

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.

10Feb2016, author: Valerie Patrick, PhD, Art and Science of Communication

Quotable (*Key Message*)

Effective communication takes both the right content and the right approach: decision science points to the right content while pitching and examples provide proven approaches.

Quantify (*The Science*)

Dr. Baruch Fischhoff, Howard Heinz University Professor in the Department of Social and Decision Sciences and in the Department of Engineering and Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon University, has applied Decision Science to the challenge of communicating science in his research. Dr. Fischhoff's research points to the need for scientists to listen to what needs their audience has while writing within the accepted norms of the scientific community. For example, the norms of the scientific community are quite different from the norms of the political community. In science, norms include identifying uncertainty, considering all data, and updating beliefs on the basis of new evidence. In politics, uncertainty is avoided, evidence is assembled to make a case but not a full picture, and while claims need to be based on facts, they

need not include all the facts. Dr. Fischhoff points to the critical role that scientists need to play in informing the public (see <https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/sds/docs/fischhoff/NonpersuasiveCommMatters.pdf>): “Although people can choose not to do science, they cannot choose to ignore it. The products of science permeate their lives.... Without some grasp of the relevant science, it is hard to make informed decisions about these issues. Those include private decisions, such as whether to choose fuel-efficient vehicles, robot-guided surgery, or dairy products labeled as “produced by animals not treated with bovine growth hormone—not known to cause health effects.” And they include public decisions, such as whether to support politicians who favor fuel efficiency, lobby for disclosing the risks of medical devices, or vote for referenda limiting agricultural biotechnology.” Dr. Fischhoff goes on to say that to be effective, science communication focuses on the facts that fill gaps in reader’s understanding pertaining to the benefits, risks, and other costs associated with the decisions they need to make. Therefore, there is homework that needs to be done to identify and produce the right content.

The most effective communicators not only have good content, they also have a good approach to communicating that content. The approach is part of the art of effective communication. For example, Seth Godin is author of 18 best-selling books and a sought-after speaker, clearly an effective communicator. In his January 30th 2016 blog post, Seth talks about the power of good examples to communicate an important message. Seth illustrates this idea with two examples as follows: “The beauty of examples is that they can travel further and faster than the item itself. The story of an example is enough to open the door of imagination, to get 1,000 or 1 million copycat stories to enter the world soon after. Email had plenty of examples, early and often. Stories about email helped us see that it would save time and save money, help us reach through the bureaucracy, save time and cycle faster. It took just a few weeks for stories

of email to spread through business school when I was there, more than thirty years ago. On the other hand, it took a long time for the story of the mobile phone to be deeply understood. For years, it was seen as a phone without wires, not a supercomputer that would change the way a billion people interact.”

Another effective communicator is Daniel Pink, author of five best-selling books, including three long-running New York Times best sellers. In one of these best-sellers, *To Sell is Human*, Daniel describes a new approach to selling that has emerged and that most professionals are more involved in than they realize. One of the key skills that Daniel identifies for the modern-day version of selling is also a skill for effective communication. This is the skill of pitching which Daniel describes as “reducing your message to its essence in a way that engages another person and begins a conversation.” The skill of pitching is another example of the art of communication.

Qualify (*Put into Practice*)

The best way to communicate science is by doing your homework. There are four basic steps to an approach based on Decision Science (see http://www.pnas.org/content/110/Supplement_3/14033.full). The first step is to determine the decisions that your target audience needs to make as a result of the scientific information to be communicated. The second step is to determine what your target audience already knows or thinks they know about the information to be communicated. The third step is to design the communication to enable the decision-making and address gaps of what they don't know or misconceptions of what they think they know. The fourth and final step is to test the communication and refine as needed.

Once you have done the homework needed to determine the content for your communication, the next step is to work on the approach. A good place to start is getting to the essence of what you need to communicate. One way to do this is to try filling out the simple worksheet on pitches that Daniel Pink has created from his book *To Sell is Human* (see www.danpink.com/pitch). The worksheet guides you through six different ways to develop a pitch. By developing your pitch six different ways, you bring six different perspectives to what you are and are not trying to say. Of course, once you do the exercise, nothing beats trying it out on some people you can trust to give you thoughtful and genuine feedback.

Once you have your pitch, then you can articulate some examples as Seth Godin suggests to help people want to share your communication with others.

Quip (*Fun*)



Too often scientists (portrayed here by Steve Urkel from the sitcom *Family Matters*) are more concerned about telling others (portrayed here by Jesse from the sitcom *Full House*) what they think they should know rather than what they really need to know. Decision Science can help scientists communicate the right content while pitching and storytelling can help scientists communicate in the right way.

Quest (*Resources*)

Dr. Valerie Patrick, Founder and President of Fulcrum Connection LLC, works exclusively with technical business professionals to help them magnify their effectiveness by applying the latest findings from social science. Dr. Patrick is a Certified Professional Facilitator who can collaborate with you to plan, prepare, and execute a group gathering that is a productive and rewarding experience for all. Dr. Patrick also provides training, consulting, and keynotes on facilitation, teamwork, collaboration, creativity, innovation, social intelligence, change management, and thriving on a steep learning curve. Contact Dr. Patrick (valerie.patrick@fulcrumconnection.com or text 412-742-9675) to set up an exploratory call. Ask about the new Performance Acceleration Package for technical teams.

Listen to the interview with Dr. Terry Yosie, President and CEO of the World Environment Center and an experienced executive in both the private and public sectors, on how to lead to win the planetary poker game on the “Science of Success: Social Secrets” podcast on iTunes here:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/science-of-success-podcast/id1063826280>.

All comments are welcome and encouraged!

Also see the companion blog post about system building skills for those who lead inspired by this podcast interview with Dr. Terry Yosie. Dr. Yosie believes that system-building skills are critical in order for organizations to be able to survive and thrive given today's mega-challenges. The blog dives deep into what system building skills are and provides resources to learn more and try them out (<http://fulcrumconnection.com/blog/system-building-skills-for-those-who-lead/>).

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.