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INTRODUCTION

Where Are We?

Nineteenth-century America witnessed the golden age of the orator—peopled by rhetorical giants such as Abraham Lincoln, Mark Twain, Henry Clay, Frederick Douglass, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, and Phillip Brooks, among many others. By the power of their words alone, these masters of the language helped us understand who we are and for generations steered the political and cultural evolution of the great American story.

The twentieth century saw the rapid rise of mass communication and media. Newspaper empires sprang up in the United States and Britain. Science fiction morphed into reality as radio, and then television changed our lives in ways we could never have imagined. A tiny community of orange orchards in California spread the fantastic magic of a new art form called the motion picture around the world.

In the twenty-first century we are in the pioneering phase of exploring new frontiers as different from radio, TV, and newspapers as talkie color movies were from silent black-and-white films. We are in the dawn of the age of social media. A quick visit to Google will tell you that social media has hundreds of life-forms, endless definitions, thousands of experts, countless books on the subject, and hundreds of millions, soon perhaps billions, of discrete voices all clamoring to be heard. Social media is a chaotic, jubilant expression of personal freedom and affirmation, a forum for all, a universal ocean of connectivity and interrelationships unlike anything the world has ever seen—and it’s getting bigger every day.

Arguably the most potent social media tool today is Twitter. But as with all social media platforms, the tool does not define the man.

Take Donald Trump, for example.
During the 2016 presidential election, Trump used Twitter on a historically huge scale to communicate instantly with millions of followers. The mass Tweets paid off. Many observers consider this skillful exploitation of Twitter Trump’s trump card in the race for the presidency and believe that it helped secure his victory.

But no one should be seduced by the Twitter phenomenon, nor believe that Twitter is the new communications standard.

Power, money, personal status, social success, political and business achievement don’t come from 140-letter sound bites. They come from years of ambitious work in a world that admires and values exceptional communications skills.

Donald Trump would be the first to tell you that while Twitter is a great tool, people are not Twitter. Donald Trump is not Twitter. He spent his entire business career relying on his robust interactive skills and considerable powers of persuasion. He was able to succeed as a business man not because of his social media platform, but rather because of face-to-face meetings with clients and the personal connections he had built throughout his career. Similarly, during the campaign, he was able to stir up the crowd and gain supporters during rallies and other public events where he spoke directly to a group of voters.

His predecessor, Barack Obama, pioneered the use of Twitter in national politics and became the first presidential candidate to exploit social media to gain power. But his true power lay not in Twitter, but in an extraordinary aptitude for eloquence and oratory excellence.

Just as they helped our recent presidents, platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and many others can help market your business—and you—but they can never be you. Social media can never be:

◆ the new CEO who so impresses the analysts that the stock soars 20 percent the next day.
◆ the team leader who drives productivity up 15 percent.
◆ the entrepreneur who articulates the vision that shapes a whole new industry and makes markets.
INTRODUCTION

◆ the salesperson who keeps raising the bar year after year.
◆ the coach who breaks through mental barriers to forge a championship team from mediocrity.

You may remember the Yankelovich survey that found if you compare two similar companies in the same industry—one with a CEO who is little seen or heard, and the other with a dynamic leader who has the power to command important audiences—the company with the dynamic leader will typically have a market value as much as double the market value of the company with the silent, unseen CEO.

No one can achieve this kind of dramatic contrast remotely. Twitter can’t do it. Facebook can’t do it. LinkedIn can’t do it. YouTube can’t do it. Not even blogs and the Buzz—the word on the Internet “street”—can do it. Until clones and robots replace us all, only people can do this.

Social media is only a tool. It is electronic, abstract, digital, and usually revolves around small images you can hold in your hand. It is a good thing and a useful thing, but it is only a tool. You, by contrast, are not a tool. You are the authentic article, large as life, and you must be seen and heard. You may not see yourself as an Abraham Lincoln or Daniel Webster. But you have—as did they—unlimited potential to lead and go far.

A good place to launch yourself is right here. Use the many keys to power you will discover in The New Articulate Executive to unleash the inner leader that dwells in all of us, waiting to be summoned. At some point, you will likely want to position yourself as a leader in whatever you do. If you work at it, you may become a transformational leader who can persuade investors, inspire employees, bond with customers, or get elected to office.

Ultimately you may achieve the status of that most rare of individuals in business or politics, what I call the threshold leader.

If the transformational leader can enlist others to rally around a cause and accomplish great things, the threshold leader, often alone, is forever out ahead of the fulcrum of change, and is in fact the
embodiment of change itself, clearing a path for transformational leaders to follow.

If you feel yourself drawn to this far frontier—or to wherever your journey may take you—this book should be in your survival kit when you arrive.

**Everything You Need to Know About Public Speaking**

- Seven key errors never to make
- The secret of translation—the real heart of your presentation
- The four As—how to orchestrate your thoughts
- The POWER formula—secrets to the perfect presentation
- Reversing the wave—starting with the end
- Projecting into the future
- How to begin and end
- The “rocket”—how to make your presentation really fly
- The “necklace”—a simple, yet elegant design for any presentation
- The 18-minute wall—and how to get over it
- The 8-second drill—the secret to capturing any audience
- The menagerie of mistakes
- Ten important writing—and speaking—rules to live by
- The most common rhetorical mistakes
- How to beat fear
- Reading a speech without appearing to read
- How to use teleprompters and stage monitors
- Mastering the art of Q&A
PART ONE

THE SPEAKING GAME
LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATIONS

The Secret Weapon

Legendary business leaders share more than just spectacular success. They not only are typically great communicators themselves but recognize and value this precious skill in others.

Former General Electric chairman Jack Welch, often cited as America’s most admired CEO—even years after he left the job—once said that the number one quality he looked for in future leaders was, “Someone who is comfortable talking to anyone—anybody in the world, in New Delhi, Moscow, Cairo, Beijing—anywhere!”—in other words, someone who could make things happen across international borders and cultural barriers, someone who could walk into a room anywhere in the world and fix a problem, delight a customer, secure a partner, or close a deal. This, said Welch, is the single most important business asset, absolutely essential to any company that hopes to grow and prosper.

Warren Buffett, the famed Oracle of Omaha and one of the world’s wealthiest men, recently told a TV audience of M.B.A. students at his alma mater, the Columbia Business School, that he would offer $100,000 seed money to any student in the audience in
return for 10 percent of future earnings. He then upped the ante by declaring that if the recipients could demonstrate what he called “public speaking,” or communications skills—or were willing to invest in public speaking training—he would boost his offer to $150,000. Buffett confided to the students that he himself had taken a Dale Carnegie course early in his career and that it was one of the best business investments he had ever made.

Today, Buffett is recognized far beyond the world of business as a brilliant communicator who can explain even the most complex business issues, dense financial engineering, and economic forecasts in terms that even a child can understand. His famous annual newsletter to investors is eagerly anticipated and widely admired for its simplicity, clarity, humor, and wisdom. Investors, business leaders, entrepreneurs, and financial markets the world over hang on his every word and follow his every move. Buffett is the kind of living legend who proves yet again that when you marry brains and talent with outstanding communications skills, the sky’s the limit.

That was my message in 1995 with the first edition of The Articulate Executive, and it is my message today. But now the message is even more urgent—because technology, for all its glories, is rapidly dumbing us down. It’s quietly, insidiously alienating us from one another and robbing us of our precious and unique gifts of face-to-face direct human interaction. We e-mail, Twitter (tweet), fax, text message, play video games, watch TV, and surf YouTube, Facebook, Google, and the Web. These are wondrous miracles of our time, but they come at a price.

The deeper we dive into all the marvelous technology, the farther apart we drift—drawn to the mesmerizing magic of our desktops, laptops, and handhelds—and in a sense the less engaging, singular, unique, and human we become. Our kids text message nonstop—even when they are sitting right next to each other, not even ten inches apart.

Many of us don’t read as much, nor socialize the way we used to, nor value speaking skills the way we once did. Even educated Amer-
icans—men and women with college and advanced degrees—make grammatical errors in writing and conversation that would not have been tolerated just a generation ago. We forget—and to our peril, hardly value—the simplest and most basic things, such as how to have an intelligent conversation or even how to spell. As just one example, I recently got a brief thank-you note from a thirtyish, Tulane-educated client with twenty-five grammatical and spelling errors. Incredibly, this is not uncommon. But is it acceptable? Should we yield to the tyranny of the universal dumbing down of even our best and brightest?

The gradual loss of the art of conversation we once valued and cherished, and the steady erosion of our capacity to interact effectively at a very personal level, speaks volumes of the age we live in and may eventually change the very nature of civilization as we know it. Of course, it’s true that texting with colleagues in the office can be more efficient than running up and down halls to try to make a decision or resolve an issue. It is also true that e-mailing customers on their handhelds can avoid the hassles of telephone tag. But these facilitators and conveniences will never replace the added business value of direct human contact.

The more we rely on technology to do our talking for us, the more we can expect to see the cost of that reliance in our business results and performance.

Our computers can help us run our businesses, but they will never get the actual deal done, enlist investors, persuade managements, recruit and retain new customers, nor lead our employees.

In business, management’s inability to interact, articulate, persuade, or enlist can have immediate and potentially fatal consequences. The combined effect over time can be an eventual loss of competitiveness and a negative effect on the bottom line. At the per-
sonal and career levels, smart and talented people lacking these skills will find the odds stacked against them. The disadvantage could be debilitating, even insurmountable.

Excellence in business communications should be as routine as excellence in business performance. Many business leaders (like Jack Welch) will tell you that in successful corporations, communication is performance. Those who look, act, and sound like leaders will be seen as leaders. And in any career, this is always a very good thing.

If leadership in business is perceived as an asset, then an inability to sell a product or service, command a room, run a meeting effectively, enlist allies, persuade investors, inspire employees, align team members, or compel key audiences gives the perception of no leadership at all. This means that if you have a good idea, you might not be able to sell it. If you have a vision, no one will hear it. If you have a strategy, no one will follow it. So what does it profit us to have what it takes, if no one can take what we have?

Warren Buffett will tell you that when any commodity, such as an asset class or a particular stock, is perceived to be losing value, that’s the exact moment smart investors buck the trend and look for value. His purchase of Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway bucked all the trends. If his long history as a champion investor is any measure, he will probably make yet another killing. Ironically, in business, if almost nowhere else outside politics, leadership communications is another bankable asset that is actually gaining in value—precisely because it is becoming such a rare commodity.

Unlike businesspeople, politicians have long understood the value of leadership communications. In fact, word power is their entire stock and trade. If anyone should doubt the power of the word to accomplish great things, witness the incredible phenomenon of Barack Obama, who rose like a rocket from relative obscurity in the
middle of a deep recession to become the first African-American president.

Millions of Americans immediately recognized a good thing when they saw it. The majority who voted for him say they did so largely on his extraordinary ability to articulate his vision and reveal his intelligence, clearly define problems and solutions, simplify the complex, rationally debate any issue, engage in intelligent conversation, resonate with the masses, enlist vast support, secure loyal followings, capture the mood of the nation, win over Independents and Republicans alike, enlighten the uninformed, and discuss challenging crises with a cool head. In other words, Obama positioned himself as a capable leader at a critical historical moment when the whole country was crying out for leadership. This is not the kind of thing you can do with just text messages, e-mails, and tweets (although it is true, as we mentioned earlier, that Obama was the first presidential candidate to harness the vast leverage of YouTube and Twitter to reach millions of mostly young voters).

Maybe businesspeople should borrow from the experience of politicians. The question here is, can you walk into a room anywhere, anytime, and make things happen? Wonderful things unfold when people talk face-to-face in private offices, conference rooms, boardrooms, corridors, auditoriums—and yes, even on the golf course. Deals are cut. Decisions are made. Obstacles are cast aside. Whatever the job, the job gets done.

That’s why now more than ever is the time to capitalize on the huge added value that leadership communications brings to any business proposition or transaction. As Warren Buffett would certainly concur, it could be the best business investment you ever made. That’s what this book is all about.

Read on.