

BREVITY IN COMMUNICATION

BECAUSE TODAY'S WORLD SEEMINGLY SUFFERS FROM ADD

by Craig Harrison

Have you noticed lately how people's attention spans have shrunk as fast as 401k retirement accounts? Folks just don't have the time nor the patience for the whole story. They want the Cliff Notes version, the executive briefing, the synopsis or capsule summary. And if we don't provide it they simply tune out.

Do your clients, customers and co-workers a favor: be respectful of their time. Make your communication concise, and focus on the important aspects of your message.

Your Communication Palette

Savvy communicators choose their mode of communication based on key constraints, including the needs of their readers, listeners and audiences.

There are 540,000 words in the U.S. dictionary but no requirement to use them all, or the most obscure words. Choose your words accordingly.

And choose your mode of communication appropriately. Never before have we had more options for communication: e-mail, blogs, listservs, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and other communities. And a responsibility accompanies this freedom to choose. Just as you wouldn't use a public address system to announce the termination of an employee, you likely wouldn't use a listserv to share the results of your latest medical tests with colleagues.

■ TWITTERS and TWEETS

140 characters max! It's not War&Peace. Key points. Vitals only. Headlines but no fine print.

Users of Twitter compact their com-

munication to 140 characters or less per tweet. Learn to distill your ideas and accomplishments into this short form of information. It focuses you on what's key and vital, and no more.

■ The Phone Message

Messages you leave on others' voice mail should be clear, concise and confident in nature. Identify yourself and your contact number, enunciating well. State the purpose of your call at the outset. Don't gab on incessantly. Tip: repeat your phone number a second time for added intelligibility. Pause between bursts of numbers.

Have you noticed how some callers treat a recording device like a license to engage in a stream of consciousness exercise. THINK FIRST, before you call.

■ The Memo

Confine yours to one page. You want it read, not ignored. The more focused your writing is the quicker others can grok it.

■ CV

One page, double-sided at most! Keep your résumé streamlined for ease in reading. Leave readers with an overall impression of competency, intelligence, creativity or other key attributes.

■ PowerPoint

Engage in Pecha Kucha ("Chatter" in Japanese). Here's the concept: 20 slides. 20 seconds each. No more. No Less. No more "death by PowerPoint!" If you can't communicate it in 640 seconds...you lose!

In Brief

Need inspiration? Consider these

forms of short communication:

■ Haikus

17 syllables. Three lines. No more; No less. Bonus points for its relationship to the environment.

■ Epitaphs

With space at a premium each word counts. How can you sum up a life on a slab of granite, elegantly and poignantly?

■ Greeting Cards

A sentence. A phrase. A word. Or just an image. Power and poignancy in its brevity!

■ Websites

Why make users type a long web address such as the 57 character URL: <http://www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/longwindedURL.html> when instead you can use TinyURL and instead type: <http://tinyurl.com>.

■ Traffic Signal

All done with an image!

■ Speechmaking

Short and sweet seals the deal!

"A speaker should cultivate brevity with a suitable leaven of levity. In short, be terse for nothing is worse than intermitable verbal longevity"

So choose your words carefully. Bravo for brevity. Say it succinctly! ■

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

