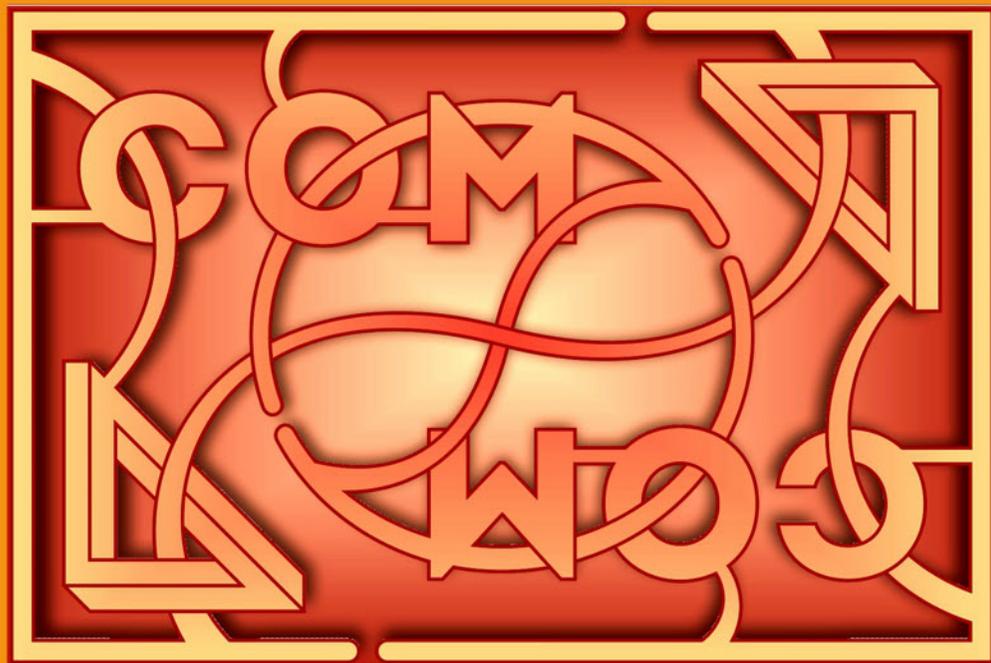


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Smart Communication Tips

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Ian Rowland

Smart Communication Tips

by
Ian Rowland



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— Ian



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Smart Communication Tips

by Ian Rowland

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A Quick Note About Me

I do three things so I have three websites.

www.ianrowland.com

This is about my work as a professional writer. In simple terms, I offer a complete 'start-to-finish' writing and publishing service. Technical writing, business, sales, marketing, creative... you name it, I've done it! I offer 35+ years experience across all media. In my career, I've helped more companies to sell a greater range of goods and services than anyone else you're likely to meet. I'm also a 'ghostwriter'! If you've got a book inside you, I can write it for you or guide you through the self-publishing process.

www.coldreadingsuccess.com

My website devoted to the art, science and joy of cold reading and what I call 'cold reading for business'. As well as providing free information and downloads, the site tells you about my three books on cold reading and the training I offer.

www.ianrowlandtraining.com

All about my talks and training for conferences, corporate groups and private clients. Main subjects include:

- The Practical Persuasion Method.
- Creative Problem-Solving.
- Leadership, Presence And Charisma.
- Unlock Your Mind.
- Be A Genius!
- Cold Reading For Business.

I also offer bespoke training packages to suit *your* needs. Clients to date include the FBI, Google, Coca-Cola, Unilever, the Ministry Of Defence, the British Olympics Team, the Crown Estate and many more. Full details on the site.

A Quick Note About My Books

I've written quite a few full-length books that I sell from my websites (as listed opposite) and via Amazon. Mostly, I write about:

- Business success and the joys (?) of working for yourself.
- Cold reading (how to talk to people as if you're psychic) and what I call 'cold reading for business'.
- Overcoming various forms of addiction.

In addition, just to defy easy classification, I've written one book of original romantic poetry, which I'm very proud of!

I've also produced quite a number of smaller booklets, like this one, that are available as *free, instant* downloads from my various websites.

If you want to support me, please tell your friends about my work, even if you only steer them to the free stuff. It's all good for awareness and promotion. I would also be very grateful for any friendly mentions and recommendations on social media.

Want to get in touch with me? Great! I'd *love* to hear from you. You can find me on Facebook and other social media or just send me an email: ian@ianrowland.com.

About This Booklet

Like everyone else, you are in the communication business. No matter what you do or what you want to achieve, good communication will help you and poor communication will hold you back.

Imagine all of these scenarios:

- Two sweethearts trying to patch things up after a quarrel.
- A sales person hoping to close a £1 million deal.
- A police officer defusing a potentially tense situation.
- Someone aiming to do well at a job interview.
- A therapist working with a client who wants to quit smoking.

Different people, different challenges, one golden thread in common: the more they know about good communication, the more successful they are likely to be.

In one way or another, I've been in the communication business for most of my life. As a freelance writer, I've helped companies sell everything from industrial herbicides to tank turrets. As a non-famous, non-important performer, I've presented magic and mindreading shows all over the world. In the corporate sphere, I've worked with companies both large and small, showing them how to sell, solve, persuade and lead. From time to time, I've even 'ghosted' entire books for people, helping them to share their story with the world in (almost) their own words.

Along the way, I've collected a few smart communication tips that I feel are worth passing on. You'll find some of them in my books and courses (such as 'Cold Reading For Business'). In this booklet, I've put together a few tips that didn't fit anywhere else. Add them to your mental toolbox, if only on the basis that it's better to have them and not need them than to need them and not have them.

Conversation Tracking

Would you like to be able to read someone's mind? I mean *really* do it, without tricks or scams? Well, I can tell you how. I am not kidding and I will be true to my promise. This is a bona fide, authentic way to read a person's mind like a book and I guarantee that it works every single time. What's more, you need to know about this tip if you love to communicate clearly and successfully.

Here's how it goes. When you're talking to someone, deliberately leave an idea hanging in the air, incomplete and unresolved. If the other person is listening attentively, and actually tracking what you're saying, they will pick up on it and ask you to complete the thought. For example, you might say something like this:

"I've looked over the notes from the meeting. There are two interesting points about the project. The first one is..."

Then you only mention one point.

If the person you're talking to is tracking the conversation, they will say something like this:

"You said there were two interesting points. What's the other one?"

On the other hand, if they are *not* tracking the conversation very well, they won't prompt you for the second point. They simply won't realise (or care) that you mentioned two points but so far you've only mentioned one of them.

Mentioning numbers ('There are two points...') is a good way to test someone's ability to track the conversation, but it's not the only one. There are many possibilities. For example, you could say something along these lines:

"Oh, you're going to Spain? I had an amazing adventure there a few years ago that pretty much changed my life! I'm sure you'll love the weather and the food. You'll have a great time!"

When you say something like this, some people will immediately ask you about this 'amazing adventure' you mentioned. They are tracking the conversation well and are aware that you mentioned an adventure but haven't yet supplied any details. Others will not ask you about it because they aren't tracking the conversation. They don't realise you have left the point dangling in the air.

Why is it useful to check if someone is tracking your conversation accurately?

You can use this information in several ways.

First of all, if the OP (the other person) claims they are interested in what you're saying but are evidently not tracking the conversation, this is an interesting discrepancy. There are three possibilities:

(1) They are feigning interest. They may say they want to listen to you but, for whatever reason, they are faking or insincere. This can be very useful to know. Also, if you're selling, it can help you to distinguish genuine prospects from time-wasters.

(2) They sincerely want to track the conversation, and are trying, but you aren't being sufficiently clear or you are boring them. You need to change how you're communicating so that you build a better, stronger bridge. This could involve slowing down, using different vocabulary, assuming less prior knowledge or making other changes to improve how well you're communicating.

(3) They sincerely want to track but they just lack the candle power to do this very well. I doubt you'll often meet anyone like this, but if you do it's better to be aware of the problem than not be aware. You can at least try to find a simpler or better way to get your point across. This might involve switching to a different mode e.g. from semantic mode to visual, from literal to metaphorical or from factual to emotive.

Alternatively, if the OP demonstrates they are tracking the conversation well, you know that they are paying attention and you are making yourself clear. You can also be fairly sure you are dealing with a fairly 'tidy', rational and analytical mind. To build good rapport with someone like this, try to adopt or emphasise the same qualities: rational, organised, tidy and thoughtful.

Brain Chains

‘Conversation tracking’ was a way to *read* someone’s mind. Now I’ll tell you how to *control* someone’s mind. For real.

A ‘brain chain’ is a statement with a hole in it that you know the person you’re talking to can fill. Suppose you’re talking to someone who knows the capital of California is Sacramento (and not Los Angeles, as some people mistakenly suppose). You can say something like:

“I was talking with Jim the other day about the office they’re opening in California. It’s going to be in... er, not LA, the other place, the capital, you know...”

The other person will chime in at this point and mention Sacramento. People can’t help themselves from doing this. It’s more or less an automatic reaction.

Another example. Suppose you’re talking to someone who will know that Martin Scorsese directed the film ‘Goodfellas’. You say:

“They’re certainly making us a good offer. I feel we’re in that Scorsese movie, what’s it, ‘The Good Guys?’ ... what was it?”

You can be sure the other person will supply the title you are apparently failing to recall: ‘Goodfellas’.

Why is this worth knowing about? Because as soon as you use a brain chain, you are momentarily *taking control of the other person’s mind*. You truly are. For a few seconds, that person isn’t thinking their *own* thoughts or focusing on their own agenda. They are only thinking about whatever piece of information you have caused to pop into their mind.

This gives you a subtle advantage. It means you automatically own the initiative in the conversation and can steer it in whichever direction suits you. It means you can lead the conversation towards the points you want to focus on and away from the ones you don’t.

I have used brain chains everywhere from job interviews to sales pitches and training events. They are an amazingly effective way to momentarily hijack someone’s mind and lead it where you want it to go. Remember, with great power comes great responsibility!

The ‘Comfort’ Formula

A friend of mine used to sell expensive financial consultancy services. She mentioned one little trick that I’ve found very useful over the years. I hope you will enjoy using it too.

When my friend was pitching her services, prospects sometimes balked at the fees she mentioned. Her response was always the same. With a warm and gracious smile she said, “I quite understand. That’s all right. I wouldn’t want you to pay anything you’re not comfortable with.”

And she left it at that!

Guess what? A very high percentage of these prospects subsequently came back and signed up! Take a moment to think why this is such an effective formula.

First of all, it avoids arguments or ‘hard sell’ tactics. It takes all the clash and conflict out of the equation.

Secondly, it strongly implies that the seller is far from desperate to sell, and never needs to compete or negotiate on price. This, in turn, suggests the seller has plenty of work and is doing well, which implies she’s very good at what she does.

Thirdly, it subtly re-frames the conversation. It implies that there’s no problem with the service or the fees; the only problem is what the other party chooses to feel comfortable with — and this, of course, is always subject to change! People change their minds all the time. It’s a more or less constant feature of human behaviour. It’s perfectly possible to feel that something’s a bad deal on Monday but to change your mind by Friday.

I’ve been using this formula for years. I think it’s very effective and a way to avoid an awful lot of wasted time and argumentative hassle. I’m not suggesting that every prospect changes their mind and comes back. No net catches all the fish. However, you’ll find a very significant percentage of prospects decide to go ahead after all — and without you having to do any extra work or chasing.

Time Negation

This is a way to disagree without disagreeing. It's an easy trick to use and can help you make progress in many meetings and negotiations.

Here's how it works. You probably know that in any negotiation, it's generally wise to avoid directly contradicting the other person's point:

“You agreed to provide someone to install the system after we've bought it.”

“No, we didn't.”

This sounds very argumentative and generally leads to rather pointless dialogue. You may also know that it's good to avoid using the word 'but' immediately after the other person's suggestion, because this tends to feel just as unhelpful as a direct contradiction:

“You agreed to provide someone to install the system after we've bought it.”

“I know we touched on that point, but I'm not sure that was actually part of the deal.”

Although this is gentler than direct negation, the 'but' tends to jar and provoke a rather negative interaction.

So, what can you do if you *have* to disagree (because the other party is factually incorrect) but you want to avoid direct negation and the dreaded 'but' word? You can use time negation. The formula is:

[enthusiasm] + [we want to talk about that] + [a time reference, past or future]

Here's how it sounds:

“You agreed to provide someone to install the system after we've bought it.”

“That's an important point and we certainly will come on to that. For now, can we just clarify the point about the maintenance contract, because it seems there has been some confusion...”

You have avoided agreeing with the statement (which you can't do), but you haven't become stuck in a direct contradiction. Also, you haven't

uttered the word 'but'. You have managed to keep the conversation flowing forward in what seems like a helpful and positive way, even though there is an area of disagreement.

The sweet part about this is that you have the option of relating the point you want to make back to whatever it is you disagree about. In this example, it may be that the terms and conditions of the maintenance contract affect whether or not your company supplies someone to help install the software.

The time negation can involve going backwards in time as well as forwards.

“You agreed to provide someone to install the system after we’ve bought it.”

“That’s an important point and I know it was discussed at last week’s meeting with the engineers. For now, can we just clarify the point about the maintenance and upgrade contract, because it seems there has been some confusion...”

I have used time negation in a lot of meetings and sales pitches, as well as more informal conversations. It’s an easy, elegant way to dodge the dreaded sounds of ‘no’ and ‘but’.

ILToT

This tip has proved invaluable to me over the years. It's a wonderful verbal shift that is well worth knowing!

Imagine a meeting where your client has put forward a proposal but the terms and conditions are ones you simply cannot accept. You could just say:

“I don't think we can agree to those terms”.

While this may be fair and factually accurate, it sounds negative and seems to leave little scope for progress. Here is a way to say exactly the same thing but with wording that creates an entirely different mood:

“I'd like to think we can arrive at terms we can both agree to.”

You are still saying you can't, or don't, accept the terms currently on the table. However, this version sounds a lot more positive and conveys your constructive intent. It steers the conversation forward towards a discussion of terms and conditions that would be agreeable to everyone. There are countless occasions when this very simple phrase can transform the tone of a meeting.

ILToT isn't just useful in business meetings. There are many informal, personal conversations where it works equally well. Whenever you're trying to reach an agreement with someone, negative words like 'no', 'can't' and 'but' often feel unhelpful and create a sense of stalemate, blocking the path towards successful agreement. The ILToT phrasing takes away some of the toxicity of disagreement and helps to preserve a more positive and constructive tone.

We've all been in situations where a group of friends are trying to make a collective decision — for example about which movie to see or which restaurant to try. If the discussion gets a little heated and fractious for whatever reason, I've found that ILToT is a good way to steer the chat in a more positive direction.

Whenever your first impulse is to respond with a 'can't/ don't' statement, or you're about to offer a flat refusal or rejection... take a moment to see if ILToT would be a less confrontational alternative.

Living For Giving

Are you interested in building good rapport with people? Here's a tip that will help.

It's not a bad thing to think about what you can *get* from other people, or what they can do for you. We all need other people to help us from time to time, and it's nice to have a wide circle of friends and contacts whom you can call on when you need them.

However, you should think of that as the *end* point of your friendships and relationships, not the starting point. Your *starting* point should be: what can you do for other people, how can you help them, what value can you add to their lives? If you have this outlook on life, and genuinely care about what you can do for others, you will end up with a good, strong social circle and plenty of friends who will offer help and assistance when you need it.

There's nothing virtuous or idealistic about this. Every day, you're swimming in a sea of opportunities to do someone you know a favour, to offer a friendly or encouraging word, express your willingness to help or just brighten their day with a small gift or something that's fun or frivolous. The opportunities are there if you look for them. It's very easy to go through life focused on what you want to get, and there's nothing wrong with that. Just take some time every day to switch to 'giving' mode, survey the landscape of your family, relatives and friends and ask yourself what you could give that would make life a little brighter for someone else.

I'm going to add one qualifier. It's true that some people will take from you and never give back. It's true that some people will exploit your kindness and never repay it. These things happen from time to time. All you can do is accept that this is how some people are and move on. Even though your kindness won't always be reciprocated, I suggest that 'living for giving' is still the best policy.

What does this have to do with rapport? Everything! At an instinctive level, people can sense whether you are selfish or selfless; whether you're a taker or a giver; whether you're likely to do them a favour if they call on you. When people sense that you're a 'living for giving' sort of person, they instinctively warm to you and it becomes far easier to establish good rapport.

Soft Commands

Under normal circumstances, we all find it fairly annoying when people tell us what to do, especially people who aren't authority figures. However, when I perform a mentalism show, I constantly have to tell people to do things: choose a card, think of a country, add up these numbers... and so on. There is no doubt I am giving commands and issuing orders, yet nobody minds or feels annoyed. Why not?

Well, part of the reason is that the context clearly justifies the process of giving orders. If people are looking for entertainment and choose a mindreading show, they know that from time to time the mindreader is going to ask them to do things, such as choosing a colour or thinking of a word in a book. It's expected and accepted within the context of a show that involves audience participation.

However, there's a bit more to it than that. Like every magician and mentalist in the world, I've learned ways to 'soften' commands so that people are less likely to object to them.

First of all, I behave politely and courteously towards the spectators who take part in my stage routines. Good manners go a long way towards overcoming possible objections. I don't overdo it, because nobody likes fawning, exaggerated politeness. But a little basic courtesy and respect goes a long way.

Secondly, I make it easy for people to follow my 'orders'. I make eye contact with the spectator, I don't speak too quickly and I explain what I want him or her to do in simple, direct terms they find easy to understand. Clarity and simplicity are hugely important. If it's annoying to be told what to do, it's even more annoying when you can't understand the order or have to ask for clarification.

Thirdly, I take care to sound less like someone giving an order and more like I'm offering an invitation. Look at this:

"Pick up one of these books."

This is a command and it sounds like one. Here's how to make it sound more like a friendly invitation:

"Can I invite you to look at these books? They're all pretty well known... maybe you recognise some of them. Could you please just pick one up for me?"

The same command now sounds warmer and less objectionable.

Another important part of a 'soft command' is this: I always make it clear that there will be a reward, a payoff, for the person I'm giving the commands to. For example, at the start of a routine, I might say, "I'd like to share something amazing with you. Something that you have never seen before and that I think you'll find truly incredible. What's more, it's based on a fascinating psychological principle that affects us all..." and then launch into the routine. With these words, I've made it clear that there will be a worthwhile payoff at the end for the people who take part.

What does all this have to do with clear and successful communication? Quite a lot! In everyday conversations, you may have to tell someone what to do, or make a 'suggestion' that they have to go along with. Going about this the wrong way can be very damaging in terms of rapport: you risk being seen as domineering, arrogant or thoughtless. Going about it the right way can make a big difference. Just remember the guidelines: in terms of tone, make it sound like an invitation more than a command; be polite; be clear and easy to understand; make it clear there's a payoff or benefit.

One last tip: there are two ways you can ask someone to do something. The first is to look and sound as if you naturally expect they will comply. The second is to look and sound as if you expect they will raise objections or resist the command. The former is much more successful.

When I go to see my dentist, and she tells me to open wide or clench my jaw or have a rinse, she has that air of business-like, efficient, authority that makes it seem like the most natural thing in the world to do exactly what she tells me. Try to cultivate the same air of relaxed authority that is implied rather than stated.

Echoing

This is one of my favourite conversational tips. It's very simple yet amazingly effective. When you're talking to someone, listen to what they say with genuine interest and feed the last part of it straight back to them almost like an 'echo'. For example:

"I should be able to get to the meeting. Mind you, the train isn't always as reliable as it used to be, so it's possible I could be a little late."

"You think you could be a little late?"

Another example:

"We don't mind looking after the baby twice a week and we're glad to help. But we're not as young as we were and it does leave us both exhausted."

"You're both pretty wiped out at the end of the day?"

I know this looks rather strange on the printed page. However, during the casual flow of normal, natural conversation it doesn't sound quite so unusual. When you 'echo' someone's words like this, they almost always say "Yes..." and then expand on the point, adding further details and sharing more with you.

This is an excellent way to enhance rapport. These little 'echoes' get people to open up to you and share a lot more about what they really think or feel. Try it!

Just one caveat: you can have too much of anything, even good things. It's possible to have too much good food, too much exercise, too much of a social life. 'Echoing' is a good tip to know about, but don't use it too often in one conversation. Never do it robotically as if your *only* role is to repeat what the other person just said. Offer an echo when you think the other person probably has more to say. It's a good way to signal that you're listening, that you're following what they say and you don't mind if they talk a little bit more about it.

Defence Triggers

John sees Jane at a party and goes to talk to her. John has a goal in mind that we can politely express as ‘not going home alone’. He tries everything he knows to achieve this goal. He uses his best ‘lines’ and ‘techniques’ in an attempt to be irresistibly charming.

Of course, Jane can sense exactly what John is up to. This is not her first rodeo. To her, it’s just another lame ‘chat up’ approach, not much different from a hundred others that she’s had to deal with. Almost instinctively, she puts up her defences and deflector shields, blocks John’s moves (which probably isn’t difficult) and does her best to persuade John to leave her alone and go elsewhere.

Now, let’s run this scene again.

John goes to talk to Jane but this time doesn’t have any goal in mind. He has no idea what will happen if he talks to Jane but he knows the only way to find out is to say hi. Since John doesn’t have any goal in mind, he doesn’t use any ‘lines’ or try any ‘techniques’. He’s literally just talking to Jane because he thought she might be worth talking to. No agenda, no strategy, no plan.

Jane realises that John isn’t ‘chatting her up’, ‘hitting on her’ or talking with one purpose in mind. This being the case, Jane doesn’t feel the need to put up her deflector shields. Where there’s no attack, there’s no need for defence. Since John hasn’t triggered Jane’s defences, there’s a greater opportunity for the conversation to flow and to flourish. It may sound counter-intuitive, but precisely because John doesn’t want anything, there’s a greater chance that he and Jane will develop a sense of rapport — and who knows where that might lead?

There’s an important lesson here. Avoid triggering people’s ‘defence’ mechanisms by addressing them in what is clearly a self-interested way. No-one likes to be cast in the unappealing role of ‘person I want to get something from’. This never leads to good communication and rapport. When people sense the opposite, that you’re not fixated on yourself or your wants, and actually have quite a selfless attitude, you’re much more likely to communicate well and achieve good rapport.

However, the selfless attitude has to be sincere and genuine. Fake selflessness is visible from space and just doesn’t work.

‘Because’ Cues

A lot of books on selling and communication mention the importance of being a good listener. This is great advice but there’s one part a lot of people miss out: use ‘because’ cues. A few examples will make this clear.

Don’t ask, “When do you need this to be delivered?”. Instead, say, “Tell me, when do you need this to be delivered? Because I’d like to get a clear picture of your situation and what your needs are.”

Don’t say, “Which features are you most interested in?”. Say, “Can you explain which features you are most interested in? Because I really want to get a clear idea of what matters to you.”

Don’t say, “Why don’t you want to go to John’s party?”. Say, “Tell me, why don’t you want to go to John’s party? Because I really want to understand where you’re coming from and what your reservations are.”

There are at least three reasons why ‘because’ cues are a good idea.

First of all, you frame yourself as someone who doesn’t just deal in dry, sterile facts but actually empathises with the other person’s situation. This creates a much warmer, more positive tone that promotes better connections and deeper conversations.

Secondly, the ‘because’ cue will elicit deeper, more emotional answers and more references to feelings. Engaging with someone’s feelings, as you probably know, can be a very important aspect of successful selling, persuasion and communication.

Thirdly, even judged in purely factual terms, the ‘because’ cue encourages people to provide clearer, more comprehensive replies. They will mention more relevant details than they might do otherwise, which could be incredibly important to the success of your conversation. A ‘because’ cue sends a really clear signal to the other person that it’s okay to go into details and express what they really want to say without having to edit or censor themselves. Most people respond very positively to these signals.

Un-Reverse Psychology

Most experienced sales people know a little bit about motivational psychology. For example, if I want you to buy my product, I should try to frame it as satisfying one or more of your basic psychological or emotional needs. This is a good plan, but I'd like to offer a useful extra twist. Let's suppose you are evaluating rival products, A and B, and for whatever reason I would prefer you to buy product A. There are clearly two basic strategies I can follow:

- Suggest that product A is good.
- Suggest that product B is bad.

But there's a problem. As soon as I start saying anything derogatory about product B, I'm likely to trigger your suspicions and defences. A little voice in your head could start wondering, 'Why is he so keen to steer me away from B?'

There is a third option that avoids this problem altogether. It enables me to always sound as if I'm being positive, so you're less likely to get suspicious.

For example, suppose I happen to know that 'available in a wide range of colours' just isn't something you care about. I could spend quite a long time extolling company B's virtues and saying they pride themselves on providing their product in a wide range of colours. When I do, you will just hand wave the point away and say, "It's not really that important" or words to that effect.

As soon as you do this, you are emotionally waving the product away as well. However, at no point have I sounded as if I was trying to *dissuade* you from product B. In fact, my tone remained positive all the way through!

This is a very subtle and useful way to *sound* as if you're always focusing on positives while covertly skewing the conversation in a particular direction. When I worked in the software trade, my company sold expensive software that came with two options: the client could ask us to maintain it (which was very lucrative for us) or they could ask an independent third-party to do it. I know a sales person who pulled maintenance contracts worth a fortune by praising and recommending the third-party option... but in a way that subtly suggested it was far more hassle than it was worth.

Pre-emptive Neutralisation

A customer in a store is considering two similar products, A and B. The sales assistant, trying to offer some advice, has a slight problem. She genuinely believes that B is the superior product (for various reasons) but it's also more expensive. She knows that if she recommends product B, the customer is immediately going to think, "Of course you want me to buy that one because it costs more so you make more profit."

If the assistant doesn't do anything to counter the customer's cynicism, her advice won't count for anything. One way forward is for the sales assistant to use pre-emptive neutralisation, like this:

"I'm honestly not just saying this because it costs a bit more, but I would recommend product B. It's better quality and it will last longer."

Because the sales assistant has pre-empted the most obvious objection, the customer doesn't dwell on it. This means the customer is more likely to be receptive to benefits like 'better quality' and 'lasts longer'.

You can apply this technique to many business and personal conversations. Whenever you are about to put forward a point of view, or a recommendation, ask yourself if there is an obvious suspicion or objection that the other person is likely to think of. If so, you have to pre-empt it or else your suggestion will effectively be worthless. When you take care to neutralise the objection, the positive points you want to put forward are more likely to get a fair hearing.

You may think that this is a fairly obvious suggestion. Maybe so, but experience suggests there are many people who fail to use this strategy. As a result, they have the rather dispiriting experience of seeing their best advice — offered with nothing but the best of intentions — ignored and discarded.

This advice applies to many situations, not just selling. Imagine you want to pay someone a compliment, but they might suspect it's just hollow flattery or that you have some ulterior motive. You could start off by saying, "I'm not saying this just to flatter you, but I'd like to say..."

Pre-emptive neutralisation is a simple tip but one that can make a big difference to the success of your communications.

Supply The Mnemonic

You can probably think of many occasions when you want people to remember what you've said. If you're trying to sell, promote, persuade or teach, you don't just want to get your message across. You also want your message to be remembered, to stick in the mind of whoever you're talking to.

The same applies to your personal communications, with partners or friends. When you're discussing something that's very important to you, you don't just want to be heard and understood. You would also like the other person to remember what you're saying so you don't have to mention or explain it again.

There's a simple principle involved here: if you want people to remember it, make it easy to remember.

Mnemonics (memory aids) take many forms. They can be verbal, visual, semantic, auditory or physical/tangible. Some are simple, others a little more involved. The more work you do to devise an effective memory aid, the less work others have to do to remember what you said. The effort has to come from your side.

You can look up lists of mnemonic devices and techniques. They include rhyme, repetition, alliteration, assonance, chiasmus, acronyms, wit, striking imagery, metaphors, short stories, puns and visual patterns. And that's before we've even considered physical and 'prop' mnemonics. It's actually a fascinating area to research and explore!

Mnemonics don't have to be impressively ingenious to be effective. They can be very simple and straightforward.

About 25 years ago I was doing some freelance work at an office. I was often the last to leave the building so someone showed me the four digit code needed to set the alarm. The code was 9163. She said, "When you're ready to leave, you don't want to sit around here any longer, do you? So just remember NO SIT. N for nine, O for one, SI for six and T for Three." All these years later, I can remember that code perfectly. (It's true that 'two' also begins with the letter 'T', but when spoken out loud 'T for Three' rhymes and is therefore easy to remember without confusion.)

You want your message to be remembered? Do the work. Create the mnemonic. Make remembering easy.

Metamessages

Deborah Tannen wrote an excellent book entitled, 'That's Not What I Meant'. It's a remarkable and very readable book exploring different modes and styles of conversation and how misunderstandings arise (and can be fixed).

One of the many ideas in the book that I liked was the notion of a metamessage. As Tannen explains: the 'message' consists of the information conveyed by the words you use. The 'metamessage' is what the words, and how they are spoken, says about relationships and attitudes.

Everyone is familiar with this distinction. Suppose you ask your partner how they are feeling. They say, "I'm fine thanks. Don't worry about me." You know these words can be said in ten different ways to express ten different feelings and commentaries on your relationship! The *message* is always the same: "I'm fine". The *metamessage* can vary a great deal, from "All is well" to "I'm furious and extremely upset!".

Tannen suggests that, in very general terms, men are more likely to only notice the message while women are more likely to process the metamessage. These are very broad generalisations, of course, and there will be many exceptions.

Roland Barthes, author of 'Mythologies' and expert in the field of semiotics, makes a parallel distinction between sign and signification. One word, image, sign or symbol can mean different things depending on the context and who is interpreting the meaning.

If you are trying to get a message across and finding it bewilderingly difficult, it may be the case that (a) one person is tuned into the message while the other is tuned into the metamessage, or (b) they are seeing two different metamessages. In order to achieve good communication, you sometimes need to be aware of these possible distinctions and make sure you are discussing the same message, or metamessage, as the OP (other person or other party).

LIMO Theory

One of my friends is a magician who earns his living mainly as a street entertainer. Over lunch one day, he mentioned how useful it was to have a LIMO. This puzzled me for a moment because I thought he was referring to a 'limo' as in 'limousine'. It turned out that he was actually using an acronym: 'L.I.M.O' = Large, interesting, metallic, object.

Examples of LIMOs would include a 6ft tall unicycle, a large silver or chrome box full of props, a stack of chrome-plated juggling clubs or fire sticks, a hula hoop wrapped in silver tape or a shiny, metallic red cape.

Before the street entertainer starts his or her show, the LIMO is a useful way to get attention, to provide visual focus and announce that something interesting is about to happen. During the show, the LIMO sustains interest and, presumably, gets featured in the performance.

You may not want to entertain people on the street but you can apply the same thinking to many other contexts. A close friend of mine was an expert at selling classified ads (back in the pre-internet era when classified ads were big business). Whenever he called on a prospect, he took along a bright blue document folder with the client's name neatly printed on the outside. At the start of the meeting, he placed this folder on the desk and then didn't mention it at all. He knew his prospect would notice his own name and want to know what was inside that bright blue folder. It had an almost hypnotic effect on people. Later in the meeting, he would open the folder and show the client some information about choices, options and costs.

When you think about communication, it's natural to suppose that your auditory sense takes priority — it's all about what is said and heard. However, what is *seen* can also be important to the success of your meetings. If you want to communicate well, to get people's attention and be memorable, see if you can create visual interest, and add a touch of visual focus, to your meetings and conversations.

The people you talk to are going to be using their eyes anyway. You may as well give them something interesting to look at that serves your purpose.

Avoid Abstraction

Here's a good tip that can avoid a lot of wasted time. For many years, I worked in the field of creative media and marketing. Imagine a situation where a few people from my company were meeting a few people from the client company to discuss, say, the script for a promotional video.

Here's option 1: we all got together and ask the client people what they want.

Here's option 2: after doing my preliminary research and fact-finding, and a few consultation chats, I prepared a first draft of the script. I knew perfectly well that it probably wasn't right, but I wrote it anyway. I sent this over to the client people and then organised the meeting.

What I learned, over about twenty years of handling such projects, is that Option 2 is always better. No exceptions.

With option 1, everyone's talking *in the abstract*. There's nothing on the table, nothing to react or respond to. Many people find it quite difficult, when simply discussing things in abstract terms, to articulate and express exactly what they want.

With option 2, there's something tangible for people *to react to*. They can point to the bits they like and bits they don't. It stimulates their own thinking and helps them to say what they really want.

You can use this approach in many other contexts, not just business-to-business selling. Want someone to come up with a few ideas? You could just ask them for their thoughts. Alternatively, come up with a few suggestions yourself and ask for their reactions and responses. Asking someone for information? Speculate about what the answer might be and wait for them to correct you, react and respond.

When a discussion or conversation takes place in the realm of the abstract, many people struggle to convey what they really mean — even if they have the best intentions and *want* to be constructive. When they have something specific to react to, they generally find it much easier to tell you what they really want, or to share what they know.

I know an interior designer who, over many years, learned to use this approach. She found that if she invited her clients to suggest which colour scheme they preferred, many of them struggled to give a clear response. If she suggested a colour scheme, with some sketches and colour swatches, people found it much easier to react and to express their preferences.

When you use this approach, in most cases it's perfectly okay, and indeed preferable, to be perfectly open about what you're doing and why. I didn't just send my clients a script as if I expected them to like it. I always explained what I was doing: "I've written this purely as a focus for discussion. I'm not saying it's right. It might not even be close. But I felt this was better than just trying to talk about it in abstract terms."

It's surprising what a difference this approach makes when you're asking people for information. When I work with police and others involved in law enforcement, this point always tends to come up.

Option 1: "Do you know anything about the warehouse break-in last Tuesday?"

It's an abstract question. There's nothing for the OP (other person) to react to or talk about.

Option 2: "What can you tell me about the warehouse break-in last Tuesday? As I understand it, you were just closing the bar around that time and saw someone driving away pretty quickly. That right?"

Now the OP has something to react to and discuss. Of course, in both cases you could meet with a totally flat, unhelpful response: "I don't know anything". However, you'll meet this response more often with Option 1 and less often with Option 2.

Most minds don't work well in the abstract. They find abstract concepts elusive and slippery. Help the OP's mind to 'get a grip'. Give people real, tangible, concrete things to react to and discuss.

Pick Up And Amplify

This is a good sales technique that you can apply to many other, non-selling situations.

Let me first go over how it works in a sales situation. Let's say you're with a customer in a store and trying to sell a product, such as a nice new TV set. You might mention several features and benefits (though you should always emphasise benefits). This may or may not be very persuasive.

However, it's possible the customer will mention something that he or she happens to like about the product. If so, it's a very good move to *pick up and amplify*. Agree with the customer, validate their opinion and then add to it.

Customer: "It does seem to be pretty good value."

You: "You're absolutely right about that and it's a good point. This is one of the best value sets we sell. And in fact, the value's even better than you might think — if you look here, on the display card, you can see we waive the warranty fee for the first two years. It's normally [price] but on this model we give you that for nothing."

The point is that allowing people to *persuade themselves* is far easier than persuading them. If the customer happens to mention something they like, they are selling the product to themselves and doing some of your work for you. The 'pick up and amplify' approach strengthens the effect and makes the most of it.

How can you use idea this in non-selling situations? There are countless possibilities. Consider any context where you and someone else are evaluating options and you would like your own preference to prevail. Be on the lookout for any moment when the OP (other person) happens to say something positive about your preferred option. When they do, don't just let the remark go by. Pick up on what they said, validate it and amplify.

There was one time, many years ago, when I used this approach to get a pay rise. I was discussing the matter with a manager who, though he liked my work, was rather reluctant to agree to the pay rise I'd asked for. He was putting up a pretty robust defence for the most part, but at one point said something along the lines of, "I suppose we could justify it now that you're doing more selling." (I had recently expanded my role in the company to do more client-facing work, including selling.)

In a heartbeat, I picked up the manager's point and amplified it. As well as echoing the point he had made and agreeing, I mentioned one or two other ways in which I was now contributing more value and some ways in which I was going to continue to add more value, and save the company some money, in future.

You can also use this technique in your personal life. I was once having a chat with a friend and trying to encourage her to take advantage of an opportunity that had come her way. She had been through some tough times that had left her feeling a bit down. At first, she felt a little reluctant to embrace this opportunity and make the most of it. We talked it over for a while and then she said something like, "Although, I guess it might tide me over for a while financially..."

Straight away, I picked up on the point and amplified it. In the end, she pursued the opportunity and, I'm glad to say, it turned out very well for her.

When people mention something they like, or (even grudgingly) admit that an idea might have some merit, they are opening the door to a persuasive moment — but only opening it a short way. 'Pick up and amplify' is one good way to open the door wide and let the light in.

This is also a good technique to know about if you want to be a good *collaborator*. Let's say you're with a friend and discussing a project that you might possibly collaborate on. Wait for your friend to mention an idea and then be sure you pick it up and amplify it, taking their idea one step further. "Yes, that's great, and what we could also do is..."

Incidentally, this is similar to the 'Yes and...' principle that actors learn when they are studying improvisation. They learn never to contradict what the other actor in the scene just said but to always reply with 'Yes and...' or an equivalent expression. This helps to sustain the flow of the scene.

Danshari Communication

‘Danshari’ is a Japanese word referring to the art of de-cluttering your environment. As a philosophy, it suggests that you should de-clutter your home or workspace, keeping only what you really need and regularly use. This is said to confer many benefits, both practical and spiritual. You create an environment of clarity and simplicity, and reduce your attachment to having ‘things’ just for the sake of having them.

It also becomes a lot easier to implement the basic organisational principle of ‘a place for everything and everything in its place’. Advocates of danshari say it also leads to a more relaxed, peaceful frame of mind because you create a nicer and more practical environment, with more clean lines and less ‘sensory overload’, plus don’t have to contend with junk, clutter and not knowing where you put something.

Sales expert Brian Tracy makes a similar point in ‘The Psychology Of Selling’. He states that if you work from a clean, tidy desk you will be far more productive than if your desk is messy and cluttered. (I’m not entirely convinced about this. As Robert Pirsig mentions in ‘Zen And The Art Of Motorcycle Maintenance’, some people work by ‘eidetic’ memory. Their workspace may look hopeless cluttered, but they like it that way, it is organised in their mind and they are perfectly productive.)

The point I want to make is that you can, and should, practice *danshari communication*. Whatever message you want to get across, keep the essence of it clean, simple and uncluttered. Never use 100 words if 50 will do, and don’t use 50 if 20 will do.

When you are trying to communicate clearly and persuasively, think about danshari and the metaphor of the untidy or tidy room. If your message is untidy, cluttered and a bit chaotic, people can’t find what they want in it. If it’s clean, de-cluttered and simple, it’s a more pleasant experience for the person you’re talking to and they can more easily find what’s relevant, interesting or useful.

See Beyond Yourself

If you want to communicate successfully, and to be persuasive, learn the art of seeing beyond yourself. Here's what I mean: just because a particular technique or strategy wouldn't work on you doesn't mean it's worthless.

Here's an example. As it happens, I don't pay any attention to so-called 'celebrity culture'. I'm not saying there's anything virtuous about this or inviting your approval. It's just happens to be the case that celebrity endorsement has no effect on me whatsoever. Nonetheless, I recognise that this kind of endorsement is a time-honoured promotional strategy that, if used intelligently, can win a lot of attention and persuade a lot of people to buy whatever is on offer. It works on a sufficiently high percentage of people to be worthwhile.

Let me share a story. I once knew a sales rep who sold pharmaceutical products. At one point, her company had launched a new analgesic. She was going round pharmacies and trying to persuade them to order a few cases of this new product. This sales rep told me that her company had done a deal with a national cinema chain and were offering free movie tickets. As part of her sales presentation, she would say, "... and if you order three cases or more I can offer you these free cinema tickets!"

To my way of thinking, this made no sense whatsoever. If the product was good and worth stocking, it was worth ordering (even without the cinema tickets). If it wasn't that good, and was just going to be unsold stock taking up shelf space, it wasn't worth ordering (even with the tickets). The sales rep told me, "Yes, but people don't think like that. The cinema tickets work."

Over the past thirty years, working on a vast range of persuasive and promotional projects, I've seen this point come up time and time again. I've often seen people reject a perfectly good promotional strategy just because they don't think it would work on them personally. This is very short-sighted. Whether or not a persuasive technique would work on you doesn't matter. The point is, will it work on the person you want to communicate with or to persuade? Or the audience, demographic or market you are trying to reach?

There are countless strategies pertaining to communication, rhetoric, persuasion and selling. See past yourself and don't be too concerned about whether you, individually, would find something compelling or persuasive. Think about your strategies from the other person's point of view or let past experience be your guide — including the experience of experienced persuaders, communicators and advertisers.

If you start exploring communication techniques, I think it's easy to fall into the trap of being a little too dismissive — particularly if you consider yourself to be quite smart and sophisticated.

'The rule of three' is a time-honoured rhetorical device that can be traced all the way back to the ancient Greeks. The basic idea is that if you present what you want to say in the form of three points, three lines or three ideas, most people will find your message more memorable and persuasive. You can use 'the rule of three' when crafting a sales message, giving a speech or just making a point in a memorable way.

If you want, you can dismiss this as a hoary old rhetorical device that would only work on rather simple-minded people. You would be wrong to do so. It doesn't matter that 'the rule of three' goes back many centuries. Human psychology goes back even further. When used in an intelligent and appropriate way, it's a very effective way of packaging a message. I could say the same for countless other techniques, subtleties and ideas.

If you want to communicate well, learn the art of seeing past yourself. What works, or doesn't work, on you doesn't matter. What's important is what works the person, or group of people, you're trying to communicate with successfully.

Modal Judo

I normally like to focus on ‘positive’ techniques and strategies, rather than anything that might sound negative or slightly unethical. However, this is such a wonderful trick to know about that I can’t resist sharing it.

Under normal circumstances, you want to build as much rapport with people as you can. However, on rare occasions you may want to derail the other party’s line of thought or interrupt their momentum. (Maybe because they are the ones using unfair tactics and you want to block them.) Here’s a good way to do it. It involves asking for a modal change.

If the other person is explaining everything in words, gesture to the white board and say, “It’s sometimes easier to think in pictures. Could you sketch out how you see this working? It might be easier for everyone.” Conversely, if they are a visual thinker and doing a ‘chalk and talk’ presentation, say, “Sorry, could you just leave the pictures for a moment and explain it in words? It might be easier for everyone.”

Always innocently pretend that your only concern is to make things easier for everyone to understand.

If they have prepared a ‘high level summary’, ask for plenty of detail. If they’re ready with details, say you think everyone just needs the concise, top-level summary.

The point is that when you force a change of mode in this way, it can seriously dent the other party’s flow and their ability to present their case. Try it, and you’ll see how effective it can be.

Please use this trick judiciously and in an ethically positive way!

Final Words

We've reached the end of Smart Communication Tips. My hope is that you will find at least a few of these ideas useful in both your personal and professional life. I can promise you I have used every single one of these ideas in real life and found them worth knowing.

As I said at the start of this booklet, regardless of what you're trying to achieve, good communication is always your friend and ally while poor communication is always your enemy. The more you know about successful communication, the smoother your path will be.

I wish you health, wealth, love, smiles and magic.

If you want to get in touch, my email address is ian@ianrowland.com (or just visit any of my websites and use the email link provided). I'd love to hear from you.

— Ian Rowland

London, 2020

End Note 1: An Invitation

Let's work together!

Would you like me to work with you on your communication skills? Or or to serve as your communication consultant?

You can hire me! People hire me all the time to write material for them, advise them on particular projects or lend a little creative input. If you want to sell, persuade, teach, inform or negotiate, I can help you. It's what I've been doing for over twenty years.

For further details see www.ianrowland.com .

I'd love to work with you.

— Ian Rowland

www.ianrowland.com

End Note 2: Three Requests

Please Help Me If You Can

If you'd like to support me and my work, please tell all your friends about this booklet and my various websites. I'm self-employed and promote my work as best I can, but a little help is always welcome. If you can help me to 'spread the word', I would be very grateful.

For example, you can mention me to your friends in real life or on social media. Wherever people are discussing communication or the joys and challenges of persuasion, marketing and selling, please give me and my books a mention and pass on the link:
www.ianrowland.com

Got contacts in broadcast or online media? Tell them about me or about this book. They might get a good story, article or feature out of it — if you've got an audience, I've got content! Maybe you can help me to get media appearances or to get booked to give a talk or presentation. I'd appreciate whatever help you want to offer. I want to help everyone who wants to work for themselves and do their own thing. Thank you for any assistance you can give me.

Improvements, Fixes And Flubs

If you have notes or ideas about how I can improve this book, or if you've noticed errors I should fix, I'd love to hear from you. If there are factual errors, things I should explain more clearly or typos, I'd love to correct them.

Please Send Me Your Review

Reviews are really helpful. If you have read any of the books I sell, please send a review I can add to the product page on my website. My email address is ian@ianrowland.com. Your review can be published under your own name or can be as anonymous as you wish.

Your review doesn't have to very long or a literary masterpiece. Short reviews can be great! Also, don't worry if your writing needs a little help or tidying up. I can take care of that for you.

You can also submit reviews to Amazon if you obtained any of my books from there.

What Can I Do For You?

Personal Coaching And Training

I work with private clients all over the world, either in person or via the internet. Some people contact me for help with weight loss and fitness. Others want a little help with areas such as self-fulfilment and personal success, building their business, creating a passive income or related subjects. Let's work together and see what value I can provide for you!

See any of my websites for details.

Talks, Keynotes And Corporate Training

I love taking part in live events! I offer excellent talks, training and keynotes on subjects such as persuasion and communication skills, working for yourself, creating digital products and building a passive income. I often add touches of magic and mindreading, just to make my sessions a little bit different!

To date, I've worked for the FBI, Google, Coca-Cola, Marks & Spencer, The British Olympics Team, The Ministry of Defence, Hewlett-Packard, The Philadelphia 76ers, CapGemini, BBC, Kier Construction, NBC, The Crown Estate, Iceland, Medtronic, Unilever, The Sunday Times Oxford Literary Festival, The Prince's Charities, McKinsey & Company, Eurostar Software Testing Conference, Ogilvy & Mather, Rabobank, London Business School, ABC Television, Channel 4, Cambridge Technology Partners, Synon, Valtech and many other companies.

I've also lectured at Oxford University, Cambridge University, the California Institute of Technology and Monash University.

Writing

A friend once described me as 'a book midwife'. If you have a book in you, I'll help you to write it, publish it yourself, market it and make some money from it. I've been a professional writer for over 35 years and I offer a complete, end-to-end service.

I particularly like helping people to create a passive income for themselves: create a product, set up a website, make money while you sleep. This is what I've been doing for about twenty years. I can guide you through the entire process! It's a challenging road to travel, to be sure, but at the same time highly satisfying and rewarding.

Social Media

I'd love to stay in touch via social media!

For each of my main websites, there is a corresponding Facebook page:

- www.ianrowland.com
- www.coldreadingsuccess.com
- www.ianrowlandtraining.com

You can also find me on:
Twitter (@IanRowland1)
Linked In
Instagram



Some Kind Words...

“My FBI Behavioural Analysis Program hired Ian to work with and train our team for a full day. He demonstrated and taught us a lot about cold reading and how we could apply it to our work as behavioural analysts. Additionally, he also covered advanced communication skills, persuasive language and relevant insights into the art of ‘misdirection’. At the conclusion of his comprehensive seminar, he entertained our entire team and families with a mindreading show at an evening social. Not only was it great fun, but even today my team is still talking about it. I’d highly recommend Ian to anyone who’s interested in these subjects and wants a first-class speaker and trainer.”

— *Robin Dreeke, former Special Agent and Head of **FBI Behavioural Analysis Program***

“I regard Ian as a first-rate trainer and consultant. He has amazing material, he always delivers and he’s great to work with.”

— *A. Sanghi, Lead Economist, **World Bank Group***

“Ian has a very engaging and energising style and he was thought-provoking and entertaining throughout. Most importantly, everyone said it was a great use of their time. Ian gave us plenty of ways to work smarter and be more effective both professionally and personally.”

— *A. Mellor, **Marks & Spencer***

“Ian is the best speaker and trainer I’ve ever seen, and he hosted our day perfectly. We learned a lot, he was entertaining and I know we’ll be more successful this year thanks to what he shared with us.”

— *D. Holmes, Financial Director, **Healthcare Learning***

“We had some of the top experts around the globe in their field, but when we looked at how people were registering for the conference and what the attendees wanted, overwhelmingly we saw very large numbers signing up for Ian’s course, so much so that his class was the largest in the whole session that we had for those three days.”

— *Chris Hadnagy, **Organiser, Human Hacking Conference***

“Of the hundred plus lectures and shows we have hosted at Caltech none have brought more enthusiastic praise than your performance. I have now heard from dozens of people in the audience, all of whom said this was one of the most entertaining, informative, and above all funny shows they had ever seen. You are to be congratulated for breathing so much life and class into the science and skeptics community.”

— *Michael Shermer, **Executive Director, Skeptics Society***

“Ian's special talent lies in his ability to communicate useful information about self-improvement, business, psychology and, yes, magic to diverse audiences around the world. His books are essential reading and if you get the opportunity to hear him speak, don't miss him! For those outside the world of magic and mindreading, let me tell you that Ian is very highly regarded in the trade. He even gets hired to go to major conventions and teach other magicians! When I was Editor of the Magic Circle's magazine, I asked Ian to write a column on mindreading, which he did for 12 years to great acclaim.”

— *Matthew Field, **Member of the Inner Magic Circle***

“I've been an Independent Financial Advisor for 20 years and have learned from people like Dale Carnegie, Anthony Robbins, Jim Rohn and Brian Tracy. I now include Ian Rowland on that list. Having attended his courses and invested in some personal coaching with him, I cannot recommend him highly enough. His unique insights regarding positive persuasion and what makes people tick will prove invaluable in your personal and business life. He's funny, engaging and a leader in his field.”

— *Mike LeGassick, **Leading Independent Financial Advisor, UK***

“I make it my business to learn from experts. I spent four days with Ian and we covered a range of skills that I know will help me both personally and professionally — particularly inter-personal skills and ways to establish instant rapport with people. I think he's terrific.”

— *Sam Q., **Entrepreneur, Saudi Arabia***

“I'm a sales guy. I've studied all the big names and been trained by some of the best in the business. I trained with Ian via Skype and he just blew my mind with techniques and perspectives I never knew before. It's all practical. I use what Ian taught me almost every day. He opened my eyes to aspects of communication that truly deserve the term 'magic'.”

— *Michael Martin, **Sales professional, USA***

“I studied CRFB with Ian via Skype and without doubt it's my best investment this year! Ian is an excellent teacher and working with him is very enjoyable. In addition, Ian is incredibly generous with his knowledge in many adjacent fields.

— *Patrick Ehrich, **Teacher and Educational Trainer, Germany***



Training day for Coca-Cola Europe in Lisbon; lecturing at Masters of Magic in Italy; management training event at The Atomium, Brussels



Training FBI field agents; teaching persuasion skills at The STTAR Summit at the Philly 76ers HQ; training a private client in London



Cold reading training for the Human Hacking Conference in Orlando; the Human Hacking audience; management training for Cap Gemini



A demonstration in New York for ABC 'Prime Time'; lecturing in Gothenburg; training for the Alternative Investors Institute, Paris



A couple of stage shots; teaching a public 'Cold Reading For Business' class in London