



The  
Speech Improvement  
Company

# Communication Skills for Managers:

Speak Clearly, Persuasively, and Confidently

Volume 2



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This e-book was assembled from work done by the team of Executive Communication Coaches at The Speech Improvement Company. Visit us at [www.speechimprovement.com](http://www.speechimprovement.com)

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For Volume 1 of ***Communication Skills for Managers: Speak Clearly, Persuasively, and Confidently***, visit: <https://speechimprovement.com/communication-skills-for-managers-vol-1.pdf/>

## Introduction: Why This Matters

**Effective communication isn't just a leadership skill—it's a critical success factor.** Often, when the stakes are high and the margins for error are slim, important communication skills can't be left to chance—clarity, precision, and impact are non-negotiable. Yet, many managers did not initially aim to become leaders. Earlier in their careers, as individual contributors, they had excelled. **However, the skills that earned them recognition and rewards often don't translate seamlessly to leadership demands.**

Now, as managers, they're expected to communicate in ways that inspire teams, persuade stakeholders, delegate effectively, and motivate performance. They must deliver presentations that secure funding, provide clear guidance in high-pressure situations, and handle sensitive conversations with diplomacy and tact. In short, they need to influence and lead—not just inform. Poor communication doesn't just lead to missed deadlines or small budget overruns—it can impact profitability, increase legal or financial risks, jeopardize safety, derail regulatory approvals, and erode organizational trust.

This eBook bridges that gap. It equips executives and managers at all levels with proven strategies, tools, and techniques to master the art of management communication. Drawing on over 60 years of experience coaching leaders from companies such as Merck, Bank of America, KPMG, Apple, and Amazon, the insights here will help you communicate with authority, empathy, clarity, and confidence—skills essential for leadership in today's complex business landscape.



## Struggling to Get to the Point? Try the HEC Strategy!



By [Dr. Chas Womelsdorf](#), Executive Communication Coach

Have you ever been asked to “get to the point” and found yourself scrambling? If so, you might be an inductive thinker—someone who starts with smaller details and builds toward the bigger picture. While this approach feels natural for many, it can waste time and frustrate deductive thinkers, who prefer starting with the conclusion.

Enter the HEC strategy: **Headline-Example-Comment**. This simple framework helps you speak clearly and efficiently in 20 seconds or less.

### 1. **Headline**

Start with your main point or the most attention-grabbing idea.

*Example:* “Hey Paul, having an official agenda could make our meetings shorter and more productive.”

### 2. **Example**

Follow up with a supporting detail.

*Example:* “For instance, if I know something I care about is coming up on the agenda, I can stay focused and avoid interrupting with questions that’ll be addressed later.”

### 3. Comment

Wrap up with your opinion or a suggested action.

*Example:* "Let's try sending an agenda out a couple of hours before our next meeting. I'm happy to help create it if that'll make things easier."

By using HEC, you'll communicate more effectively, saving time and earning the respect of your deductive-thinking peers.



## Preventing Interruptions



By [Melody Elkin](#), Executive Communication Coach

Preventing interruptions begins by taking a closer look at the way you communicate your thoughts, ideas and suggestions. Starting with your main point ensures listeners hear your key insights before interruptions.

Learn how in this [one-minute video](#).

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## Does Virtual Presenting Level the Speaking Field?



By [Kristen Curran-Faller](#), COO, Senior Coaching Partner

Recently, I worked with a client who shared with me that her nervousness associated with public speaking was not as much of a problem since the world went virtual. I was curious about what changed for her or what had helped her.

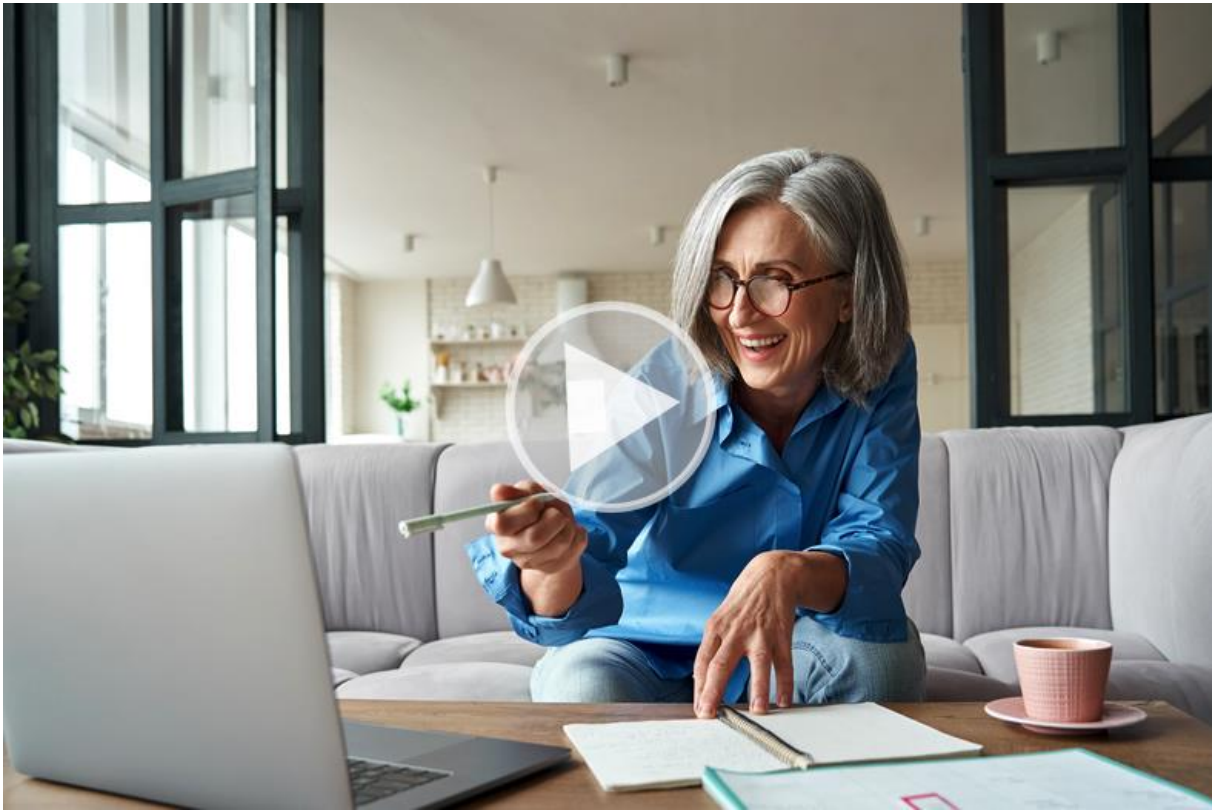
When working with clients on controlling their nervousness, there are many things to be considered. Our primary focus is on managing thoughts. The thoughts are what people say to themselves before, during, and after the presentation. We all talk to ourselves. It's what we say that has a tremendous impact on how well we can control nervousness.

She said, "Kristen, we are all equal now. Everyone is in the same size box. No one takes up more space than anyone else on the screen."

Hearing this brought a smile to my face. This client has successfully changed her thoughts to be more positive and productive. So whether or not you believe that virtual presenting levels the speaking field, the more important takeaway is that changing the way you think about something and internalize it helps create a more positive outcome.



## Projecting Executive Presence Online—Recorded Lesson



Leading requires a lot of skill and effort. In today's remote work environment, it requires even more. We know what is effective, required, and preferred in leaders who are leading remotely.

This [30-minute complimentary lesson](#) provides a clear picture of the skills you need to be an effective leader in our remote business world.

Join [Monica Murphy](#), Senior Coaching Partner, and [Dr. Ethan Becker](#), President, and learn how to "lead from the shoulders up."

WATCH NOW

# Cross-Cultural Conversations: Why We Misunderstand Each Other



By [Dr. Ethan Becker](#), President

The topic of misunderstanding has many angles to discuss; it's hard to pick one — tone, choice of words, inflection, context, etc.

Let's look at teams that have members from other cultures. Now, remember, each group has its own culture, so when you see me use the word culture, it does not only mean different countries; it might mean other departments. For this discussion, I'll focus on the word idiom.

## Definition

*an expression in the usage of a language that is peculiar to itself either in having a meaning that cannot be derived from the conjoined meanings of its elements (such as up in the air for "undecided") or in its grammatically atypical use of words (such as give way) – Source: Merriam-Webster*

While this may all sound like a foreign language to you, are we indeed that different in today's modern world? Has the world changed that much? I like the topic of idioms because it's how many Americans and other cultures communicate. Without awareness, it

can be highly confusing for individuals learning English as a second language or those visiting an American culture.

A less formal explanation is that an idiom is a collection of words that together convey a specific meaning, but if you look at each word, they have very different uses.

## Examples

These are just a few. As professional speech coaches, we train teams on cross-cultural communication often. During training sessions, we want participants to learn that what makes sense to them may not make sense to someone else. The other person might understand each word, but the collection of words together may have a different meaning. They should be aware of what they are saying, how they are saying it, and confirm their complete understanding.

Imagine your daily conversations at work. How fast do you talk? How much information do you cover during a meeting? You see, your listeners nod and smile. Your talk makes great sense (to you). They express visual responses of understanding when, in reality, they have no clue what you're saying. Then, you are surprised when the project comes out differently than expected.

Great communicators make an effort to maximize understanding. Perfect? No. But we can improve communication by recognizing ingrained idioms. The sounds and words we use to communicate our thoughts can make perfect sense to us, but do they make sense to our listeners? If you use an idiom, try explaining it or consider how your listeners will or will not understand it. Give it some thought, and see how being more careful when communicating with people from other cultures does improve communication.

## Delivering Performance Reviews Confidently—Recorded Lesson



If your work situation requires you to manage other people, this complimentary, 30-minute lesson will benefit you. One of your responsibilities is to periodically give people an assessment of how they perform their work responsibilities. This is often a sensitive and uncomfortable task.

In this [30-minute recorded lesson](#), [Dr. Ethan Becker](#), President, and [Dr. Dennis Becker](#), Founder and Senior Coaching Partner, focus on delivering a review and a specific format that will produce a positive attitude and more productive work behaviors

WATCH NOW

## Tips for Leading Effective Meetings



By [Laurie Schloff](#), Executive Communication Coach

Our coaching team appreciates the challenge of masterminding the right mix of talent, personalities, and action items.

Fortunately, easy tweaks make a significant impact to enhance comfort, participation, and awareness of nuances in a team member's behavior.

Recently, I worked with a senior leader in financial services who felt it was his responsibility to control the agenda and results of *all* meetings; in fact, he considered it part of his job. He was baffled that his group was quiet, rarely initiated topics, didn't show passion regarding action items, and only engaged in small talk *after* the meeting.

He asked me how he could change the situation. Our team of communication experts developed easy-to-apply key strategies to help this and other clients develop more productive teams.

We advised:

1. Begin meetings with small talk or each person sharing an observation or personal update to develop trust and increase interpersonal communication.



2. Develop an agenda to which team members are expected to contribute. Research indicates that 1/3 of all meetings are viewed as a waste of time. Change that!
3. Use meetings for discussion and problem-solving rather than just providing information. One of my favorite sayings is, "Go from 'information to *inspiration and impact*.'"
4. Try an approach like "round-robin" or going around the room when possible. The goal is to keep the talkers from dominating and allow quiet people to contribute more. This is essential for equalizing talking time, a key ingredient for team success.
5. Have some fun and novelty with a bit of partying, such as lunch meetings outside the office and/or appealing surprise guests. Refreshments always help. I had a client who wanted to tighten his budget by eliminating the snacks. I told him I'd give him the 25 bucks for goodies to save all the gains we'd made in coaching.

Try out these suggestions, and your team meetings will be more engaging, valuable, and productive!



## Defensiveness Prevents Clear Communication



By [Dr. Ethan Becker](#), President

### The First Moment: Defensiveness

If your listener is defensive, your point is probably lost. They have been left with the impression that you, intentionally or not, are criticizing their idea or them. Instead of focusing on getting solutions, they will be driven by this passion for defending the idea or their persona. They are struggling, and it may be your fault. You may have needed to set the right expectations; your tone may have needed to be more appropriate for the message you were trying to convey; you may not have provided them with the necessary resources to accomplish their goals, or they could just be worn out. If you take advantage of their defensiveness, it will only get worse. If you understand how to handle their defensiveness, you can rapidly shift their negative energy—whether fear, doubt, or worry—and help them leave the conversation with your message.

### Avoiding the Trap

They say, "No." You say, "Yes." They say, "I didn't know." You say, "You should have." Perhaps you were taught to ask questions to manage effectively, so you say, "How could you not know?" But, the presupposition in this question suggests that they are somehow not smart because they did not know. While that may not be your intended message, it's there, their spine will rise, and their eyes will narrow. If you react to their posturing instead

of listening and assisting them to sit back and reflect on what's bothering them, they will also react rather than focus on the real purpose of your conversation.

If you are in a conversation and you notice someone getting defensive, stop. Do not go any further with your point, as attempting to argue your idea differently rarely works; they won't listen when defensive. They have one agenda: to deflect whatever they think you are attacking. You may need to just listen, ask a question, or make a statement like "What do you need?" or "Help me understand your point of view." You may have to continue the conversation at another time. The fact that you take time to process and digest that conversation is validation, and that's the first step to overcoming their defensiveness.

If you do not plan how you'll approach their emotion, rigid beliefs, or confusion ahead, they will stay shut down and retreat deeper into themselves. To help them come to a decision or understand your point of view without feeling defensive, use a format called "Defensive Persuasion."

### **The Format: Defensive Persuasion**

1. **Validate.** If they are going to be comfortable, they must know you value whatever issue is causing their defensiveness or their opinion—even if you disagree. Choose your mode of validation; will it be a head nod, listening, or paraphrasing? They cannot open their minds until they know you have heard and understood their point—especially when you disagree entirely. Even in established relationships, you will need to validate the other person. Not as often, but if they are fired up, the only way to cool them down is to show them you recognize their view or the value of their contribution.
2. **Frame.** What message are you trying to communicate to them? You have to decide this ahead of time, and that's why if you run into someone who is defensive and cannot figure out why and they won't tell you, you have to pause the conversation. If you don't know the message you want them to understand, the conversation will still go in circles, and they will stay defensive.
3. **Decide your timeline.** It can take several conversations to overcome their emotion. Before stating what you want from the other person, you may need to validate for two or three conversations. If you do this correctly, the trust you build will enable you to communicate more easily next time.

## Best Practices in Communication for Managers— Recorded Lesson



This recording is designed for those who are either new to the role and responsibilities of management or those who are experienced but looking to review a manager's most important duties and expectations. [Dr. Dennis Becker](#), Founder and Senior Coaching Partner and [Dr. Ian Turnipseed](#), Executive Communication Coach, will teach you how to navigate essential conversations utilizing the five critical skills needed to be an effective manager of people

WATCH NOW



## Give Me a Break! Tips to Promote Team Morale and Sanity



By [Laura Mathis](#), Executive Communication Coach

As remote work evolves, we find that clients frequently express concerns about virtual meetings.

So, meeting leaders, here are easy ways to enhance your team's morale and productivity :

1. **Give them a break.** Some team members feel like it's a luxury to visit their own bathroom or grab a yogurt, as close as they may be. Encourage 15-minute breaks every ninety minutes or two hours and discourage back-to-back meetings. Speaking of meetings...
2. **Make it easy to ask questions.** Team members miss informal chatter, laughs, and learning from others just by hanging out. One financial analyst shared that he avoids asking his manager a simple question since it seems "so formal" to schedule a call.
3. **Remember that fun builds trust.** Make time for rituals and some crazy moments. Getting those positive hormones going is bonding—and bonding builds morale. Back in November, I asked a bank CIO to share the highlight of his past week. The enthusiasm in his voice and body language was better than ever when he shared that he organized a Halloween costume contest. This C- Suite Dracula had forty team members enter with just a day's notice.



4. **Create an inclusive meeting mindset.** McKinsey, the top consulting firm, recently reported engagement and performance correlated with how “included” an employee feels: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/understanding-organizational-barriers-to-a-more-inclusive-workplace>

I'm currently helping meeting leaders/facilitators to ensure that participation is as equal as possible, that leaders aren't doing all the talking and that even the quieter folks are adding value.

Try a few easy tweaks, such as doing a “round-robin” after a question is posed to the whole group.

One of my favorite quotes: “Everyone is wearing a sign—make me feel special.”

## Management Communication: Digital, Telephone, or Face-to-Face?



By [Dr. Dennis Becker](#), Founder and Senior Coaching Partner

I was recently told, "You're not going to believe this, but one of my friends was just let go for laying off her employees by email."

Imagine how her colleagues felt receiving their termination notices via email: unappreciated, disposable, and confused. An email disaster like this may sound unusual, but I regularly hear similar stories in the business world.

Over the past decade, email and text messages have become increasingly important forms of communication in the workplace. In 2023, global email traffic was estimated at 347 billion messages per day.

As a communication coach/consultant, people often ask me how these digital channels can be used effectively to lead, manage, and communicate in the workplace. My overarching advice is three-fold:

1. Identify the communication channels available at your disposal as a leader/communicator
2. Use each option wisely and in an acceptable way for the message you need to convey and target your audience
3. Follow basic guidelines to model and reinforce professional email etiquette within your work environment

Effective leaders understand the advantages and the differences between the three main elements of workplace communication: digital (email & text), telephone, and face-to-face/interpersonal communication. They utilize each aspect depending upon the type of message that needs to be delivered and an analysis of the intended recipient(s) needs, bias, knowledge, and anticipated reaction.

A competent leader, for instance, would never use email to communicate a difficult or confrontational message, where tone and intention can be easily misinterpreted, causing great hardship for all parties involved. Instead, a good leader understands that it's best to convey uncomfortable messages in person, where clear, two-way dialogue, thorough explanations, and opportunities for questions and answers can promote a "meeting of the minds" (or at least a basic understanding from the recipient of what needs to be improved). This approach is especially pertinent to those recipients who tend to be overly sensitive or defensive.

Am I suggesting that leaders avoid using digital channels? Impossible! Besides the fact that it would be unrealistic in today's work environment, email and text (especially with the growth of Slack and other popular apps) offer many distinct advantages over other forms of communication in the workplace when used correctly. Email is quick and efficient (eliminates "phone tag") and is a cost-effective option for conversing with colleagues off-site. Also, there is no better tool for sending documents or communicating the exact basic message to many recipients simultaneously.

However, the increase in email communication in the workplace brings with it the need for a better understanding and practice of professional email etiquette. In addition, while some may view email as casual and treat it as such, I always remind my clients that their emails reflect their professionalism (or lack thereof) and set the tone for how they gain respect, establish trust, and manage effectively.

Now more than ever, digital communication is changing the dynamics of how we engage in the business world. I have found that this type of communication is most efficient and effective when everyone in the same workplace agrees to some "rules of the road," such as "Who do I need to cc?" or "What needs to be in the subject line?" or "When is it appropriate to forward?" To achieve this goal, I strongly encourage businesses to adopt, educate, and reinforce professional email etiquette. The result will be clearer and more efficient electronic communication that increases productivity and camaraderie across the entire organization.

## Maintaining Online Relationships—Recorded Lesson



Everyone has relationships. Whether those relationships are pleasant and productive is based on two distinct factors. In this complimentary lesson [Dr. Ian Turnipseed](#), Executive Communication Coach, and [Dr. Dennis Becker](#), Founder and Senior Coaching Partner, will share the research that gave us this knowledge and how to implement it in your life.

Watch our 30-minute recorded lesson and you will learn:

- To understand the needs of your listeners
- Practical tools to implement in building relationships
- The Human Business Model.

Enhance your communication skills with proven strategies that you can immediately apply to keep remote employees and teams focused and productive.

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## About Us



Since 1964, the professional Speech Coaches at [The Speech Improvement Company](https://www.speechimprovement.com) have touched more than a million people around the world. We are a women-owned business and are the oldest speech coaching firm in the United States.

We support an international clientele including Fortune 500 executives, business professionals, politicians, professional athletes, entrepreneurs, and private individuals to strengthen their communication skills. We work with leaders of countries, companies, and people throughout organizations. Our coaches are formally educated at the graduate level or beyond in all aspects of human communication and cultural understanding. We have both the educational background and the real-world experience to identify speaker strengths, uncover areas of need, and evoke behavioral change.

To date, we have written 13 books on communication and are published in five languages. We have instructed at Harvard University, MIT, and other world-class institutions as well as conducting pro bono work for non-profit and community organizations. Our coaching team attends monthly development days to ensure they are apprised of the latest research, theory, tools, and trends related to human communication.

### What Topics We Cover

Our focus is on helping clients strengthen communication skills for application in both business and personal settings. While each client interaction is unique, our most popular areas of focus are in the following five areas:

- Leadership & Management
- Public Speaking
- Sales Communications
- Customer Service Excellence
- Accent Modification

### Our Clients

We've delivered group workshops and one-on-one executive coaching to thousands of clients from the world's largest pharmaceutical firms to mid-sized retailers, to small manufacturers and tech startups. They all share one challenge: the need to speak clearly, persuasively, and with confidence in any setting. Some of our well-known clients include:

Pfizer  
Goldman Sachs  
Apple  
Bose Corporation

Reebok  
Kaiser Permanente  
The Nielsen Company  
McKinsey & Company

Mass General Hospital  
Bank of America  
Takeda  
The Boston Red Sox





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