

Send lawyers,  
guns, and money

**K | T | H**

**PROGRAM AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

# What do I know?

- I don't have a degree in the subject...
- I don't have the theory and the reading...
- and I'm not even very good myself at much I'll talk about here...
- I've watched and listened a lot
- I'll tell you what works for me, and
- maybe some of it will work for you

I got stuck in a  
segue for half an  
hour.

*Kris Huen*

The first thing that I learned...

# The Biggest Single Problem in Communication...

...is the illusion that it has  
actually taken place

George Bernard Shaw



On the other hand...

The most effective  
communication I've ever  
heard...

I went home with a waitress...

...the way I always do

How was I to know...

...she was with the Russians,  
too?



I went down to Havana

...I took a little risk

**Send lawyers guns and  
money - Dad, get me out of  
this!**

# This presentation, in three parts

1. Them: the global
2. You: the specific
3. ...and five things we should never talk about in our business

1. Them

We tend to start from the  
wrong end...

- A TED talk on “Your Inspiration”
- Your idea!
- Your vision!
- Your great contribution!
- **It ain't about you**

# The Wrong End

“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”

Stephen Covey

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.”

Bernard Baruch

# The Wrong End

“Most of the successful people I’ve known are the ones who do more listening than talking.”

G. K. Chesterton

“There's a lot of difference between listening and hearing.”

“You're short on ears, and long on mouth.”

John Wayne

**“When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.”**

**Ernest Hemingway**

But when you start to talk,  
consider the following...



Why should anyone listen to  
you?

- What's in it for them?

Know three things about the people you're communicating with...

1. What do they want?
2. What are they afraid of?
3. What 'type' are they?

People ain't snowflakes...

You know you. Know them.

Always ask '*why*'?

*Why* is he doing what he's  
doing?

Because he's an idiot!

...is probably not the correct  
answer

Don't understand why? You  
just haven't figured it out yet...

Make it as easy as possible for them to come up with the idea...

Ever tried to move a stubborn horse?

I need your help...

What's 2 plus 1?

I'm thinking 5 minus 2?

12 divide by 4?

Did you *really* ask, clearly?

If you have an important point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time - a tremendous whack.

**Winston Churchill**

# But he's not listening!

- So who's fault is that?
- What's the one end of the communication channel *you* can improve?



# Did you think about the culture you're communicating in?

- In many organizations, 'yes' or 'no' is much harder than punting it...
- Watch for this one with your Sponsors...

# 2. You

# The most powerful single thing you can do:

- Never, ever say “awesome” ...
- Since when did ‘awesome’ become a proxy for ‘ok’?

# The most powerful thing you can do (really):

- **Say: “I need your help”**
- The late check out...
- Introduce
- Set the context for your request
- And *then* ask for help

# **Understand your (understandable) biases:**

- What language does he speak?**
- On the other hand, what sport do you think she plays?**

The Second most powerful  
thing you can do: Reduce and  
Simplify

If I Had More Time, I Would  
Have Written a Shorter Letter  
- Mark Twain

Sometimes it's the 'least bad' solution that you're looking for

- It's the least bad, of all the turns the thing can take
  - Thomas Jefferson...

# Catching a pass – give and go

You'd have to be a Canadian, of course

Give first, before you go



# Keep your words soft

- Eat your crow when it's young and tender...
- I may be mistaken..

Use *and*, not *but*


Email...

Bloody email...

# But I sent her an email...

The two words 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through.

– Sydney J. Harris



**WHAT  
WOULD HAVE  
TAKEN FOUR WEEKS  
OF EMAILING  
TOOK FOUR HOURS  
FACE-TO-FACE.**

-John and Erin O'Sullivan, Benchmark Clothing for

MARCH 20  
VOL. 307

Why do you think people like  
texting so much?

Because it's lazy, that's why!

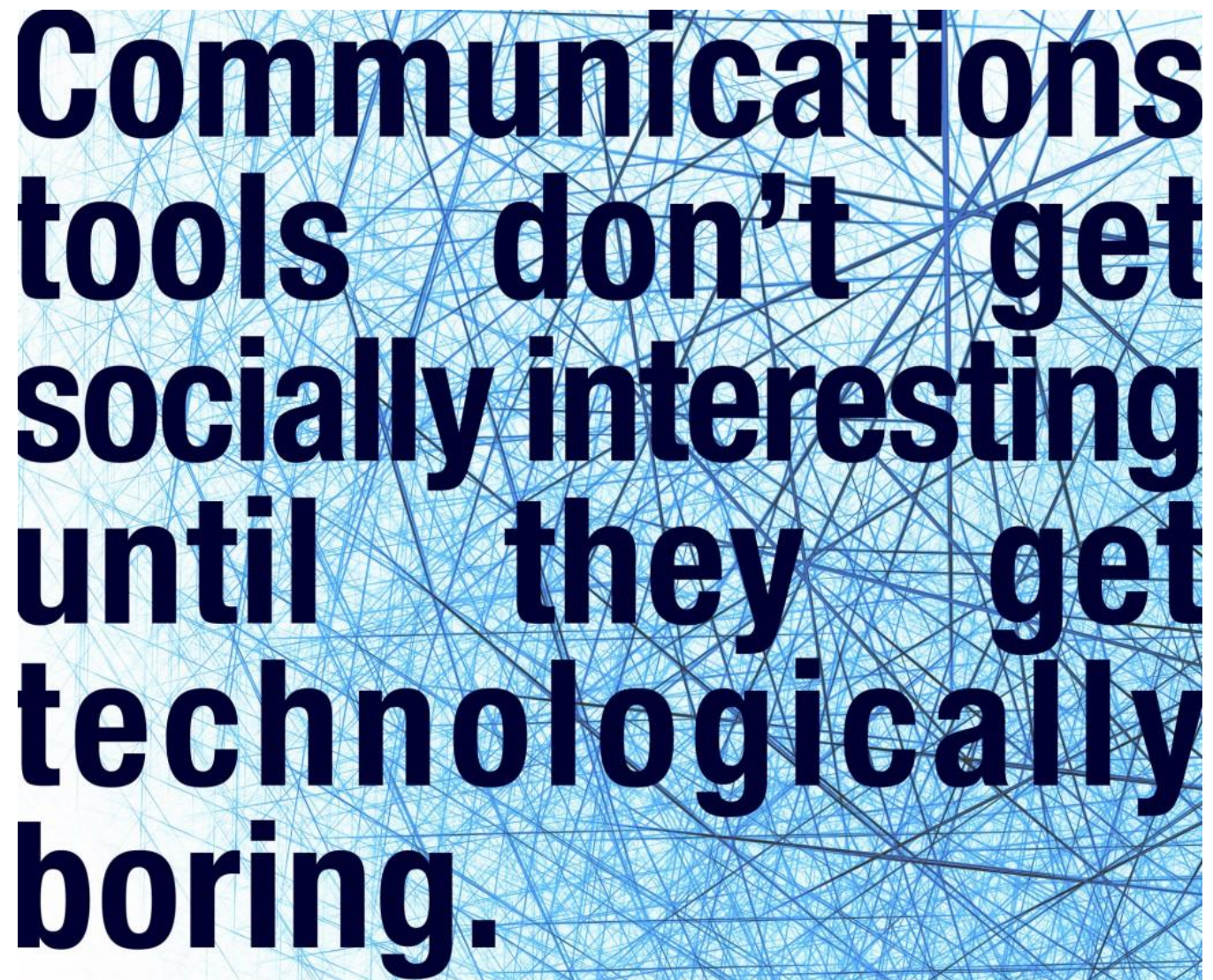
# Recent Text Correspondence

AA: r u ready fr board mting 😊

Me: Have you considered vowels?  
Punctuation and capitalisation  
perhaps?

AA: ?

Me: u totally shld! they're awesome!



**Communications  
tools don't get  
socially interesting  
until they get  
technologically  
boring.**

**–Clay Shirky**



Pick up the damned 'phone!

Electric communication will never be a substitute for the face of someone who with their soul encourages another person to be brave and true.

- Charles Dickens

# Back to email for a minute...

- The difference between a to: and a cc:
- Using (eom)
- The difference between an e.g. and an i.e.
- Where do I find you? How do I reach you? Always put you contact information in your signature...

# Read it back to yourself first

- Shakespeare was meant to be heard!
- So should you...
- Read it out loud to yourself before you send it!

Search out and kill the 'I', 'me',  
and 'you'

Look for the 'us' and 'we'

Unless you're making fun of  
yourself...

Be very careful with 'always'  
and 'never'

# Angry email?

- Almost always a really bad idea...
- Send it to yourself overnight
- Angry email is like posting a selfie after 4 martinis – but worse...

Meetings...

Bloody awful meetings...

Never set or accept a meeting  
without an agenda



3. Five things we  
should never talk  
about in our  
business...

# 1. Projects with really dumb names...

## 2. PMOs

- Starting from the wrong place: it's about **service**

# 3. Steering Committees...

- “A committee is a *cul de sac* down which ideas are lured and then quietly strangled”
  - Sir Barnett Cocks
- “A committee can make a decision that is dumber than any of its members”
  - David Coblitz
- The ‘wrong’ Sponsor
- How about Project Accountable Executive instead?

# 4. Percentage Complete

- Are you pouring concrete?

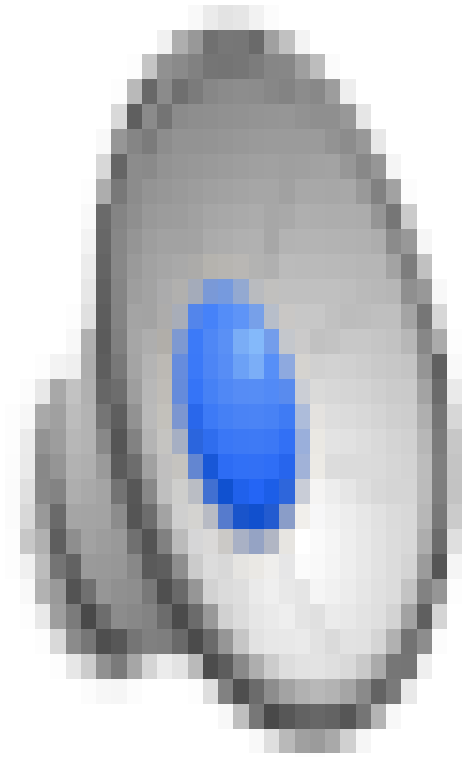
# 5. Project dashboards

- A really bad analogy...

And one last thought...

There's a really effective way  
to communicate that most  
people don't use...





Never underestimate the  
power of a good story

# Questions/Follow Up?

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