



# The Beacon

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YOUR GUIDE TO SECURING THE  
POWER OF PERSUASION

COACHING AND TRAINING SERVICES  
TO DEVELOP POWERFUL AND PERSUASIVE  
COMMUNICATION SKILLS

#### IN THIS ISSUE

Five resolutions to make you more  
articulate, effective and persuasive

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**Beacon** (bē/kən), *noun* 1. a guiding light. 2. a lighthouse or signal buoy to warn or guide vessels at sea. 3. a person, act or thing that warns or guides.

## Simply Speaking: Five Resolutions for 2007

*Golf is a game of luck. The more I practice, the luckier I get.*

• Ben Hogan

It's that time of year again when we identify our New Year's resolutions, that list of seemingly insurmountable goals for self-improvement. In our professional world, the beginning of a new year inevitably brings new goals. As we enter this new year, here is a reality for you to consider: *All too often, we make things harder for ourselves than they have to be.* How, you may ask? The solutions to our business problems and challenges involve simply getting back to basics.

We make this point frequently with our clients. We make things harder for ourselves by the simple reality that we communicate poorly as a business culture. We waste enormous amounts of time constructing (or watching) poorly-organized presentations, giving (or listening to) directionless and passion-free speeches, participating in meetings that lack action steps or conducting meetings with the wrong message. When we don't communicate in the correct way, we leave opportunity on the table and, yes, we make things harder than they should be – or could be.

We have relied on the spoken word and language to communicate with each other since the beginning of time. Yet as our professions become endlessly more complicated, with more demands and requirements placed upon us than ever before, many individuals and organizations have lost sight of this fundamental and important skill. While we are flooded with the latest "hot" products, services or ideas every day, few people spend the time and resources on a skill that is not new – the skill of articulate expression.

One of the basic principles of The Latimer Group, therefore, is that *because* life is seemingly so much more complicated, a focus on simple, articulate and persuasive communication will offer you competitive advantage. Do you want to stand out among the crowd? If so, you must develop the skills to stand up in front of the room and command attention with your words and the way you communicate. Do you want people to remember your name, your message and your presence? Then you need to communicate in a clear and powerful way that does not waste their time and, in fact, adds value to their lives.

*Do you want people to remember your name, your message and your presence? Then you need to communicate in a clear and powerful way.*

Thank you for sharing this issue of *The Beacon* with colleagues or friends who will benefit from our advice.

We welcome your feedback.

If you have any comments on this topic or suggestions for topics you would like to see addressed in future issues, please email:

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Here are five ideas you can begin using tomorrow that will make your professional communication – speeches, presentations, conference calls, interviews or sales calls – more effective. Think of these as New Year’s resolutions from The Latimer Group:

- 1. Have a clear goal every time you speak.** What do you want your audience to think or do when you are done speaking? If you start with a clear goal for your communication opportunity, your preparation will be quicker and of better quality. Set a clear goal for yourself, and then all of your preparation should be about helping you achieve that goal. Once you know your ultimate and desired destination, it becomes possible to get where you want to go.
- 2. Spend time thinking about the needs and desires of your audience.** Prior to designing an agenda for the meeting or creating a single slide, spend some time thinking about the current mindset of your audience. What will cause them to say “yes” or “no” to your requests? Too many of us communicate from an ego-centric place. Don’t spend all your time thinking about what you want to say. Spend most of your time thinking about the issues your audience will care about. When you do this, you will be more likely to design a message that will persuade them, and you also will show them the respect they deserve.
- 3. Make the benefits to your audience the common denominator to every aspect of your message.** Do you want to persuade someone of something? Then make the benefits the highlight of the message. Without clear benefits, you will struggle to persuade anyone of anything.
- 4. Be authentic and sincere.** In terms of how you deliver your message, there are two goals that should dominate your thoughts: Be authentic and be sincere. Don’t worry about how you stand, where you put your hands, how you cock your head, or how many jokes you should tell in your opening.  
*Be authentic.* When you stand up to speak, be yourself. Speak in your own voice and with your own style. Do it your way, just as if you were speaking to a friend. Remember the advice of presidential speechwriter Peggy Noonan: *“Be you, try to be honest, speak with all the candor you can muster, and say it the way you’d say it to your family.”*  
*Be sincere.* When you stand up to speak, show the audience that you care about the topic. We’ll quote another presidential speechwriter, James Hume, who wrote for seven presidents. Hume once wrote that your preparation begins *“the moment you start caring. Only then are you ready to speak to an audience. Because an audience can be convinced only when they see you care about what you are discussing.”*

5. **Practice.** Acquiring any new skill requires many things – coaching and instruction, among them. If you want to become a better baseball player, acquiring new knowledge and finding a good coach are important steps. But without sufficient practice, all the books or coaching in the world won't make you better. This is the same with your communication. Many of our client companies ask us to quantify The Latimer Group's value to them. "Can you guarantee communication improvements?" Guarantees are a fool's game. We guarantee the transfer of knowledge and good tools and frameworks. But unless the person we are coaching makes a commitment to improvement, any guarantee we might provide is worthless. There are no magic bullets, no get-rich-quick schemes, no lose-100-pounds-in-100-days ploys. See Ben Hogan's quote at the beginning of this missive.

There you have it – five good, simple ideas to improve your communication in 2007. Don't make things harder for yourself than they have to be. Keep it simple. Remain focused on your goals and your audience; communicate benefits; speak authentically and sincerely; and then practice, practice, practice.

Are there additional skills or reminders necessary for truly powerful and persuasive communication? Of course... far more than can be listed in a 1,500 word newsletter. But these five are important and remembering them will keep you on track in your efforts to stand out amidst the crowd.



One final thought in this, our initial *Beacon* issue of 2007...

Anyone who works with The Latimer Group realizes that we see our role in our clients' lives in a very clear way. Our job is to help you find the right words and apply the right skills to articulate your message. Our best way of achieving this is by providing you with deceptively simple tools, frameworks and ideas that make it easier for you to communicate correctly, efficiently and effectively.

We enjoy our work thoroughly, and because of this reality we would like to close with a hearty and heartfelt "thank you" to our clients for inviting us to work with you in 2006. And we also would like to thank those of you who have referred business to us over the past year. Referrals are the highest compliment we can receive, and we are humbled every time we receive one.

We wish each of you a successful and articulate 2007!

Dean Brenner's new book

*Move the World: Persuade Your Audience, Change Minds, and Achieve Your Goals* will be published in April.

If you want more information about *Move the World* or would like to pre-order the book, please email:

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# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

*Practical Lessons in Leadership and Communication*

## George David: A Sailor's Approach to Business Leadership

I admit it... I'm biased. I like the way sailors think.

Every organization is a manifestation of its leadership. Strong leaders tend to create strong organizations. And bad leaders, of course, tend to create the opposite. The characteristics of every organization reflect the characteristics of the people at the top.

George David, the Chairman and CEO of United Technologies Corporation, is one such strong leader who sets the bar high for his organization and has produced great results year after year. I have heard Mr. David speak several times on television (most recently on CNBC's *Squawk Box* on December 14, 2006). He is a strong public speaker and is universally viewed by Wall Street as a driving force behind UTC's run of success.

Over the last three years we have formed some opinions about Mr. David's leadership, based in part on our work within UTC, and all of which supported by his public appearances and the long-term performance of the company stock.

Here are a few observations worth sharing with you:

- 1. He drives the strategic plan down into the organization.** Despite UTC's size (approximately 220,000 people), junior employees know about and understand the details of specific initiatives driven down from the top. The initiatives are clear and they are understood, which means they have a high probability of being executed.
- 2. He is a savvy tactician.** In 2000-01, UTC was scheduled to purchase Honeywell. Eventually Jack Welch and GE jumped in and outbid UTC. But rather than get into an ego-driven bidding war, Mr. David walked away from the deal, which proved to be a disaster for GE as the European Commission eventually scuttled it for anti-trust reasons.

- 3. He speaks clearly.** Mr. David can capably weave a discussion of his company's issues and performance into a discussion on any aspect of global economics. He understands the macro and the micro and can discuss either thoughtfully and articulately.
- 4. He supports his people.** UTC annually spends enormous resources on its "Employee Scholar Program," an initiative that comes straight off the desk of Mr. David. Under this program, any UTC employee may pursue continuing education. UTC picks up the tab, and offers incentives such as stock awards to those who successfully complete their degree.
- 5. The stock price tells the story.** Let's compare UTC's performance under Mr. David to another well-known and successful Connecticut-based company, GE. On December 30, 1994, UTC's stock price closed at \$7.86/share. GE closed slightly higher at \$8.50/share. As of this writing, UTC's share price is \$62.76 vs. \$37.77 for GE (both prices as of December 21, 2006) – double the financial return. Tough to argue with those numbers.

Perhaps my admiration of Mr. David's leadership stems from the fact that he is also a successful sailor. Readers of *The Beacon* know the role that sailboat racing plays in my life. As a sport, sailing teaches a strategic and tactical decision-making framework that serves well in the business world, and Mr. David clearly applies such a framework to his business life.

We'll close with a quote from Mr. David himself: *"Sailors often call for a delay in responding to changed conditions on the race course. A shift may not last, or a building breeze may drop in velocity. The same is true in business. It's often better to take the time to be sure or to let your judgment season..."*

Great leadership, indeed... He is a first-class leader in and out of corporate boardrooms, on and off the water.

• Dean M. Brenner