### The four building blocks: People
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- Four building blocks create the foundation for successful communication: the people, the message, the context, and effective listening. The four elements are at play in every communication event, whether you're presenting in front of 1,000 people or making small talk with a coworker. When I'm coaching a client, I often ask, "What are some recent communication successes you've had?" Frequently the client will say, "I don't know, I don't really think about it. Communication just happens." Well, research shows that strong communication is the cornerstone for thriving businesses, healthy relationships, and your career success. Don't leave all of that up to chance. Before communicating, consider each of these four building blocks. As you walk to your next meeting, think to yourself, "Who will be there? What do I need to know about them? What kind of listener do I want to be right now?" Before you hit Send on your next email, ask yourself, "How's the timing of this email? Is email appropriate, or should I pop in for a quick chat?" You're making communication choices all the time. Be mindful about those choices. Let's begin by exploring the People building block. Whether you're the sender or the receiver of a message, it's important to think about the other person's perspective. For example, Tatiana and I need to edit some writing we've done. I send her an email saying, "Hey, you edit the odd chapters, I'll do the even ones. Let's finish by the end of the next week." Simple enough, right? I mean, what could possibly go wrong? Well, if I don't manage perceptions, the whole project and our relationship could blow up. I intended for this message to Tatiana to be helpful, to get things going. But the message might sound bossy or overbearing. Who am I to tell her which chapters she has to edit? My intent may have been helpful, but what was the actual impact? When deciding what and how to communicate with another person, consider the Think, Feel, Do model. What do I want Tatiana to think? Time to start editing. What do I want her to feel? Respected, treated fairly. And what do I want her to do? Get started. Now that I've thought of how I want her to feel, I might adjust my original wording from, "You do the odd chapters, I'll do the even," to something softer like, "To get the ball rolling, I suggest you edit the odd chapters, I'll do the even, but if you have something else in mind, please let me know right away." Communication gets tricky because all people have mental filters, certain levels of knowledge, personal concerns, or preconceived notions, that affect the way we interpret messages. Those mental filters dictate how we decode or understand a message. Think of a conversation you have coming up soon. What assumptions might your conversational partner have about you or the topic? What do you want the other person to think, to feel, to do? Let your answers inform the words, the tone, and the body language you use during the conversation. If you want to be a great communicator, begin with the People building block. Do your best to understand a message from the other's perspective.

### The four building blocks: Message
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- What gets transmitted between a sender and a receiver, hopefully with positive intent, as Brenda mentioned, is the message. The message in a conversation is more than the words that we speak or write. It's the nonverbal signals we deliver and the tone of voice we use. If you give your best effort in a presentation, and I approach you at the end saying, good job today, the words in my message will be completely overridden by my unenthusiastic delivery. As the sender, when you contemplate your message, keep in mind not only how you word or you write something, but also the channel that you use to send it. A channel may be a text, an email, a phone call, a face-to-face conversation, a memo, an interoffice chat, or a voice message. If I know I have to get my boss' attention, I may send a quick text and ask if it's appropriate to call her for a conversation. Because of the amount of emails she receives daily, I know that if we have to make a swift decision, this channel is more productive for both of us. Now, speaking of email, I was frightened, but not surprised to see the Radicati Group's findings. In 2015, the technology market research firm published a report stating that the number of emails sent and received around the world topped 205 billion per day. This number will increase steadily by 3% per year. This means that by 2019, we will send and receive 246 billion emails worldwide daily. I mentioned all kinds of channels earlier, but this report tells me that email tends to be the preferred mode of transportation in the workplace worldwide. Whatever channel you utilize, you may also need to consider the message's organizational pattern. Is your message meant to inform? In that case, you will focus on the need for your receiver to understand. This is done by designing your message in a simple, concise way that's tailored for your receiver. But does your message aim to persuade? If that is your intent, you will need to use the same concise audience focus strategy as you would to inform, but to persuade someone, you must also craft an argument with your main claims, evidence and reasoning for your idea. If you intend to persuade, you may approach your message by presenting the problem followed by the solution. If the audience has two choices, you may organize your message by comparing and contrasting the two. Regardless of the nature of your organizational pattern, you message is more effective when you bundle primary and secondary information. Don't just give the information, follow it up with some kind of supporting evidence or example that can make it memorable, or at least understandable. For example, if I'm announcing a promotion that our company plans to begin in the upcoming month, I should tell our staff why we're making this decision or what yield of return we saw last time we tried something similar. If you consider the message going from the sender to the receiver in a cyclical pattern, then the check for message effectiveness is receiving the listeners' feedback. As the sender, allow time for your receiver to absorb the information and either ask questions or get clarification. If you skip this critical phase of checking for understanding, you will run the risk of miscommunication and the perception that you don't value the receiver's involvement in the whole communication process. The product of your communication loop is your message. Be thoughtful with how you strategize, deliver and evaluate it and you will be an effective communicator with every interaction.

### The four building blocks: Context
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- Communication never happens in a vacuum. Location, timing, and relationships are all part of our third communication building block, the context. One of our clients, Julia, had to deliver some bad news about a benefits cut to a number of different business units. She made good location choices. She decided to deliver this news in person, even though that meant a lot of travel for her, and she made sure that each meeting would be held in a quiet conference room to avoid distractions. What she didn't factor in were timing and relationships. By the time she reached her fourth or fifth site visit, the news had already spread, and people were a step ahead of her. One team leader had a long, positive relationship with the senior leadership team. He trusted that their decision was in the best interest of the company and had already briefed his team on the changes. They'd pretty much made peace with the new benefits plan. Julia showed up assuming this group would be as resistant as the others. She failed to take the emotional temperature in the room and began her rehearsed presentation. By the end of her poorly timed talk, she had actually taken this receptive audience and made them feel resistant to the idea. The team leader was not happy with her. Think back to a time someone tried sharing with you at a bad time or location. I hate it when my mom calls just to chat and I'm in the midst of rush hour traffic trying to get to a meeting on time. Bad timing, bad location makes for a horrible listener. Always be sure to tune into the context, timing, location, and relationship, and see how effective you become.

### The four building blocks: Listening
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- The building blocks of people, message, and context seem simple enough when you apply them to daily life, but there is one final component of stellar communication that must be considered. That building block is listening, an activity that takes up to 55% of our working time, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Between interacting at work, talking to our families, taking in information through radio, TV, video clips, we listen more than we speak daily. Most of us come into the workplace with little to no training on listening. Across the globe, schools prepare us to write, read, and speak, but few of us have had extensive training in listening. Listening is the skill that separates good communicators from amazing ones, and you guessed it. We want you to be an amazing communicator, so here are some tips to being a strong listener. When you are the sender of a message and you're getting feedback from your receiver, you have to listen with your ears, your eyes, your heart. What do I mean by that? Let's refer back to the example Brenda mentioned in her overview of the people building block in which we're deciding who will edit each chapter of some writing Brenda and I had done. As she asks me to start editing the work we do, Brenda may use her ears to pay close attention to my words, my tone of voice, or even my pacing. Am I asking several clarifying questions? Sounding annoyed at the timeline? Responding with more options? Is there a phrase that I'm repeating more than others? To be a good listener, use reaffirming nonverbals to show that you're listening. Feel free to summarize what you hear or simply give some interjections of agreement, uh-huh, hm. These indicate that you are following along. If our conversation about the editing deadline occurs in a face-to-face setting, Brenda will have a chance to listen with her eyes. She will pay close attention to my eye contact or facial expressions. In turn, she will try to moderate hers to match my reaction. Listening with your eyes allows you to be attuned to nonverbal communication. Even when you communicate with words and symbols, there's a lot to pay attention to. And yes, I'm referring to exclamation marks, all caps and our beloved emojis. Finally, listening is about connecting to the other person with your heart. This is a higher level of listening and goes beyond surface level conversation. Empathetic listening is about putting yourself in the other person's shoes, seeing the world from their perspective. Listening with your heart takes more time and attention and is only used in specific situations. Let's say, for example, that when Brenda discusses our editing deadline with me through email, I start bringing up totally different project deadlines that conflict. Since Brenda's a good communicator, she will instantly recommend we get on a call so she can assess the situation. She would ask me what else is on my plate and paraphrase what she hears. She would ask me clarifying questions to better understand my perspective. It will definitely take more time for Brenda to listen with her heart but in the long run, it will make our communication more effective and build more trust in our relationship. Intentional listening happens on many levels and it's a critical part of the communication puzzle. Brenda and I have a whole course in this library on effective listening skills if you want to explore the topic further. Now that you know the four building blocks of an effective communication process, let's put it into action in some actual work situations.

### When you socialize in professional settings
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- Many of our viewers tell us that socializing in professional settings left them feeling a bit awkward or uncomfortable. Yet working lunches, moments before meetings and water cooler chats are a great opportunity to build rapport and cultivate trust. A Harvard Business Review article measuring likeability versus strength in leaders has this great quote. "Before people decide what they think of your message, "they decide what they think of you." Here are some tips that work well and help you exude warmth and confidence. Smile authentically. A genuine smile involves a considerable amount of facial muscles compared to a polite grimace. Stand or sit tall. Strong posture and a steady gaze tell everyone around you that you are competent. Minimize fidgeting. Stillness means calmness. Practice being quiet with your gestures and your face. You want to be expressive, but don't overdo it. Mine for connections. When you don't know the person you're trying to connect with, talk about the external environment like the weather, a current event, or a common context that you're in together, like striking up a conversation with a stranger in the airport shuttle that doesn't have heat or air conditioning. If you know the person better, initiate conversation with something a little bit more personal. Whatever your topic choice, keep your comments positive. It's tempting to make small talk by griping about a recent management decision or another colleague. It's easy to commiserate on negative situations, but it's never a good idea to build rapport on that foundation. Move the conversation away from surface level topics by asking some open-ended questions and get the person to talk about himself. - Hey Jake, how was the game last night? - Hey, I can barely walk today, but it went well. - Are you competing next weekend? - You know, we're not sure yet. - We're waiting for the announcement later today. - Well, you guys have been doing awesome this season. I have a feeling you'll win next week. - (chuckles) Thanks. We will see. - Nice, Amanda built rapport very well. Now in the toolkit video up next, I'll share some practical exercises that you can use to sharpen your socializing skills.

### Tool kit: Social settings
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- Let's begin with what I call neutral context drills. Next time you're traveling through an airport, you want to find someone sitting close by with whom you share something in common. Maybe it's the same briefcase, it's a sports team logo, or the same watch. If appropriate, make eye contact and give a greeting. Make a comment about the item you have in common. Your goal is to use the common item to create rapport. If the person is responding positively, continue the conversation about the common item, and then switch to another open-ended question. See if you can maintain the conversation for two to three minutes. Now, practice this drill each time you travel, or when you are in a social setting. Let's move on to workplace context drills. Go to your next meeting, committed to ignoring your phone or tablet, or other electronics, and instead, tune into the people. Make a point to ask an open-ended question to the person to your right. Do this for three consecutive meetings. Keep the conversation light. Ask open-ended questions and encourage the other person to talk. Practice your open gestures, stance and non-verbals. Practice your listening interjections, those ahas and yeah, and stay attentive with your eyes. Finally, we'll focus on drills you can use in other professional contexts. At the next professional conference or meeting you attend, find three people you haven't met before and try to connect with them. At first, comment on the environment, maybe the keynote speaker, or the news piece related to your industry. Follow up with open-ended questions about them or their work. Practice repeating their names a few times or ask them something about their name. Think of a visual, a verbal reminder to help you retain that name. After your conversation, make a note in your context so you can follow up with them later. If you are watching this and you were born after the mid 1990s, you might feel more proficient with electronic communication than with those face-to-face dealings, but being comfortable in social settings takes practice. Use these drills to build new communication habits that will propel you in the workplace.

### When you run meetings
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- Have you ever calculated the cost of your meetings? Using Harvard's meeting calculator and average salary estimates for IT professionals, a one-hour meeting with just four people will cost your organization around $300. We need to make the most of every second during our meetings. Let's watch Amanda facilitate a meeting with her team. As you watch, consider what she could change to make her meeting more effective. - Hello? - Hi, Lydia, is that you? - \[Lydia\] Yeah. Hi Amanda. - Okay, now that we have Lydia on the line, I think we can get started. So today we need to do a review of the civic center project and start figuring out how we can get caught up on our work for the VP. So the civic center project. We hit all of our internal and external deadlines. We have the client feedback now and it's all within the range we like to see. So we did fine on this one, but I don't think that's the case for the VP. Well, I can't really think of anything else, so moving on. Let's take a deeper look at the feedback from the civic center. - Are we almost done here? I've got a call in five minutes. - Oh yeah. Yeah, we can finish this next week. I'll see everybody then. - \[Lydia\] Okay. Bye everybody. - Oh, thanks Lydia. - Bye, Lydia. - Well, what did you notice? Amanda started off well with a clear agenda. She stated what they needed to do in today's meeting, but she could have sent the agenda in advance to give people time to think before sharing ideas. A smart agenda is specific about how people can best prepare for the meeting. For example, you might change after action review to plan to share three things that went well and three things that we could have done better on the project, 10 minutes. Adding that estimated time for each agenda item will help people mentally prepare. Teleoanticipation is a biological process for pacing oneself. Migrating birds use it to make sure they have enough energy to get to warmer places, and it's how athletes pace to finish a long run. Your meeting attendees also need to be able to pace their attention and energy exertion during a meeting, but no amount of pacing makes a two-hour meeting effective. Keep meetings at 60 to 90 minutes max by including only agenda items that require discussion. Basic update information can be handled in a different channel, like email or weekly briefs. So Amanda could have prepped a bit better but did you also notice that she was the one doing most of the talking? When you run a meeting, you want to stimulate discussion. Here are a few tips: prepare for your meetings by writing out the questions you will ask rather than the content you plan to share. When you ask a great question, allow some silence so people have time to think. Second, monitor participation so everyone has a chance to talk. Don't forget your virtual participants like Amanda did. Check in periodically with teleconference attendees. Three, demonstrate that you're listening by paraphrasing the content and emotion when others share. Finally, you can generate great discussion by paying attention to nonverbal cues. Do people look confused, frustrated or like they have a thought? Respond to those nonverbal cues to encourage the fullest participation. Let's watch Amanda to see her practice some of these great facilitation skills. - Okay. Let's shift gears. What could we have done even better? Jake, do you have a thought? - Well, we had a two-week gap in the last program plan. We had just had some good momentum going and bam, right back to square one. - Thanks Jake. So you're frustrated by the timeline, right? - Yeah, I mean, I know that we created the timeline but I'd like to see us moving forward, avoid these gaps. - Good, thanks. Lydia, I don't want to put you on the spot, but I do want to give you the floor if you have anything that you wanted to add. - Amanda is doing a much better job by functioning as a true meeting facilitator rather than dominating as a content expert. In the meetings toolkit you'll create an action plan to improve the meetings you lead.

### Tool kit: Meetings
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- It's time for a quick self-evaluation of your meeting facilitation skills. Which of the following actions are you consistent about doing? Those are your strengths, keep them up. Also, identify three new behaviors that would help you run more effective meetings. These new actions might happen before the meeting even takes place. For example, you could send an agenda with ways people can prepare and a timeframe for each item, or you could spend time planning the questions you will ask to spark a great discussion. If you have remote attendees, schedule meeting times that accommodate them, or at least rotate the times, so no one has to be the person that's always up in the middle of the night. Now during your meeting, ensure that everyone participates. Your new action could be to ask a great question and then wait in silence for people to share ideas. Or hold the floor for people if others try to interrupt. For example, "John, what are your ideas?" And then wait in silence. If someone interrupts say, "Hold that thought, please. I'd love to hear from John." Is your new action item to pay more attention to non-verbal cues and be responsive? For example, "John, did you want to say something?" or "Carlos, it looks as though maybe you disagree. I'd like to hear your thoughts." Demonstrate good listening by summarizing periodically in your own words. Your new action items might be to save the last five minutes of the meeting for an after action review. Ask the team to evaluate what went well in this meeting, what could be improved for the next meeting. Summarize decisions made and who will do what by when. And of course, manage time, so you finish when scheduled. After your meeting, do you send out a short reminder of who said they would do what by when? If not, that can be one of your new facilitator tactics. Okay you should have your three new action items. Go into your calendar and find your next five scheduled meetings. Add a note right on those calendar appointments, reminding you of your three new meeting behaviors. Run your meetings like a pro, and watch your team productivity and satisfaction skyrocket.

### When you send emails
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- Annabel Acton, a Forbes contributor, said she likes her email like her dentist visits, short, to the point and only when necessary. I think that's a great way to approach email, especially given that office workers on average receive 200 emails a day, or spend 2 1/2 hours a day on email. Let's talk about some best practices for writing emails that get action. When crafting an email, begin by thinking of the action you need the reader to take, make sure that action request ends up being in your first or second sentence. If no action is necessary, think twice about whether this person really needs the email. Amanda, a project manager, drafted this email to her team. She wrote. - \[Amanda\] The activity report was started in the '90s by our president Renee Momper as a way of collecting and aligning activities happening in the various units. It's since been revised to include updates on departmental activities as well. These reports are used by our managers during. - Yada, yada, yada. As a reader, how long did it take you to start tuning out? Not long, right? Amanda needs to begin with one short sentence that captures the most important aspect of this email. Something like. - \[Amanda\] Your activity report is mandatory and due this Wednesday. - This is the bottom line message of interest to the reader. Then in her next sentence, she should make the action request. She wants people to complete that report and this is her chance to make the action easy for the reader to take. Rather than forcing the reader to search through multiple forwarded emails as if searching for lost treasure, she writes. - \[Amanda\] Download the report of this address, activityreport.net. Complete and email it to me by noon on Wednesday. - Now the action is clear and easy to take. Save all the other details for after the action request, and be particular about how many details to include. Do you think Amanda's reader cares who started a report in the '90s or how it has changed over the years? Doubtful. Amanda revises to this, these reports are used by our managers during our performance evaluations. We've trimmed down this monster of a message to just 39 words now. Conciseness for the win. But Amanda isn't ready to hit send just yet. She also needs to edit for tone and accuracy. Amanda decides to soften her message without sacrificing conciseness and clarity. She changes one pronoun, your to our, one adjective, she deletes mandatory, and adds a please. Voila, the tone is now direct, but polite. - \[Amanda\] Our required activity reports are due this Wednesday. - Please download the report. Don't forget to proofread. Proofing may slow you down a bit, but it's worth it to protect your credibility. To be a great proofreader, adjust your mindset so that you want to find errors. When we're eager to hit send, our minds skim right over mistakes. Make it a game that you won't send your email until you find at least one error to fix. Go through your draft a few times, looking for something different in each read. The first reading could be for grammar, and just grammar. Next read is for numerical accuracy. Third read could be for spelling of names. Use spell and grammar check, but don't be dependent on them. A Baltimore news channel that accidentally labeled a video with the Prince of Wales, W-A-L-E-S, as the Prince of Whales, W-H-A-L-E-S, would be the first to remind us that spell check is helpful, but still misses a lot.

### When you are explaining
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- Washing machines are simple, right? Pick the size of the load, the water temperature, and use the self-explanatory compartment for the soap. Ah, the power of simplicity. Yet, how did my teenage kids manage to skip steps, overload the machine, or end up with tie dyed socks that used to be white? I think the responsibility falls on my shoulders. Both of the children may have made a mistake because my directions were not complete or didn't meet them where they were at as a learner. In this next clip, Amanda too struggles to teach Jake how to embed a video into a PowerPoint deck. Let's listen in. - So I want to show you how to embed video files to use during client presentations. - I just use the live site. - Well, this is probably better. So first you choose the slide that you want the video in, then you go to the tool bar and click the video icon. - Wait, I don't have a video icon. - Yes you do, here, let me show you. Okay, you're in the wrong toolbar. So from here, you just scroll through the files of the prompt and select the video that you want to use. The only tricky part is the video file type, but MP4, ABI, almost anything really will be fine. So not really an issue there. Make sense? - I guess. - All right, good deal. Holler if you need anything. - Hmm. I'm not convinced Jake is ever going to be able to embed a video file. When you're explaining a task or teaching someone, try these best practices. Determine process or product. Does it matter how someone does a task or just that they get to the final product you need? Decide this and explain to your learner which is most important. Place actions into buckets. Our brains operate well when we think and receive information in patterns. Master mind mapper, Philippe Packu, has published a popular graphic showing the many story titles, flag colors, company logos, and game descriptions that exists in sets of three. Three seems to be a magical retention number. When you explain the task, consider lumping steps into about three buckets. Amanda could have helped Jake with before, during, and after categories. What he needed to do before setting up the embedded file; then the steps for embedding it, during; and finally, the steps for testing it, after. Placing actions into buckets makes them easier to follow. Flex to the need of your learner. Is your learner a big picture person or is your learner more of a step-by-step detailed person? Depending on the activity, you may want to show the final product in use. For example, Jake might need to see the customer watching the embedded video during the presentation. Someone else might need a set of written instructions or what to do before, during, and after they embed the file. In other cases, the person may understand better if you create a short video tutorial. Know your learner. Follow the what, why, how logic. Many learners need to understand the why before they try to process the how. A good investment in the why will yield buy-in to the how. In Jake's case, Amanda didn't do a good job discussing the rationale for using embedded videos. Maybe embedded videos keep the client from jumping ahead and getting distracted, or prevent technical glitches during presentations. Whatever the reason Amanda bypassed the why, she tells Jake what needs to happen and jumps to the how. Honor the process and tell your learner why the task matters. Let the learner show and tell. After you demonstrate a process, ask the learner to show and tell back to you. Avoid the temptation to grab the mouse or jump in and correct when they are explaining their thinking. Learners need to practice in a safe environment that you create. Don't cheat them of that experience. Want some help applying these skills to your daily life? Look at the explaining toolkit in this course, and you'll find three different activities designed to help you master the art of teaching others a task.

### Tool kit: Explanations
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- Here are three different activities to help you become a better teacher in your job. To learn about learning styles, here's our learning style exercise. Pick three to four coworkers to teach how to make your favorite meal. Find out how they process information first. Ask each, "Do you need to see a picture of the final product? Do you prefer a step-by-step recipe? Do you need a list of ingredients first?" From this information, identify the big picture people and the step-by-step people. How would you teach each group how to cook the meal? Make a list of your instructions. Share it with them and get their feedback. In our second activity, you can work on breaking down a process. Now, think of a process that your team members do often. List all of the steps that need to happen from start to finish. Break that list into separate buckets. Is there a before, during, and after? Is there a in the office, from home, and onsite bucket? Consider visual supports you can provide with your instructions. For example, when this is done correctly, it looks like this. Would a video tutorial be helpful? Show your compartmentalized lists to a colleague who is unfamiliar with the process and watch them follow the instructions without verbal coaching. You may need to take notes on the changes you think will make the task easier to follow. Finally, share the what, why, how exercise. Think of something you will need to explain to others in the next week or two. Write down a clear what in one sentence. Try to capture the big picture. Now, make a list of three reasons why this is a good idea and why this task matters. Then proceed to the how, the buckets, and the steps involved. Practice this with a friend before you share it in a meeting. Ask your friends to paraphrase back what they have heard. Do you need to make any changes to your process before you share? When you're giving instructions, meet people where they are. Find out how they learn. Place steps into buckets, provide support materials, and share the why behind a process. You will get better buy-in and faster learning in action.

### When you pitch ideas
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- You may not be in sales as your actual profession, but we all have times when we need to pitch an idea and get the approval of others. Our communication building blocks from chapter one guide our influential attempts. First, think about the people whose approval you need, and what's in it for them to agree. If you can't think of a single way in which your listener benefits from your idea, you may need to rethink your plan. People first in every pitch. Consider the decision-making style of the person you're trying to influence. Is she more of an analytical thinker type, who makes decisions by processing data and bottom-line results? Or is this someone who is more emotional, and makes decisions by processing the effects on people? Head or heart? Thinker or Feeler? Your Thinker needs evidence, facts, comparisons, and benchmarks. The heart decision maker needs to make sure people will benefit, values will be honored, and harmony upheld. Then, consider your message. A great pattern of organization when pitching an idea is the what, why, and how. Immediately overview what your suggestion is. Then give two to three compelling reasons why your idea is a good one. Back up those reasons with solid evidence, statistics, voice of the customer, case studies, data, specific examples. Make sure these reasons are aligned with the values and the priorities of your decision maker. Finally, explain to your decision maker how your idea will be implemented. Prove feasibility. What, why, how. Here's how you could influence someone to add an additional rep to an account, assuming you know the person you're speaking to tends to be a heart processor. It's best to start with what your suggestion is, and you could say something like this. - \[Voiceover\] I need one additional rep to run point on this campaign with me. - After you explain your suggestion, explain why your idea is smart and support ideas with evidence. You can say something like this. - \[Voiceover\] We calculated that the social components alone are going to take 200 to 250 staffing hours. That's too much for one person. - Now it's time to speak to the heart. Talk about what's in it for the client by saying: - \[Voiceover\] The client loves the work that we've done before, and I want to protect our reputation and the client's loyalty. - Finally, explain how your idea will work. You can say: - \[Voiceover\] I realize this adds significant costs, so I've been looking at ways we can adjust the budget. Can I get your thoughts on some suggestions I have? - And that's how you use the what, why, how pattern. When we influence, we also want to consider the Context building block. Think carefully about your timing and location and history with the decision makers. Timing matters when you try to influence. An influence is just not one isolated message. It's a campaign. Talk to your decision makers multiple times, with slightly different messages each time. Perhaps you begin by dropping some subtle seeds, working up to a suggestion, and then, eventually, a full-on request for action or resources. Influence is a campaign. Finally, remember our Listening building block? Train yourself to ask questions, talk less, and listen to deeply understand the needs of those we're trying to influence. The best pitches aren't just making a sale or getting your way, but they are about truly making life better for someone else.

### Tool kit: Pitch new ideas
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- We have three activities for you to enhance your influential skills. Number one, nothing happens in a vacuum. To get ideas approved and projects accomplished, you need people who are in different circles in your personal and professional life. My former student and current music industry executive calls this the power list. Let's start with a power 20 list. Here's how it works. List four of your professional networks that you utilize. Consider the networks you depend on when you need to ask for information or advice. For each of these four networks, think of five people who are essential to the power of your network. Not necessarily people that you have a personal connection with, but people who you've met and want to stay in contact with. Next, develop a networking code. Make an effort to reach out to everyone on this list at least once a month. Any form of contact counts, texting, calling, email. Create a tracking system, whatever works to help you stay organized. Make a simple visual to allow a quick scan of your professional network. Now here's another activity. Take out your mobile phone and look at the last 10 numbers that you dialed. Think of topics that require you to influence each of these 10 people. My mom is on my last 10 dials, and I need to convince her to use her swimming pool access pass that I bought for her. Now, you write out 10 names, your influence goal, and what's in it for them, their incentive. What's in it for my mom? She'll stay healthy. Now write head or heart decision-maker and see if that changes your incentive statement. For example, knowing my mom is a heart decision-maker, maybe I'll change her value proposition to, Hey mom, you'll get to see friends at the pool. Finally, consider your timing. When will you be talking again to this person? What are your campaign steps? What will you bring up and when? Here's your last activity, it's a fun way to practice your pitching skills. Imagine you need to sell a teapot to a flight attendant. I know, crazy, but practice your what, why and how format and include incentives for the flight attendant to buy the teapot. Now, imagine selling the same teapot to a Sumo wrestler. How do you change your what, why and how? What's the new incentive for the wrestler? Now, try finding some random objects sitting around, it could be anything. Convince a friend or colleague to purchase one of these items. Practice your what, why, how format. Make sure you back up your reasons with evidence and tailor your pitch to that specific friend. Once you've done that, try selling the same object to someone else and note how your approach has changed. Get feedback from them. What would you have done differently? The purpose of this exercise is to get more comfortable with the what, why, how format. Once you've done that, the pattern is yours and you'll be ready to pitch like a pro.

### When you're asking for something
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- Want to go to a great conference? You'll need to ask. Need a new computer? Time to ask. Our work lives are filled with opportunities to ask for what we need. And yet for many of our viewers, advocating for themselves is tough. Women tend to ask for things they need even less often than men do. Linda Babcock, in her book "Women Don't Ask," shares numerous studies about this, but one really sticks out to me. We have a group of grad students who have the same degree, the same qualifications, and who have been taught the same negotiation strategies. When they went on the job market, 57% of the men negotiated their starting salary. Only 7% of women did. How can we, men and women alike, become better at making requests? First, use the skills from the video on pitching ideas in this course to make a great case that your request is a good idea. Then, when it's time to actually ask for what you need, be direct, don't beat around the bush or be too vague. Imagine asking your boss for additional resources by saying something like, "We want to make sure that this project is successful "and gets plenty of attention, okay?" We haven't really asked for anything. Be sure to state the action you need clearly and directly. Create a sense of urgency in your request so the decision maker doesn't back-burner your idea. Make the next steps obvious and easy for the decision maker. I love it when students ask me for a recommendation letter and have already sketched out a rough draft of what the letter might say. They make my job so easy that I'm more inclined to say yes. Here's how you could ask someone for additional resources on a project. To state the desired action, you could say something like, "I'd like one additional rep to run point "on this campaign with me." To make the next step easy, say something like this. "I'm hoping you can identify someone on the team "with tons of digital media background, "and I'll then schedule a meeting "to bring the new person up to speed." Then finally, to create urgency you could say, "We have great momentum going. "So it would be best to bring someone in yet this week. "Are you good with this?" Now that you've seen the three keys to a great ask in practice, remember these tips in your daily life: be direct about the action you want, create urgency or a reason to act soon, and make the next steps for your decision maker as easy as possible. Want some practice opportunities? Check out the toolkit on making an ask.

### Tool kit: Making an ask
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- If we are going to request things we want and need, we have to get over our inhibitions about asking. We need to face the fact that we might get rejected, but learn to ask anyway. No isn't the end of the world. So here's your toolkit assignment. Spend the next 30 straight days asking for some low-stakes, unimportant thing every single day. On Monday, maybe you order something that isn't on the menu. On Tuesday, ask a friend to give you a lift to work. Throw in a few crazy requests that are bound to get a no just to get comfortable with the idea of rejection. Walk into your local gas station and ask for a discount. You're going to get laughed at, but so what? You're training your brain to ask. Kick this exercise up a notch by asking a friend to play along. Share what your request was each day. The accountability will help you stick to it when the asking gets tough. After a month of practice, let's ask for something that really does matter to you. When you're ready, keep these two things in mind. Many of us are much better at asking for other people. So first, imagine that your request isn't for you, but for someone you care deeply about. Listen to how you would ask on their behalf and use some of that language in your real request. Second, remind yourself that if you never ask, you'll never know. Find us on LinkedIn and drop us a note about your experience. We love hearing your successful request stories.

### When you're caught off guard
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- Have you been caught so off guard that you didn't know what to say? The professionals we surveyed as we prepared for this course, ranked this as a top challenging communication situation to manage. When Jake asks Amanda for additional resources on a project, she feels caught off guard and is not prepared to cope. Let's watch what happens. - Hey. I'd like to speak to you about something important. - \[Amanda\] Sure. - I would like to bring on an additional rep to the new account. So I'm hoping that you can identify somebody with a ton of digital media experience. And then I'll set up an appointment to meet with the person to get them up to speed. How does that sound? - Why? I mean, don't you think we can handle it? This will blow our budget completely. - It's tough to know how to respond when you're caught off guard. Jake's requests pushes Amanda to re-scope her budget and her team. She needs these three steps to help her manage the unpleasantness and formulate a better response. Buy time and acknowledge the situation. Say something like, "This is catching me off guard. "Give me until the end of the day to consider." Or buy some time on the spot with some questions. "Tell me a little bit more about your idea. "I want to understand." Calm yourself, take a deep breath, possibly look away momentarily to try and focus your thoughts. Exhale deeply. All these behaviors will help you bring your elevated heart rate down and physically center you. Use a response formula. If you have to respond immediately, use this pattern to focus your thoughts. What I do know, what I don't know and how I will find out. Here's Amanda responding to Jake using these three tips. - Hey, I'd like to speak to you about something important. - Sure. - So I would like to add an additional rep to the Vibe account, what are your thoughts? - Well, I know how important the campaign is and that we have ramped up social media. I need to know a little bit more about your expectation for adding an additional rep. What responsibilities did you have in mind for this person? - Well, we need somebody to run the social media so I can stay focused on the overall strategy and the brand alignment. - At this point, I don't know what the exact hour requirement will be. I can talk to Carlos who can help estimate the time involved. Let me get back to you tomorrow. - Sure. Thanks. - Like Amanda, when you're caught off guard, you can turn an uncomfortable situation by calming yourself, buying some time and using the turnkey formula that projects your transparency and your credibility.

### Tool kit: When you're caught off guard
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- Here's some everyday opportunities to practice handling caught off guard situations. Practice buying time. Here's some common scenarios you could use for practice. Tell someone you need to call them back when they stop by your desk and interrupt your work. Or when someone comes to your office making a request say, I need to think on this, then follow up after thinking about it for a bit. When the waiter comes in the restaurant to take your order, buy some time and ask them to come back. All of these everyday opportunities are ones to help you practice buying time. Practice calming yourself down. Your commute is a good time to do this. When you feel anxious and impatient, take a moment and focus on your breath. Focus on one visual cue and take five deep full breaths. Bring your heartbeat down and stop your brain from bouncing around on a hundred different topics. The better you get at doing this, the better you will be at calming yourself when you get caught off guard. Work the what I know, what I don't know and how I will find out formula. This formula suggests you ask yourself three simple questions when you're caught off guard. One, what do I know? Two, what information am I missing? And three, what could I do to find out more. Practice the formula before you get caught off guard. So for example, when you're in a meeting listening to questions that are asked of other people, imagine yourself trying to answer. Begin with what you do know about the subject, move to what you don't know about the question, and then explain how you would find the answers. As another example, imagine your boss rushing into your office, questioning your latest expenditure. Quickly think of what can you recall about this expense? What you're not sure about, maybe the type of payment, the exact vendor or details on the order and say what you can do to track down more details. So when you're caught off guard, buy yourself some time, calm yourself down and respond with what you know, what you don't know and what you will do to find out.

### When you're criticized
Selecting transcript lines in this section will navigate to timestamp in the video
- You've spent weeks working on a proposal and your client shoots it down. Your boss isn't happy with your performance and let's you know. in this video, we'll look at approaches to use when people push back on our ideas or criticize our work. We'll focus on how we can stand up for ourselves without sounding defensive. First, check your own listening bias. Ask yourself, "Are my mental filters or assumptions creating defensiveness?" Here's an example. I'm driving at rush hour with my husband we're in gridlock traffic and he says, (sighs) "I knew we should've taken the bypass." Now I might react with "Well, how was I supposed to know? Besides, did you think to look at the traffic app before we left?" This response demonstrates a classic intent-impact gap. His intention was simply to commiserate with me about the traffic. My interpretation of his intent is that he blames me for choosing a bad route. So depersonalize and assume positive intent. Second, give yourself time to ponder criticism. A student told me that an assignment I gave was a pointless waste of time. Well, that was hard to hear, but I recognize that the student was frustrated, maybe didn't see the bigger picture or maybe he was right. I needed time to think. So rather than defend or accept as truth, I simply said, "Thank you for the feedback." That's it. Often, all you need to do is say, "Thank you." If you want to say more than thank you, demonstrate empathy. You can also ask questions. Along with recognizing my student's frustration. I could add, "Please tell me what you had hoped to learn and how did this assignment miss the mark for you?" Next, I love the suggestion from Mark Goulston in a "Harvard Business Review" article, to ignore your first two thoughts. The first one is likely to be defensive and the second one is likely to be accusatory. Lead with the third thing that comes to mind because by then, you're focused on problem solving. Do you remember my first response when stuck in traffic? "How was I supposed to know?" That's defensive. My second response, "Did you think to look at the traffic app before we left?" Accusatory, trying to shift blame. My thing third thought and the one I should lead with focuses on solving the problem. Something like, "Is there an alternate route we can take?" Finally, try using, yes and, in conversations when you feel defensive. Yes and, is a tried and true improv comedy trick that allows the conversation to move forward. Let's imagine that Jake criticizes Amanda's resource allocation on a project, He thinks they should have at least one more rep on the team. Amanda resists the urge to personalize this, even though her first thought might be "Well, doesn't he think we can handle this on our own?" She ignores that. Her second thought might be "Well, he's just being lazy and needs to step up." But again, she resists this accusatory thought. Instead, her productive conversation goes something like this. - Amanda, your estimate on time spent on this project is way off and we cannot begin to meet the client's expectation without an additional rep. - Thanks for bringing this to me, Jake, can you tell me a little bit more about your reasoning? - Yeah, we've added a whole lot more channels for this campaign and I would feel a whole lot more confident if we had additional support. - So you're concerned that with the new social media ad we'll need to add an additional rep to cover all of our bases. - Exactly. I mean, that makes sense, right? - Yes, and I want to make sure that we stay focused and on budget. - Use, yes and, to move toward a solution. Now you have the basic dos and don'ts for standing up for yourself without sounding defensive. Let's try them out in the toolkit.

### Tool kit: Criticism at work
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- To move ourselves away from defensive responses when we face criticism or pushback, let's practice writing both defensive and effective responses. Comparing the two will help us to always land on the right response. Let's imagine you're a recruiter, and at the board meeting, one member says to you, "You've only filled 85% of the open positions this quarter." What would a defensive response sound like? Pause the video and think of your reply if you were to miss the mark. Did your defensive response sounds something like I'm doing the best I can. I've tried this and that. Or maybe you said, well, if you would approve better salaries, I could make stronger offers. Those are defensive and accusatory. What would your excellent communication reply sound like? Try to express gratitude for the feedback. Use empathy. Try, yes and. Okay, pause and give it your best shot. How did this one go? Your board member said you've only filled 85% of the open spots. Did you say something like yes and I know how frustrating that is to all of us. I'd like to revisit the idea of aligning our salaries with the market. To round out our toolkit, think of the last three times you faced criticism or pushback. Write out a defensive response that I hope you avoided and write out a response that integrates our techniques. Assume positive intent, express gratitude for feedback, empathize and use yes and to move toward a solution. Responding to criticism is delicate. Practice saying your responses out loud to a trusted friend so that you strike just the right wording and tone. Good luck.

### When you are presenting up
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- When we coach our clients to present to executives, we know that they have a lot on the line. C-Suite or executive audiences have unique expectations. In this following example, Jake is presenting in front of the executive committee. Think of how you would coach Jake to improve. - Hey everyone and thanks for your time, I would like to discuss the Vibe account. Now Vibe is a new brand that has been capturing over 20% of the market, which is a pretty incredible number given the competitiveness of this industry. When we first started to represent Vibe, the data wasn't giving us the insight necessary, but over the last four years, our our campaigns have allowed them to... - Jake, we get the reports, why are we even here? - I know that you know this, but I'm trying to paint a picture as to where we've come from and where we are today - Okay. - So as you can see they've grown and they want us to handle their social media. - But do they want a new feature? Or and who's even running the account? - Yes. And we need a new account rep' so I'm here to get the approval. - Now, let's critique Jake's C-Suite effort. He was prepared and polite. However, when you present up, consider the strategies for communication success. Know your audience. Executives hear a lot of information and make tough, quick decisions. Plan your presentation by asking these questions. What are their pain points around the topic? How much do they know about the topic? What are their core values? Have they had a history with this topic? Jake underestimated the knowledge level of his audience and he frustrated them by covering things they already knew. Next, lead with your conclusion. When you present up, your suggestion or key idea should be spoken within the first 60 to 90 seconds of your presentation. If you design your presentation, like Jake did, giving lots of exposition before you get to your findings and your recommendation, you've lost your audience and their approval. Get to the point succinctly. Introduce your topic with SCQA. Former McKinsey consultant Barbara Minto developed The Minto Pyramid Principle, which always opens a presentation with this effective SCQA sequence. S, what's the current situation? C, what complication has created a problem or an opportunity? Q, what's the one key question that needs to be addressed? And A, what's the answer to that question? This answer is your recommendation. If you follow the SCQA sequence, your introduction will be brief. And your audience will know your direction from the very beginning. If Jake had used SCQA, his introduction would be something like this. - Thank you for your time, as you know, we've been representing Vibe for a number of years now and their campaigns. Vibe is our top client, and this particular campaign is our greatest one yet. Now the social media that we've been incorporating, although it's been extremely exciting, is also labor intensive. So I'd like to know, and giving them the best social media and keeping our costs down, I want to put it out on the table as to bringing a representative in. - Jake appeared far more effective in this version, didn't he? Like Jake, you'll want to lead with a conclusion and introduce your topic with SCQA. Next, go for the forest. Whenever you're presenting to executives, focus on the big picture. We call that the forest, rather than the minute details, the trees. Executives don't want to get tangled in the details. But be prepared to dive deep, if you're asked. We coach professionals to present an idea and just a few slides, and then have a few dozen others in an appendix. Finally, expect to be grilled. The C-Suite is known for tough questions. Executives won't wait patiently at the end of your presentation and then ask questions, plan to be interrupted often. Be prepared, answer concisely, and redirect back to your main theme. I remember coaching a chief financial officer to speak on a controversial topic to her board and the media. We embedded all her graphs with hyperlinked slides for the hostile questions we anticipated. One by one the questions came in, while she called walked behind the keyboard, clicked on the screen and revealed the spreadsheet with the key number the audience member was looking for. If you prepare 100% for your presentation, prepare 200% for the questions. So remember, when you're presenting to executives, lead with a conclusion, use SCQA, go for the big picture and expect to be grilled.

### Tool kit: Presenting up
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- In this toolkit, you'll find activities designed to help you get your C-suite presentations off to a great start and prepare for whatever comes your way during these high stakes meetings. The first thing is to create an SCQA introduction for your next persuasive attempt. What is the current situation? What's the complication? What is the key question you'll be answering in your presentation? And what is that answer or your recommendation? Plan for tough questions. Meet with a colleague, review your main points and ask for three tough questions that the intended audience might ask. Repeat this three times with additional colleagues. Prepare for your questions that have come up by creating a slide for each answer. Either hyperlink to the corresponding slide with the information, or create a supporting handout to share with your audience when the question comes up. Plan for curve balls. Before you deliver your next presentation to executives, imagine this scenario and prepare for them. You're in the elevator with a key decision maker who was supposed to attend your presentation later on that day. She says, "I can't make your presentation this afternoon. Can you give me the general idea?" Summarize your entire presentation in two to three sentences. Or what if the executive says, "I've had a change in travel plans, can you please take me to the airport and give me the rundown on the way?" What do you do? No visuals, no handouts. Your presentation becomes a conversation while you drive. Write down some points to prepare for this scenario. Or what if you start the presentation and the projector shuts down? No light, no power, no problem. Now how would you proceed? Make some notes and changes to prepare for this possible scenario. What if you start your presentation, but the key decision maker isn't physically present, but has joined in by phone? What would you do? Are you prepared to juggle the virtual audience that has no notes and cannot see the visuals? Practice explaining your visuals in one sentence in case you need to say, I'm showing the group this and, et cetera, et cetera. Now don't laugh, we share these scenarios with you because they have all happened to our clients. Being prepared will assure your success with all your C-level presentations.

### Practicing your communication every day
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- As the Oracle of Omaha, Warren Buffett, said to a group of students, communication improves the value you bring to your company and your own personal brand. We designed this course to be applicable to your everyday workplace communication situations, the ordinary ones and the challenging ones. We hope you'll reach out to us on LinkedIn to share ways you've applied the content in your daily life. Both Tatiana and I have had a great time putting this content together and sharing it with you. We hope you found it helpful, and will strive to be an excellent communicator.