



Communicate Better NOW

North On Woodward Communication Training

THIS ISSUE: AI without losing your voice • The ‘close the loop’ habit • A better *script* for interruptions

FIGHTING GRAVITY: *What’s making the rounds in internal communication right now, and what to do about it.*

AI — Tool or Crutch?



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I can't have a simple conversation anywhere without politics or AI showing up. Politics I leave alone. Wade in without your armor on, and you'll regret it fast. AI, though, is fair game. And when it comes to the written word, it comes down to one question: are you using it as a tool, or are you leaning on it as a crutch?

One of my favorite managers in my previous life as a journalist was (and I suppose, still is) super talented with video, lighting and thoughtful management of people. But a wordsmith they were not.

I read a systemwide email from them, that was long, flowy and had lots of unneeded adjectives. Perfectly competent sentences ran on well beyond the point being made. I asked them if they were using AI and they sheepishly copped to it. Which was fine because they wanted to improve their grammar and sentence structure while communicating with stakeholders.

Here’s where the bud fell off the rose. They lost their own voice and their own unique and authentic communication style. The words were there, but they were empty and lacked the true sense of the author. I was less interested in the content, because I recognized immediately it wasn’t their content. And that’s where we can draw the line with Artificial Intelligence. When it takes the humanity out of what we’re communicating, we’re relying on it in a way that robs, instead of enhances.

AI also doesn’t always get it right. It needs heavy human intervention to save it from itself. It can save a lot of time and effort, only if the human master does their part to corral enthusiasm for hallucinations and copy-catisms. Leadership credibility depends on an authentic voice; AI should sharpen, not replace. Think carefully about this fast-moving technology and how it can fit into your world.

As a tool: AI sharpens your thinking. It catches typos, tightens a sentence, offers a second angle you hadn't considered. You still make the call. The words still sound like you.

As a crutch: AI does the thinking for you. You stop wrestling with how to say the hard thing. The message goes out clean but empty. Polished, but nobody's home. Your team can tell the difference. So can your clients.

Tut's Take: If you can’t defend a sentence in your own words, don't send it in someone (or something) else's words.

FUNNY NOT FUNNY

TRUE STORY!

Chaos ensued when a homeless man jumped on a public transportation bus. Several of the passengers yelled to the bus driver, “There’s a bum on the bus”, but what was heard was, “There’s a bomb on the bus”. And then there was panic as people scrambled to get off the moving bus. No one was injured but it’s a prime example of ‘not being understood, in the way you wish to be understood’.



People don't hear neutrally. They hear through whatever fear, expectation, or context is already loaded in their head. In a climate where "bomb" is a word riding just beneath the surface of public anxiety, that's the word the brain reaches for when a sound is close enough. The listener's state of mind and emotion did as much work as the speaker's words.

We call that, ‘hearing through your Acrylic Box’. Consider the following when you speak. Take into account all of the things swirling around in your listener’s and listeners’ ecosphere that could affect how your specific message might land in an unintended way. Then tailor your message based on how they are likely to hear it from you for better communication outcomes.

Tut's Take: When you design your message to account for listener context, misunderstandings become easier to predict, and easier to avoid.

RANDOM ACTS: *A workplace productivity trend worth knowing about.*

According to Pumble's compilation of workplace communication research, in 2026, the cost of poor communication in the workplace has been estimated to be anywhere between \$9,284 to well over \$30,000 per employee per year*.

*Source: <https://pumble.com/learn/communication/communication-statistics/>

The fix isn't complicated. It's the same one pilots and surgeons have used for decades: close the loop. Don't just send the handoff. Get it confirmed. "Here's what I'm taking from this" isn't a formality. It's the difference between alignment and finding out three weeks later that everyone nodded, and nobody understood. Misalignment is a productivity drain; confirmation prevents rework.

Tut's Take: If nobody repeats it back, you don't know it landed, you just hope it did.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS: *What the research says about how we talk to each other and how to do it better.*

Did you know communication is chemical? When you are angry and negative your Cortisol levels rise and you speak and hear things in a hormone driven vault. That means whatever is said next can either de-escalate or pour gas on an already smoldering fire. Better *scripts* reduce conflict and improve collaboration.

Tut's Take: When you resist the urge to react and choose proactive, intentional communication instead, the result is higher productivity and a more cohesive work ecosystem.

BEHAVIOR	WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY	WHAT YOU COULD SAY, INSTEAD
Someone who constantly interrupts.	“In yesterday’s meeting, you kept interrupting while Jaxon was presenting and it really ticked everyone off.”	“You may not have noticed that you stepped on Jaxon several times while he was presenting. I’m sure you didn’t do it deliberately, but it made it hard for others to follow the discussion.”

September through November is the ideal time to shake off the summer feelz and get communication-aligned with your Team!

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