







# Consider the Costly Consequences

Because credible messaging is the catalyst for accelerated business performance, organizations lacking this key ingredient for success often suffer costly failures in many areas:

✔ **Inadequate innovation.** When employees can't present their innovative ideas to management in compelling and persuasive ways, those ideas fail to gain traction.

This affects not only "Big Innovation" (e.g., the launch of a ground-breaking product like the Apple Watch), but also the equally important "Everyday Innovation" (e.g., internal process improvements and enhanced selling approaches that affect profitability and customer satisfaction).<sup>4</sup>

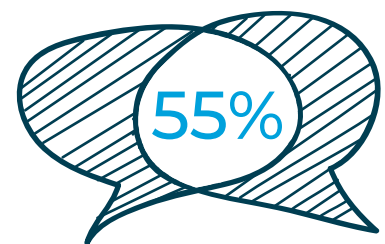
✔ **Poor strategic decisions.** When critical business decisions hang in the balance, senior management wants and needs to hear the best thinking of its brightest trusted advisors. If your key people lack the executive presence to communicate and deliver recommendations at every level of the organization, those recommendations will fail to make a positive impact. The results: strategic miscues, costly mistakes, and underperforming corporate strategies.

✔ **Failed strategic projects.** Even when strategic projects are approved, "UNcredible" communication can cause them to fail. More than half of project leaders surveyed believe that effective communication with stakeholders and senior managers is the top factor in project success.<sup>5</sup>

The Project Management Institute reports that of the money put at risk in strategic projects, more than half is due to poor communications.<sup>6</sup>

✔ **Lost sales opportunities.** The impact of weak messaging is perhaps most apparent on top line revenue. When sales team members fail to deliver messages with credibility to potential customers, sales are lost. And, those that are won are often smaller and less profitable than they could be.

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**Does your message have the credibility, relevance, and impact to capture the attention of overwhelmed and distracted decision makers?**  
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55% of project managers agree that effective communication to stakeholders and senior managers is the number one factor in project success.<sup>5</sup>

# What Works: A Common, Scalable Framework for Credible Messaging

If you don't equip your employees with essential skills for credible messaging, your company's best ideas won't get heard. And, they won't be turned into successful products, services, and customer relationships.

Addressing this critical business challenge takes more than typical implementation of communication skills training. It requires that an organization build a strong, common capability among its employees to deliver credible messages.

For an idea or message to be seen as credible, you must be able to quickly clear three hurdles when presenting it:

1. **Your idea must be understood.** If you and your message are hard to follow, decision makers and customers are unlikely to pay attention and even more unlikely to act upon the idea.
2. **Your idea must be seen as having real value.** Decision makers must first connect with the need or problem addressed by your idea. Only then can they appreciate how it delivers compelling and relevant benefits.
3. **You must be perceived as worthy of trust.** Decision makers must feel confident in your ability to act on your idea. Don't be slick and smooth. Be yourself. Let your conviction shine through as you deliver your message.

In this context, building presentation skills is only part of the solution. Companies that innovate successfully have also begun deploying comprehensive, organization-wide frameworks for ensuring that great ideas don't get "lost in presentation" (see sidebar).

## Case Study: Improving Innovation with an Organization-wide Messaging Framework



In his book *Collaborative Leadership*, retired Cisco Systems executive George O'Meara shares how he transformed the Cisco Services Sales Group and grew its revenue from \$800 million to over \$6 billion. His focus was not just on improving "Big Innovation," but also on promoting "Everyday Innovation" throughout the organization.

O'Meara describes his frustration with an "otherwise bright staff who struggled with presenting ideas in a way that would be crystal clear on the problem as well as the idea."

### His solution:

Adopt a common, shared communication framework his people could use to articulate their ideas more clearly, and with more credibility.

In the case of the Cisco Services Sales Group, O'Meara stated, "Transformation of any sort will go nowhere without tools to ensure processes are consistent, sticky and transferable."

## Take Action: Audit Your Company's Current Approach

There are three criteria for the successful deployment of a shared and scalable framework for credible messaging:

- ✔ **Does it equip people to design, deliver, and defend their ideas?** While traditional presentation skills training should be part of any deployment, people should also be equipped to design the message, deliver the message in non-formal presentation settings, and defend the message.
- ✔ **Is it transferable?** For a messaging framework to be transferable, easy to implement, easily coached by managers, and consistently used, it must be simple to follow and reinforced by an appropriate tool or job aid.
- ✔ **Is it scalable?** For a messaging framework to be scalable, it must be deployed in a level-appropriate way. Recognize that some employees may need only basic exposure to key messaging concepts, others need training in essential behavioral skills, and others require more intensive coaching to succeed in high-stakes messaging environments.

Auditing your company's current approach against these criteria is a logical first step toward creating an organization-wide initiative that boosts messaging effectiveness.

## Consider the Return on Your Communications Training Investment

Every company is looking for ways to accelerate business performance. The surest way to turn your company's best ideas into bottom-line profits is to equip people at all levels with the skills to credibly design, deliver, and defend clear and compelling messages.

If that sounds like a prohibitively expensive proposition, consider this:

The impact of just one innovative idea, one large sale, or one well-executed strategic project can more than cover the costs of deploying a common and scalable approach to credible messaging across your organization. An investment in deploying a credible messaging framework will continue to reap results for you, your company, and your customers well into the future.

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# Mandel Can Help Accelerate Business Performance

Mandel Communications has helped more than 500 companies in 55-plus countries improve innovation, strategic decision-making, project execution, and sales performance through more effective communication. Companies like Cisco, CIGNA, BMC Software, EMC, Expedia, The Hartford, Hewlett Packard, IBM, Microsoft, Oracle, Standard Insurance, and Verizon have deployed Mandel's proven communications framework to improve their bottom-line business results.

When deployed well, communication skills training can be transformative, enabling people across your organization to design, deliver, and defend more credible messages that better engage and motivate employees and customers, alike.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup><http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/08/you-cant-do-strategy-without-input-from-sales>

<sup>2</sup>[www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/163007/state-american-workplace.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/163007/state-american-workplace.aspx)

<sup>3</sup><http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/01/opinion/sunday/why-you-hate-work.html>

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/trainingindustry/tiq\\_2015summer/#/28](http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/trainingindustry/tiq_2015summer/#/28)

<sup>5</sup><http://insights.wired.com/profiles/blogs/3-problems-all-project-managers-face-in-communicating-with-senior#ixzz3eZ9hFpPM>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.pmi.org/~media/PDF/Business-Solutions/The-High-Cost-Low-Performance-The-Essential-Role-of-Communications.ashx>

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Want to train your Millennials to design, deliver, and defend their best ideas with credibility?

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