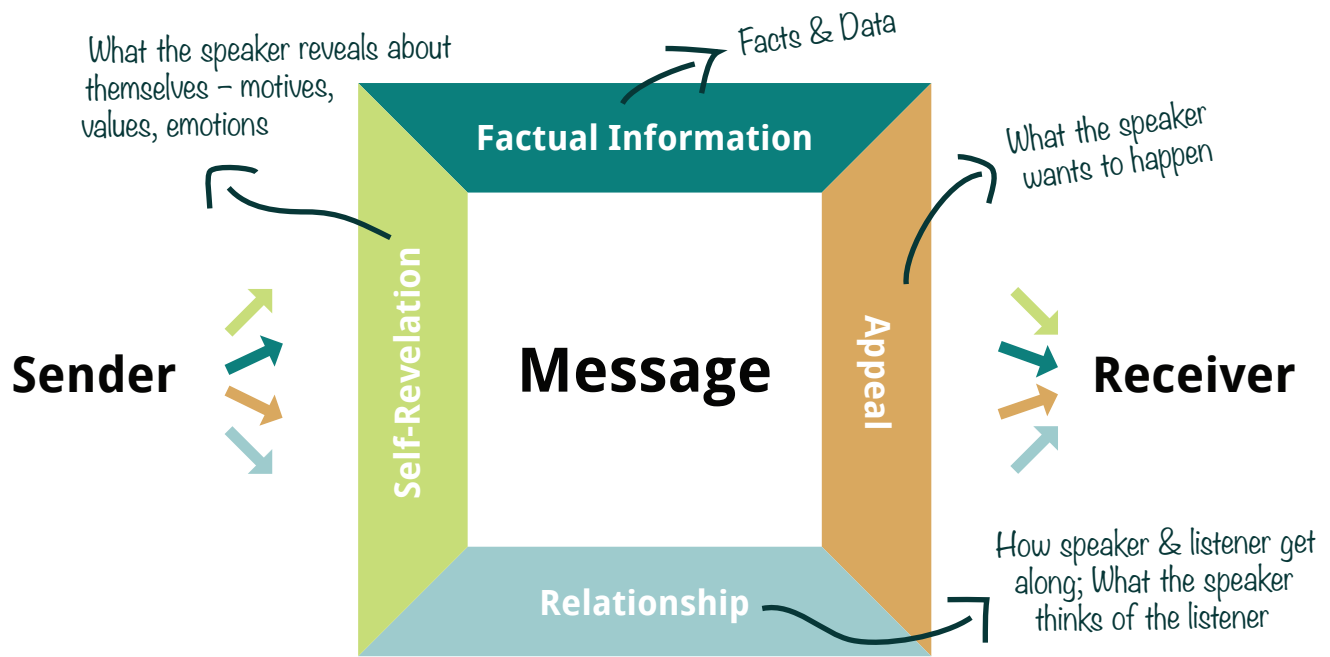


Four Sides of a Message

Have you ever been in a discussion in which the other party seemed to understand something completely different from what you said and meant?

According to the Four-sides model ("Hamburger Modell") by Friedemann Schulz von Thun every message has 4 sides:



Except for "Factual Information", these sides are open to interpretation. There can be a huge gap between what is said and what is perceived. It depends on who is speaking and who is listening. Example:

"Your team is a bottleneck" - Factual Information

Self-Revelation could be:
"I'm worried, we might not be able to deploy"
"I'm relieved it's not my team"

Appeal could be:
"Work faster"
"Work differently"
"Hire someone"

Relationship could be:
"Your work is inadequate"
"You're letting everyone down"

People tend to perceive the relationship layer. This explains countless "I've never said that!" arguments: "Hearing" the relationship layer and confounding our interpretation of what was said, with the actual words.

So, when you speak, anticipate possible misinterpretations and explicitly say what you do and don't mean. When you listen, ask how something was meant, before getting defensive.

