

Quadrant II Newsletter

Research shows that the difference between leaders who derail in their career and those that soar to great heights is social skills. Social skills appear in the second quadrant of Stephen R. Covey's Importance-Urgency matrix: social skills are important to a career but not urgent (Covey is author of the top-selling business book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*). Quadrant II provides an opportunity for business and technical professionals to learn and try out new social skills based in science.

18Jun2018, author: Valerie Patrick, PhD, *The Secret to Improved Written Communication*

Quotable (*Key Message*)

Curse of knowledge bias is why written communication takes work.

Quantify (*The Science*)

Curse of knowledge bias is the tendency to rely on our knowledge to make sense of the world. Curse of knowledge bias is a type of mental short-cut that helps our brain filter what needs our conscious attention. The brain needs filtering because billions of information signals flood the brain at any moment of the day but our conscious awareness can only manage a small fraction of that information. Neuroscientist Dr. Arne Dietrich explains the brain's filtering challenge this way: "99 percent plus of all the brain's computations occur in the ill-lit basement of the [non]conscious" (Dietrich A. *How Creativity Happens in the Brain*. 2015: Palgrave MacMillan, page 54).

The brain freeze we get when we try to drink a cold shake too fast is similar to the cognitive freeze we get when we try to hold too much information in our conscious brain. The main difference is the brain freeze produces the physical

pain of a headache while the cognitive freeze produces the psychological pain of stress and confusion. Good writing does not produce any pain for the reader. Good writing is engaging and useful to the reader. Good writing focuses on the essence of the message so the writer's specialized knowledge can be applied to other areas of importance to the reader. The secret to good writing is to make your writing compelling and succinct.

Qualify (*Put into Practice*)

Try the 6-step editing process below to help make your writing more compelling and succinct. Focus on one bullet for each edit of your draft (yes six separate edits – you can do it!). Of course, the more times you apply this editing process, the easier it gets because the more of these principles you start incorporating into your writing automatically.

- Make each sentence compel the reader to the next sentence.
- Start each sentence with the subject.
- Make sure each sentence uses an active verb.
- Get rid of adverbs and reduce your adjectives.
- Keep your sentences to 25-30 words.



- Keep your paragraphs to 250-300 words.

Quip (*Fun*)

The first sign of communication trouble is not

everyone in the room is interested – in this case, only the consultants both named Bob in the movie Office Space are expressing interest.

Quest (*Resources*)

I applied this editing process to my latest blogpost here:

<http://fulcrumconnection.com/blog/better-beliefs-make-cognitive-biases-friend/>. Give me your feedback in the comments!

Learn more about communication in a podcast interview with Jill Schiefelbein, President of The Dynamic Communicator and author of Dynamic Communication: 27 Strategies to Grow, Lead, and Manage Your Business. In this podcast episode, Jill talks about powerful ways for technical professionals to avoid some of the most common traps of poor communication in the workplace: <http://fulcrumconnection.com/blog/026-avoid-disaster-technical-organizations/>.

Click on this link to take a short survey on traits of technical people and you will receive the final list of technical traits with a white paper on how these traits can be leveraged for leadership:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/63KKV8K>

About Fulcrum Connection LLC

Fulcrum Connection specializes in instructional design, training, speaking, facilitation and consulting to develop skills in leadership, innovation, sustainability, troubleshooting teamwork, and managing technical professionals.