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## If your communication skills determine your future success, what are you doing to improve them?

Richard Branson is renowned for emphasising the importance of communication.

One of his favourite quotes is:

*“Communication is a skill that you can learn. It’s like riding a bicycle or typing. If you’re willing to **work at it**, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life.”*

– Brian Tracey

This Business Breakthrough report will help you ‘work at it’ and will help you improve your communication skills.

From birth, you’ve been developing the ability to speak, listen and connect with people.

As a toddler, just as you learned to crawl, walk and run, you practiced your first words, first sentences and first questions. Then, you got better and better at communicating – until you didn’t.

There comes a time when most people take their ability to communicate for granted because they’ve mastered the basics.

But if you want a better career, a better life, even, you might consider developing your communication skills – just as Richard Branson and Brian Tracey suggest, and just as Godfrey Camille did...



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### From miserable to marvellous...

Despite a ‘bleak’ 1930s childhood, Godfrey Camille attended Harvard University, where he was described by psychologists in the 85-year-long *Harvard Study of Adult Development* as a ‘neurotic hypochondriac’.

Like his colleagues at Harvard, he enlisted in the army to serve in the second World War. However, unlike most of his colleagues, who came home as decorated officers, he returned as an unremarkable private. He did attend medical school on his return but, shortly after graduating, attempted suicide. Later, aged 35, he was hospitalised for 14 months for pulmonary tuberculosis.

### A much brighter future...

One Harvard researcher wrote: “Everyone had predicted he’d be a loser.”

Even Camille described his formative years as “dysfunctional” when he was interviewed in the early 1970s, 40 years after the start of the study. However, his 14-month experience in hospital was a turning point.

By the time he was in his 50s, Camille was happily married, considered by his adult daughters as an “exemplary father”, and a leader in his community. He ran a successful medical practice and became a nationally recognised expert on asthmatic patients.

## What changed?

His ability to communicate.

During his 14 months in the tuberculosis ward, Camille began developing relationships with fellow patients, playing cards and attending Bible class with them. Relationships with orderlies and nurses also blossomed. He learned to communicate with people of all walks of life and to build relationships. After leaving the hospital, he continued to develop these new communication skills.

Researchers determined that, until the age of 30, Camille did not have one lasting friendship. Ten years later, he was one of the most socially active people in the study. He died of a heart attack, aged 82, while mountaineering in the French Alps.

More than three hundred people attended his funeral – recognition of the fact that he'd been successful, popular and much respected. In the download tools (see below), you'll find more about how communication plays a vital role in the world's Blue Zones (regions in the world where people live significantly longer and healthier lives). Check it out.

**“Good communication isn't just a skill – it's a better life strategy.”**

### KEY FACT:

More than 80 years after the start of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, which involved over 2,000 participants, a 2023 research summary concluded that: *“Good relationships keep us healthier and happier.”*

### IN A NUTSHELL:

Your communication skills effect everything in your life – from your emotional wellbeing and personal growth to your professional advancement and community belonging.

## 4 rules for communication success:

You find supercommunicators in successful marriages, in politics, in business, in the military and in the medical profession. In fact, supercommunicators appear in all walks of life. You recognise them because they're the ones people want talk to, to confide in and to ask for guidance and advice. They're the ones who better connect with the people in their lives through their mastery of the 4 rules of communication success.

Before we get to the 4 rules, it's important to note that there's 1 key principle to bind them all...

### KEY FACT:

**Great conversations are learning conversations**

From his deep research into what makes a supercommunicator, here's what Charles Duhigg suggests are the 4 rules:

1. Pay attention to **WHAT KIND OF CONVERSATION** is happening – if you're not having the same kind of conversation, you're unlikely to connect. There are 3 kinds of conversation, as follows...

2. Share your **GOALS**, ask what others are seeking – if you don't, everyone is heading in a different direction in the conversation, and you're unlikely to connect.
3. Ask about others' **FEELINGS** and share your own – if you don't, others may feel that the conversation is incomplete, which will reduce or prevent or undermine trust, understanding and a sense of connection.
4. Explore whether **IDENTITIES** are important to the conversation – if you don't, some may feel excluded or misunderstood and turn what might have been a productive discussion into an argument or relationship breakdown.

You don't have to agree with everyone, every time. You just need to be sure you're having the same **KIND OF CONVERSATION** and then be curious and genuinely interested. Demonstrate that you're listening. Learn about the goals, the feelings, the beliefs and values of those to whom you're talking – learn about what matters to them.

## How do you do this?

Duhigg's research confirms the importance of first working out the kind of conversation you're having – **What's This Really About?** Once this has been established, you have the 3H's to guide your questions, comments and responses:

- Is the conversation about **GOALS**? Try and **HELP** them make a decision.
- Is the conversation about **FEELINGS**? As you chat, recognise and reflect their feelings – give them a conversational **HUG**.
- Is the conversation about **IDENTITY**? Ensure you **HEAR** what they're saying about themselves.

Supercommunicators think more deliberately about which kind of conversation they're having and then start by matching (synchronising) their conversation with their colleague.

This shows that they have genuine interest in connecting with the person they're talking with and in understanding what they want to talk about.

**“The ‘What's This Really About?’ conversation is a (quiet) negotiation – only the goal is not to win, but to**



**help everyone agree (implicitly) on the topics we'll discuss, and how we'll make decisions together."** – Charles Duhigg, *Supercommunicators – How to Unlock the Secret Language of Connection*

A mismatched conversation means there is no connection, and there'll be no real exchange of views.

Have you ever felt, when you were discussing something with someone and making no progress, that it was as if that person was from a different planet? This is probably because you were mismatched – you were actually having two different conversations.

Duhigg suggests that the next time you have a conversation that, rather than being constructive, is going badly or edging towards an argument, try asking:

- **Do you want to talk about how we are both feeling?**
- **Or, do we need to make a decision together?**
- **Or, is this about something else?**

Once you've synchronised the conversation, you'll be better connected, the conversation will flow, and you'll build a stronger, more trusting, more respectful and productive relationship. Success will follow.

## A PROVEN SOLUTION FOR YOU...

Think about what kind of conversation is taking place and synchronise your conversation around the other person's goals, feelings or identity.

## Important – care needed...

Synchronising or matching conversations is not mimicry. It's about authentically, genuinely seeking to understand what the other person wants, what they are feeling and who they are.

And remember – these tools, skills and frameworks are there to help you advance your already capable conversation skills. Conversations ebb and flow, and these new insights empower you to navigate and embrace their natural rhythm.

Remember also that **every great conversation is a learning conversation** that builds connection, builds relationships and, ultimately, builds a

more successful life.

Here's an overview of the 3 conversation subjects you're looking to master. For more details and specific skills, please check out the download resources:

## Mastering GOALS conversations

This kind of conversation is a quiet (implicit) negotiation about what you and they ultimately want, the outcome that you and they want and the decisions that you and they need to make.

Everyone has at least an idea about what they want from a conversation – your skills can help make these explicit and obvious rather than unclear and vague.

## Mastering FEELINGS conversations

Seek to understand their feelings, for sure – this is vital. But also be willing to share your experiences, your emotions and your feelings so that they can see you're in their feelings space. However, always keep in mind that it's not about you.

Studies show that despite our normal discomfort about opening a feelings conversation, people are nearly always happy to be asked and to answer a deep feelings conversation.

**"Emotions impact every conversation... even when we don't acknowledge those feelings, they're still there – and when they are ignored, they're likely to become obstacles to connection."** – Charles Duhigg, *Supercommunicators – How to Unlock the Secret Language of Connection*

Ask deep questions rather than fact-based, surface-level questions and respond in ways that show that you appreciate or at least partially understand how they feel.

Especially important when having a feelings conversation is demonstrating that you're hearing what they're saying and how they feel as they say it.

A gentle and respectful way to show you're listening is to ask permission to share with them what you've just heard – *"Would it be OK to share with*

*you what I think you're telling me?"* – then repeating back to them what they're saying. Rephrasing their words and reflecting back to them how you think they feel can build very strong connections.

## Mastering IDENTITY conversations

Our histories and backgrounds, our families and friendships, the teams we support and our passions all shape our view of ourselves, how we communicate and how we build relationships. Asking about these elements can prove to be fundamental to a highly-connected conversation.

Identity conversations are, by definition, deep, as they get to the core of how we see ourselves in our world. They are potentially the most challenging conversations to have and at which to succeed, but well-crafted questions, prepared in advance, can be a big help.

Duhigg describes the importance of identity: *"We all possess social identities that shape how we speak and hear."*

Psychologists suggest that, unless we are able to shift the way in which we see ourselves, our behaviours are unlikely to evolve and our results (at best) remain the same. If you see yourself as weak communicator, unable to change, you'll remain a weak communicator. We hope this report helps you see that you are capable of improving your communication skills – what do you think?

Please check out the download tools (see below) for more details and for the resources to help you develop your communication skills.

**STOP** – taking your conversation skills for granted; it will hold you back from your full potential in life.

**START** – investing time, effort and energy in improving your communication skills so that you can transform your results – just as Godfrey Camille did.

**GET YOUR BITESIZE SUPPORT TOOLS NOW**

<https://businessbreakthrough.online/supercommunicators-win-tools-and-resources/>

## TIME TO DISAGREE:

“The complexity of being a supercommunicator feels way too difficult for me.”

You're right, communication is far more complex than we often realise. This is why learning how to better communicate can transform your relationships, careers and even your life when you improve these skills.

Start simple. Start easy.

Duhigg provides a simple 3-part

framework that you can think about at the start of every conversation. You can quickly determine whether you're having a **goals, feelings** or **identity** conversation. This simple insight alone can improve your communication skills, because at least you'll have matched/synchronised your conversation with your colleague.

“Using these new ideas, tools and frameworks feels unnatural and might appear false and

untrustworthy to the people I talk to.”

When you learned to ride a bike or drive a car, or if you've tried to play a new instrument, it likely felt unnatural or uncomfortable at first. And it's the same with learning supercommunicator skills.

Be aware of the 4 supercommunicator rules and the better ways to ask, listen and be seen to be listening and you'll soon be a better communicator.

## ULTIMATE ARGUMENT:

“How do I know this will work for me and my business?”

Until you test the supercommunicator skills every day for a few weeks, you won't know. Godfrey Camille proved that Richard Branson and Brian Tracey were right: “...*communication is a skill that you can learn*”.

The Harvard Adult Development Study suggests that it would be worth your while to advance your communication skills, especially if you want a more successful business, stronger relationships and a better life.

## Tell me more...

*Supercommunicators – How to Unlock the Secret Language of Connection*, by Charles Duhigg, pulls together insights, research and stories about supercommunicators from many walks of life. Because this basic human skill of communication can be improved, it's worth getting and devouring a copy of Duhigg's book. You too can become a supercommunicator.

## 4 helping hands for you...



Every day of your life you're communicating with individuals and groups, be it well or badly or indifferently. Every one of these conversations contributes to your success – or derails it.

Improving your communication skills helps accelerate your relationships and your success in business and in life. These '4 Helping Hands' can get you started:

1. Please don't take your communication skills for granted – it's possible to improve your ability to ask questions, listen well and demonstrate that you're listening. This will allow you to build stronger connections with the people in your life.
2. Work out which conversation you need to have to start with and synchronise (match) your colleague's conversation – is it a **goals, feelings** or **identity** conversation?
3. Ask open questions. Actively listen to what the other person says (and doesn't say). Try to establish what they mean and how they are feeling.
4. Share your thoughts, stories and feelings in a gentle way to show you're in a similar place or can appreciate what they are saying and feeling. Asking permission to share what you've heard and how you relate to it helps.

## GET YOUR BITESIZE SUPPORT TOOLS NOW

<https://businessbreakthrough.online/supercommunicators-win-tools-and-resources/>

Please use these tools and resources to think about the kind of conversations you want to take place in your firm and then synchronise them around goals, feelings and identity.

FOR MORE EDITIONS OF BUSINESS BREAKTHROUGHS, PLEASE GO TO:  
<https://businessbreakthrough.online/library>

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