



## Gone In 60 Seconds- Communicating For Results



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### About the Author...

Elango R is the author of 'You Don't Need a Godfather', Columnist at Economic Times, People Matters and at Wall Street Journal Online – India.

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**E**ach time I face an audience or address a large team, my biggest worry is-Will they understand what I am telling them? No, I am not smirking at anyone's intelligence levels I am seriously concerned about my communication "Effectiveness"! It means that people I talk to should understand what I am saying, what I want them to do as a result and what I expect of them.

Many companies spend a lot of money on communication skills workshops, voice and accent training, English language classes and the entire gamut of soft skills training. There is an industry that has mushroomed and bloomed around this. However, many fail to address the core issue-are we able to get our message across crisply, in an engaging manner and get the results we want? This is about results, not style and accent; it is about language and not just oration. It is about everyday conversation.

Communication is about successfully telling someone your thoughts and requirements and that person UNDERSTANDING what you have said in the same manner. Many of us think that we are communicating when actually, we are just talking.

Our ability to communicate, to get things done is critical for our success. From the simple approval for a project to a client proposal, to making an impression when you run into your CEO-these conversations, emails and "communication" determine what we can get done and how quickly.

I have addressed this critical skill in my book, "You Don't Need a Godfather". Given below is an excerpt on how to start paving the way to more impactful communication and results.

Let's start with the '60 second' mantra.

Why just 60 seconds? In today's corporate world, this is all the time someone has to make an impact! We are expected to juggle meetings, calls, emails and actual work all at the same time. All these mediums are fighting for the same one minute. And what or who we pay attention to will be the one that conveys a crisp objective and makes it most relevant to us.

Here is a 60 second trailer on how to use the ESCAPE route to effective communication:

Establish attention: Thirty to sixty seconds is all you have. A sure fire way to get attention is get on the path of relevance-what is important to the listener, not



YOU. Let's assume you are seeking approval for business related travel. Don't say, "I need your approval to travel"; instead say-our project is behind schedule, I have initiated a recovery plan, part of this is to travel to Timbuktu. Please help!

Simple: Avoid jargon, abbreviations and technical words. By way of example, use 'difficult' instead of 'challenge', instead of 'failure mode evaluation analyses'; try 'we could fail'!

Crisp: Not necessarily quick to the point but straight to the point. Qualifying a statement is good, but there's no need to recite the encyclopedia. Having said that, if the person you are addressing asks you to qualify your statement, you know you've got their attention! Mission accomplished right there.

Action: Focus on what you want to achieve, not on what you want to say or how you are treated.

Presence: Watch, listen and adapt your approach. There is a lot of literature on body language. For instance, I listen best with my hands crossed but I am given to understand that shows defensiveness. Don't go for simplistic signals like this; watch your receiver closely. Be on the lookout for stifled yawns, quick glances at the watch, pulling their blackberry out ... people will tell you without telling you.

Exit: Close quickly with decisions. Never leave it inconclusive, summarize for the benefit of all and never forget to say 'thank you', whatever the outcome.

Like anything, throw yourself at improving your ESCAPE at every moment and opportunity. The best practice is when you are negotiating with your child; watch them play you effectively. Trust me on this one; they are the ones effectively negotiating you!

But, there a few traps that you have to watch out for. One that most of us end up falling into, even with the best of intentions ... Being too connected to our own objective.

Don't boil the ocean – Focus on The MUST, Good and IF YOU CAN

I learnt this while participating in an acquisition we were preparing for-an atmosphere fraught with anxiety, tension, competition and adrenaline. Most teams throw questions, request for tons of data fearing that they may forget to ask something. Then, one of our board members coached us that we are better off prioritizing and focusing on what we absolutely need. That way, we make productive use of the target company, our time and better still, gain the respect of the target company management. So we classified all requests as MUST, Good and IF YOU CAN. The effect was amazing and focused all our efforts on the MUST.

So What?

I learnt the "So what?" check from a colleague Raj Patil, a consummate sales person. Everything you say, present, sell or communicate, ask yourself "so what?" You will be surprised at how crisp and relevant you will get. For example, you are saying that the sales figures show a pattern, ask yourself "So what?" —



you should state the same in a way that makes sense to the audience. Remember you are not providing information you want action ...

#### Channel distortion

Finally a well-crafted message avoiding all the pitfalls can fall flat if we don't pick the right channel. By channel I mean email, text message, in person conversation ... whatever.

I had a colleague once who would never respond to email. At any time, he had over 1000 unread mails in his inbox. But pick up the phone and talk, he always came through and was willing to support. Here the means of communication made the difference. Just because email is quicker for me, is not what should matter. What is convenient for my audience is what takes priority.

Communicating for results is a science and when mastered will provide us with a huge boost in our work place.

Think back to the thousands of movie trailers you have seen. Do they talk about the countless crores

that went into making the movie (that is all the producer cared about), or the tantrums the movie stars threw (surely the woes of the director)? No! They all address why you, the movie goers, should come see their movie. They showcase the plot, the scenic locations, the action and adventure (or comedy as I prefer).

That is what we have to learn to do: Figure out what action we want to happen (have people go see the movie)

Distill what our audience wants to hear or cares about (great plot, awesome locations)

Communicate to them in a manner that is familiar to them (TV, radio, email)

Using this as a guideline, hopefully all our meetings and conversations will be akin to blockbuster releases and not bedtime stories.

Good luck and have fun trying this out. Keep me posted on your tales - connect with me on [www.ElangoR.com](http://www.ElangoR.com) or follow me on twitter @agastyasays

