

Deliberative Speaking

A Process That Connects With People and Achieves Results

by Jon Craighead

“Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.” – Benjamin Franklin

Most communication is delivered without preparation, resulting in annoyance, displeasure, and frustration. Deliberative speaking describes the skillful delivery of a conversation. It requires more than the ability merely to speak and articulate; this is speaking with deliberate intent to get a coherent message across to another.

There are specific particles to this activity. First, the speaker must know the subject matter and speak it clearly and succinctly so that the message is clearly receivable and understandable. Second, the speaker must have a clear outcome to be achieved. Third, the speaker must pause intermittently to connect with the listener(s) to insure the message is being received. When the speaker has finished delivering the message, time must be allowed for questions and answers for clarification if necessary. If further action is required, a system for follow up is established.

Skillful thinking is an indispensable part of deliberative speaking. This puts many at a disadvantage because there is a misguided conception that most people think skillfully. This is believed in spite of the mounds of evidence to the contrary. This explains why so many people are inapt at communicating successfully. Thinking, or the absence thereof, is often a spontaneous reaction to some stimuli. This is why poor communication is often the rule rather than the exception. This creates many challenging situations to be dealt with that are traced back to inadequate or ill-conceived messaging. Delivering skillful instructions to others is a vital and consequential role of leadership.

Almost always deliberative speaking requires the speaker to prepare the listener in a preemptive fashion by setting up the receiver’s “listening.” When this process is completed and both the speaker and listener are on the same page, the speaker can now deliver the message into that space that has been jointly created. With the speaker and the receiver on the same page, it is then possible to deliver the planned conversation with more certainty.

Knowing your audience is an indispensable part of deliberative speaking. The studying of personality types can be very useful in this endeavor. Robert M. Bramson, PhD, a psychologist and management consultant, has authored many publications dealing with

the difficulties of people's interactions with each other. He has created five thinking styles in dealing with this conundrum:

1. Synthesists are creative people who perceive the world in terms of opposites. To connect with this category of thinkers, listen appreciatively and don't confuse their arguing with resistance.
2. Idealists believe in lofty goals and standards. To connect with Idealists, associate your alignment with quality, service, and community good.
3. Pragmatists are flexible and resourceful people who look for immediate payoffs rather than a grand plan to change the world. To connect with them, emphasize short term objectives on which you can get started with resources at hand.
4. Analysts equate accuracy, thoroughness and attention to detail with completeness. They are likely to gather data, measure it, categorize it, and methodically calculate the right answer to any problem you come up with. To connect with this type, provide a logical plan replete with back-up data and specifications.
5. Realists are fast-moving doers who know reality is what their senses, sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch indicate. To connect, Realists want a three paragraph executive summary which tells, briefly, what is wrong and how you propose to fix it. They will often take you at your word if they see you as an expert.

Deliberative speaking is a system of preparing for knowing and bonding with your audiences before you speak. Doing so assures a more meaningful communication. Deliberative speaking is mastering speaking for desired results. As a process, it provides a system for people to connect with one another successfully. This process is also effectively applied to written communication. It works equally well in business, family, and socially to build partnership, affinity, and workable outcomes.

Obviously, communication is a two-way street. My next article will address listening and the responsibilities of the listener.