

Don't be Charlie Brown's Teacher

Executive summary. If you are interested in communicating information to your audience, and you want your audience to absorb and remember what you're saying, communicate effectively. Communicate using vocabulary, tempo, brevity, and body language that your client understands and wants. It's not about you. It's about them. They need to get it. You already do.



This better not be you. When you are not connecting to your audience, they may hear you because there's noise coming out of your mouth, but they're not listening. You ever listen to the teacher in the Peanuts cartoon? Go here, trust me, you'll need to in order to understand this article. [QR]

Do you hear the teacher? That's what an ineffective communicator sounds like. Is this you? And, oh my goodness, your poor co-worker is Charlie Brown in this instance. Look at his face – he's in shock. And the worst part of this scenario is your client, here played by Peppermint Patty.

Where's the disconnect? The break in communication can come in many forms:

- Talking too much (try to use ten words instead of a hundred)
- Using too many acronyms (acronyms are good for brevity, but are ineffective if their definition is unknown, or they're just distracting – here's where Robin Williams cleared it up [QR])
- Excessive use of pronouns so that we don't know who "they" are, or "he" is (use the party's name)
- Mixing in bodily functions (coughing or throat clearing)
- "Umm" after "umm" after "umm"
- Talking too quickly (does not allow for discussion, or digestion of the information by the listener)
- Constant repeating of a message (the listener heard it the previous two times)



The solution is here. It's pretty simple. Ask a friend, who will tell you the truth, how your message is received. And here's the hard part, take his or her advice. Especially if you hear the same thing from more than one of your candid friends.

My story. I gave a presentation about 18 months ago and I couldn't fill the hour. I was finished with my material in about 40 minutes. So, I kept saying "ok, let's see here" over and over again. Why? Because I was trying to fill time. I noticed it during my presentation, but it didn't hit home until the performance survey came in and someone hammered me on it.



Also, I don't talk a lot. You may think as I write these articles and then do the recordings that I've got plenty to say. I'm really one of those people that speaks when spoken to and doesn't usually talk too much.

Work safe!