

Preview

UNLOCK YOUR PERSONAL **CHARISMA**™

Eight Best Kept Communication Secrets
Of The Top Sales Professionals



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Best Selling Author
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How can you have charisma?

“Be more concerned about making others feel good about themselves than you are making them feel good about you.”

— DAN REILAND

*For Dad, Mum and Sis
The three angels in my life.*

A DEFINING MOMENT IN MY LIFE

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Monday, January 29, 2008.

9.13 am.

In the MediaCorp studios of one of Singapore's most watched morning shows—Prime Time Morning.

In about five minutes, I was going to be on national TV—in front of more than a million people—to pitch my first book, *The FAQ Book on Public Speaking*.

I was only 25, fresh out of school.

Truth be told, I was quaking in my shoes and almost hyperventilating. And here's why.

I'd never sold anything in my life.

I come from a working-class family. My dad is a taxi driver, my grandfather was a trishaw rider and my great grandfather a rickshaw puller. Since young, I thought I was destined to be in transportation.

As a child, my dad would ask me, "Son, what do you want to be when you grow up?"

With all my enthusiasm, I'd say, "Taxi driver!"

My exasperated father would hit me on my head and say, "Son, you've got to think bigger!"

And I'd reply cheekily, "Ok then... I'll drive a bus!"

Fortunately for my dad, I ended up studying computer science.

But that still begs the question: How did I—with humble beginnings, average results and no business experience—end up selling 8,000 copies of my first book, coaching CEOs and business leaders more than twice my age, and getting ranked as one of the top 25 young entrepreneurs in Asia by Business Week USA?

How The Best-Kept Secret Manifested In My Life

The answer lies in a best-kept secret that I had stumbled upon as a freshman in university. I would later discover that this same secret has helped executives to climb the corporate ladder at amazing speeds, entrepreneurs to build businesses that bring them massive incomes, and leaders to take their companies and countries to greater heights.

But before I reveal to you the secret, let me show you how it manifested for me.

I first met Andre in university. I was a freshman and he was three years my senior. Everyone in the computing faculty—including our dean—knew him, as he was a prominent leader with very good business acumen.

Just the year before, Andre had helped our faculty raise a significant amount of funds. It was no wonder that wild rumours about his background—that his family was made up of very well-known businessmen in Singapore—began to spread.

So when Andre approached me one afternoon to join him in a business venture, I was stunned as I had nothing much to offer.

"In transportation?" I asked, thinking that my destiny had caught up with me.

“No. In education. I want to set up a training company and make it big in Singapore. Would you like to be my business partner?” Andre asked.

I said yes because I had nothing to lose. This decision proved to be a major turning point in my life.

The Journey with My Mentors

Andre became my mentor and taught me everything he knew about running a successful business. He had me sit-in on all his business meetings and client appointments, where my job was to observe and take notes while he did all the selling and negotiations.

After each session, Andre would ask me two questions: “Why did I do what I did today?” and “What have you learnt?” Sometimes, our conversation would last through the night, with me furiously taking notes.

Andre also groomed me to head my faculty’s corporate communications unit, managing more than 100 student associates. During my stint as the Managing Director of the School of Computing’s Corporate Communications unit, I learnt how to motivate my team and lead them towards ambitious goals that made the other faculties envious. The dean was so pleased with us that my core team was awarded the Dean’s Letter of Commendation.

But the benefits of my involvement went beyond mere recognition. Because of my position, I got to rub shoulders with industry leaders and in all honesty, finding a job after graduation was a breeze.

After completing my tenure as head of the corporate communications unit, I decided to further my entrepreneurial aspirations by signing up for the NUS Overseas College (NOC) Programme, a one-year programme where I got to work in a start-up environment and study part-time in a prestigious Ivy League school. I was very lucky to be sent to the University of Pennsylvania where the Wharton School of Business is located.

There, I met four World Champions of Public Speaking—David Brooks, Ed Tate, Darren La Croix and Jim Key. Toastmasters International has recognised these men as the World Champions of Public Speaking after winning the International Speech Competition, which sees more than 20,000 contestants each year from all over the world.

I was so mesmerised by these speakers' onstage ability to influence and inspire the masses that I knew I had to speak to them, which I did thankfully. Not only did they offer me speaking tips, but they also became my public speaking mentors.

I entered their coaching programme and for two years, they taught me everything they knew about public speaking. One of them even challenged me to take part in my very first humorous speech contest held in Philadelphia, which I won at the division level.

Who says Singaporeans can't be funny?

The Most Important Advice of My Career

Before I left, Darren gave me a very important piece of advice.

"If you want to become a professional speaker like us, you have got to write a book. It is your passport to the speaking industry."

This spurred the birth of my first book, *The FAQ Book on Public Speaking*, where I meticulously penned down everything I had learnt about public speaking. All my hopes were pinned on this book, but I was also painfully aware of one brutal fact. Nobody knew Eric Feng. Which meant that no one would be interested in buying my book.

And so I paid a visit to a wonderful lady who is famous in Singapore, Malaysia and some say Batam! (Pardon the Singaporean reference—my countrymen may now laugh). She is none other than Irene Ang, a well-loved local celebrity and CEO of Fly Entertainment.

"Irene," I asked, "would you like to join me in writing my first book?"

"Sure!" she agreed without batting an eyelid. I was ecstatic!

Irene is definitely one of the reasons why we managed to sell so many books. We also found favour with the media and got ourselves into a few of the major ones, such as Radio 938 LIVE, Prime Time Morning, Lianhe Zaobao and The Business Times.

The Big Question

By now, you are probably asking the same question that many others have asked me once they've heard my story.

“Why did these people go the extra mile to help you?”

This is a natural question. But an important one because it led me to discover the best-kept secret that I was talking about.

The answer is simple—**they liked me enough to want to help me succeed.**

People Buy People First

From Andre, to the World Champions of Public Speaking, and also from Irene, I learnt that people buy people first.

Before they buy your ideas, your product or your organisation, they need to buy YOU first.

If they like you, they become comfortable with you. When they become comfortable with you, they start to trust you and when enough trust is built, they will want to help you succeed.

And once that happens, all you need to do is ask and the answer will most often be yes. Sometimes, they will even come to you asking how they can help you succeed!

That, my friends, is the best-kept secret of the successful. This is the same secret that has given them many unfair advantages over their peers and competitors.

The Best-Kept Secret, Manifested

And Darren was right. My first book did become my passport to the speaking industry. It opened doors for me.

My first big break came from DP Architects, the geniuses behind some of Singapore's landmark buildings like Suntec City. The next assignment was with the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Secretariat where I got to coach the former Executive Director (Ambassador Michael Tay) and other dignitaries in public speaking. This was then followed by an engagement with

Great Eastern Singapore, one of the most respected insurance companies in Singapore.

And I had just turned 26.

The Best-Kept Secret, Proven

As I continued interacting with the elite of the various industries, I became utterly convinced that this best-kept secret works... if you know how to use it.

A life planner secured a six-figure annual premium from a client who did not believe in insurance just three months into her career.

A third year business student snagged the only position in a prestigious internship even though his grades were not as outstanding as the other candidate.

A 23-year-old entrepreneur convinced an investor to support her new fashion boutique to the tune of more than \$85,000 despite her lack of business experience.

An SME won a six-figure consulting project over the big four because the boss liked them better.

A newly appointed managing director of an MNC won the hearts of her more than 1,000 employees in less than six months though she had never met any of them before.

These are just some of the many amazing people I have had the pleasure of meeting over the three years I spent researching this book.

And here's the best part. Many of them may not be smarter than you, or more educated than you, or even better looking than you!

What sets them apart is their personal charisma.

They are likeable. They have presence. They connect quickly and easily with anyone. More importantly, they know how to get their ideas and thoughts across in a way that gets their prospects and clients to say yes. As a result, they often get what they want.

The good news is—you can too!

With this book.

So What's In It For You?

If you are a **sales professional**, you are in luck because this book was written with you in mind. By the time you are done with this book, you will know what it takes to become a top performer in your field and enjoy all the perks that come with outstanding sales. Get ready to become a sales powerhouse!

If you are a **leader of your organisation**, the principles described in this book will make it easier for you to motivate change and inspire results among the people in your organisation.

And just in case you are wondering... the strategies outlined in this book are not mere theories. They have been taught to more than 5,000 sales professionals and business leaders across Asia over the last three years with great success.

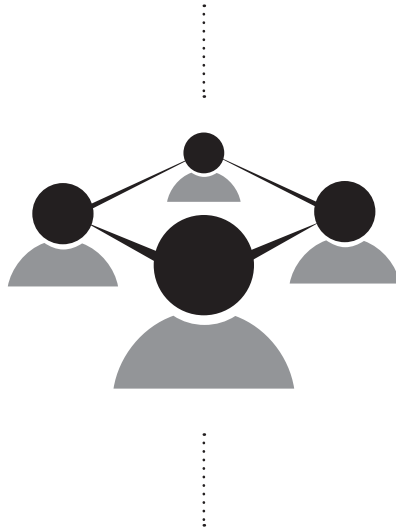
So apart from learning how to come out tops in the people game, you will also get to read inspiring stories of accomplished individuals who have succeeded in winning the hearts and minds of their colleagues, clients and bosses.

Everyone has the capacity to become charismatic and successful.

After all, if a bus driver wannabe can win at the people game, so can you!

SECRET NO. 1

CONNECT



When we get too caught up
in the busyness of the world,
we lose connection with one
another—and our ourselves.

– JACK KORNFIELD

HOW TO GET PEOPLE TO LIKE YOU WITHIN 90 SECONDS

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When someone feels connected to you, it means three things.

One: they like you.

Two: they are open to what you have to say.

Three: they want to agree with you. As a salesperson, this is the first base to establish. And you want to do it fast.

Unfortunately, people are judgmental by nature. Within seconds, they will already form an impression of you based on the way you look, the way you move and the way you talk. And this first impression—whether positive or negative—will determine their future interaction with you. Hence, you want to make sure the impression you leave behind is a positive one.

That Powerful First Impression

In 1993, the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* published a study on the power of first impression, conducted by Nalini Ambady a social psychologist at Harvard University, together with Robert Rosenthal.¹

She invited a group of people to observe the silent video recordings of 13 college teachers in action. The duration of the recordings ranged from two seconds to ten seconds. After observing the teachers, the observers had to rate them on a fifteen item checklist of personality traits.

Observers, presented with the ten-second recording, were given sufficient time to absorb and process their judgments to rate the teachers. When Ambady cuts the recording back to five seconds, the ratings were still the same. Amazingly,

observers scored the teachers the same when she showed just two seconds of the recording.

We are extremely comfortable in making snap judgments. And when a snap judgment is made, we will hardly change our mind.

but it speaks volumes about how human beings behave. We are extremely comfortable in making snap judgments. And when a snap judgment is made, we will hardly change our mind.

This may seem incredible

But that is nothing compared to what Ambady discovered next.

She compared the ratings made by the observers with the students who had attended the entire semester of class taught by the college teacher and found that the correlation of the results were astonishingly high. In other words, an observer's two-second opinion of the college teacher was strikingly similar to the opinion of a student who had sat in that teacher's class for a whole semester.

Ambady concluded in her study that "... these findings² [were indeed] surprising and provocative. Not only do we possess the remarkable ability to form impressions of others, but perhaps more remarkably, the impressions that we form can be quite accurate."

1. Credit goes to Malcolm Gladwell for sharing with me this study. You can read more about it in his book *What The Dog Saw* under *The New-Boy Network* chapter.
2. Extracted from *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1993, Vol. 64, No. 3, pp. 431 – 441

As an extension to her study, social psychologists have also discovered that when an impression is formed, people will be resistant to changing it. And here's the startling part—they will have the tendency to filter information that reinforces their judgment of you. So if they like you upon first impression, they will continue finding reasons—consciously and unconsciously—to like you. Similarly, if they dislike you upon first impression, they will continue finding reasons—consciously and unconsciously—to dislike you.

Some psychologists termed this as “the halo effect”.

One of these researchers, Edward L. Thorndike was the first to support the halo effect with empirical research³ in 1920, and this is how he defined the halo effect:

The extension of an overall impression of a person (or one particular outstanding trait) to influence the total judgment of that person. The effect is to evaluate an individual high on many traits because of a belief that the individual is high on one trait. Similar to this is the ‘devil effect’, whereby a person evaluates another as low on many traits because of a belief that the individual is low on one trait, which is assumed to be critical.

So, what have we understood so far about first impression?

- It is fast and can be made in less than two seconds
- It is mainly determined by a person's non-verbal gestures
- It is largely permanent and determines how people relate to you in future

And this triggers an even more important question:

“If first impression is so critical in determining our affinity towards a person, how do we ensure we create a good one for new clients and prospects?”

How You Can Create a Positive First Impression

In early 2008, I started an experiment with my participants. At the start of each class, I would get them to go around saying hello to their classmates. As they returned to their seats, I got them to write down three people who had left them with the best first impressions. Apart from their names, they had to write down the reason (or reasons) why.

3. E L Thorndike, *A Constant Error on Psychological Rating*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. IV (1920), pp. 25 – 29

Over the course of three years, I collected close to 1,000 sets of data. I started organising their responses into common themes, taking note of the exact words they used. And as I compiled the data, I became convinced that there are essentially just six components that human beings unconsciously use to determine first impression.

What excites me even more is this—there was a consistent body of empirical research to support the six components I discovered, but I shall not bore you with them.

Ok maybe just one more.

Georgetown University in United States re-ran a revealing experiment conducted in Princeton in 2005. Student volunteers had to—in sometimes less than half a second—determine whom was the more competent one between the pairs of faces on a screen.

The researchers discovered that human beings are so sensitive to facial expressions that we are comfortable making snap judgments like this. Even when the students had several seconds to choose, they did not alter their initial decisions.

The findings from this research were very similar to Ambady's experiment done earlier.

What these student volunteers did not know was that the photographs they saw were of candidates who were previously running for the Senate, the House and Governor in 2002 and 2004.

When the student volunteers were asked about how they determined which candidate was more competent, the two answers consistently given were a genuine smile and engaging eye contact.

When the student volunteers were asked about how they determined which candidate was more competent, the two

answers consistently given were a genuine smile and engaging eye contact.

Coincidentally, these are also the first two components I discovered that determines a positive first impression. And not surprisingly, more than 70% of the faces they chose as more competent, turned out to be the people who were actually elected for office.

Six Components to Instant Rapport

Here are the six components to pay attention to if you want to develop a more positive first impression.

Genuine Smile

A genuine smile has constantly ranked on the top of my list as the single determining factor of a positive first impression. The wise men were right—a smile is indeed the shortest distance between two strangers!

In Guy Kawasaki's book *Enchanted* (which I strongly recommend), he suggests making crow's-feet (wrinkles around the eyes) so deep that they can hold water.

“Call them laugh lines instead, if this makes you feel better. And for the sake of your smile, skip the Botox treatment and facelifts.”⁴

Some of us are born with very stoic or stern faces. But if you consciously remember to smile every time you communicate with others, it will eventually become a habit.

Eye Contact

People who have met former US President Bill Clinton often have good things to say about personally speaking with him. One of them is the way he engages with his eyes, making you feel like you are the most important person in the room.

In fact, he has often been compared to Al Gore, the former Vice President of United States. “When Bill Clinton addresses an audience of a thousand people, it feels like he is just talking to you. But when Al Gore is talking to you, it feels like he is addressing an audience of a thousand people.”

Many people sometimes take this technique the wrong way and start to stare. I strongly advise against this, especially in Singapore. You won't want to have a crazy guy chasing after you with a parang (Malay equivalent of the machete),

4. You can find this quote in Guy Kawasaki's latest book *Enchanted*, pp. 11.

just because you wanted to connect with him, do you?

Instead, give your 110% attention as you are communicating with another person. Engaging the person in a warm, steady and non-threatening gaze is definitely an effective way to show attention. Mentally, you are sending out a signal to the other person that you want to connect.



The Power of Connecting in Business

Being able to connect is vital in business settings.

I met up with an HR director of a manufacturing company in early 2011 to pitch a training programme for her employees. After the meeting, we got insider news from her colleague that she liked us a lot, which explained why she stayed with us for an hour, giving us full details of what she wanted.

This was in stark contrast with another company—very well-known in Asia—whom she was brief and succinct with. In fact, I was told that she was in the hurry to end the meeting with them.

So why did she like us so much? There were many reasons but one of them was this:

“Eric gave me a lot of eye contact unlike the other trainer who was looking everywhere else.”

Somehow she came to a conclusion—based mostly on personal eye contact—that I was more interested in helping her than the other trainer. Is it true? I cannot say for sure but there is one thing that I'd like all of us to be certain of: First impression matters. A lot.

High Energy (or Enthusiasm)

This is a no brainer. If you observe the successful, one thing that you observe immediately about them is their seemingly infinite source of positive energy. And this energy they exude is so infectious that it draws people to them.



The Key To Winning Your Audience Over From The Stage

Early this year, I was invited to attend McDonald's APMEA⁵ Women Leadership Network Conference held in Marina Bay Sands. As I was

sitting right at the back, I could observe the dynamics between the speaker and the 350-strong audience. What separates the good speakers from the great speakers lies in the amount of enthusiasm they display on stage. And it shows.

There was one particular speaker who was amazingly energetic. Her name is Georgette Tan, Vice President of Mastercard Worldwide. She was excited about her message. Heck, she was excited just to be with the audience. As a result of that, the audience reciprocated. Almost everyone was leaning forward, reacting positively to everything that she had to say. You could almost hear disappointment from the audience when she left the stage.

That is the power of enthusiasm!

So we know that wearing your energy on the sleeve draws people to you. But how do we generate high energy on a consistent basis, or at least, on command? There are three techniques that have worked well for me and I am confident that it will work well for you too.

1. Always be in the state of gratitude

If you ask my close friends around me, they will tell you that I am an extremely ambitious and goal-oriented person. I set goals for everything —my career, my finances, my relationships and even my recreational activities. It gives me a sense of purpose and direction. Even though I have achieved quite a bit at a young age, I was not always happy.

I did not understand why until I came across this quote many years ago. All of sudden, the lights went on in my head as I thought about this piece of wisdom: “Success is having what you want. Happiness is wanting what you have.”

I realised that the constant chasing after things was what got me drained and unhappy. Yes, I did get happy when I achieved something but it was only for a fleeting moment. We all know how quickly the moment is gone, and before long the cycle of chasing begins again.

I was constantly caught in the state of “not having enough” which caused me to go after for more. And more. And more. And more. And more.

You get my point. But the truth is it would never be enough until I learnt to appreciate what I already had.

And that's what the piece of wisdom was trying to get across—"happiness is wanting what you already have."

I'm now less attached to my goals, and instead, I focus on what I already have. And guess what: I've become happier. I am not too worried about my book deadline (though my business partner and sponsors are). Instead, I am in a state of gratefulness—grateful that I have something to share with you.

I'm also grateful that my company has the finances to publish this book (it can cost a bomb you know!). Grateful that my team is excited about the book and they are doing everything they can to market it Asia-wide.

You can be happy too—right now. Just this realisation will give you a tremendous amount of positive energy. Start focusing on what you already have. In fact, start a gratitude list. You can do it anytime of the day as long as you do it. Take a piece of paper and start writing down what you are genuinely grateful for. The big things and the small things; let your heart be your guide.

So remember: "Success is having what you want. Happiness is wanting what you have."

2. Start your day right

I learnt this from Robin Sharma. He says that how you start the first hour of your day will determine the rest of your day. For most of us, the first hour of our day is usually filled with resignation ("It's 7am already?"), anxiety ("I have only three more days to go, am I going to hit my sales target?") and frustration ("That buggger just cut my lane!") These are not the kind of positive emotions to start your day with! No wonder we get even more drained as the day goes.

Here's a great tip from Robin Sharma that will ensure you have abundant energy to last the entire day.

“Set aside one hour every morning for personal development matters. Meditate, visualise your day, read inspirational texts to set the tone of your day, listen to motivational tapes or read great literature. Take this quiet period to vitalise and energise your spirit for the productive day ahead. Watch the sun rise once a week or be with nature. Starting the day off well is a powerful strategy for self-renewal and personal effectiveness.”⁶

3. Set aside time to do the things you love

Love is one of the most powerful sources of energy that we can tap into. Hence, the easiest way to energise ourselves is to do the things we love.

When was the last time you did something that you genuinely enjoyed, so much so that you felt alive and happy?

If you are struggling to find an answer, I suggest that you do the following exercise.

Grab a piece of paper and list down all the things that you would love to do.

Please ignore the negative voices that are shouting in your head right now—“Yeah right, as if you would have time to do them” or “Do you have the money?” or “What about your responsibilities?” etc.

Keep writing.

If you had all the time in the world and all the money in the world, what would you like to do? Write down all the big things (my list starts with a trip to the Maldives) and all the small things (I adore drinking Koi tea!).

Once you have exhausted your list, proceed to do one of the things in your list. You will probably pick the small items first—but that is ok. The key is to do something that you love. This will bring back some energy into your life. Once you are done with that, schedule the rest of the activities into the rest of your year.

Every time you feel energy sapping away from you, go back to the list and do something from the list. You will feel a surge of positive energy!

6. For more ideas how to raise your energy, I suggest you read Robin Sharma’s “Mega Living” which has become my personal bible.

In fact, I am off to do one of my favourite activities right now—watch an episode of Friends while having my dinner. See! It is that easy. Now go do yours.

Body Language

I once gave a challenge to my participants. In a crowd of many people, would you be able to pick out people of status? After observing the crowd for while, they discovered the big giveaway.

Good posture.

There are the exceptional few—usually someone of status—who will saunter into the room with style and poise. What stands out most will be their good posture. They stand up straight, with their face looking forward (not down, like most Asians), and they would be striding with purpose.

Some body language experts even claim that posture is your biggest success barometer.

These are all signs of inner confidence. Some body language experts even claim that posture is your biggest success barometer. So if you want to look the part, start practicing the walk and pay close attention to your posture.

Giving Meaning In A Handshake

Another aspect of your body to pay attention to is your handshake.

We all know the drill: give a firm handshake. The greater mystery is what a firm handshake entails. Here's my take.

Designing An Unforgettable Handshake

Take a look at your right hand. Notice the webbing in between your thumb and first finger. When you shake the other person's hand, make sure the webbing tucks in nicely with the other person's webbing. Give the person's hand a firm squeeze, hold it for no more than three seconds and then let go.

To leave the person with a positive first impression, you must also do two things with your handshake according to my findings.

One, you got to offer the handshake first. In other words, be proactive. This shows that you are confident and not afraid of being rejected.

Two, give a warm handshake. It gives people the impression that you have a warm personality too. Unbelievable, I know, but the data never lies. So use this knowledge to your advantage. You can either hold a warm drink or give your hands a rub before you shake the person's hand. (A note of caution: please DO NOT rub your hands in front of the person. This will be counter-effective.)

Distracting Gestures

Now let's talk about your distracting gestures.

When conversing with others, do not fidget, squirm, scratch or touch any part of your body. For girls, it is your hair. For guys, it is your nose or spectacles. Do not play with your accessories too. Most of the time, these actions are unconscious to you but very obvious to the person you are talking to and it undermines your credibility.



Your Gestures Can Make or Kill The Sale

I once accompanied a pharmaceutical sales representative to meet his client, a very important doctor of a government hospital in Malaysia. As he was explaining his product, I was taking notes on the gestures he used. At first, he was just touching his bright yellow tie. As he proceeded with his sales pitch, he started stroking the tie rigorously. It was obvious to me (and I suspect to the doctor as well), but he was oblivious to his tie-stroking.

Fortunately for him, the doctor had worked with him before, and was used to his antics. Yet, imagine if it had been a new client—or worse, a skeptical one—such distracting gestures would have caused him to lose credibility and potentially several million dollars of sales.

If you suspect that you have the same challenge as the sales representative, I suggest you get a trusted friend to observe you as you are speaking or selling. Another way is to videotape yourself when you deliver presentations. With feedback from these sources, you will be able to spot the distracting gestures and eliminate them once and for all.

Verbal Cues

Now that we have covered the four non-verbal aspects of creating a positive first impression (genuine smile, eye contact, high energy and body gestures), let's move on to the verbal cues, which includes what you say and how you say it.

Building Impressions With Your Words

Let's start with what you say—your words.

The words you use in your everyday speeches sometimes speak louder than the clothes you wear or the title you carry. Dale Carnegie, a trailblazer in public speaking aptly pointed out that “our words reveal our refinements; they tell discerning listeners that we have a background of education and culture”.

If you want to command the respect of people you meet for the first time and leave a positive first impression, improve your choice of words.

If you want to command the respect of people you meet for the first time and leave a positive first impression, improve your choice of words.

Avoid using overworked adjectives and worn-out phrases. I once heard a buddy of mine use the same adjective on his day, his lunch, his socks and his wife's new-hairdo. Everything was 'nice'.

No wonder his wife was not happy.

Instead of 'nice', he could have tried 'breathtaking, captivating, irresistible' or 'exciting'.

Likewise, instead of 'new', you can consider 'bold', 'fresh', 'groundbreaking', 'unprecedented' or 'revolutionary'.

Instead of 'good', you can easily fit words like 'superior', 'proven', 'exquisite', 'incredible' or 'rewarding'.

Rather than use tired adjectives like 'big', why not use 'gigantic', 'towering', 'overwhelming' or 'staggering growth'.

Notice that I am not asking you to be verbose with your vocabulary. Bombastic language will only alienate you from your listener. What I am asking you to do is to be more precise with the words you use. This makes you appear objective and insightful.

Here's a simple habit you can master from today onwards—learn a new word everyday. If you stick to this habit, you would have learnt 365 new words by year's end! I assure you that you'll be doing better than the average executive on the street. Plus, you will win people over faster too.

Boosting Your Vocabulary, One Word at a Time

You can learn words directly from your dictionary, or even the thesaurus on your computer (just highlight a word and right click, choose “Synonyms”). You could also start paying attention to everyday conversations. Each time you hear an interesting word, write it down and make it a point to check what it means. Once you have done so, find opportunities to use the word in everyday conversations. It is that simple.

Speak English, Not Singlish

Another way to leave a positive first impression is to avoid speaking Singlish. There are two good reasons for this.

One, it is informal, which makes it immediately inappropriate for most business settings. Imagine a stranger in suit speaking to you in Singlish—it will be difficult for you to take him or her seriously. (NOTE: There is an exception however. If the person speaks to you in Singlish, speak back in Singlish. You will be able to connect better with that person. More on this in the next chapter).

Two, it will be incomprehensible for listeners who are not from Singapore. This will cause an immediate disconnect.

If you want to leave the person wanting more of you, don't forget the lessons your English teacher taught you. Make sure you have

Make sure you have a good command of the language and it will pay dividends in personal credibility.

a good command of the language and it will pay dividends in personal credibility.

I once met a senior Vice President of an MNC who could barely speak a sentence of proper English. Hearing him speak is like hearing fingernails scratching on a chalkboard. I gave up trying to understand him less than a minute into the conversation. It was extremely difficult to take his words and his ideas seriously. He definitely left an impression, and it was most definitely not a good one.

Three Ways to Improve Your Command of English

One, watch your grammar. Two, watch your sentence construction. Three, watch your pronunciation. If speaking English is proving to be a challenge for you, I suggest you either take up night classes or start listening to the radio (recommended: Radio 938 LIVE). It is definitely worth the investment!

Building Impressions with Your Voice

Now that we have covered what to say, let's look at how you say it. Three things to pay attention to: tone, pitch and diction.

- **Tone**
What your listeners and audience want these days is a conversational tone. It is more natural and sincere, and will subconsciously lead the other party to conclude that you are a genuine person. This is a definite way to cast you in good light. Next, improve your tone by emphasising on important words. Not only will this add variety to your speaking tone, it will also help you sound more assertive.
- **Pitch**
As for pitch, a relatively lower one will give others a better first impression since such a voice is associated with someone who is credible and dependable. Many top business leaders and politicians are keenly aware of this and to gain a marked advantage over their competitors, they hire voice coaches to help them sound better.
- **Diction**
Finally, your diction plays a significant role in helping others remember you positively. Like the words you choose, your diction

can determine if you are someone others can respect or laugh at. Here are three simple ways to improve

your diction. First, enunciate the consonant that is at the end of every word. For example, ‘peaK’ or “hearT” or “carP”. Second, learn to pronounce ‘th’. Third, do not put an ‘s’ behind the words you pronounce (a bad habit I notice some speakers commit).

Your diction plays a significant role in helping others remember you positively.

Speaking Slips

There was this lecturer in my university who always mispronounced his words. One of them was ‘mobile phone’ which he pronounced as ‘mobile porn’. So you can imagine how many sniggers he invited in just one lecture.

Here’s another one a participant of mine enthusiastically shared. Once he entered a well-known restaurant only to be questioned by a waiter “Why come to XYZ Restaurant?”

He was shocked. While he was trying to figure out the answer, he was led to his table. Only then did he realise what the waiter was trying to say: “Welcome to XYZ Restaurant!”

The above examples may seem trivial but imagine if you make these mistakes in your job interview when you are meeting your future employer for the first time. Or when you are presenting your project to your boss’s boss who has never met you before. What kind of impression will you be leaving behind?



Your Voice Plays A Significant Role When Your Interviewers Cannot See You

A year ago, my company decided to hire one more salesperson to help us expand our corporate training business. As I was overseas, my colleague arranged for a teleconference call with the final two candidates. Within the first minute of that call, I had already decided whom I wanted to hire.

That decision was made even before looking at their resume. The person I preferred (let's call him J) sounded much more confident. And as I listened deeper, I realised why I came to that unjustified conclusion.

He sounded so much better! He was conversational and made me feel extremely comfortable with him. He spoke with variety and energy and kept me constantly engaged. And most importantly, he had better diction, which made him appear more credible to me.

But I was utterly wrong! J was fresh out of school while his competitor had been in the sales line for more than five years.

According to Albert Mehrabian, a Professor Emeritus of Psychology, UCLA, effective communication depends on the words you use (7%), your voice (38%) and body language (55%).⁷ However, on the phone, weightage increases significantly for the words you use (16%) and your voice (84%)! This is why you need to pay special attention to your voice (i.e. your pitch, tone and diction) if you want to avoid receiving unfair treatment from your future employer, your boss's boss or anyone you meet?

Pause Fillers

Pause fillers are the meaningless words you add into your speeches such as 'urm', 'er', 'you know', 'ah', 'hmm'. You might have your own pet pause filler.

It usually happens when you are trying to recall the exact words you want to say. Or you might be just plain nervous. Either way, it leaves a negative first impression because it makes you sound uncertain (which is a huge credibility killer). It also reduces clarity, which prevents your listeners from getting what you are trying to say. You'll need to find ways to remove pause fillers from both informal and formal speeches.

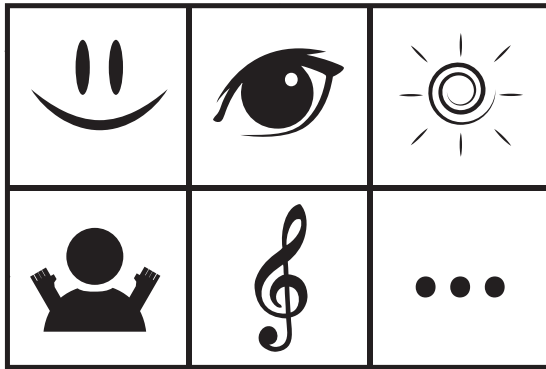
Peppering pause fillers in your speeches is more often a bad habit than anything else.

Peppering your speeches with pause fillers is more often a bad habit than anything else. So if you start becoming aware in your day-to-day

7. Mehrabian, Albert (2009). Silent Messages – A Wealth of Information About Nonverbal Communication [Body Language]. Personality & Emotion Tests & Software: Psychological Books & Articles of Popular Interest. Los Angeles, CA: self-published.

First Impression Checklist

- + Smile appropriately
- + Look sincere
- Frowning or look uncertain
- + Give individual attention? (look at one, speak to all)
- Look down or away before making a point
- Display shifty eyes
- + Highly energetic and eager to meet you
- + Use positive words
- + Make them feel comfortable
- Drain your energy, feel awkward



- + Confident and relaxed posture
- + Upright and alert
- + Purposeful and natural gestures
- + Lean forward when listening or making a point
- Create physical obstacles
- Tense, rigid, uncomfortable
- Distracting gestures
- + Conversational
- + Appropriate volume
- + Vary the pitch
- + Sound passionate and enthusiastic
- + Clear and crisp articulation
- + Smooth and natural
- + Vocal variety conveys emotions and is in sync with the content
- Monotonous, boring, flat, nasal
- Speak with singlish
- + Pause appropriately or for effect
- + Listen intently
- Have pause fillers (ah, urm, you-know)

speaking, you will naturally cut down your pause fillers. You will be more inclined not to use them—especially when it matters—since it has already become a habit not to use them.

If you find it difficult to be aware of your own pause fillers (which is understandable), you can get your friends and colleagues to help you spot them. In Toastmasters, they fine you ten cents for every pause filler that you use. Trust me, it is very effective since money is involved!

So there you have it. Six components to pay attention to if you want to win people over within the first 90 seconds. Let's recap with the following visual:

You can also download the First Impression Checklist from the website www.UnlockYourCharisma.com/secretbonus

Now that you have left the person smiling with positive thoughts about you, we can proceed to deepen the connection through small talk. The talk is not as “small” as you think it is. You will find out why in the next chapter.

SECRET NO. 2

RELATIONSHIP FOCUSED



Everyone has an invisible sign hanging from their neck saying, 'Make me feel important.' Never forget this message when working with people.

– MARY KAY ASH

HOW TO GET YOUR CUSTOMERS TO BECOME YOUR LIFETIME FANS

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During Thanksgiving in 2005, my roommate and I decided to make a road trip to Niagara Falls. He brought along a Caucasian girl by the name of Phoebe to join us. I remembered being extremely nervous because she was beautiful; a Taylor Swift kind of beautiful.

I became self-conscious about my Singaporean accent. It is not exactly the kind of accent that impresses the ladies.

Since my roommate was driving, I had to keep her company. Not wanting to talk too much and reveal my weaknesses, I decided to focus the entire conversation on her. We started with common topics like the weather and life in United States (note: this was way before I started my research into unlocking one's personal charisma, if only I knew then what I know now!).

We went on to talk about her family, her best friend, her hobbies, her pet peeves, and her aspirations. I was quite certain she was telling me her entire life's story.

Halfway through the conversation, she asked if I was keen to hear about her wedding plans, which I happily said yes. This is what she told me:

“Ok Eric, don’t laugh but I want to get married by the time I am 26. I will get my fiancé to build a big glass house with a dance floor on the San Diego beach. My wedding will begin at sunset so that the sun will create beautiful reflections in the glass house. I will be dressed in a princess gown, complete with a tiara. When my favourite music start playing, I will jump down from the second storey and with cables holding me, I will float down like a fairy, right into the centre of the dance floor. My fiancé will be dressed in a black tuxedo with a rose in his hand, waiting to dance the Waltz with me. My guests will also be dressed in gowns and tuxedos and together, we will dance the night away.”

She said all of that in one breath!

I replied, “Wow, that would be so beautiful!”

But in my head, I was thinking, “Wow, so expensive!”

A note to the ladies: if you should ever start sharing your wedding plans and you see your future husband slipping slowly into a blank, glassy gaze, it is not because we are not listening to you. We are calculating how long it would take before we can afford marrying you.

Phoebe did not stop there. With the enthusiasm of a three-year-old kid on a swing, she continued sharing her ideas on family planning.

“I want to have four children,” she asserted. “First, a daughter. Then twin sons. And then another daughter.”

In my head, I was confused. “Wow, you can control the sex of your kids?” But instead of asking her, I just smiled.

By then, two hours had passed and I succeeded in making the whole conversation about her and her alone. At the end of the eight-hour road trip, Phoebe gave me a hug and said, “I enjoyed myself so much. This is the best conversation I ever had! You really listen!”

In my head again, I was going, “Of course I’m listening; you didn’t even give me a chance to talk!”

But I learnt a valuable lesson from talking (read: listening) to this beautiful lady.

Phoebe had a wonderful time that morning because I gave her my undivided attention and made the entire conversation about her.

And then I remembered what Dale Carnegie famously said in his book “How To Win Friends & Influence People”:

“You can make more friends in two months by being genuinely interested in the person, than in two years, trying to get the person interested in you.”

From that experience, everything started to make sense.

The single most important ingredient that will make any relationship succeed comes down to being genuinely interested in the other person. This is true whether it is between you and your spouse, your colleague, your boss or your client.

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Undivided Attention in an Attention-Deficit World

Attention: it is the currency of all relationships.

Unfortunately we are living in an attention-deficit world, where our limited attention is diverted to unimportant things, so much so that we have very little left for the things that matter.

Among the biggest culprits are our digital devices: mobile phones, laptops, iPads and Angry Birds and other handheld distractions that we choose to busy ourselves with. Another culprit is insane amount of work we allow ourselves to take on in the office, only to find the 101 things we have to do come crashing down on us at once. Need more examples? I still haven't talked about the depressing news on TV, the household chores, bills, birthday present for the mother-in-law and the endless worries in your mind.

Perhaps that is why when we take effort to give someone attention, it is a big deal to them.

This is probably why Phoebe was so impressed with me.

Care About Them Until They Care About You

When you give people attention, you are showing them that you care. You are telling them that they are more important than anything else, at least for those moments you are with them. And because of the law of reciprocity—the simple law that states that people will tend to treat you the way you treat them—these people will return the care and put you on a pedestal.

This explains the well-known saying which deserves to be repeated here:

When you give people attention, you are showing the person that you care. You are telling her that she is more important than anything else, at least for those moments you are with her.

“People don’t care about you until you show them how much you care about them.”

The successful people I have observed and interviewed already know this and have used it to their advantage. As a result, they are able to win people over easily. Now you can do the same too.

In chapter two, you learnt the attending skill, which is one way to make the person feel important. Here are five more ways to give attention and show them that you care.



What the Dogs Know

There’s a reason why dogs are seen as men’s best friends. No matter how upset you are with them or how upset they are with you, they will always greet you with their wagging tails: a sign of their enduring affection for you. Use the same unflinching enthusiasm with whoever you meet, whether it is on the phone, in person or online.

Give a big wide smile, look them in their eyes and say hello in the most enthusiastic way possible. Yes, some may think you are crazy but all will feel like they are the most important person in your world.

1. Be excited when you see the person

I love this technique taught by Leil Lowndes in *How To Talk To Anyone*. She suggests that whenever we meet a person; imagine that she is a long-lost friend or a hotshot celebrity. See that person as someone whom you have wanted to meet or speak with and you finally did. This would naturally increase your enthusiasm and you will also make the person feel extremely special.

New action to take: Make an effort to be excited about every person you meet with, whether it is on the phone, in person or online. If they ask you why you are so excited, just tell them that you are happy to see them. And since enthusiasm is infectious, they will be excited to be with you in no time.

2. Remember the details of past conversations and encounters

This is a technique gleaned from the interviews I've had with top sales professionals.

Recall the previous chapter where I shared with you about establishing common ground with the PPVs (Passion, Pain, Value). Top sales professionals take an additional step forward. They remember extensive details of what was shared with them in the conversation with their clients and they bring them up again in the next conversation. This helps them demonstrate that they care enough about their clients to recall even the tiniest of facts.

Remembering the (Not So) Little Things

The most basic step is to remember their names. A person's sense of self-worth is closely connected with their name. For example, when you use name in greetings, like "Hope to see you again, Samantha!" you can be sure that it will impress her. By remembering her name you're communicating that she is important enough to be remembered. You'll give a boost to her ego and you'll find that she will be very happy to be in your company.

You must also remember important dates of your prospects and clients, such as birthdays and anniversaries. Take the opportunity to wish them well on their birthdays. You may even consider giving them a gift. Get creative by singing them a birthday song on their voicemail or mail them

a hand-written greeting card. If he is a first-time father, buy him a self-help guide on how to be a loving father. That would be worth more than just a photo frame or a pen.

The key thing here is to remember to take action on important personal occasions. This is always better than wishing them on holiday festivals since your greeting will be lost in the thousands of other greetings they receive. Birthdays are more exclusive and hence your greeting will stand out more.

Next, remember what they love (i.e. their passions). When you do, the gesture becomes a strong impression that will be difficult to forget.



A Tale of Pandan Cakes and Hampers

My business partner Richard is a genius when it comes to remembering what our clients love. There was one afternoon where I had a meeting with the training manager of a financial company. Halfway through the meeting, Richard decided to get us some snacks and he returned with pandan cakes, which happened to be the training manager's favourite cake. The training manager was pleasantly surprised and this thoughtful gesture helped us build a more positive relationship with him.

In another casual conversation with a financial director, Richard discovered that she had just been promoted. The next day, he sent a hamper with well wishes written in Mandarin just for her. She appreciated it tremendously not just for the hamper, but also the thought put into choosing the items in the hamper that represented good luck. Good luck was something very important to the financial director.

Creating Impressions on Values and Pain

Casually referencing the person's pain point or values in your conversation with them will also make the person feel important. Say, for example, that the person you are talking to is pro-environment and has shown disgust with plastic utensils, you will impress her when you bring your own utensils during the next meal together.

This technique is also very powerful for follow-ups after a networking event. During the conversation, pay special attention to what they have

During the conversation, pay special attention to what they have said (their passions, their pains and their values). Remember special dates and events as well if they mention any.

said (their passions, their pains and their values). Remember special dates and events as well if they mention any.

Remembering What's Important—To Them

Imagine that the person you are speaking to is going on a short holiday to Tasmania. Send the person a text or email a day before, wishing him safe journeys and good fun.

If the person has a son who is taking an exam (like the PSLE) in the following month, send an email to wish his son good luck and even better, offer to link him up with capable tutors if he is actually looking for one.

The key here is to remember something that is seemingly unimportant and then reference it in the next conversation. This will set you apart from the 99.9999% of the people who are mostly into themselves or their own agendas.

New action to take: Make it a habit to take notes after your conversation or encounter with the person. Find a way to reference it either via a phone call, an email or the next encounter. This will impress the person tremendously. If you are a sales professional, you will also want to download this Client Bio Data Sheet which can be used to help you remember important details about your client. Here's the website → www.UnlockYourPersonalCharisma.com/Bonus

3. Look out for the “lion” in them

There is a popular motivational poster with a cat looking into the mirror, but sees a lion as its reflection. This is also Dr Dawn Dekle's way of looking at the people she works with. The Dean of the S P Jain Center of Management prefers to see the “lion” in her staff. In other words, she chooses to see people for their strengths, potential and capabilities. A good leader—in her own opinion—is someone who focuses on strengths and helps develop potential. She is also quick to compliment and slow to criticise.

“[Unfortunately more often than not] we do not see the best in people, so if they have disappointed us, we think of them as disappointing people,” Deckle points out. Deckle explains that this often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy because this causes leaders be on the constant lookout for their subordinate’s mistakes, which causes the subordinate to feel disempowered and demoralised, leading to more mistakes.

Her advice is to allow other people to fulfill their potential by looking past their mistakes. “People do stand up straighter and they are more confident,” observes Deckle, who has used this approach in her daily work.

New action to take: Be quick to compliment and slow to criticise. Focus on the person’s strengths, potential and capabilities. A good

Be quick to compliment and slow to criticise. Focus on the person’s strengths, potential and capabilities.

question to constantly ask yourself is “What do I like about the person?” Not only will this help you focus on the positive, it will also build affinity between you and your client or prospect. This, however, does not mean that you ignore the person’s mistakes. Be curious and find out why the person did what he did. Correct the action and not the person (recall: people always want to be right).

4. See people as people and show them genuine concern

Early this year, I had the privilege of interviewing the Chief Operating Officer of Singapore Youth Olympics Games Organising Committee (SYOGOC), Eric Tan.

Previously, in his 32-year career with the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), Tan—having held the rank of Brigadier General (Retired)—had been the Singapore Army’s Chief Artillery Officer, Commander of the 9th Singapore Division, Force Commander of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force in Timor-Leste and Commandant of the SAFTI Military Institute. In spite of his high-profile portfolios, he is an exceedingly humble man who has genuine concern for people.

In his own words, he sees people as people. “I realised that if I look at people as people, I will stand to gain more than if I looked at them as a ‘soldier,’” he explained.

“Once you look at them as labels—staff, secretary, boss—you stop seeing them as people, who are human beings who have aspirations, ambitions, wants and desires.”

New action to take: Have genuine concern for people regardless of age or status. Instead of judging them, see them as people with aspirations, ambitions, wants and desires, just like yourself. Also make it a habit to see and feel issues from their perspective.



See People as People

As such, Tan always takes the time to understand the person, taking pains to learn about their family background, their culture, their desires and their dreams. His empathy for people has also helped him solve many tricky situations, as he was able to see and feel issues from another person’s perspective.

“The situation in Timor-Leste was a difficult one. We had to depend on each other for our safety and success. There were some who got brushed aside because they did not use English as their first language. They took a while to say things so some assumed that that group of people had nothing to contribute. But they had good ideas, we just needed to give them a chance,” said Eric.

To overcome such negativity, Eric constantly reminded everyone that they had been handpicked for the job by their individual countries. They were good at what they did and there was no reason why were incapable of doing a good job in Timor-Leste. This soon became a mantra and people started seeing their own worth in the team.

It was with such humility and empathy that Tan won himself many supporters and the respect of his superiors, all because he saw people as people.


5. Appreciate the person and do it often

If there is one thing we need to do more of, it has to be this: sincere appreciation of others.

Reflect on your entire day. How many people have you praised and appreciated? If you are like most people, the count may be one or two. But if you want to be counted among those who are in the top 1% and

are wildly successful and popular, learn to include appreciation for others in your daily language.

If you want to be counted among those who are in the top 1% and are wildly successful and popular, learn to include appreciation for others in your daily language.



Take Time to Love Your Loved Ones

Be sure to appreciate your loved ones too, especially when they are still alive. I recall one story shared by a life coach that moved everyone in the room to tears. He once got his client to take a step of courage to tell his 64-year old mother that he loved her. This is something that he had never said before, and being Asian, it was possibly one of the scariest things to do.

But he resolved to do it anyway.

So he called his mum and when she picked up the phone, he blurted out in his native Hokkien dialect, "Mother, I love you."

She could not hear him well and so she asked him to repeat himself.

In a louder voice, he said again, "Mother, I love you."

"Crazy!" she replied, and slammed down the phone.

The client was naturally distraught but his coach told him to relax and go back home as planned.

The call was made in the afternoon and three hours had passed by the time he returned home. To his surprise, he was greeted with all his favourite dishes on the dining table. His mother did not say anything and the two of them proceeded with dinner quietly. But as he was eating, he started tearing because he could feel the love his mother had for him.

A few years later, the client unfortunately met with an accident and passed away as a result of complications from the accident. When his coach visited him at the hospital, a common friend of theirs thanked him profusely. "Till today, his mother has not forgotten those words that her son said to her."

New action to take: Grab a piece of paper and write down all the people that you want to thank and appreciate. Beside their name, list down specifically what you want to thank them for. Remember to include your loved ones like your parents, spouse and children. Once the list is complete, go appreciate them in person.

Sources:

Dale Carnegie *How to win friends and influence people* pp48

Credit Kelvin Lim, *The Courage To Create*

Charisma in Summary

1. Be genuinely interested in others
2. Make your prospects or clients feel like they are the most important person in your life when you are with them
3. Be excited when you are with prospect or client; be enthusiastic and show how happy you are to see them
4. Take extensive notes when you meet people and record what their PPVs (passion, pain, values) are; remember birthdays, anniversaries, etc. and find creative ways to celebrate them
5. Find chances to raise details about what your prospects or clients shared in the next conversation or encounter you have with them, especially the seemingly unimportant events in their lives
6. Be quick to compliment and slow to criticise; focus on strengths, potential and capabilities
7. Have genuine concern for your prospects or clients, and treat them as people with dreams, desires and aspirations
8. Make appreciation for others part of your daily language, especially for the important people in your life

SECRET NO. 2

INFLUENCE



A person can have the
greatest idea in the world—
completely different and novel
—but if that person cannot
convince enough other people,
it doesn't matter.

– GREGORY BERNIS

THREE MISTAKES YOU ARE UNKNOWINGLY COMMITTING RIGHT NOW THAT IS SABOTAGING YOUR SALE

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As a communications coach, I have spent more than a thousand hours coaching sales professionals like yourself in their presentations and pitches. No matter which industry, country or organisation they come from, I always notice the same three mistakes that they unknowingly commit. This sabotages the sale they are trying so hard to make. It is a shame because these mistakes are easily avoidable.

I suspect that they have been insidiously embedded inside your presentation and you need to get rid of them fast, if you want to close your sales.

In this chapter, you are going to discover what these three mistakes are and how you can avoid them once and for all.

Mistake #1 – You talk too much

You talk too much about yourself. You talk too much about your product. You talk too much about your service.

So you're eloquent, excited and energetic. But have you tried hearing your rhetoric from your listener's point of view? Because if you do, all they are hearing is this: "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah..."

People don't buy because they understand your product or your service. People buy because they feel understood by you. And it is quite difficult for people to understand you if you are doing all the talking.

People don't buy because they understand your product or your service. People buy because they feel understood by you.

So the next time you meet a prospect or client, refrain from delivering the well-oiled sales pitch. Instead, have a conversation with them about them. Give them lots of attention. It will make them feel important and special. This is your fastest route to a "yes".

Having said that, your conversation with them must be strategic. There are two key objectives you must achieve in this conversation in order for the sale to happen.

Number one on your priority is to build sufficient rapport leading to the person liking you. (Note: refer to the two keys – "Connect" and "Relationship-Focus" for the specific tactics.)

Next, create a "gap" (I'll explain this in a moment) big enough that listeners will be driven to take specific actions in their best interest; hopefully, this means buying that solution from you.

Mind the Gaps

There are two types of gaps I want to deal with here. One is the knowledge gap. The other is the dream gap.

When your listener discovers that there is something he doesn't know, a knowledge gap is created. As an insurance agent, you will appreciate the power of a well-placed knowledge gap, like "If insurance is so bad, then why do more than 100,000 people in Singapore still buy insurance?"

If you are a sales manager, showing clear differences in sales results can help create a knowledge gap. For instance, you can display the sales results of other representatives and then ask this question, "Donald did exactly what all sales representatives were taught to do, but why was he able to sell three times more than all of you?"

Another instance: say you are a general manager delivering a speech to 20,000 employees. You can share a success story of a competing company and then pose this question, "What did this company do different from us that led them to be number one consistently in our industry?"

See how a knowledge gap is created? You can pose a question that sets them thinking about what they clearly don't yet know. There are specific advantages to creating a knowledge gap. First, it generates interest. Second, it gets listeners involved. Most importantly, it causes pain.

And pain drives action.

Learning Pains

When you want to know something you don't currently know, it is like having an itch that you cannot scratch. Soon, it becomes a pain point and the only way to relieve it is to fill that knowledge gap. This is also the same reason why we are willing to sit through a really bad movie, because the only thing worse than bad acting is not knowing how the movie ends.

For the knowledge gap to work, you need to first skillfully open the gap before leading to a close. As a salesperson, your tendency is to tell your prospect or client everything about your product or service. What you need to learn is to tease and get your listener to the stage that they are begging you to tell.

One way to create a knowledge gap is to use questions and puzzles.

Imagine if you are able to constantly open the knowledge gaps in your listener's mind during your conversation with them. Don't you think you will have them eating out of your hand in no time?



A Tale of Pandan Cakes and Hampers

The idea behind the knowledge gap is to simply point out that there is something they don't know that someone else does. "I have a friend of mine who is the same age as you and only has a diploma certificate. Yet just this month alone, he has raked in \$15,000 and he is taking the next month off to bring his family to Paris."

Won't you want to know what he did that helped him make so much money?

Or here's one from me:

"To date, 55,241 books have been written on influence. But after reading the 50th book, you'll realise that they are talking about the same thing. My research has led me to a startling fact: influence actually boils down to just two questions you need to answer.

And the reason why your colleagues can sell ten times more than you even though they lack the experience or even product knowledge is because they know what these two questions are. I will reveal them in the next chapter."

Aren't you curious to find out what these two questions are? In fact, I think you are already looking for it. This is what I mean by opening the gap.

The Power of Dreams

The second of these gaps is called the dream gap. It is the gap between where we are now (the "start state") and where we want to go (the "end state"). A skillful salesperson is able to get his prospect or customer to experience that gap during the conversation. The bigger the gap, the more pain you generate.

This pain will provide the person with the impetus to take necessary action in order to achieve the end state. And of course, a smart salesperson will cleverly position his product or service as the solution to close the gap.



You have to help the people visualise their end-state (Y). The clearer he can see it, the easier he can imagine the reality of it.

So how do we proficiently open the dream gap?

First, you have to help people visualise their end-state (Y). The clearer they can see it, the easier they can imagine the

reality of it. The end goal is for the them to feel excited, exhilarated and a full range of positive emotions.

Here are the Y-questions to ask to help people get from the present to their end-state.

1. Where do you see yourself in the next five years?
2. What would you want to acquire or achieve that will make you very happy?
3. What is your bucket list*?
4. What is your ideal lifestyle like?
5. How would you know if you or your organization have succeeded?

There are essentially three broad categories of things that human beings want. I call them the ABCs of life. So as you work with your prospect or client to share with you their end-state, be sure to cover these three grounds:

Assets – money, insurance, investments, properties, businesses and health

Bonds – with self, parents, spouses, children, friends, clients and colleagues

Career – doing well at work, promotions, recognition, being effective and efficient

Probe for the Why

Be very specific as your prospects or clients paint their end-state to you. When they say, “I want a lot of money,” do not stop at that answer. Go deeper and ask them, “How much?” and “What do you want money for?”

If they say, “I want a big house,” probe a little further by inquiring, “What type

* A list of things you want to do before you die. I usually like to start by asking if the person has caught this movie titled “The Bucket List” starring Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson. From there, I will dovetail to this question – “Do you have a bucket list?” If they do, get them to share. If they don’t, encourage them to create one right now. You can start by sharing your own list.

of house; care to describe?” and “What do you think people would say when they visit your house?”

They might mention that they want to improve their family life, by saying, “I want to have a closer relationship with my wife.” Take the chance to find out more, by inquiring, “How would you know when you have a closer relationship with your wife?”

When they declare, “I want to do well at work,” give them a chance to give more details, by asking “What do you mean by doing well at work?” and “What results would you want to produce?”

The key here is to be specific. Get your prospects and clients to describe their thoughts in detail. Get them to colour their dreams as vividly as possible. The clearer they can see it in their mind, the easier for them to feel it. And when they feel it, they will want it.

This is how you generate the pull.

From Why to Buy

To deepen their wants and desires further, ask WHY.

Why do you want the money? Why do you want this big house? Why do you want the job promotion? The “why” question is powerful because it gets the person into an emotional state, versus a rational one.

The “why” question is powerful because it gets the person into an emotional state, versus a rational one.

You will learn in the later chapters that people buy based on their emotions. Or, if you’re adventurous, you could also try out an experiment with many different people by probing them with the “why” question. You will soon realise that at the end of the day, what people want is freedom and fulfillment.

This means that if you can position your products and services to help them achieve these two end-states, you will have a significantly higher chance of closing the sale.

Once you have got the person present to their end state (Y), go for the start-state (X). Here are some questions you can ask:

1. So where are you at right now with regard to your assets, bonds and career?
2. Are you happy with where you are at right now? If you're not happy, why not?
3. What is your day-to-day situation like right now?
4. If you were to score yourself right now from 1 to 10, how would you score yourself and why? (You can break it down to assets, bonds, career if you like)

To help them get into an emotional state, be specific. Get them to describe their situation and current state in vivid detail. Remember: if they can see it, they can feel it. And if they can feel it, it will create sufficient pain to motivate the person to take action.

The key emotion you want to generate at the start state is dissatisfaction and unhappiness. This will create a push towards the end-state.

Instead of giving a speech, have a conversation; build rapport, get the person to like you and start widening their gaps!

Isn't this a much more effective way to close a sale than just talking non-stop about you, your product or your service? Now go get

started. Instead of giving a speech, have a conversation; build rapport, get the person to like you and start widening their gaps!

Mistake #2 –You are not buyer-centric

During one of my training sessions with our civil servants, I got them to come forward to sell their organisation. And this is what I got from them:

If you join us, you will get a \$120 monthly allowance to take public transport...

You get to upgrade the workforce...

We work very closely with the top management...

We have work-life balance...

You will have the chance to travel overseas...

And the list goes on.

Are you compelled to join the public service?

If I were you, the answer is, "Not yet."

Here's the reason: They didn't sell *benefits*. They sold *features*. They described what you would do if you work with them (for example, "You will have the chance to travel overseas" or "You get to upgrade the workforce"). Features do not naturally translate into a successful sale because there are still many questions unanswered. For example,

So what if I get to work closely with the top management?

Who cares about the \$120 transport allowance?

What's in it for me if I help to upgrade the workforce?

Until you answer these invisible questions that are screaming in your buyer's head, you won't get that sale.

The answers to the above questions form the benefits. It tells you what you are going to get out of doing something. It either brings you pleasure or takes you away from a pain. For a benefit to be effective, it must be able to elicit a positive response from the listener. Neil Rackham, author of SPIN Selling, says, "The higher the value of the sale, the less effective features and advantages are and the more important benefits become."

A good habit to cultivate is to constantly ask yourself the following three questions whenever you prepare a pitch. These questions will help you get into a prospect's mindset and help you see from her point of view.

A good habit to cultivate is to constantly ask yourself the following three questions whenever you prepare a pitch. So what? Who cares? What's in it for me?

So what?

Who cares?

What's in it for me?

It also helps if you are clear of your buyer's start state (X) and end state (Y). The start state gives you clues to what they are dissatisfied with and unhappy about while the end state tells you the desires and wants of your buyer.

If you are able to demonstrate how they can move away from X towards Y with your product or service, the chances of them saying yes to you is significantly higher.



Finding the Benefit

Say a civil servant is at a road show. His objective is to get people interested in working for public service. Before he launches into his sales pitch (remember mistake #1 – talking too much), he can start with a question.

Say he is talking to an executive working in the private sector, he can ask, “What got you interested in the public service?” This is an open-ended question that can either lead to X (finding out the person’s current dissatisfactions or unhappiness) or it could lead to Y (finding out the person’s desires and wants).

A specific X-question he can ask is, “What is it like working in your current job?”

A specific Y-question he can ask is, “What would your ideal job be like?”

Discovering Value

As a salesperson, you also want to find out the prospect’s values. Values refer to the things that are deeply important to someone.

For example:

Freedom: not being tied down by a 9-5 job

Fulfillment: a chance to do something meaningful and contribute back to society

Growth: to learn everyday and get better

The magic question to help you get to their values is “WHY?”

The magic question to help you get to their values is “WHY?”

With the information you glean from your prospect or client, it would become so much easier to make the sale.

If the executive is tired of the old job because of all the travelling, do you think “travelling overseas” will appeal to someone? Or if the executive is already making a lot of money in the private sector, will the \$120 monthly transport allowance seal the deal for that person?

On the other hand, if the executive's values were about meaning and contributing back to society—which might be something that the person did not get to realise in the current job—your focus then would be to demonstrate why public service is more meaningful than the person thought.

So instead of telling the executive the job function (“help upgrade our workforce”), you can let the executive know the impact the person gets to create if he or she works with your organisation. For example, “you will help lower income Singaporeans find jobs so that they can support their family.” Another example: “You get to make sure that no child in Singapore will ever be abused by monster dads again.”

Sell the Right Thing

The lesson is really simple. Sell benefits, not features. Focus on your buyer's wants, desires and values. And remember to answer the three questions that are constantly screaming in their heads. “So what?”, “Who cares?” and “What's in it for me?”

It pays to be buyer-centric.

Mistake #3 – Your pitch is forgettable

Your prospects and customers are constantly bombarded with information. The moment they are awake, their brains are exposed to an avalanche of data from television, radio, newspapers, internet, phones, games, advertisements, bosses, co-workers, spouses and mother-in-laws.

How certain are you that they will remember your sales pitch a day from now? Heck, how certain are you that they will even remember your sales pitch an hour from now?

Why They Forget You

As the saying goes, “out of sight, out of mind.” If you want to remain first in your prospects or clients' minds, you got to be remembered. Unfortunately, most sales pitches are boring and forgettable for three reasons.

1. They do not involve the buyer in the sales pitch
2. The benefits are too abstract
3. There is too much telling and very little showing

You can avoid the first reason if you work hard in engaging your listener in strategic small talk. We have covered the how-tos in the earlier part of this chapter. (Here's a quick refresher on what we covered: get them to like you fast, widen the gaps and be buyer-centric. Now you're ready to go!)

Let's tackle the other two reasons.

Your benefits are too abstract. In other words, your benefits don't tell us anything about why your prospect or client needs your product or service. If you are giving a talk on the importance of exercising, you must make it clear how exercising can benefit them.

In the book "Made To Stick", the authors Dan and Chip Heath warn against bringing up abstract benefits like "you will feel healthier" or "exercising is a way of life". It's hard for the audience to experience what "healthier" is. It's even harder for them to understand what "way of life" is.

If you want your listener to remember what you say and take action, make sure the benefits are concrete and tangible.

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For example, if you want to drive home the importance of exercise to an audience of grandparents, tell them that when they exercise regularly, they will live to see their grandchildren graduate!

Isn't that more concrete than "you will live a longer life"?

One more example: when speaking to a middle-aged crowd, you could share that if they exercise 15 minutes a day, three times a week, they can save more than \$450,000 in medical bills and \$12,000 in anti-ageing cream in a year!

Isn't this stronger than "you will live healthier and look younger"?

You can further amplify the desires of your audience by helping them to imagine themselves enjoying the benefits. In 1982, psychologists conducted a study on a group of homeowners in Tempe, Arizona to observe the effects of persuasion. One group of homeowners were presented with some information about why cable might be worthwhile.

CATV will provide a broader entertainment and informational service to its subscribers. Used properly, a person can plan in advance to enjoy events offered. Instead of spending money on the babysitter and gas, and putting up with the hassle of going out, more time can be spent at home with family, alone, or with friends.

The second group of homeowners were asked to imagine themselves in a detailed scenario:

Take a moment and imagine how CATV will provide you with a broader entertainment and informational service. When you use it properly, you will be able to plan in advance which of the events offered you wish to enjoy. Take a moment and think of how, instead of spending money on the babysitter and gas, and then having to put up with the hassle of going out, you will be able to spend your time at home, with your family, alone, or with your friends.

After the survey was conducted, the local cable company approached the homeowners for subscription. The homeowners who received the first piece of information about cable subscribed at a rate of 20%, which was about the same as the rest of the neighborhood.

The homeowners who *imagined themselves* subscribing to cable, however, subscribed at a rate of 47%. The research paper, when it was published, was titled “Does imagining make it so?” The answer is yes. (*from “Make It Stick”, Chip and Dan Heath*)

Showing the Way

Now for the final reason: too much telling, very little showing.

Let’s take a look at an example:

“Our mission is to become the international leader in the space industry through maximum team-centered innovation and strategically targeted aerospace initiatives.”

Will you still remember this message after one day? Or an hour later?

Chances are you won’t, because these are just words. Worse, these are abstract words—in phrases like “international leader”, “maximum team-centered

innovation” and “strategically targeted aerospace initiatives”—that don’t trigger any mental images in your mind.

They just don’t say anything.

But how about this?

“Put a man on the moon and return him safely by the end of the decade.”

As you read this message, can you envision a man hopping on the moon? The words above are simple enough to understand and as a result, it helps to generate a mental image. Your idea of a man may be different from mine, but the essence of the message is the same. We both have a man on the moon. And because we can see it, therefore we can remember it.

An Experiment with Apples

I want you to close your eyes right now and imagine an apple in your mind.

Go on.

Try it.

Imagine an apple in your mind. Once you are done, open your eyes.

What is the colour of your apple?

This is an experiment I have been conducting over the last three years and I get all kinds of answers – red, green, red/green, black, grey, the Apple logo etc. But to this day, no one has ever told me that they see the alphabets “A-P-P-L-E” in their mind.

This says a lot! Our mind doesn’t see words. That is not the natural language of our mind.

Instead, our mind sees pictures. This is also the reason why kids love to read picture books. It is easy for them to understand the message of the story. As they grow up, they start reading storybooks; Enid Blyton if you are born in the ‘80s, JK Rowling’s Harry Potter or perhaps more recently Jeff Kinney’s Diary of the Wimpy Kid.

Even though these books are filled with words, the narrative evokes images in the minds of children, which in turn elicits a wide range of emotions. Children—and even adults—experience real emotions of surprise, awe, joy, fear, sadness, and laughter. These emotions make the story sticky.

So likewise, if you want your pitch to be sticky, find ways to help them visualise and feel. The best way to do that is not to tell but show. And here are four powerful ways to show your point – stories, analogies, pictures, props and demonstrations.



Why Prices Go South at Southwest

This was a story that Herb Kelleher, former CEO and chairman of Southwest Airlines used to tell as he travelled around United States to meet his employees and customers. The story explained who Southwest Airlines' competition was and why they priced their tickets so low.

“You know it is funny I get letters all the time from shareholders. And they are often angry letters—America West is flying between Los Angeles and Las Vegas for \$149 one way and you Herb Kelleher, Southwest Airlines, is pricing at \$79 for the same one-way ticket. Don't you have the decency to at least kick your price up to \$129? Why are you leaving so much money on the table?”

Herb would then write back, “Thank you for your letter but you don't really understand who we are and who our competition is. It is the automobile. \$79 is the same price to drive from Los Angeles to Las Vegas including maintenance, gas and insurance and that's how we price our ticket.”

Because of the simplicity of the story, everyone in the organization—down to the janitor—knew who their competition was and why they price their tickets low.

Lesson to learn from Herb Kelleher: the next time you have a point to make, find a real example to illustrate the point. It may take more work but your audience will have a higher chance of believing it and remembering it.

Analogies: Bringing Statistics to Life

Steven Covey, author of 7 Habits of Highly Effective People once shared a finding relating to organisational effectiveness:

- 37% have clear understanding of what the organisation is trying to achieve
- Only 1 in 5 is enthusiastic about the goal
- Only 20% of the employees trust their organisation

These statistics, by themselves, are dry and uninteresting. Covey wanted to help his audience understand the implications of the findings and make these numbers alive. Knowing that his listeners were American football fans, he helped bring the numbers to bear by drawing an analogy. This is how he reframed the data:

If the above statistics hold true, it means that:

- 4 out of 11 football players know where to score
- 2 out of 11 players care
- All but 2 will compete against their own team

With an analogy, Covey delivered a far sobering depiction of the data than just stating it.

Pictures: A Thousand Words, One Unforgettable Story

This is a winning photo taken in 1994 during the Sudan famine. The picture depicts a starving child crawling towards a United Nations food camp, located a kilometre away.

Looming in the background is a vulture waiting for the child to die.

This picture shocked the whole world. No one knows what happened to the child after the photo was taken, including the photographer Kevin Carter who left the place as soon as the photo was taken.

Three months later, Carter committed suicide due to depression.*

Props: Show and Tell Time

In 2008, Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple, revealed the world's thinnest notebook at the time by taking it out of an office envelope. The frenzy and buzz he caused with this one simple action dominated the tech news scene for weeks.

Four Ways to Stickiness

So there you have it, four ways to make your pitch sticky so that you are remembered for all the right reasons. Weave in stories, analogies, pictures and props and they will serve you well long after you've put them to use.

An important note: what matters is not what you say, it is what your listener remembers.

Over to You: Reflecting on Your Pitch

Out of the three mistakes, which one—or ones—have you been unconsciously committing as you attempt to influence? Is it talking too much? Is it not being buyer-centric? Is it being too forgettable?

Regardless which mistake it is, I encourage you to take necessary actions to overcome them. Like a new shirt, it can get uncomfortable the first time you put it on. But over time it will feel like a second skin.

Likewise, the strategies in this chapter may seem foreign to you. I strongly encourage you to conscientiously put them to practice and apply them, and you may experience that surge in sales that you never thought possible.

When you are ready, join me in the next chapter where I will help you summarize what the 55,241 books on influence are really trying to tell you. I will show you how influence essentially boils down to just two questions you need to answer in order for you to successfully influence someone.

These two questions are applicable whether you are dealing with your prospect, your boss, your investor or your mother-in-law. You are going to be very happy because you will save a lot of time (reading all the 55,241 books), money (if each book costs \$20, that's about a million dollars!) and effort reading all of them (which will take you many lifetimes).

See you at the next chapter!

Sources:

<http://www.huaren.com/UnitedNations/photo-1.htm>

Charisma in Summary

1. There are only 3 mistakes you make when making presentations and pitches, which are easy to avoid
2. **Mistake #1:** You talk too much; remember that people don't buy because they understand your product or your service. People buy because they feel understood by you
3. Use a knowledge gap to make your prospect or client pay close attention to you and start thinking about matters that they do not know about; do this by asking questions to challenge their understanding
4. Use a dream gap to help illustrate where prospects are now and where they can be with your product or service; probe further to discover your prospect's purpose and why
5. **Mistake #2:** You are not buyer-centric; focus more on talking about the benefits to your prospects rather than the features of your product or service
6. Find out what your prospect's values are; values, like freedom and fulfillment, refer to the things that are deeply important to them
7. Ask these three questions from the perspective of your prospect: "so what?", "who cares?" and "what's in it for me?"; these questions will help you make an emotional push toward you and your product or service
8. **Mistake #3:** Your pitch is forgettable; use visual language in your pitch instead of abstract words
9. Find real examples to illustrate your point simply and clearly; these help to shift your prospect's perspective to the product or service you're using
10. Use stories, analogies, pictures and props in your pitch to illustrate your point: this helps make your ideas and pitch "sticky"

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