



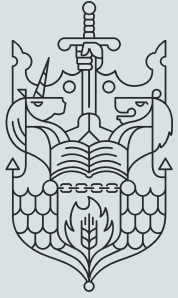
Adapting communication for the virtual world

DELIVERED BY: NICK THOMAS & ASSOCIATES

7 APRIL 2021



The Insurance
Institute of Plymouth
and Cornwall
Chartered Insurance Institute



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What can we do for you?

- CPD: technical and soft skills (CII & PFS)
 - Networking • Social

What events would you like to see us run?

- Did you know this CPD event is funded by your local institute so we can make it free for you, our members?
- Keep an eye out for Eflyers. Are you opted in to emails? Many members aren't, so please share event updates with colleagues!
- Follow us on social media for latest news
- Check the web-site for upcoming events, digital content and contact details
- What topics would you like to see covered?

[CONTACT YOUR EDUCATION OFFICER: NAT@THMARCH.CO.UK](mailto:NAT@THMARCH.CO.UK)



Introduction / Housekeeping

Welcome and thankyou!

Webinar format – muted and video off. Interactive features – polls, Q&A

Session 1 of 3 – slides and recording will be made available

Nick Thomas

- Background in Insurance Broking Sector. Sales and Sales Leadership specialist
- Widely qualified coach and personal development specialist
- Coaching, training and consulting – Insurance M&A

Nick Thomas & Associates

- Specialist training, coaching and consulting to the UK Insurance Sector
- Technical insurance, sales, business and soft skills, compliance training



Learning competencies

*‘Begin with the end
in mind’*

Stephen R. Covey,
The 7 Habits of
Highly Effective
People’

- Mehrabian’s Law – the elements of communication and how we interpret communication from others.
- The challenges of ‘virtual’ communication media vis a vis in person face to face meetings
- Email – research on reasons for miscommunication and conflict. How to adjust to mitigate against this.
- Impactful and clear writing skills
- Adapting verbal communication to the loss of body language – building the visual element the third ‘V’
- Telephone Speech techniques.
- Virtual online meetings – how does this differ to telephone and F2F. How do we adjust to be effective and impactful

Elements of communication

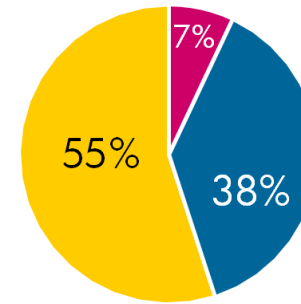
Mehrabian's Rule

Professor Albert Mehrabian, University of California

His studies in 1970s suggested that we overwhelmingly deduce our feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about what someone says by the speaker's body language and tone of voice, NOT the actual words

'...if words and body language disagree, one tends to believe the body language' . Professor Mehrabian

Non-verbal cues can be more valuable and telling than verbal ones.



Dr. Albert Mehrabian's 7-38-55% Rule

Elements of Personal Communication

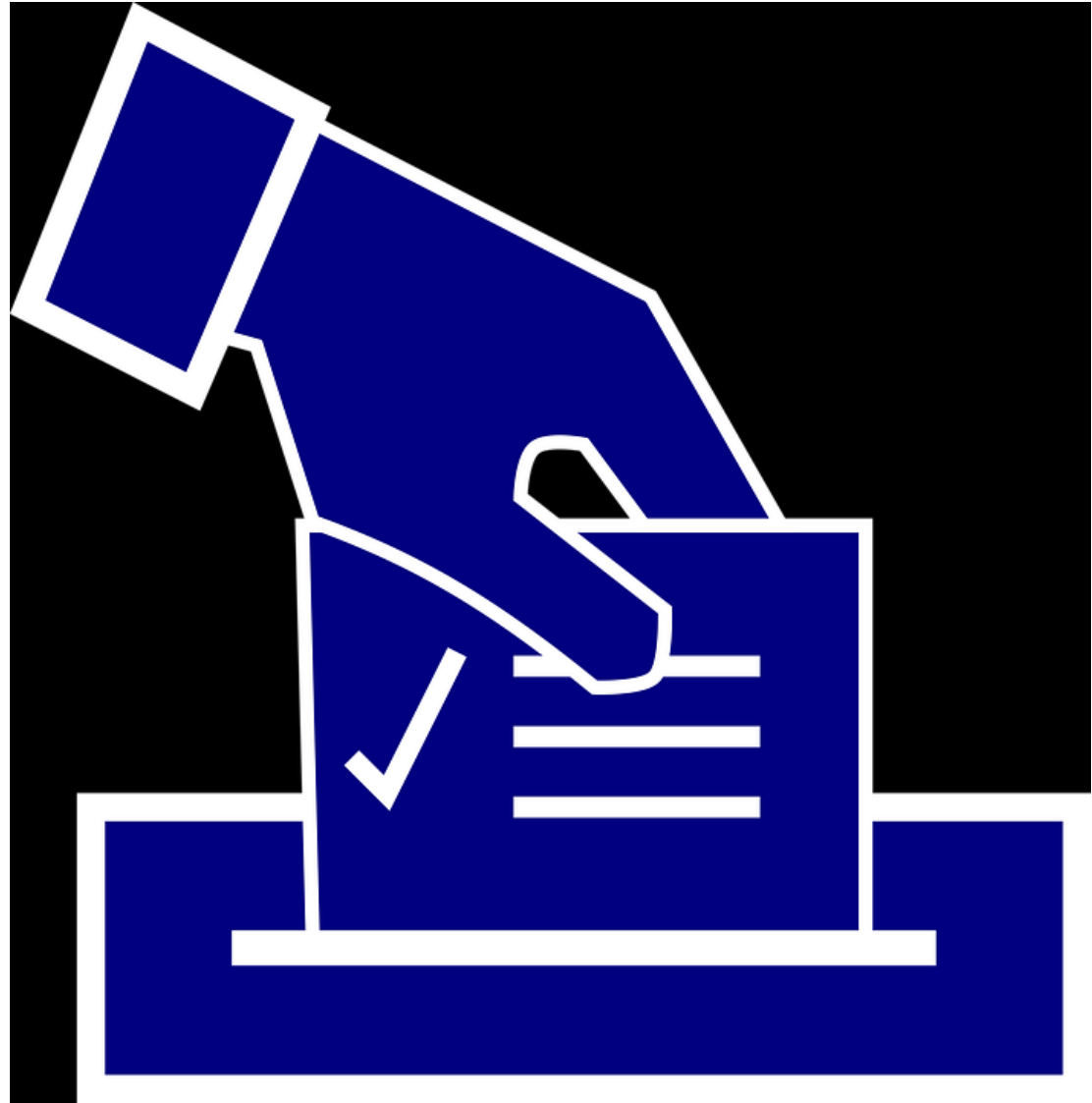
- 7% spoken words
- 38% voice, tone
- 55% body language

'The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said'

Peter Drucker, management consultant, educator, and author. Often described as the 'founder of modern management'

POLL

How have we
replaced F2F
meetings?



Email

Kristin Byron, Professor of Management, 2007 study found that:

- ‘e-mail generally increases the likelihood of conflict and miscommunication’
- We misinterpret positive e-mail messages as more neutral, and neutral ones as more negative, than the sender intended
- Even jokes are rated as less funny by recipients than by senders

“When you communicate with a group you only know through electronic channels, it’s like having functional Asperger’s Syndrome – you are very logical and rational, but emotionally brittle.”

Email... “is not better than face-to-face contact; it’s only better than nothing.”

Professor Clay Shirky,
Social Computing specialist

Email communication and remote working

- **Lack of ‘mutual knowledge’** – do not have context and do not give benefit of doubt to other = conflict
- **Build in some F2F** - people who know each other well F2F less likely to have misunderstandings/conflict. Joseph Walther [Professor Communication and Telecommunications]
- **Banyan model:** “...put down little roots of face-to-face contact everywhere, to strategically augment electronic communications.” Professor Clay Shirky

“The two main things that get in the way are the lack of shared understanding about how you work and lack of shared identity. When you don’t have things in common, you’re less likely to give the person the benefit of the doubt. Plus, you don’t know how the other person is reacting. Is he being quiet because he’s setting aside his feelings, or is he actually stewing?”

Mark Mortensen, Professor of Organizational Behaviour at INSEAD (Business School)

Written word - guidelines

Know your outcome – what response do you want, what do you want the reader to get out of it?

The basics – grammar, spelling and punctuation. Do not rely on spell check = artificial intelligence not human intelligence

Favour nouns and verbs – generally stronger than adjectives and adverbs

Use sensory language rather than digital

- Describe in a way reader can see, hear or touch
- Limit abstractions {‘understand’, ‘think’, ‘interest’}
- Avoid jargon – ‘in group’ rapport but barrier to outsiders

Layout

- Avoid long paragraphs in small text. Avoid long sentences with clauses and sub-clauses.
- Write ‘inductively’ – start at the ‘top of the pyramid’ with the main ideas and then chunk down to subsidiary ideas/points

‘The meaning of communication is the response it gets.’

Adapting Mehrabian - telephone

When we communicate face to face our message is received via three factors, these are...

- Content (What you say)
- Voice (How you say it)
- **Body Language**

When we lose the face to face, we lose the body language part of our communicated message. We need to re-interpret to the 3 Vs:

- Verbal (What you say)
- Vocal (How you say it)
- **Visual (The image people form from your words)**



Adapting Mehrabian - telephone

The Third V – Visual: how do we want Clients or prospects to think of us? Examples:

Friendly Helpful Cheerful Knowledgeable

Confident In Control Positive

Professional Enthusiastic Organised

Passionate In Charge Structured

Take a Moment:

- Write down 5 words that describe how you would like people to think of you; that represent the image you would like them to form of you in their mind's eye
- Use the word on this page and/or select some of your own
- Pick one word at a time – how would you speak to people to build this image in their mind?

Improving the way we sound

- **Articulation** – Ensure that you are being understood. Are you pronouncing words correctly and clearly?
- **Speed** – Adjust the rate at which you speak. Most people speak too quickly. Slow down or match the rate of the caller – this can build rapport and allow you to ‘pace and lead’
- **Volume** – Speak as if you were talking to someone across the desk from you. Deepen your voice to add credibility.
- **Pause** – Pausing at selected times will add impact to your comments. It also helps to remove filler words (um, err, mm, ah)
- **Emphasis** – Highlight important statements by changing your voice tone, speed or volume.

“We often refuse to accept an idea merely because the tone of voice in which it has been expressed is unsympathetic to us”

Friedrich Nietzsche

Improving the way we sound

- **Posture** – ensure that you are sitting up in your chair and you have open body language.
This can really alter the effect of your voice.
- **Mood** – try to use where possible/relevant. Relate to the mood of the customer, adding humour
- **Smile** – this comes across in your voice and helps the caller create a positive image of you.
- **Positivity** – use positive language i.e. ‘I’d be happy to...’, rather than, ‘I have to...’
- **Express** – be yourself. Nobody likes to deal with a robot.

“We often refuse to accept an idea merely because the tone of voice in which it has been expressed is unsympathetic to us”

Friedrich Nietzsche

Improving the way we sound...

Tip	Meaning	Rating
Articulation	Ensure that you are being understood. Are you pronouncing words correctly and clearly?	
<i>Action:</i>		
Speed	Adjust the rate at which you speak. Most people speak too quickly. Slow down or match the rate of the caller.	
<i>Action:</i>		
Volume	Speak as if you were talking to someone across the desk from you. Deepen your voice to add credibility.	
<i>Action:</i>		
Pause	Pausing at selected times will add impact to your comments. It also helps to remove filler words (um, err, mm, ah)	
<i>Action:</i>		
Emphasis	Highlight important statements by changing your voice tone, speed or volume.	
<i>Action:</i>		

Tip	Meaning	Rating
Posture	Ensure that you are sitting up in your chair. This can really alter the effect of your voice.	
<i>Action:</i>		
Mood	Try to relate to the mood of the customer, adding humour where possible/relevant.	
<i>Action:</i>		
Smile	This comes across in your voice and helps the caller create a positive image of you.	
<i>Action:</i>		
Positivity	Use positive language i.e. 'I'd be happy to...', rather than, 'I have to...'	
<i>Action:</i>		
Express	Be yourself. Nobody likes to deal with a robot. Use tools as a guide, but don't forget who you are.	
<i>Action:</i>		

Take a Moment:
Review the following methods of improving the way you sound on the phone and rate yourself (1-5) for each. What action would you take in each case?

Online/virtual meetings - why is online different?

We have Words, Voice and some Body Language.

But:

- We lose the natural pre and post-meeting chat
- Visual- only head and shoulders
- Eye contact tough to maintain
- Reading the room is harder
- Micro expressions can be missed in the virtual
- Peripheral vision – tougher to scan photo gallery than F2F. Need to make deliberate effort

The challenges of online meetings

Engagement Threshold - It is much harder to hold engagement and attention in virtual online meet vs F2F

- **Constant gaze** – tiring to constantly look at people’s faces. All we have in virtual
- **Baseline stress** – multiple Zoom meets
- **Ringelmann effect** – the more people involved in a task, the less effort they devote individually. The more in a meeting, the less engaged they will be
- **Task switching** – ‘Attendees often interpret virtual meetings as a licence to multi-task’ (HBR)...especially when video ‘off’ – ability to ‘hide’

- 92% people admit to multi-tasking in virtual meets
- 94.4% people say they can pay attention F2F versus only 41.7% for virtual meetings

Setting yourself up for success

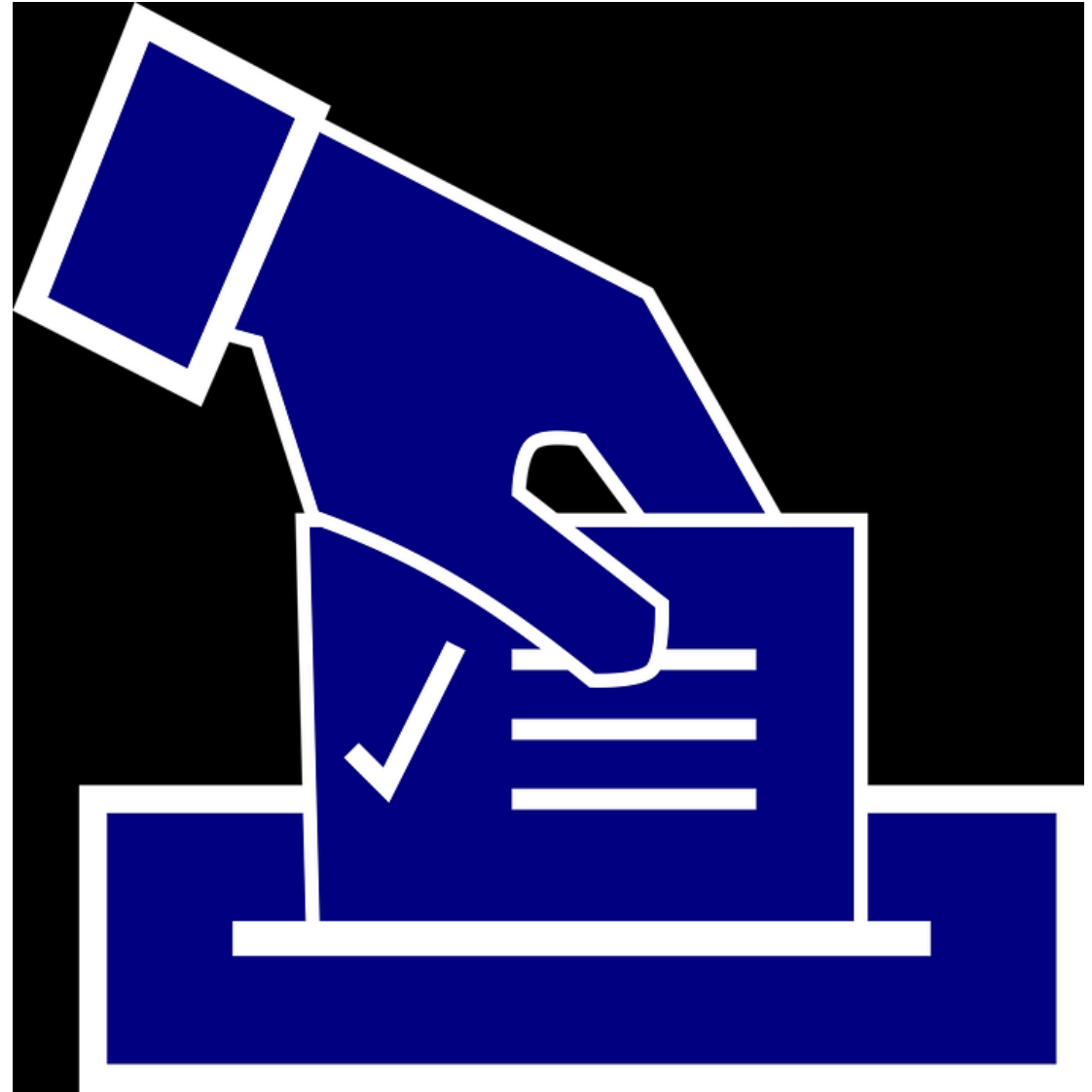
Starting the meeting (more important for one : many meetings)

- **Always have a chair/controller**
- **Open strongly** - immediate interaction to **gain engagement**. Ask about the other person
- **Introduction** – **agree rules** for speaking and signaling intent
- **Housekeeping** – give people permission to be human (Amazon delivery/child/dog)
- **Mute/unmute** – mute when others talk to avoid distraction. Unmute – clear indication
- **Hand raising** - virtual or physical
- **Video on** where possible – more human/rapport and trust/less distraction/use of body language



POLL!

Technology Tools



Setting yourself up for success

Running the meeting with presence and engagement

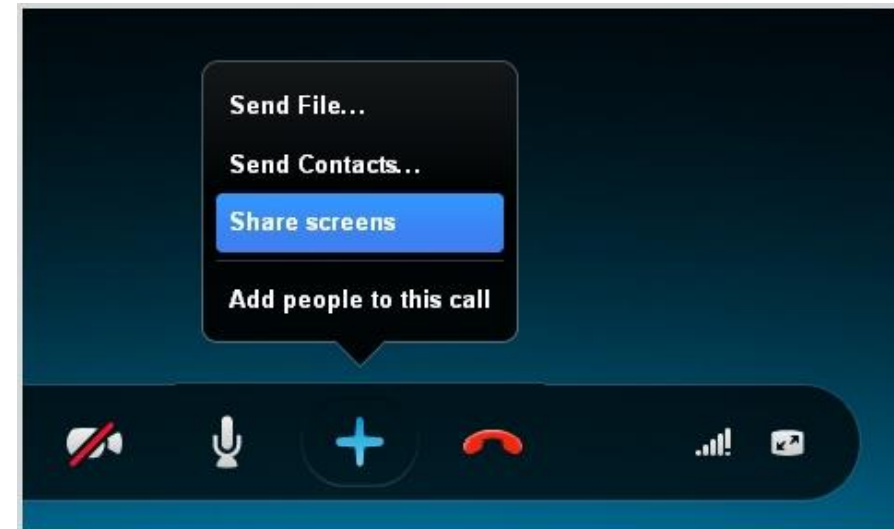
- **30 + 3 rule**
 - Instant engagement
 - Regular re-engagement. Stay above engagement threshold
- **Call out by name** – make attention imperative. Give ‘quiet’ types chance to talk
- **Keep presentations/monologues short** – few minutes
- **Check the room regularly**
 - Check understanding and engagement
 - Be ready to switch format or content [have ready]
- **Use body language and expression** – create space for conversation, lean in to show interest
- **Commentary on emotions and thoughts** – ‘that made me smile Jim’/’that really resonates with me’



Setting yourself up for success

Running the meeting with presence and engagement

- Use platform tools to
 - Lift a flat meeting - engagement
 - Make more accessible – open to different learning styles
 - Demonstrate expertise, command and confidence
- Screen share
- File sharing – recommend send in advance
- Annotation – slide or doc already on screen. Collaborative Co-create solutions
- Whiteboard – use post it notes? Put all ideas in one place. Inclusive and informal. Brainstorm?
- Breakout rooms
 - Smaller groups, less intimidating, greater creativity
 - Lose screen and file share – take screenshot



Questions and what next?

Building Rapport in the Virtual World – 10am, 4 May 2021

- Rapport building
 - Why? Key skill in building trust and mutual influencing
 - How? Pacing and leading, matching and mirroring.
 - The ‘neurological levels’ of rapport – pacing and leading at each level.
- The four principles of rapport – empathy, authenticity, similarity, shared experience
- The differences and challenges of virtual rapport building vs. F2F.
- How to adjust across the neurological levels to achieve the four principles, using written word, social media, spoken word and virtual meeting media



The Challenges of the ‘New Normal’

- Gaining the attention of the prospect/client - engaging
- Adapting our communication to the virtual world
- Building rapport in the virtual world
- Impactful online meetings and presentations
- Prospect identification and sources of business
- Negotiating and influencing
- Collaborating
- Remote teams – performance and wellbeing
- Social Selling



Hammersbach Chat Podcasts

‘Adjusting our skills and strategies for the virtual world’ Parts 1 & 2

with Nick Thomas, founder of Nick Thomas & Associates
- specialist training, coaching and consulting to the insurance sector.

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