

You are joining over 35,000 people from all over the world who have followed this set of practice exercises to become better communicators.

My name is Conor Neill and I have been teaching leadership communication for the last 20 years, inside EO and as a professor at IESE Business School in Barcelona, one of the top ranked MBA schools in the world. More about me: www.conorneill.com

Imagine, for a moment, your future.

You are now old. You have lived a long and successful life. You are looking back over the experiences of your life.

If you take a few minutes to add up all of the hours you spent giving presentations or speaking publicly... it will be a small number compared to all the hours of your life.

However, those hours of speaking, of giving presentations, will have a bigger impact on your life success than all of the other hours.

You make a living with words and numbers... and nobody knows what you think until you speak. When a speaker turns information into meaning... then we will always remember that speaker.

That speaker will be you.

The Path to Eloquence

In the ancient period of Athens, and of Rome, eloquence was power. Eloquence is the ability to speak well. Eloquence was the instrument of power, it was the instrument of action, it was an aim of ambition. This worksheet is about focusing your efforts to become Eloquent.

Becoming Eloquent: 6 Tasks

"The more I practice the luckier I get" Gary Player.

How to use this worksheet? Task 1 you can do right now. Make 1-2 videos each day. Don't do too much today, and not do the work tomorrow. Do less when you are motivated, and make it a habit. Tasks 2,3,4,5,6 you could spend from 3-10 days on each of them... repeating until you are happy with the end

result (you are not embarrassed by the video... and would be willing to share on YouTube).

1. Getting Started with your Webcam
2. The "Ice-Breaker" - Connecting with People
3. The Secret of Consulting
4. The Rule of Three
5. Three Words for the Future
6. Pain - Benefits – Improvement

Task 1: Make a Short Video

Today's first task is to record a video on your laptop. Just make a short video. Record the following into your webcam:

“Success is a few good habits repeated every day.”

Task 2: The “How I got here” Ice-breaker:

An ice-breaker is a simple introduction of who you are. It will be used at networking dinners, or at a point in a larger speech where you share your own story to build credibility for the speech. There are 5 standard formats; this week we will focus on the “how I got here” approach.

Task Description:

How I got here: Describe 3 decision moments that led you to be “here”, where “here” might be the place you live, the job you have, or why you are practicing speaking at this moment.

Take a few moments and reflect on the 3 critical decisions. Pick 3 and get started. Don't think too much. The aim here is to get a first version done. Then you can press delete. And maybe try again...

Start your webcam. Briefly explain the 3 critical decisions into your camera. Then you can press delete. And maybe try again... **Remember that this speech is merely a way for you to introduce yourself.** Pick three important things you'd like your audience to learn about you and make those your speech. If you speak on something that you're passionate about, you won't run out of words. So, talk about an exciting adventure from your past, your hopes, your dreams and maybe your favorite hobby. What defines you? Talk about it.

Resources:

- Ice-Breaker Examples: 3 videos of People delivering Ice-Breaker speeches: <http://www.conorneill.com/2011/10/three-examples-of-ice-breaker-speeches.html>
- Develop Your Speaking Skills Video lessons: <http://www.youtube.com/user/rhetoricaljourney>
- The Toastmasters International Guide to preparing the Ice-Breaker speech: <http://www.toastmasters.org/EN1167F.aspx>

Task #3. The Secret of Consulting

I spent the years 1995 through 2004 as a management consultant for Accenture. Consultants learn a

useful secret when they start in the big firms. People are not ready for your answer. You can't go straight there. The consultant's secret is to not jump directly to the solution. The listener is not ready until you have established a shared view of the problem.

Instead of jumping directly to the answer, top consulting organizations train their people to lead in to the answer with the following structure:

Situation -> Complication -> Question -> Answer

Situation: A summary of the current reality. *"Your profits were 10%"*

Complication: Point to a fact that raises a question. *"The nearest competitor made 30% profit"*

Question: State the question that is implicitly raised in the mind of the listener. *"What are they doing differently?"*

Answer: Now you state your conclusion. *"They reduced their product range to 3 models"*

Task Description

Take the newspaper or magazine you read. Find an article that interests you. I read the Economist. If you have nothing to hand, try this [interesting article](#) in the New York Times.

Summarize the article in the format Situation -> Complication -> Question -> Answer. Can you summarize down to 1 sentence for each part?

Now, start your webcam. Record your S-C-Q-A speech structure. Then you can press delete. And maybe try again...

Resources:

Amazon Book: [Barbara Minto, The Pyramid Principle: Logic in Thinking and Writing](#). Barbara Minto developed this S-C-Q-A structure during her time at McKinsey & Co.

[The Economist magazine](#). The only magazine I read every week. Insight and opinion on international news, politics, business, finance, science and technology

Task #4. The Rule of Three

The rule of three is a powerful speaking technique that you must learn, live, and love. When speaking, the number 3 is greater than 4.

The triad of 3 offers a greater sense of completeness than 4 or more. Use 1 for power. Use 2 for

comparison, contrast. Use 3 for completeness, wholeness, roundness.

The rule of three works at micro and macro speech levels.

Micro:

"Faster, Higher, Stronger" - Olympic Motto

"I came, I saw, I conquered" - Julius Caesar

"Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" - US Motto

"Location, Location, Location" - The secret of Real Estate

Macro:

Many great speeches follow the macro rule of three with their overall structure:

- Introduction, Body, Conclusion;
- Complication, Resolution, Example;
- Past, Present, Future.

Task Description:

I want you to use the **Past, Present, Future** speech structure to develop a speech about a change in the world you want to see happen.

Past - You set the context by telling a story 1) about a good time in the past; or 2) lay out a contrast of a difficult past and how far we have come to get to where we are today.

Present - You set out the challenges of today with a story. You lay out the decision to be made now, and the alternatives to choose from.

Future - You tell a story of a hopeful future if the right decisions are made today.

Develop 1 simple story for Past, 1 for Present, 1 for the Future. Switch on your webcam and deliver the speech.

The Greatest Example of Past, Present, Future

The greatest use of the Past, Present, Future speech structure is Ronald Reagan in his speech to the nation after the Challenger space shuttle disaster on 28 January 1986. You can [watch this 3 minute speech here](#).

What is in Ronald Reagan's Challenger speech?

Past - Stories of great explorers of the past and the new worlds they opened for us today.

Present - Ronald Reagan and his wife's personal experience of watching the Challenger shuttle disaster. The doubts and worries that they share with the rest of the audience.

Future - We must continue to travel to space - this is the legacy we must leave to remember the great

explorers.

Resources:

[7 Speaking Suggestions from Reagan's Speechwriter](#)

Task #5. Three Words for the Future

Today's exercise is to develop your "3 words for the next year". This is something I learnt from a blogger called Chris Brogan. Read great examples of "3 words for the next year" on his blog here <http://www.chrisbrogan.com/my-3-words-for-2011/>

Pick 3 words that you can use as guidance for things you want to do in the next 12 months. Create three words that sum up how you intend to behave and focus your energies. And then, with that in mind, start thinking about how that will manifest over the coming 12 months.

My 3 words are "Create, Connect, Complete". Last year's words were "(Live) Local, (Work) Global, (Say) No".

Webcam Time! Now, turn on your webcam.

Start speaking: "My 3 words are XX, YY, ZZ. XX means that in 12 months time my life will look like ...; YY... ZZ..." Give 30 seconds of vision for each word. Describe why each word is important to you.

Finish speaking: "The 3 words that will shape my next 12 months are XX, YY, ZZ".

Task #6. Pain - Benefits - Improvement

How to sell to human beings.

This is based on the latest neuroscience research on the human brain. In my seminars, I talk about the lizard brain, the mammal brain and the human brain (cortex). Real decisions are taken deep down in the lizard brain, not in the cortex.

Use a structure: **Pain -> Benefits -> Improvement.**

Pain - Benefits - Improvement

Identify the Pain: What is the pain that your audience is facing? Concentrate on the most important short-term pain. Is the pain financial, strategic or personal? Get to the reason behind the reason. If the first reason is "more money" or "get promoted" - why? If it is "better relationships" - why? What is missing in their life?

Differentiate with Benefits: The Benefits must be relevant, believable and easy to remember. You can have a maximum of 3 benefits. "Learn at your own pace, Specific achievable tasks, Regular reminders build

good habits". To make Benefits powerful, they need to differentiate your offer and directly deal with Pains. What specifically is different about your offer?

Demonstrate the Improvement: There are two types: Increased pleasure or Reduced pain. Can you demonstrate that the improvements have been greater than the costs? Can you demonstrate with specific examples?

Today's Exercise

Write down the Pain - Benefits - Improvement outline. Your aim to get it as simple as is possible. Is there a way you could reduce the words? Now reduce more words. Make it short. Shorter. Can you deliver the simplest possible explanation of Pain - Benefits - Improvement?

Switch on the webcam and deliver your Pain - Benefits - Improvement speech.

Further Resources:

- How to Evaluate Spoken Communication – evaluation framework pdf <https://conorneill.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ConorNeill-Checklist-Evaluation-Communication.pdf>
- Conor's blog – lots of articles on entrepreneurship, leadership and communications www.conorneill.com
- Conor's YouTube channel – my weekly practice... <http://cono.rs/utube>