



Communication Briefings

ideas that work

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Tips of the month

■ **Attract visitors to your Web site** by hyperlinking keyword-laden text rather than merely hyperlinking the phrase "Click here." The hyperlinked words will interest visitors—and attract search engines.

— Adapted from "How to Write Good Web Site Copy," Judy Vorfeld, *Communication Expressway*, www.onweb.com.

■ **Speed up brainstorming sessions**—and capture more ideas—by asking your recorder to use script instead of printing to write ideas on a whiteboard. Reason: Printing takes 30% to 50% longer to write than cursive.

— Adapted from "Another Way to Speed Up Brainstorming," *Timely Tips for Teams*, www.qci-intl.com.

■ **Connect with your audience** by applying the 80/20 rule to your visual aids. That reminds you to spend at least 80% of your time looking at audience members instead of at your own slides.

— Adapted from "10 Tips for Using Visual Aids," *Witt Communications*, www.wittcom.com.

■ **Limit damage from your perfectionist tendencies** by asking yourself these questions: Is my effort disproportionate to the task's value? Am I jeopardizing other, more important projects? Your answers help define priorities.

— Adapted from "Thirteen Tips for Working Smarter, Not Harder," Jan Jasper, *Jasper Productivity Solutions*, www.janjasper.com.

■ **Counter this objection**—"I'm already working with someone"—by asking your prospective customer this question: "Are you confident enough in them to allow me to show you an alternative?"

— Adapted from *Visit the Sage*, www.honest-selling.com.

Listening

Boost your powers of concentration

What's the biggest barrier to effective listening? Poor concentration tops the list. Use this exercise to increase your ability to concentrate.

In a quiet place, close your eyes and count slowly to 50 with this simple goal: Don't let another thought intrude. Concentrate only on maintaining the count.

The exercise sounds much simpler than it is. The first time they try, few people can count past 20 or 30 before competing thoughts begin to crowd their brains. Keep trying, though. Once you can complete the full count without interruption, you're ready to apply your skills to an interpersonal

encounter. Use these tactics to aid your new powers of concentration during your next conversation:

- Don't interrupt.
- Don't finish the other person's sentences—out loud or in your own mind.
- Don't agree with the other person.
- Don't let your eyes wander while the person is talking.

Your goal is to let your conversational partners know they have your full attention.

— Adapted from "Practical Team Exercises," *The Extraordinary Team*, Quality Process Consultants Inc., www.theextraordinaryteam.com.

Running smart meetings

Add power to your meetings

You already know that effective meetings begin with narrowly defined objectives. However, many leaders make a critical mistake when they develop those targets: They write the objectives as verb phrases.

Example: During this meeting, we will discuss the strategic plan, review budget figures and brainstorm strategies to boost sales.

The problem: Objectives that begin with verbs are hard to measure. How will you know when you have "discussed," "reviewed" and "brainstormed" enough? Those objectives

are vague and open to interpretation.

A better way: Craft objectives using nouns. That lets you create clear, measurable goals and results in meetings that are more effective.

Example: By the end of this meeting, we will have an agreement on three adjustments to the strategic plan, a list of items to adjust or cut from the current budget and a time line for implementing the new sales strategy.

— Adapted from "Facilitation Essentials for Leaders," Kelly DeCesare, *Opportunity*, www.brodycommunications.com.

What's inside

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Dealing with deadlock | 2 | Rein in after-hours socializing | 5 |
| Deflect co-workers' busy questions | 3 | Avoid these sales letter blunders | 6 |
| 10 questions leaders must ask | 3 | How to field multiple questions | 6 |
| Test your vocabulary | 4 | How to make a clean getaway | 7 |
| Eliminate creative blocks | 4 | Sort out plural confusion | 7 |
| Recover from presentation problems | 5 | Ask questions before responding | 8 |