

5 Business Communication Traps and how to avoid them



CLARITY FIRST

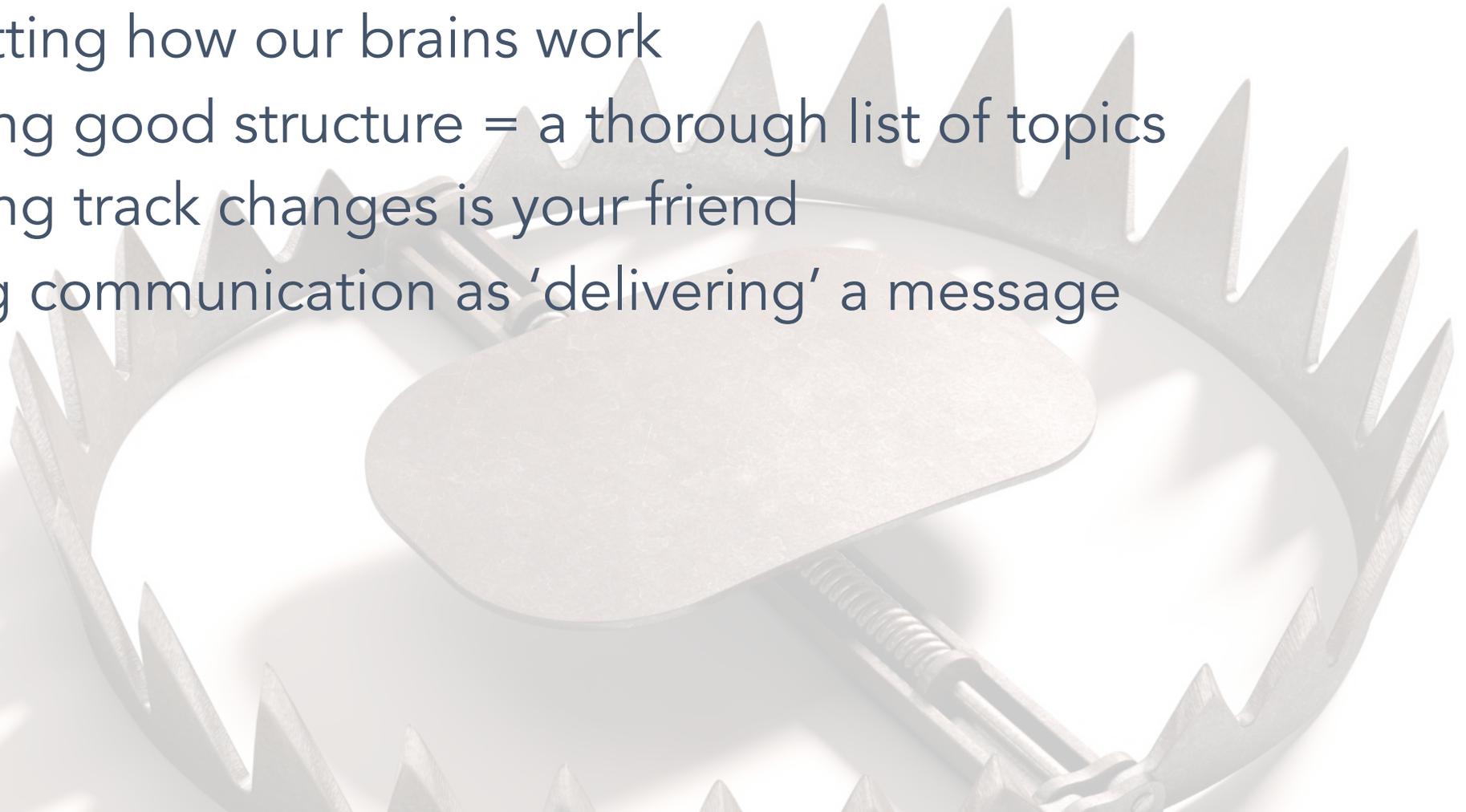
PROGRAM

DOWNLOAD NOTES

<https://ClarityFirstProgram.com/5TrapsNotes>

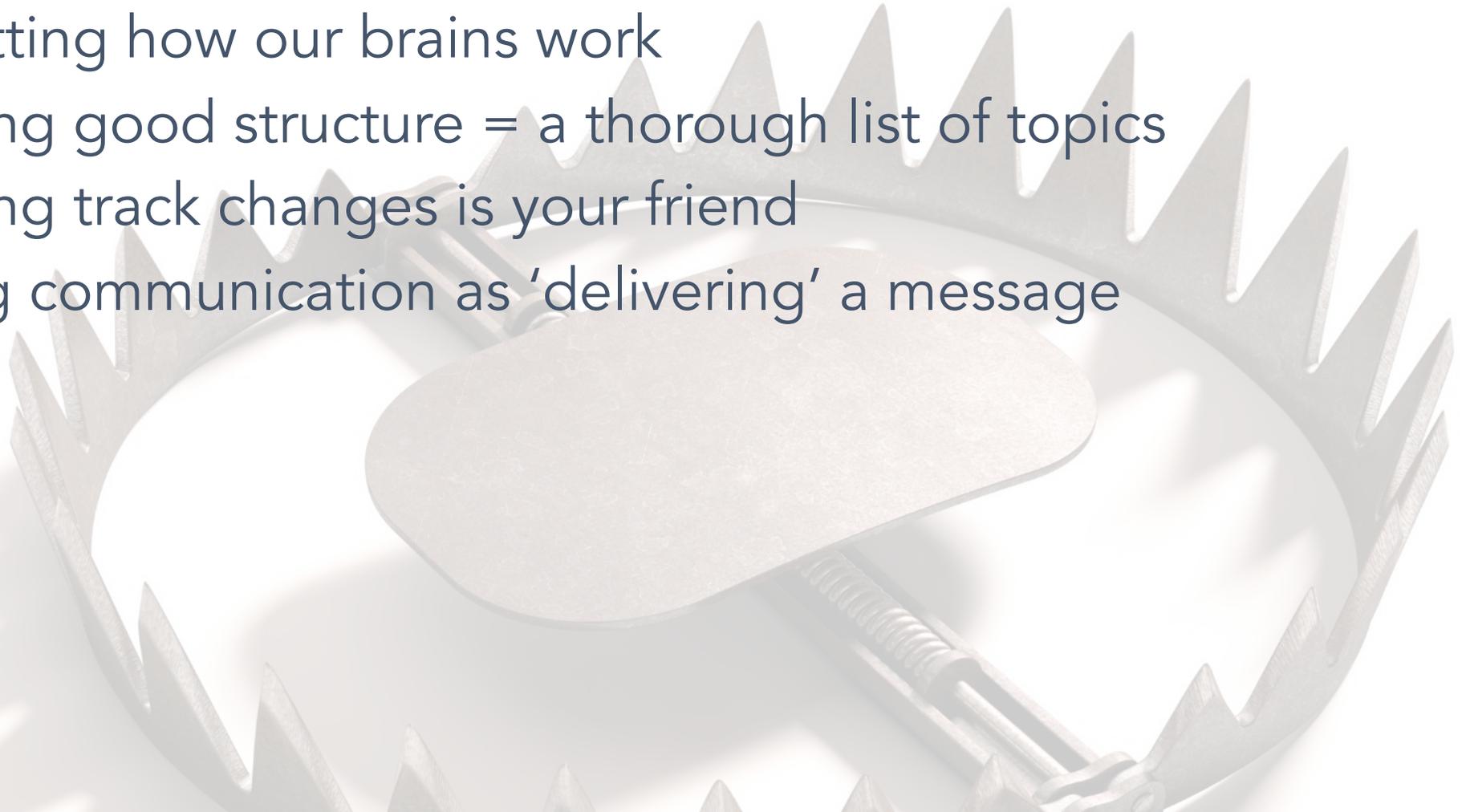
Five traps to avoid so you can communicate with impact

1. Believing shorter is always better
2. Forgetting how our brains work
3. Thinking good structure = a thorough list of topics
4. Thinking track changes is your friend
5. Seeing communication as 'delivering' a message



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TOO LONG DIDN'T READ

< TLDR >

TOO HARD DIDN'T READ

> THDR >

Megastore.com Latest News

Attached please find a press review of Megastore.com's online activity.

Mega-Store.com was launched in July 1996. The site was shut early October for an overhauled to get set for holiday selling, marking the third time Mega-Store unplugged the site for a relaunch. The site was criticised for being hard to navigate and for emphasizing product breadth over depth. Manufacturers provide the majority of product-related editorial, rather than Mega-Store generating it inhouse, which would help to differentiate the site and make it unique.

The site is moving to a newly acquired e-commerce platform and will incorporate customer-suggested changes before its scheduled reopening October 17. Among other things, customers suggested changing product categories, adding products and making it easier to log-in to shop and place orders.

Offering

Mega-Store.com currently offers about 600,000 SKUs of product.

Traffic

About 23 million Mega-Store customers had internet access at the end of last year. Mega-Store com had a little more than 1 million visitors in August, according to Nielsen/Net Ratings. That was well behind Amazon.com, which led with 17 million visitors.

Media Metrix, Inc. (Nasdaq:MMXI) reports that in July, sears.com leads the "department store" retail category by attracting 2.475 million unique visitors, followed by JC Penney.com with 2.242 million and Mega-Store.com with 1.477 million.

Sales

Internet sales totalled only about \$5 billion during the Christmas season last year. That is small in comparison to the overall size of Mega-Store, which had more than \$160 million in sales in 1999.

Jury still out on MegaStore.com

To build our understanding of Megastore.com's current performance, I have now attached the analysis you requested as to whether the financial press thought its strategy was a success.

As far as the financial press is concerned, there are three reasons why the jury is still out regarding MegaStore.com's success:

1. Past performance is poor
2. Current performance improvement initiatives are yet to prove themselves
3. Some fundamental issues around integration and customer loyalty remain unaddressed.

I have discussed each issue in turn below.

Past performance poor

Since its launch in July 1996, MegaStore.com's performance has been poor in terms of both sales and traffic.

Sales are low

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Speed to read is more important than length

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Integration

Earlier this year, Mega-Store.com was spun off as a separate venture from parent company Mega-Stores Inc. in Witherspoon, Ark. The online company is a joint venture of Mega-Store, which is the world's largest retailer, and Bucks Partners in Palo Alto, California. As a separate internet business, Mega-Store.com will be exempt from charging sales tax, except in California, Utah and Arkansas, where the e-retailer has a physical presence. This allows it to be more competitively priced against other pure e-retailers.

Higher pricing had been a big criticism of the program and posed a peculiar conundrum for the low-price leader, which suddenly found itself undercut by Amazon.com and eToys during last year's holiday season. It also allows Mega-Store to take more risks now that Mega-Store.com isn't as closely tied to the parent company. "The need to focus on earnings held us up and kept us from being as innovative and as creative as we need to be," said Turner.

The spin-off also brought in venture capital group Bucks Partners. The benefits here go far beyond financial, as Bucks gives the retailer access to a talent pool rich with new-economy players. Combined with the relocation to Silicon Valley, the heart of internet country, the move allows the retailer to better attract the best and brightest in the industry.

"The splitting off of the company is good for attracting talent and for giving a small start-up division the focus it needs to be successful," said Haller. "The risk is allowing it to stray too far from the overall brand proposition that Mega-Store offers."

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Jury still out on MegaStore.com

We have been helping Mega Brothers identify how to improve the performance of its online business, MegaStore.com. To help build our understanding of its current situation, you asked me to review what the financial press is saying about MegaStore.com.

As far as the financial press is concerned, the jury is still out regarding MegaStore.com's success for the following three reasons:

1. Its past performance is poor
2. Its current performance improvement initiatives are yet to prove themselves
3. Some fundamental issues around integration and customer loyalty remain unaddressed.

Each of these reasons is discussed below.

Past performance poor

Since its launch 18 months ago, MegaStore.com's performance has been poor in terms of both sales and traffic.

Sales low

The online store's sales totalled only about \$5 billion during the Christmas season last year.

That is small in comparison to the overall size of Mega Brothers, which had more than \$160 billion in sales over the same period.

Traffic low

About 23 million customers had accessed MegaStore.com at least once by the end of last year. In the month of August this year, MegaStore.com had a little more than 1 million visitors, according to DigitalData. That was well behind Acorn.com, which led with 17 million visitors.

MediaMetrix reports that in July, Acorn.com led the online department store retail category by attracting 2.475 million unique visitors, followed by JabbaJabba.com with 2.242 million and MegaStore.com with 1.477 million.

Current initiatives unproven

MegaStore.com has taken a number of initiatives to improve its performance – including a planned site re-launch, creating a separate online company, and appointment of a new CEO with a relevant track record. However, these are all recent measures, and are yet to prove successful.

Site re-launch benefits not yet proven

The site was shut early October for an overhaul to get set for Christmas selling, which was the third time Mega Brothers unplugged the site for a relaunch. It had been criticised for being hard to navigate and for emphasizing product breadth over depth – it currently offers about 600,000 products.

The site is moving to a new e-commerce platform and will incorporate customer-suggested changes before its scheduled reopening 15 November. Among other things, customers suggested changing product categories, adding products and making it easier to log in and check out.

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Before – 688 words

After – 877 words

Five traps to avoid so you can communicate with impact

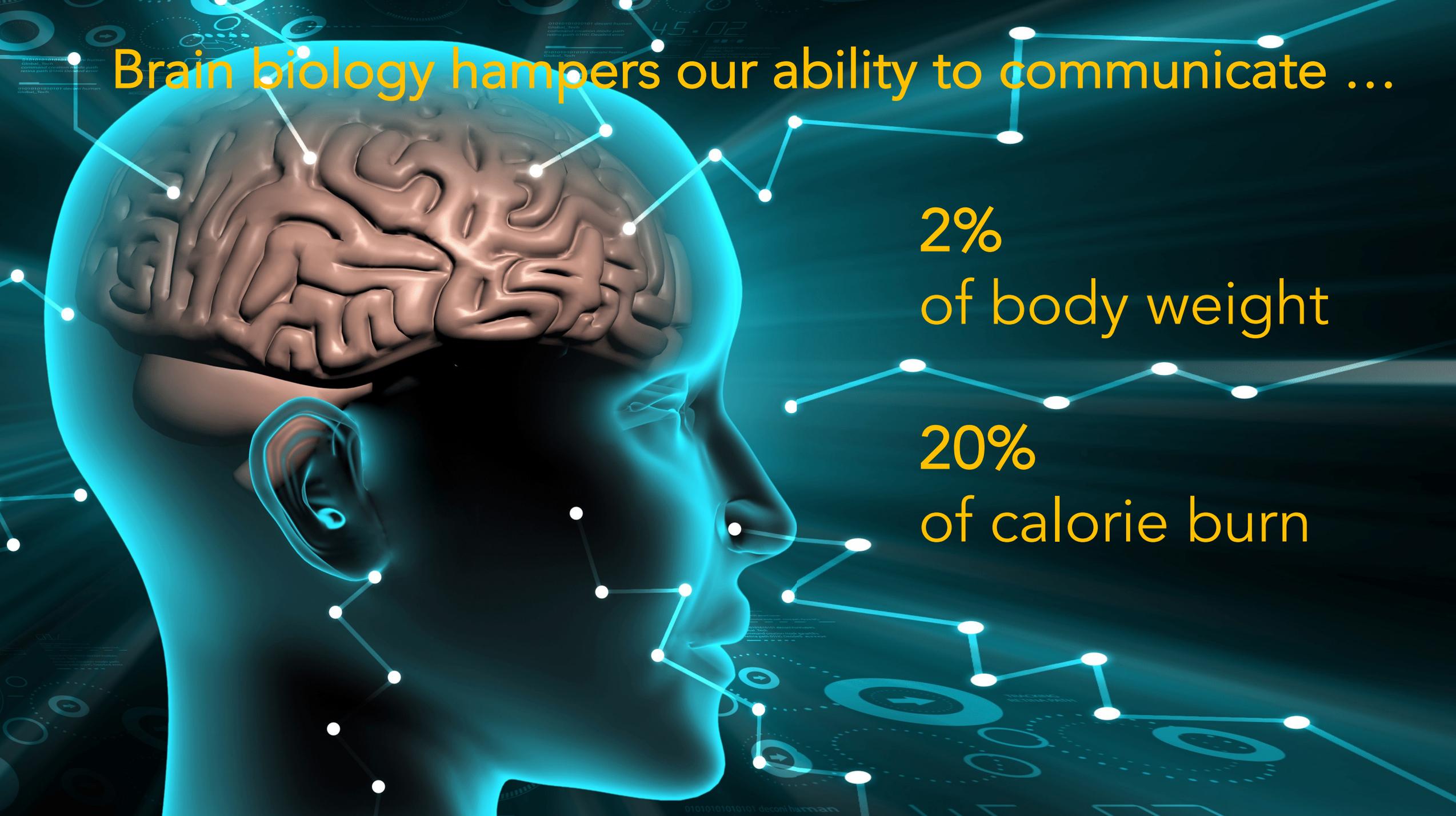
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Brain biology hampers our ability to communicate ...

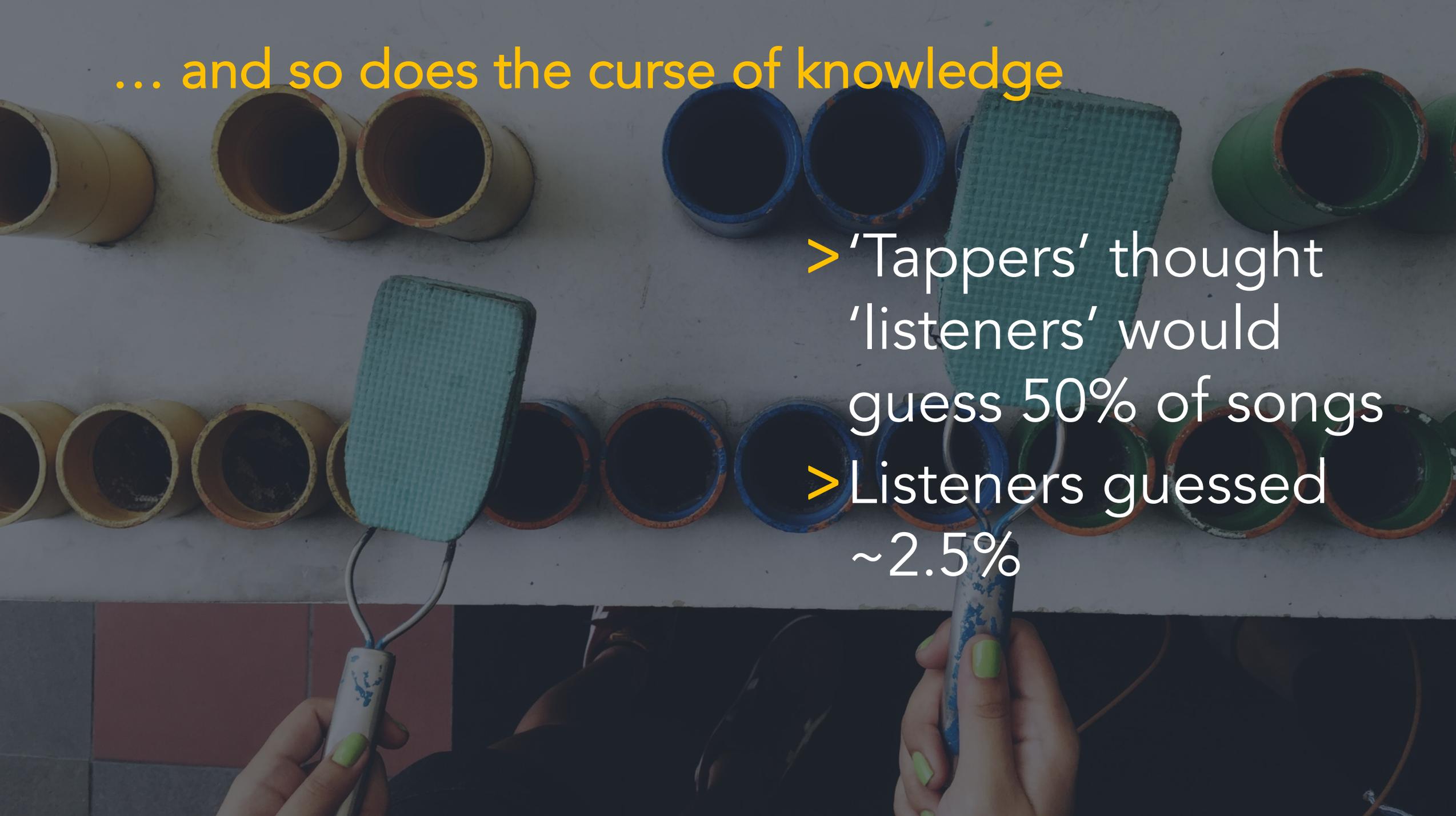
2%
of body weight

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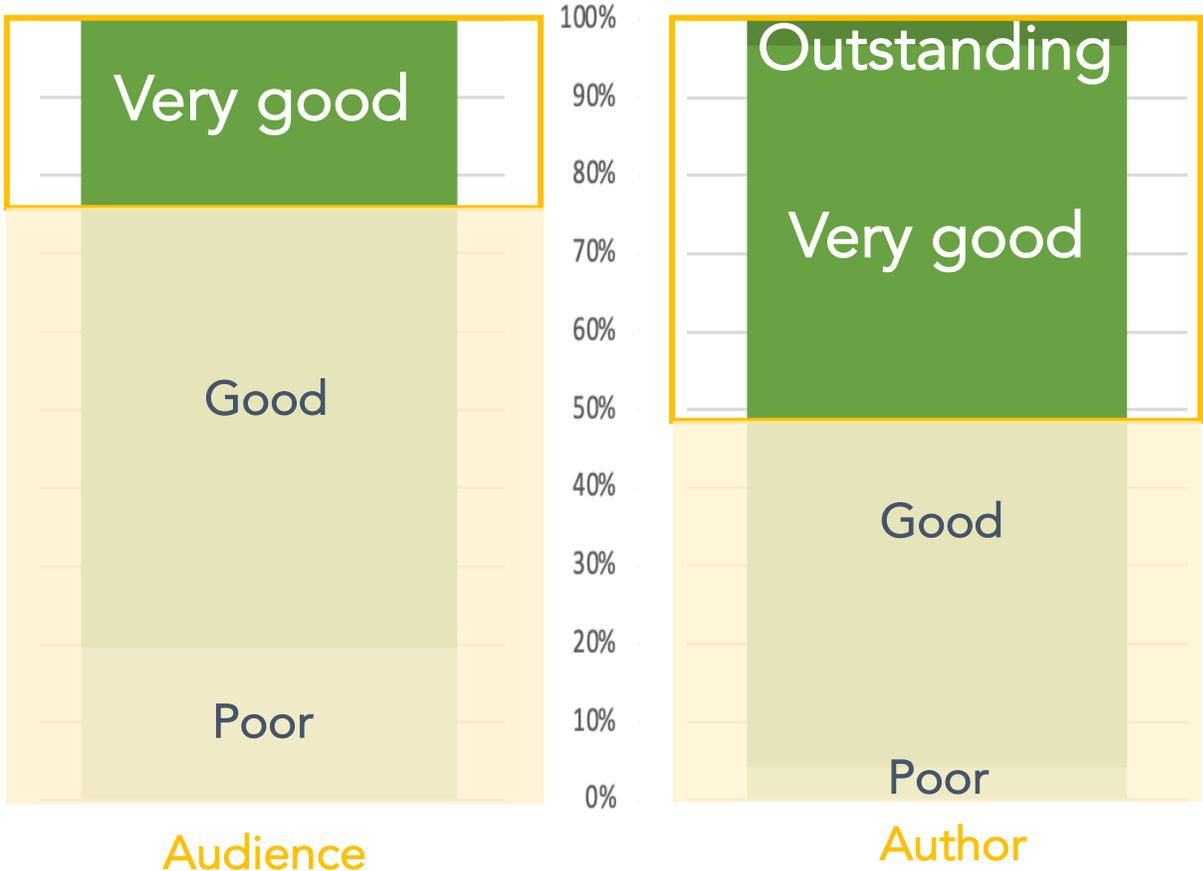


... and so does the curse of knowledge

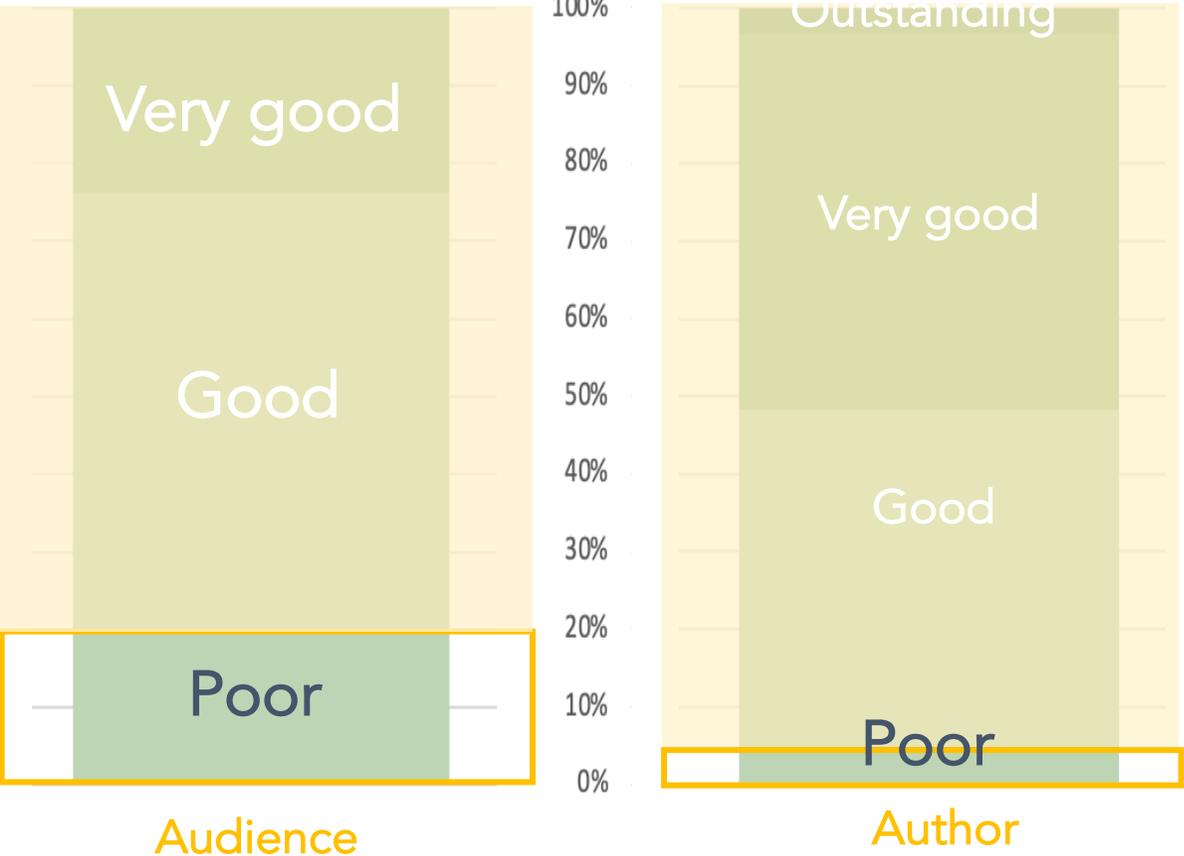
- > 'Tappers' thought 'listeners' would guess 50% of songs
- > Listeners guessed ~2.5%



Authors were more than twice as likely to rate their communication as 'very good' or 'outstanding'

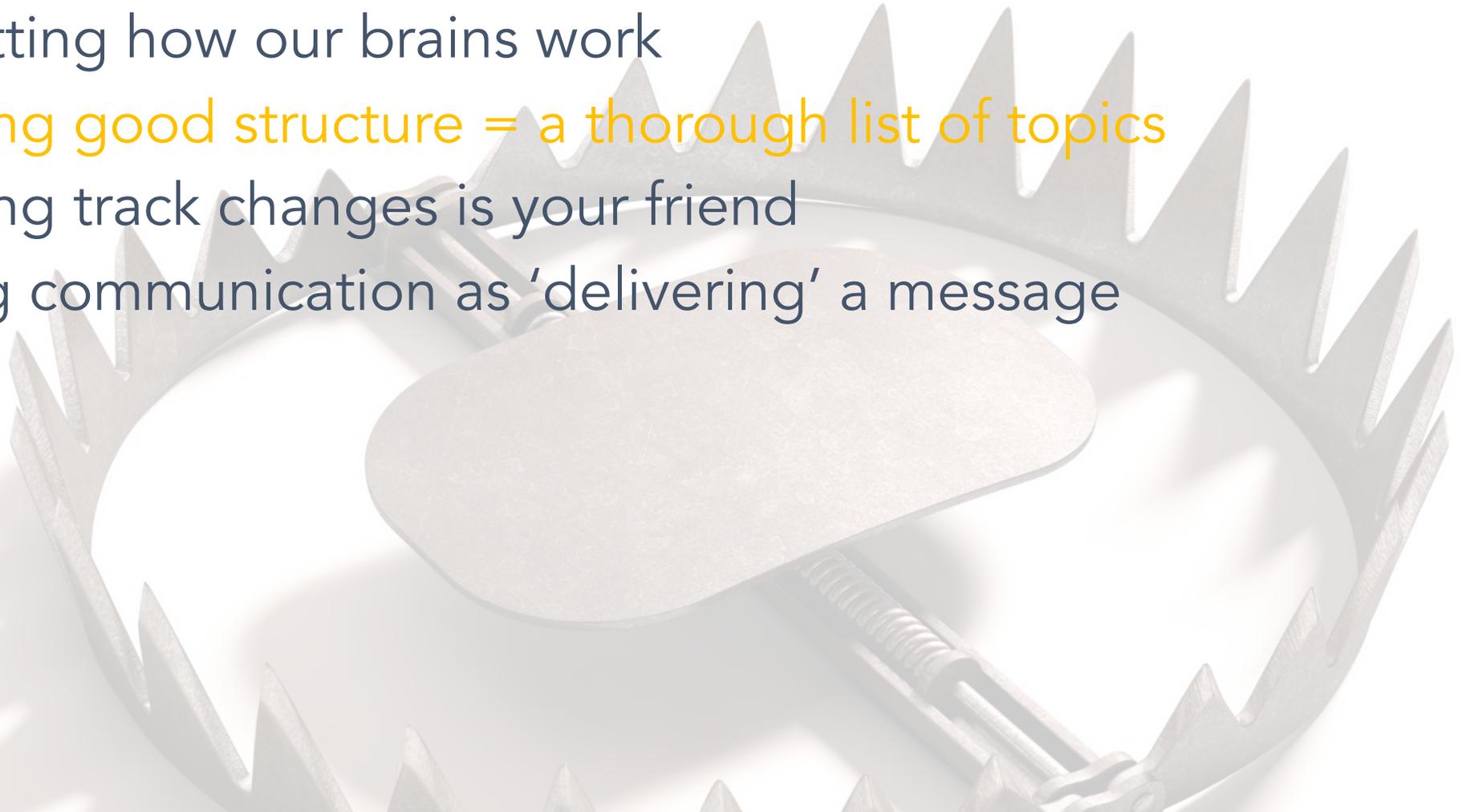


Audiences were twice as likely to rate communication as poor and rated none as outstanding



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Lists of topics are great for collecting the right data ...

| Trial Name | Business Owner | Product Owner | Date | Version | 1.0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---------|-----|---------|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|-----------------------------|--|--|
| 1. TRIAL AIM & SUITABILITY The trial aim should clearly describe value to XX of proving the value of the potential product or service (MVP) in a manner which is more efficient and effective than other pathways. | 3. TARGET CUSTOMER SEGMENTS Have personas been developed? Which customers are we targeting? Are any out of scope? | 5. SUMMARY HYPOTHESES & SUCCESS CRITERIA The summary hypotheses should address the most significant threats to viability i.e. What is most likely to kill the Proposed Solution? We believe (Target Mkt) will (do this action/use this solution) for (this reason - Customer / Business Value), as evidenced by (Minimum Viability Tests), by when Each variable in the experiment has to be properly tested. The hypothesis has to be testable and has to have the potential of failing. Refer to Hypothesis Worksheet (separate document) for detailed hypotheses. | 6. RELEVANT INSIGHTS Link to HCD / Concept Testing / Desk Research / Published Research that's relevant. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. ALIGNMENT TO VISION & ROADMAP Demonstrate alignment to strategy | 4. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS Those few things that must go well to ensure success: | 7. MINIMUM VIABILITY TEST (MVT) MVT = the minimum amount of validated learning in specific areas of uncertainty e.g. MVP value tested with real customers: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. OUT OF SCOPE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9. BUSINESS MODEL REVENUE STREAMS | 11. CONSEQUENCE OF NOT VALIDATING What happens if we don't validate this trial? | 13. VALUE TO CUSTOMER & BUSINESS <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>VALUE TO CUSTOMER</th> <th></th> <th></th> <th>Overall</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Desirability - wants and likes it</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Adoption - based on need and fit</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Willingness to pay - in principle</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | VALUE TO CUSTOMER | | | Overall | Desirability - wants and likes it | | | | Adoption - based on need and fit | | | | Willingness to pay - in principle | | | | 14. CONSULTATION | | |
| VALUE TO CUSTOMER | | | Overall | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 10. BUSINESS MODEL COST CONSIDERATIONS | 12. RISKS & DEPENDENCIES & CONSTRAINTS Consider legal, reg and compliance touchpoints among any other potential issues | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>VALUE TO BUSINESS</th> <th></th> <th></th> <th></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Benefits - strategic, ROI (\$), cost, simplicity, other</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Timing criticality - Cost of Delay avoided by acting quickly</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Risk - reduction</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | VALUE TO BUSINESS | | | | Benefits - strategic, ROI (\$), cost, simplicity, other | | | | Timing criticality - Cost of Delay avoided by acting quickly | | | | Risk - reduction | | | | EVALUATION | | |
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... but lists of topics don't tell what the data means

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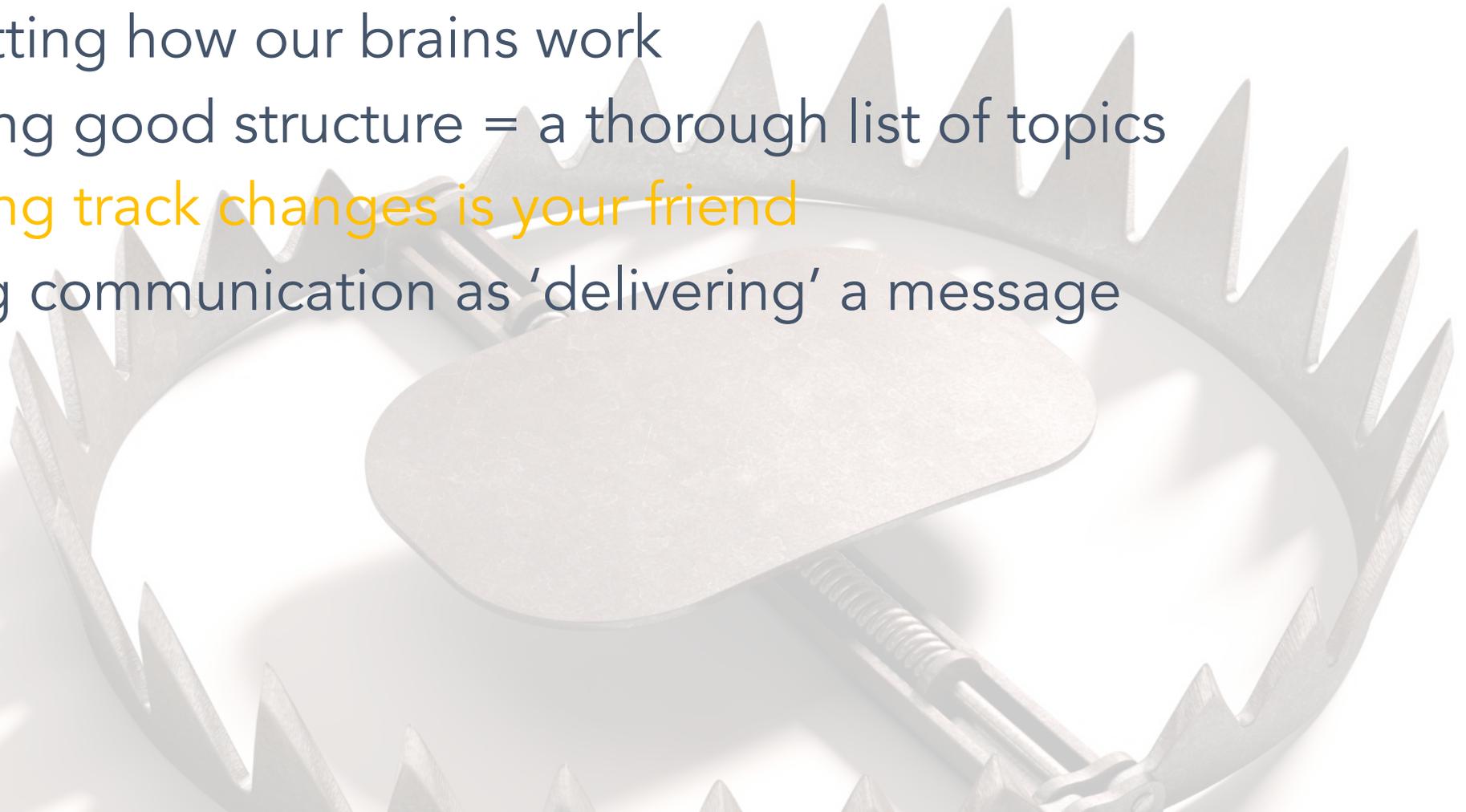
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Will need to provide a couple of examples.

 **Kulkami,**
This needs some context. On the lines – while this work is via multiple initiative, this is not reflected and tracked as HRIs in the RIS.

 **Kulkami,**
Which time? Think Kylie mentioning the 3Q20 deadline to operationalise the standard?

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- > A chain of pain

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Seeing communication as 'delivering' a message

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a white envelope with a red wax seal. The person is wearing a dark purple sweater. The envelope is being held in front of a dark, textured mailbox. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a building facade.

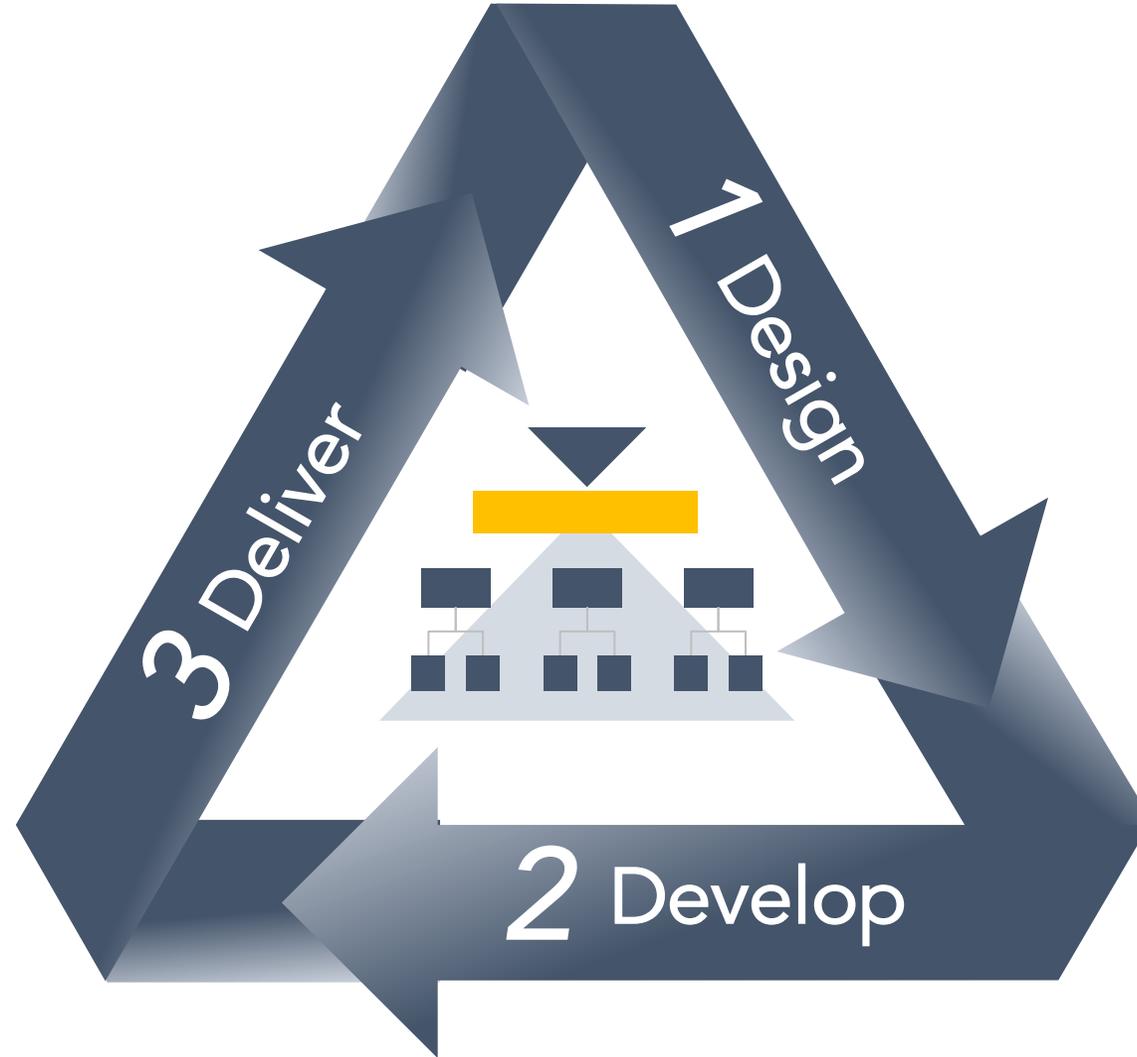
- > Introduce steps for clarifying and confirming your message
- > Explain how to master those steps
- > Know where to start

Seeing communication as 'delivering' a message

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a light-colored envelope with a red wax seal. The person is wearing a dark purple sweater. The background is slightly blurred, showing another envelope and a dark surface.

- > Introduce steps for clarifying and confirming your message
- > Explain how to master those steps
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The So What Strategy provides a 'go to' framework



Step 1: Design your strategy



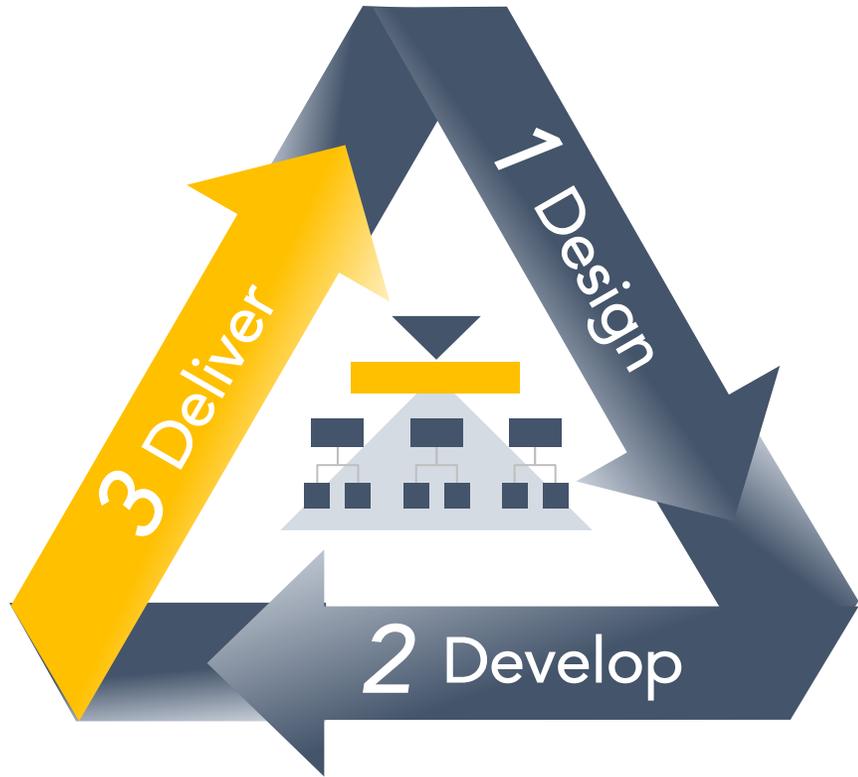
1. Clarify your purpose
2. Understand your audience
3. Plan your process

Step 2: Develop your storyline



1. Create context
2. Articulate your 'so what'
3. Build supporting points

Step 3: Deliver your communication



1. Package your storyline
2. Deliver your communication

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PROGRAM CURRICULUM

Navigate through the modules in your own time and bring questions for us to help you with to the regular group working sessions.

0 - CREATE A BASE UNDERSTANDING

KNOW THAT STRENGTHENING YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS MATTERS

– OPTIONAL –

This *How to Communicate with Impact* course is part of our free Base Program.

You may start these four short modules here or jump straight to the Accelerator for a deeper set of modules.

1 - ACCELERATE YOUR PROGRESS

START MAKING ITERATIVE IMPROVEMENTS TO YOUR COMMUNICATION

This short course introduces the fundamental storylining principles.

It provides ideas to help you start using the ideas immediately while also addressing early challenges.

You need to score 70% or higher in each Accelerator module before graduating to the Core Curriculum.

2 - BUILD CORE CAPABILITIES

COMMUNICATE MORE CLEARLY, PARTICULARLY IN FAMILIAR SITUATIONS

The Core curriculum walks you through all aspects of storylining.

It helps you build a strong core foundation that helps you frame your thinking for any communication at work.

Complete the Core to gain access to The Sprint.

3 - SPRINT WITH PATTERNS

COMMUNICATE WITH GREATER IMPACT WHILE USING PATTERNS

The five Sprint Modules help your storylining 'take off'.

The Sprint helps you get the most out of storylining in a wide range of settings.

Once you complete the Sprint Program you will have access to an extra monthly coaching session for Momentum Members only.

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- > 4 modules
- > ~10 minutes each
- > Downloadable notes

www.clarityfirstprogram.com/cwireg

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- > 6 modules
- > 2 – 10 minutes each
- > Challenges
- > Downloadable notes

PROGRAM CURRICULUM

Navigate through the modules in your own time and bring questions for us to help you with to the regular group working sessions.

- > 22 modules
- > 2 – 15 minutes each
- > Challenges
- > Downloadable notes

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FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY PARTICIPANTS

- > The communication is **clear and easy to understand**
- > Like the **clarity of the one-pager**
- > It's **tighter and more concise.**
- > **Getting replies, period!** And faster than anticipated.

2 - BUILD CORE CAPABILITIES

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- > 5 recorded workshops
- > ~ 1 hour each
- > Challenges
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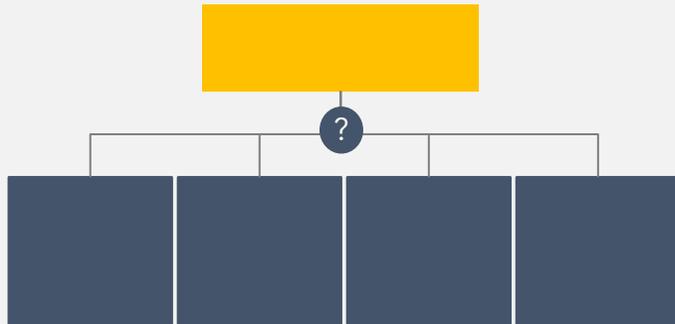
The Sprint helps you get the most out of storylining in a wide range of settings.

Once you complete the Sprint Program you will have access to an extra monthly coaching session for Momentum Members only.

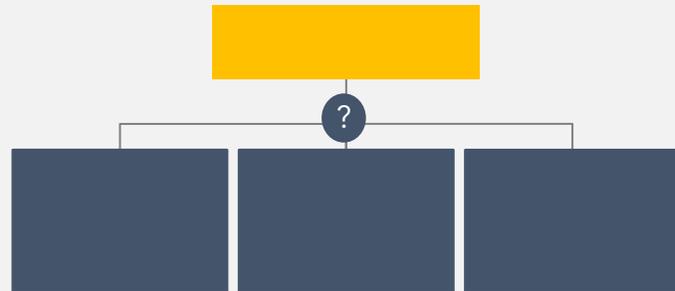
Action Jackson



The Pitch



Traffic Light



Close the Gap



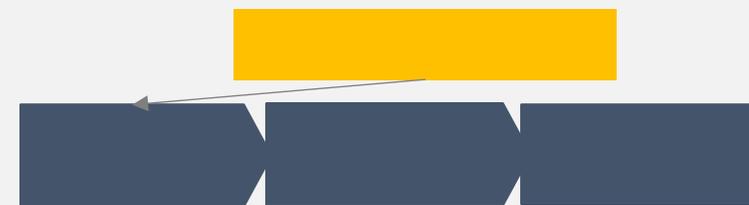
Houston, we have a problem



To B or not to B



Watch out!



FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY PARTICIPANTS

- > Project steering group is **making quicker decisions** from reading a slide without needing me to explain the detail.
- > Better structure has meant that **conversations are more focused and substantive**
- > **Colleagues** - Excellent and **most transparent financial message**

CEO - The **clearest and most concise finance paper I have seen** in 3.5 years

3 - SPRINT WITH PATTERNS

COMMUNICATE WITH GREATER IMPACT WHILE USING PATTERNS

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PROGRAM CURRICULUM

Navigate through the modules in your own time and bring questions for us to help you with to the regular group working sessions.

MOMENTUM LEVEL

- > 2 x monthly live coaching calls
- > An extra one once graduate from Sprint
- > Extensive library of tools and tips



Bianca 10:26 AM

Hi Davina

Hope you've been keeping well... as well as can be in lockdown!

I did your course last year at [redacted] I found it extremely useful and continue to use the So What framework - I find it's a bullet-proof method for communicating anything!

I've since left [redacted] and am now at [redacted] - a software company specialising in bill management. We are in a significant growth phase and as such, there are a lot of leads in the business making change and need to communicate this to the Execs and our Board.

Execs have noticed a difference in how I communicate ideas - that they are clear, succinct and actionable, thanks to you!

I am softly pushing to my manager (COO [redacted]) that we get the execs and leads of the business to take your course so we can uplift the quality of our communication and way of thinking. He is interested to hear from you. I feel that you could sell him!

Can you please give me a call so I can give you some context and we can arrange next steps?

www.clarityfirstprogram.com/join

CLASSIC PATHWAY - \$159/m or \$1,590/yr (inc taxes)

Self-directed program

Supported by group coaching

0 - CREATE A BASE UNDERSTANDING

KNOW THAT STRENGTHENING YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS MATTERS

– OPTIONAL –

This *How to Communicate with Impact* course is part of our free Base Program.

You may start these four short modules here or jump straight to the Accelerator for a deeper set of modules.

1 - ACCELERATE YOUR PROGRESS

START MAKING ITERATIVE IMPROVEMENTS TO YOUR COMMUNICATION

This short course introduces the fundamental storylining principles.

It provides ideas to help you start using the ideas immediately while also addressing early challenges.

You need to score 70% or higher in each Accelerator module before graduating to the Core Curriculum.

2 - BUILD CORE CAPABILITIES

COMMUNICATE MORE CLEARLY, PARTICULARLY IN FAMILIAR SITUATIONS

The Core curriculum walks you through all aspects of storylining.

It helps you build a strong core foundation that helps you frame your thinking for any communication at work.

Complete the Core to gain access to The Sprint.

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NOTE: PRICE INCREASE FOR 2022 PROGRAMS

www.clarityfirstprogram.com/join

INTENSIVE PATHWAY - \$1,290 inc taxes

Directed 3-month program

Supported by group coaching + live Sprint Workshops

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KNOW THAT STRENGTHENING
YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS
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NEW: PARTICIPANTS ALSO RECEIVE EMAIL FEEDBACK ON 1 COMMUNICATION

www.clarityfirstprogram.com/join



Christine

Re: GP comms and support

To: Davina Stanley

8 May 2020 at 9:14 am

Hi Davina, and thank you so much for your follow up email.

I apologise for the delay in replying but as things were evolving so rapidly I wanted to wait to give you the fullest account. You would know how slow the wheels of government usually are, but not in this case!

Your email exercise with me provided a clarity when I simply could not see the wood for the trees. The template provided a framework for face-to-face conversations I ended up having on the run within just a few days, first with my boss, then with her peer, then with their boss the Executive Director, and finally with the Strategy and Planning group as a whole.

Very quickly, everyone began to see the problem, and the opportunity to provide an early strategic response. The Executive Director sought feedback from everyone about the 'enablers' that we should consider working on to support the health service going forward in the 'new normal' post-COVID, and that feedback was collated last week. I have been given advanced permission to start work on a few of the more obvious and resourced projects, and next week the Executive Director is meeting with the CEO to discuss a plan for the rest.

Exciting times. I'm a happy Director again. And I can't thank you enough.
Christine.

Recent post-program research* highlights the productivity shift our approach delivers ...

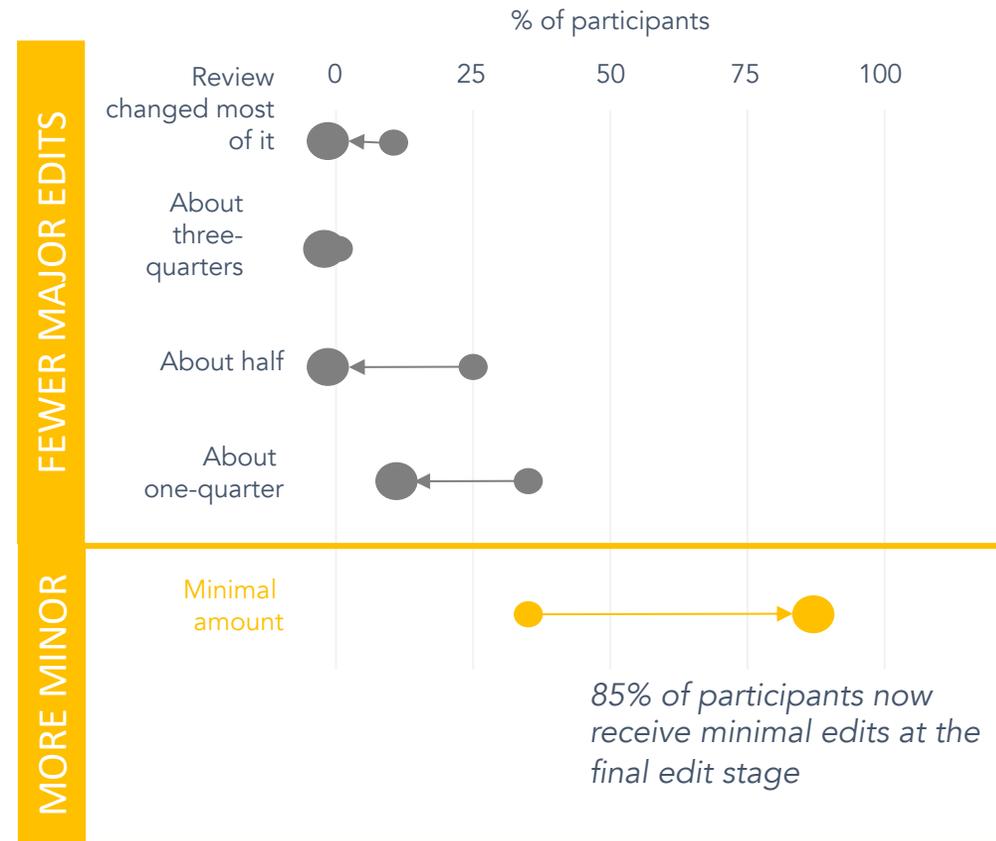
First drafts were faster to prepare

- Nobody now takes more than 10 hours to complete their first draft
- 22% more participants now take less than 1 hour to complete their first draft

Reviewers asked fewer questions about the first draft

- 12.5% of drafts now lead to no review questions at all
- 20% fewer drafts now always lead to stakeholder questions

Reviewers made fewer changes at the final edit stage

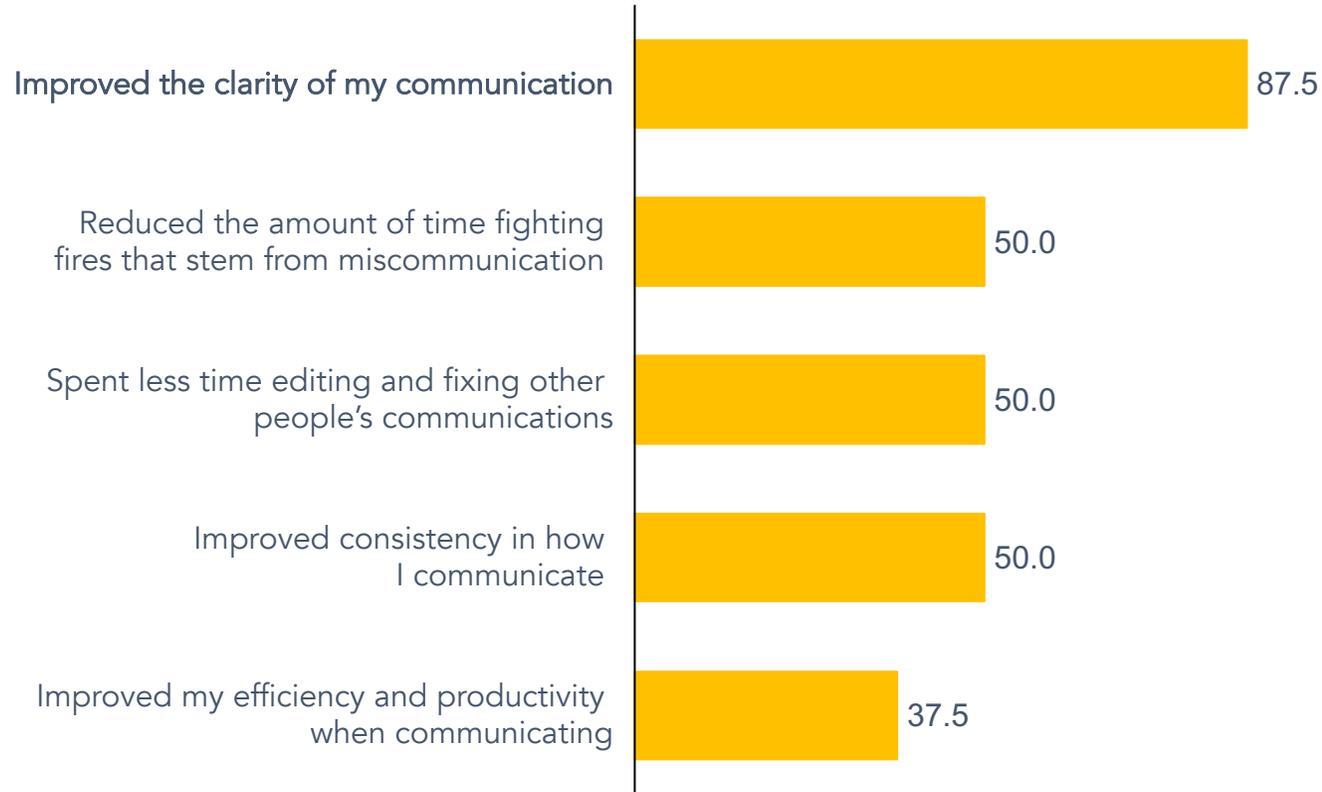


* Source: post program survey for a recent client program

... along with **greater satisfaction & impact**

All participants identified improvements with the majority having improved the clarity of their communication

% of participants (all chose multiple options)



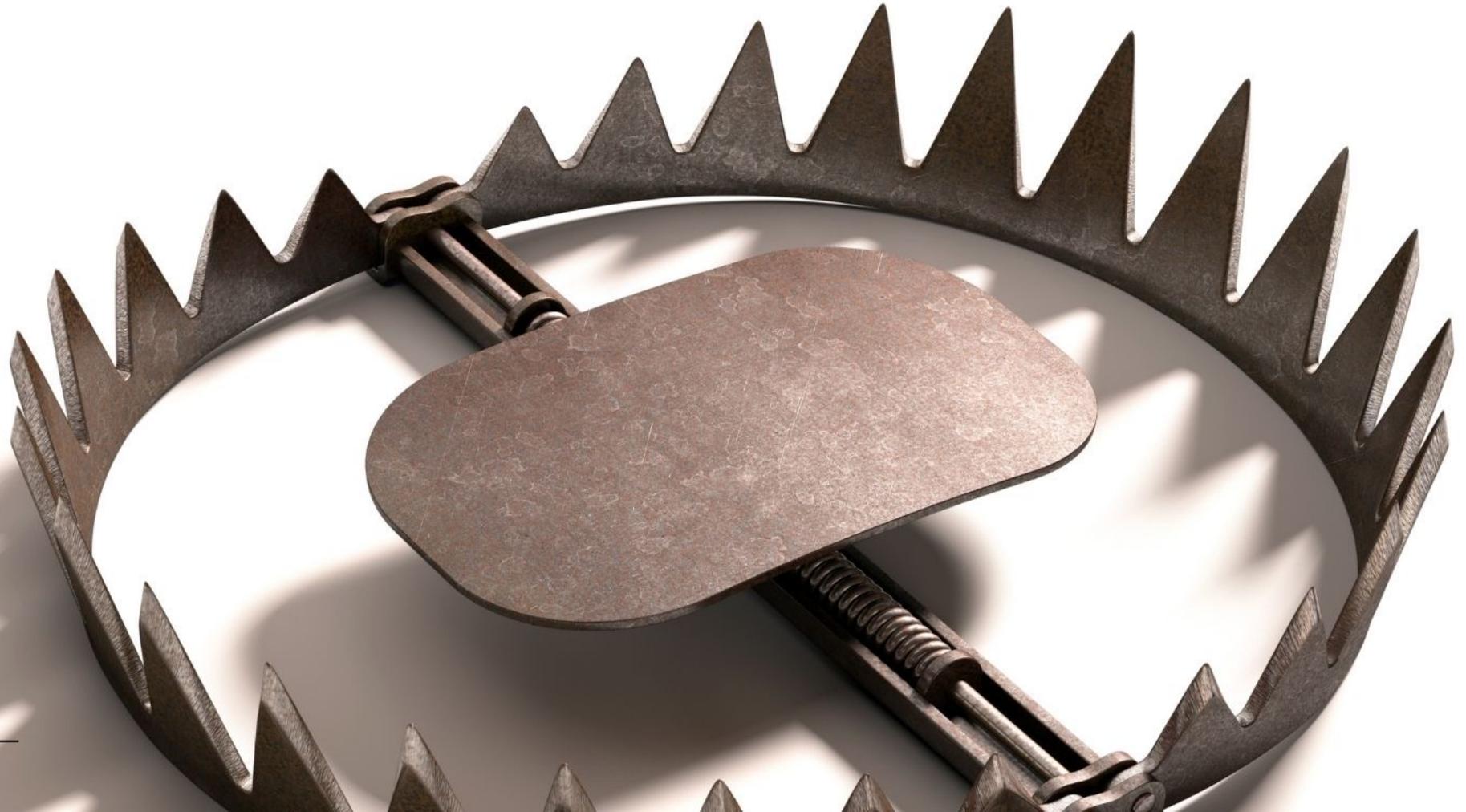
* Source: post program survey for a recent client program

www.clarityfirstprogram.com/join



WE OFFER A 14-DAY NQA GUARANTEE

5 Business Communication Traps and how to avoid them



CLARITY FIRST

PROGRAM

ASK ME
ANYTHING!

www.clarityfirstprogram.com/join

01

CLASSIC PATHWAY - A flexible, **SELF-DIRECTED** active learning journey

WARM UP -

Learn basic principles to get started quickly

CORE CURRICULUM -

Learn The So What Strategy framework so you can make iterative improvements

SPRINT PROGRAM -

Apply the framework so you can communicate more crisply & clearly

MOMENTUM -

Master the framework to confidently and consistently communicate powerful insights

WORKING SESSIONS



CLASSIC PATHWAY

LEARN INDEPENDENTLY

LEARN - Read *The So What Strategy*, complete Core Curriculum, explore portal
GROW - Use ideas in your work, workshop challenges together

01

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WORKSHOPS



KO

W1

W2

W3

W4

W5

WORKING SESSIONS



SEP

SEP

OCT

OCT

NOV

NOV



CLASSIC PATHWAY

LEARN INDEPENDENTLY

LEARN - Read *The So What Strategy*, complete Core Curriculum, explore portal
GROW - Use ideas in your work, workshop challenges together

EMAIL – DAVINA@CLARITYFIRSTPROGRAM.COM

We maintain confidentiality in the Hot Seats while having a rich conversation

1. Use pseudonyms, eg 'TechCo' for a technology company
2. Tweak the context to mask the specifics, but not damage the substance
3. Avoid using exact numbers for sensitive information
4. Choose a generic topic

STARTING POINT ...

#1 - I'd like to be able to **prepare comms for our senior leadership team that they actually find useful**, rather than creating documents that no one reads

For example:

- weekly updates on what our wider team is doing so they are always current, not caught off guard!
- packs that allow them to make decisions based on the information in it, rather than having to ask clarifying questions.

#2 - I'd like to be more **clear, succinct and persuasive** when presenting to my peers and our leadership team

#3 - I'd like to be **more efficient** when I write and edit comms, stop ruminating about what to say where and constantly rewriting

STARTING POINT ...

- > Being more structure driven when I write content (slide/email)
- > Gaining more weight when I present/speak/communicate (to be taken more seriously)
- > Getting to finish my drafts faster

Success would look like ...

One month

- a) Gaining trust from my **Director/Manager** when I prepare content and present content (i.e. my presentation will be thoroughly thought through and have good structure)
- b) My **Director/Manager** trusts my content/presentation skill enough to let me present to clients (i.e. they won't have to make a lot of content changes)

3 months

- a) Being able to present to **senior clients** without any major hurdles (without much support from senior people)
- b) Being able to **influence Director level client (or higher)** in taking actions (without needing much help from my superiors)

One year

- a) Become an **expert communicator** (good enough to coach junior consultants on content creation and content presentation)
- b) **Being taken seriously by Partner/Director** and get invited to present sales content to our client.

SUCCESS WOULD LOOK LIKE ...

1. Concise verbal communication without technical jargon
2. Email communication
3. Communication with external stakeholders

... and **GREATER IMPACT**



I tried to shortcut last week and used the approved key messages instead of the tool and it came back from Jelena who had lots of edits that made so much sense and made it was so much clearer, and I shouldn't have short-cutted".

*"Our project director is notoriously finicky and it's very uncommon to get something back without some changes – since using the tool the amount of feedback and changes has definitely decreased, so **he spends less time reviewing it and I spend less time doing re-work plus Trinity and Andrea spend less time signing off – it helps everyone"***

5 Business Communication Traps and how to avoid them



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