourself, there you have remained.
—St. Augustine

Beginnings

Begin somewhere. You cannot build a reputation on what you intend to do.
—Liz Smith

Character

We must be at the helm at least once each day; we must feel the tiller-rope in our hands, and know that if we sail, we steer.
—Henry David Thoreau

Conversation

Remember that talking is one of the fine arts—the noblest, the most important, and the most difficult...
—Oliver Wendell Holmes

Defeat

...admire those who attempt great things, even though they fail.
—Seneca

Failure

To bear failure with courage is the best proof of character that anyone can give.
—W. Somerset Maugham

Illusion

Don't part with your illusions. When they are gone you may still exist but you have ceased to live.
—Mark Twain

Laughter

Once you get people laughing, they're listening and you can tell them almost anything.
—Herbert Gardner

Love

...and what is done in love is well done.
—Vincent van Gogh

Mistakes

No matter how far you've gone on a wrong road, turn back.
—Turkish proverb

Perseverance

We must believe that we are gifted for something, and that this thing, at whatever cost, must be attained.
—Marie Curie

Principles

It's important to let people know what you stand for. It's equally important that they know what you won't stand for.
—B. Bader

Suggest what is right, oppose what is wrong. Try to satisfy yourself and not others. If you are not popular, at least you will be respected. Popularity lasts but a day, but respect will descend as a heritage to your children.
—T.C. Halliburton