

HOW TO COMMUNICATE YOUR VALUE



IN A NEW VIRTUAL BUSINESS WORLD

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HOW TO COMMUNICATE YOUR VALUE IN A NEW VIRTUAL BUSINESS WORLD

With COVID-19 creating a time of uncertainty and fear...how do you continue to communicate your value to clients while the world is upside down? Do you back off and give everyone space? Do you reach out even more to not sever ties?

Our relationships with clients are different now, more challenging and at times ambiguous. But there are ways to maintain your value, show expertise, and communicate with clients in a language that truly speaks to them despite the current climate.

The key is how you communicate. **In a time of crisis, targeted communication cuts through the clutter!**

**HERE ARE 6 TIPS TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE VALUE
DURING A TIME OF CRISIS.**



CAUTION

BEFORE YOU FOCUS ON VALUE YOU FIRST HAVE TO FOCUS ON EMPATHY

The worst thing you can do to damage a relationship is to appear out of touch with someone else's needs. Recognize the environment has changed and that your selling tactics have to adapt as well. That can often mean taking a break from pitching and instead reach out to simply say hello and check in, ask if everyone is OK and establish if now is a good time to talk business. Once you've reached out to touch base and make sure everyone is OK, you can then focus on providing value.

1) IDENTIFY NEEDS

Before you claim value...you have to create value. **Value comes when people feel heard, listened to and cared about.** So how do you do that?

ASK QUESTIONS.

Take the time to ask questions so you can better target your message towards needs! Ask clients what they need from you. Most of us tend to focus on our sales pitch, but **purposeful communication means taking the attention off yourself and putting your audience in the spotlight.** When it comes to asking questions - don't snorkel, scuba dive! Generic questions like "How are you" will only take you so far. You can't tap into the heads of your clients without the right information and you don't get answers to questions you don't ask. **So ask questions to find out what their needs are.** "How can I be of service?" "What's working for you now?" "What's making things even harder now?"

REMEMBER WIIFM.

Once you know needs, you're in a better place to add value. **If you feel you or your product can make a difference, spell that out.** Find the "What's In It For Me!" What will your audience get from your message, why should they listen and why will your message matter to them? Once someone sees the value in it for them, their focus and attention will increase. If you feel the time is right to sell, highlight how you or your product can be specifically of service to address needs. Without the "What's In It For Me" you run the risk of sounding insensitive by simply selling. **When you take the time to think why your client should care, you are more apt to come across as helpful and valuable.**

DON'T FORGET DELIVERY.

When I do in person Media Training with my clients, we do taped interviews and playback for critique. Time and time again, no matter who the client is, the same critique frequently comes up. No one smiles. To be clear, there's a time and a place for a smile! But what happens when we smile? We appear warmer, more engaging, more relatable and basically more human. **So don't forget to throw in a smile when you're on a video conference with clients.** Smiling even when you're on the phone can brighten your voice and make you sound more empathetic.

2) ACT AS A MOTIVATOR

It can be hard in times of turmoil to focus on goals. In a crisis our objectives can seem even more unreachable and perhaps no longer even relevant. So how can you help clients re-evaluate their business objectives, identify new more realistic goals, and motivate them to meet those goals?

Ask them this one question:

"WHAT DO YOU WANT TO AVOID?"

It can be a powerful question and the first step to set up a new kind of partnership in a new kind of environment.

People are also more apt to move away from fear than towards pleasure. While fear isn't a good long-term motivator, in the short term, in a time of uncertainty and change, identifying fears and working to get away from them can feel empowering. **Sometimes just identifying the fear, and saying it out loud can help someone realize what they need to do to find success.**

By asking **"WHAT DO YOU WANT TO AVOID"...**

- You can work to find solutions away from the fear and therefore towards the goal.
- You can make yourself a partner and a motivator.
- You can provide reassurance and further solidify trust.

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE:

I was working with a CFO of a major financial institution who was going on MSNBC for the first time. I saw him walking towards the conference room and it was clear everyone he passed showed respect. He was someone in charge who was used to getting things done effectively. He walked into the room and told me he didn't need Media Training but wanted to "brush up" so he could just practice a few mock interviews.

I asked him what his goals were for the interview and his answer was that he wanted to provide insight on the topic. We did a round or two of practice interviews and I could tell he wasn't really paying attention and just wanted to get the training over with to appease his boss. So I stopped.

I told him I had one final question to ask him and I wanted an honest answer.

"TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE AFRAID OF WITH THIS INTERVIEW?"

He was taken aback, but he thought for bit and then said:

"I DON'T WANT TO APPEAR LIKE I DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER OR THAT I'M NOT CONFIDENT."

ONCE I KNEW WHAT HE WANTED TO AVOID, I WAS IN A BETTER POSITION TO HELP HIM.

I told him I could work with him on ways to appear more confident and that I could teach him a tool to tackle tough questions and get him back to his message. I assured him I wouldn't leave until he felt truly secure and that I would be available to practice with him right before the interview.

Now, I was a partner to help him get through this. I was a safety net and credible resource with proven techniques that could help him move away from his fear and towards his goal.

Asking

"WHAT DO YOU WANT TO AVOID"

can put you on a path to better help your clients, cement trust and provide movement to motivate.

Information can change minds, but emotions can change actions. Currently emotions are at a fever pitch, so don't ignore how clients are feeling! Instead

SHOW CLIENTS HOW YOU CAN WORK ON A SOLUTION TOGETHER TO AVOID WHAT'S KEEPING THEM UP AT NIGHT.

3) KEEP CONCISE

When you're working with short attention spans, you don't have time to drone on and on before you get to your point. **You need to put your important information up front.**

Yet we're trained to speak backwards, we talk all about our details and then we deliver our big news, we set up the joke and then the punchline, we outline all our efforts and then talk about the payoff.

In a time when people are struggling with information overload, you need to move your point up, deliver your lead right away, and don't waste time.

HERE'S HOW:

DON'T BURY THE LEAD!

When I worked in television news, "Don't bury the lead!", was the mantra. It means **don't leave the most important information until the end.**

No one wants to hear all about a zoo opening, how many animals are there, where the zoo is located....and then oh yeah 20 lions escaped.

Before you engage with your clients, your boss, co-workers

WRITE DOWN THESE THREE THINGS:

- 1** NEED TO KNOW
- 2** NICE TO KNOW
- 3** NOT IMPORTANT

Then write down what you'd like to say, how you plan to start off the conversation and what you'd like to convey. Once you have a basic outline, start to organize your thoughts.

- The most important information should go under **“Need to Know.”**
- Less pressing information should go next to **“Nice to Know.”**
- Anything left over in the **“Not Important”** column isn’t worth bringing into the conversation.

As you’re organizing your thoughts, it can help to ask yourself
“If they don’t know this...will it matter?”

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE:

A nurse is calling a doctor at 1:00 a.m. from the hospital to tell her about a patient.

The nurse has a ton of information about the patient:

This patient is a 65 year old male. The patient came into the hospital at midnight complaining of pain. The patient is cranky. The patient is with his wife and daughter. There aren’t a lot of hospital beds left. They’d like to try to discharge the patient as soon as possible. The doctor should come in as soon as possible to see the patient.

YOU COULD BREAK ALL OF THAT INFORMATION INTO THE FOLLOWING:

- 1 NEED TO KNOW...** The doctor needs to come in as soon as possible.
- 2 NICE TO KNOW...** The patient is 65 complaining of pain. The patient came in at midnight. They are low on hospital beds. The hospital would like to try to discharge the patient quickly if possible.
- 3 NOT IMPORTANT...** The patient is with his wife. The patient is cranky.

How would you start that conversation if you were the nurse?

So often we just talk without a structure to what we’re saying.
And without structure we can tend to ramble.

Now isn't the time to waste attention and come across as verbose.

TAKE THE TIME TO FIGURE OUT WHAT PEOPLE “NEED TO KNOW” AND THEN PLACE THAT FIRST.

4) CAPTURE ATTENTION

What's the simple trick you need to know in order to **grab someone's attention?**

It's a tool you can use right before you bring in your main message...and it will help your clients focus more on what you're saying.

First take a minute to think about what you pay attention to and what you don't give time towards.

You'll come to see, we're more apt to pay attention **when we feel we're learning information that will matter to us.**

IMAGINE YOU'RE WATCHING TV NEWS,
AND THE ANCHOR SAYS:

**"Coming up next...
a story about visiting your Doctor."**

Would you listen?

WHAT IF THE ANCHOR SAID:

**"Coming up next...
the number one thing you need to
know before your next Doctor's visit."**

Does that intrigue you more?

The difference is now there's wording to suggest **you're missing out on key information if you don't listen to what's coming next.**



And therein lies the simple trick!
It's called Flagging.

A Flag is a verbal cue that signals you to pay attention.

Almost like planting a flag in the ground to alert you something's there. A verbal flag tells the audience "There's about to be information here for you that you won't want to miss."

FLAGS CAN INCLUDE SUGGESTED PHRASES LIKE:

“WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...”

“THE REAL NEWS IS...”

“THE 3 TOP THINGS TO REMEMBER...”

(People love lists. It makes it seem like you're the expert who's culled through all the nonsense to give them exactly what they need to know.)

You're flagged everyday and you probably don't realize it.

Think of the promotional e-mails currently in your in-box. Are you more apt to open an e-mail with the subject **"Summer clothes"** or the e-mail with the subject **"The one item you need in your closet this summer."**

A flag is almost a tease that there's information upcoming that you won't want to miss out on.

With the environment we're in now, you have to work even harder than ever to have your message cut through the clutter. We're all assaulted with information from every medium at this point and our brains are at capacity with all there is to worry about.

So before you deliver your main message, add a flag in front to perk up attention.

The next time you're communicating to a client, over e-mail, phone or Zoom, put yourself in their shoes and think about what would **earn their attention**. How can you flag them that your information is **important enough** to listen to?

**WHY NOT DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO HELP
MAKE YOUR MESSAGE MATTER TO YOUR
TARGET AUDIENCE!**

5) BE AN EXPERT

How can you still be useful to clients when it's clear they're not interested in what you're selling? With the Covid-19 pandemic, decreased budgets, and lack of work, many customers are being forced to turn their backs on trusted suppliers.

So, how can you keep your customers close even if they don't necessarily need you now?

The answer lies in targeted communication
to turn yourself into an expert!

**HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE
THE WORD "EXPERT?"**

**SOMEONE WHO OFFERS GUIDANCE,
ADVICE AND KNOWLEDGE THAT'S OF USE.**

So make yourself more useful than ever by offering your expertise with this simple strategy; **Instead of selling... send out tips.**
Offer your clients information to keep them engaged and by your side.

HERE'S HOW TO COMMUNICATE YOUR EXPERTISE AS EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE.

USE LISTS! Lists make it seem like you've culled through all the clutter to find the best of the best. Plus, lists can make mundane information more enticing. Our overworked brains breath a sigh of relief when we see lists. Lists signal a chance to not work as hard because someone else who knows better has already done the work for us! **So show your expertise by sending out lists with helpful information.**

LIST EXAMPLES:

**"The top 3 ways to improve
color print quality."**

**"5 great examples of
print marketing materials."**

**"The #1 trick to make your print
marketing more effective."**

USE FLAGS to get customers' attention by telling them these are tips and trends they "need" to know. Remember flags are verbal cues to highlight that what you're about to tell someone will matter to them. When you use flags like "need", "must", "only", you're signaling that this is vital information you don't want to miss out on.

FLAG EXAMPLES:

"What you need to know about the inkjet tipping point."

"The only way to improve your marketing quality."

"The best advice I was ever given in the industry."

REMINDE CLIENTS WHAT THEY'LL GET FROM THIS INFORMATION.

Don't forget to wrap it up and spell out why customers should pay attention to what you're saying. What's in it for them. Will your tips help them save money, gain a competitive advantage, put them in the know?

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME EXAMPLES:

"Why knowing inkjet trends can save you dollars down the road."

"3 trends to keep you competitive in today's market."

"The print marketing materials that will increase your sales."

Whatever tactic you choose and whatever phrasing feels right, **the key is to be proactive.** Pick a set amount of time that works for your relationship whether it's weekly, monthly or quarterly communication. Then make sure to **follow your set schedule** so clients know they can depend on you for tips, trends and important information.

So often we communicate in order to earn something from our customers... typically sales. The trick with sharing your expertise is that you come across as caring without trying to get something in return. In reality though,

BY SENDING OUT TIMELY TIPS YOU CAN CREATE DEMAND FOR YOURSELF, PROVE YOU'RE WORTH AND ESTABLISH YOURSELF AS AN AUTHORITY WITH KNOWLEDGE IN THE FIELD.

6) REMOTE READINESS!

Now that the world has gone from in-person to on-line, we're suddenly finding ourselves interacting in a whole new way with our clients and co-workers. We've gone virtual, and virtual meetings require a brand new set of skills!

So what does it take to reign on remote calls?

HERE ARE 5 TIPS TO HELP YOU NAIL YOUR NEXT VIRTUAL MEETING.

1

SIT WITH A SLIGHT LEAN FORWARD:

Imagine if you're sitting up straight that you're a triangle with a right angle. You want to lean about 20% forward. Just a slight lean. **When we lean forward we look more proactive and more engaged.** Leaning back makes us look more relaxed and passive. Plus, on camera whatever is closest to the camera will look larger. When you're leaning back, what's closest to the camera? Your stomach! No one wants to make their mid section appear bigger. So instead, sit with a slight lean forward to look your best and appear more authoritative.

2

DON'T FORGET TO GESTURE:

Even though the camera may cut you off at the waist, that doesn't mean your hands aren't still important. No one speaks without gesturing. When we communicate without use of our hands, we come across as more robotic and nervous. **But when we gesture we appear more relatable.** So keep your hands accessible and at the ready. Imagine that your gestures are like a highlighter, helping important points stand out. But what would happen if you highlighted the whole page? Important points would be lost. So use gestures sparingly and with purpose. You also need to move away any objects that may be tempting to fiddle with. There's enough distraction as it is on a virtual call. Don't give others additional things to focus on, like the tapping of a pen.

3

KEEP NOTES NEAR.

There's no need to put added pressure on yourself to memorize every bit of information on a virtual call. It's OK to keep notes by your side. Use your notes also as a way to remind yourself of certain cues like eye contact, breathing, volume, pace. News Anchors constantly use cues on their teleprompter that no one can see. They're reminded to pause, to punch certain words for importance with their volume, and to slow down. So if you find that you speak softly, or that you tend to race through what you say, **use your notes as a way to remind yourself to stay on track.** Write down a cue like "Slow Down" on the top of your page. No one will see it and why not do everything you can to make yourself come across as more confident and credible?

4

MAINTAIN EYE CONTACT:

Just because you have notes doesn't mean you can stare at them the whole time. Try to keep eye contact with the camera as much as possible while talking. When we don't maintain eye contact we come across as insincere, whereas **eye contact can help us better connect with whomever we're speaking with**. It's hard enough as it is to connect with people virtually, so make sure when you're talking that you concentrate on the camera in front of you so that those on the call feel acknowledged. You can even put a small sticker by your camera so you have something to focus on to help remind you where to look.

5

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT:

My kids have virtual calls most mornings at 10:00 a.m. for school. Inevitably at 9:59 a.m., one of them comes downstairs waving frantically that they can't log-on to the meeting. Don't leave anything to the last minute! Make sure that you're logged on early enough to guarantee your audio and video are working well. Also take the time to test that your camera angle is good and that your background is clean and free of distractions and clutter. See if the platform you're using lets you practice beforehand. For example, if you're using Zoom, go to support.zoom.us to find out how to use the site before your meeting so you can appear more polished.

So while virtual meetings may now be the new norm, it doesn't mean you should expect to ace each meeting right away. This is a new way of communicating that takes a new set of skills and thought.

**TAKE THE TIME TO FOCUS ON WHAT COUNTS,
SO YOU CAN BOOST YOUR CREDIBILITY AND
CONFIDENCE ON CAMERA.**