



# **Preparing for the Modern Workplace**

(c) 2018 Gates Matthew Stoner

# Agenda

- **Triaging inflow**
- **Channel Selection**
- **Encoding effective messages**



**It doesn't have  
to be scary**



# You have a message...

- To Respond or Not Respond that is the question.....
- And how
- And when

**Not responding is  
a response**

**~ Jonathan Carroll**



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# OODA Loop

- **Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act**
- Developed by the US Military
- OODA loop is a decision process for assessing incoming information and making decisions



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# Message Triage



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# Message Triage



- Scan for messages
  - from clients, boss, or coworkers needing immediate attention
  - subjects you have been tracking
  - unusual/unexpected needing attention



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# Message Triage

- React with care
- Pause for emotional reactions
- Reread/Listen for key points
- Act or Delegate



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# Message Triage

- Automation doesn't eliminate need for actively reviewing message inflow
- Rules for deciding and acting
  - David Allen 2 minute rule
- Rules for filtering
  - Sort by projects, people, and priorities



# Message Triage

- Rules for filtering
  - Sort by projects, people, and priorities
- Rules for deciding and acting
- Automation doesn't eliminate need for actively reviewing

Message inflow



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# Message Triage



Handled



Read Later



Pending  
Requests



Requiring Response





# Message Triage

- Don't become a slave to your incoming messages
- Set time aside for message checking
- Illusion of productivity when only responding to messages

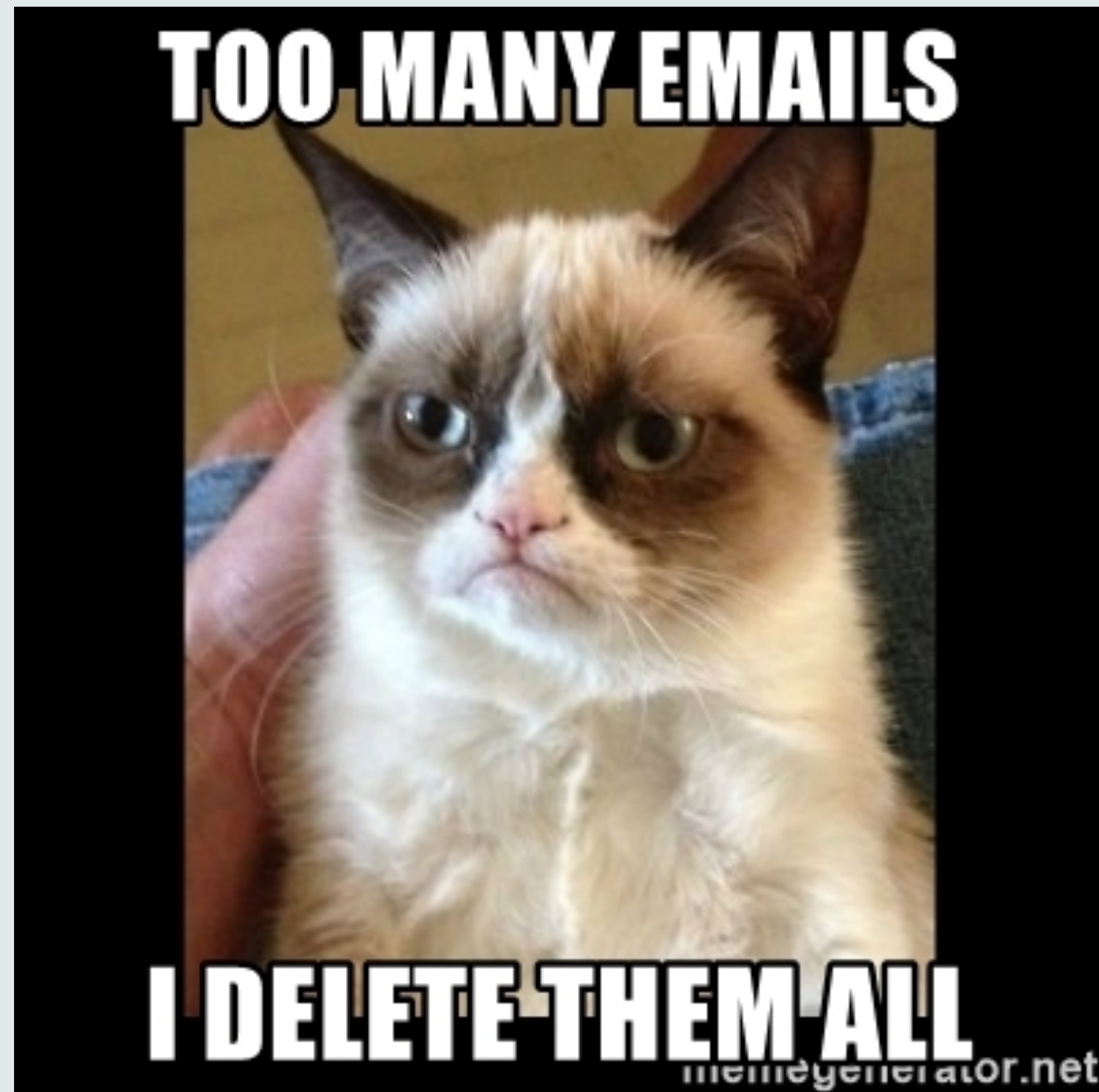


# Message Triage

- Don't be distracted by incoming alerts (badge icons, sound prompts, etc)
- Avoid checking messages in non-work hours
- Setup rules to elevate priority messages to get your attention without regularly checking



# Message Triage



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# Message Triage

- Limit time sucking messages
- Beware of messages masking themselves as ‘urgent’
- Route non-important messages to accounts and folders you check less frequently
- Don’t use work channels for non-work related mailing lists, etc



# What is inbox zero?



*A process system to  
manage your inflows  
from ridiculous to zero*

# Principles

- Process to zero
- Convert to actions
- More than checking, less than responding



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# Cost-Benefit

- Up front costs to regain control of your inbox
- Long term benefit to better inflow management
- Increased productivity
- Less difficulty finding important messages



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# Processing

- Delete
- Delegate
- Respond
- Defer
- Do



# Delete

- Read/Listen once and if you don't need it delete it
- Such as
  - Thank you
  - Acknowledgements
  - Mass Messages





# Delegate



- Delegate anything that shouldn't be requiring attention
- If needed, file the message in a folder to follow-up on with whoever you delegated the action



# Respond

- If you can respond quickly, do so
  - Merlin Mann defines quickly as less than 5 minutes
  - David Allen 2 minute rule



# Defer



- Create a folder called Requiring Response to store messages you need to respond at a later date
- This way all those messages are in the same place rather than a long list in your inbox
- After responding, you can move them out of the Requiring Response folder to Handled

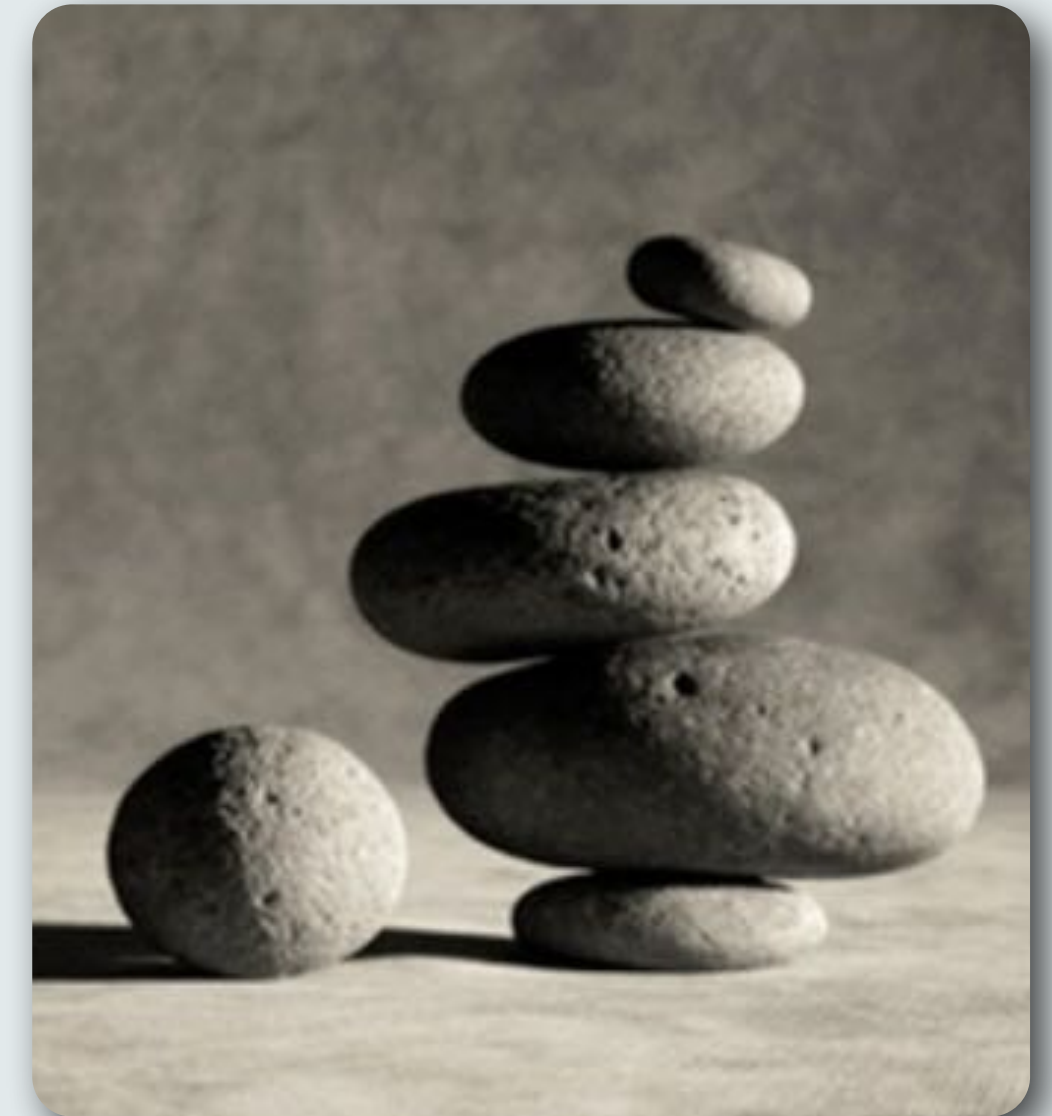


# Do

- A mantra of In Box Zero is ***Do and Move on.***

Convert message into action, process and do what is needed. Then move onto the next message.

- This could be Read/Listen
  - and File
  - and Delete
  - and Reply





# Channel Selection



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# Channel Selection

- Channel switching versus maintaining
- Recipient preferences
- Generational differences
- Possibility for misunderstandings
- Need for documentation/record keeping
- Channel advantages/disadvantages



# Face to Face



- Physical co-presence facilitates more nonverbal channels for feedback
- Possibility for clarification and reducing uncertainty



- Channel overload
- Environmental distractions
- Does not eliminate possibility for misunderstandings



# Email



- Message planning capacity
- Degree of formality/informality
- Record keeping



- Delayed receiver processing
- Message reception not guaranteed
- Poor wording -> misunderstandings





# Phone



- Real time feedback
- Less nonverbal “noise” compared to FtF and Video-Mediated
- Voice cues are information rich in addition to message text



- Turn-taking cues
- Local sensory distractions
- More onerous record keeping



# Video Mediated



- Appearance cues useful for non-acquainted communicators
- Information sharing not possible by words alone
- Possibility for clarification and reducing uncertainty



- Cognitive distractions from technology
- Technical issues/quality



# Text-based



- Between synchronous and asynchronous
- Short messages and possible misunderstandings



- Wording conventions not universally known
- Degree of formality
- Sending not equal Read



# Channel Selection

- **Legal issues**
  - Discovery
  - Privacy
  - Termination



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# Channel Selection

- **Project Management**
  - Internal v External
  - Record keeping requirements
  - Messaging purpose
  - Timing requirements



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# Message Encoding



# Formulating messages

- **Encoding** is an internal activity in which verbal and nonverbal behaviors are selected and arranged according to rules of grammar and syntax applicable to the language being used to create a message







# Effective Encoding

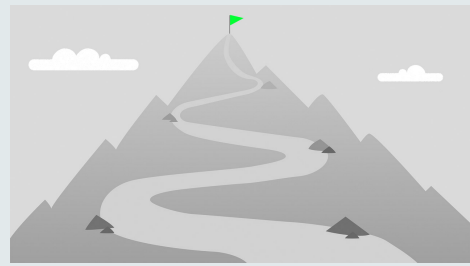
*Channel  
Selection*

*Conveys  
intentions*

*Tailored for  
recipient/s*

*Lacks Ambiguity*

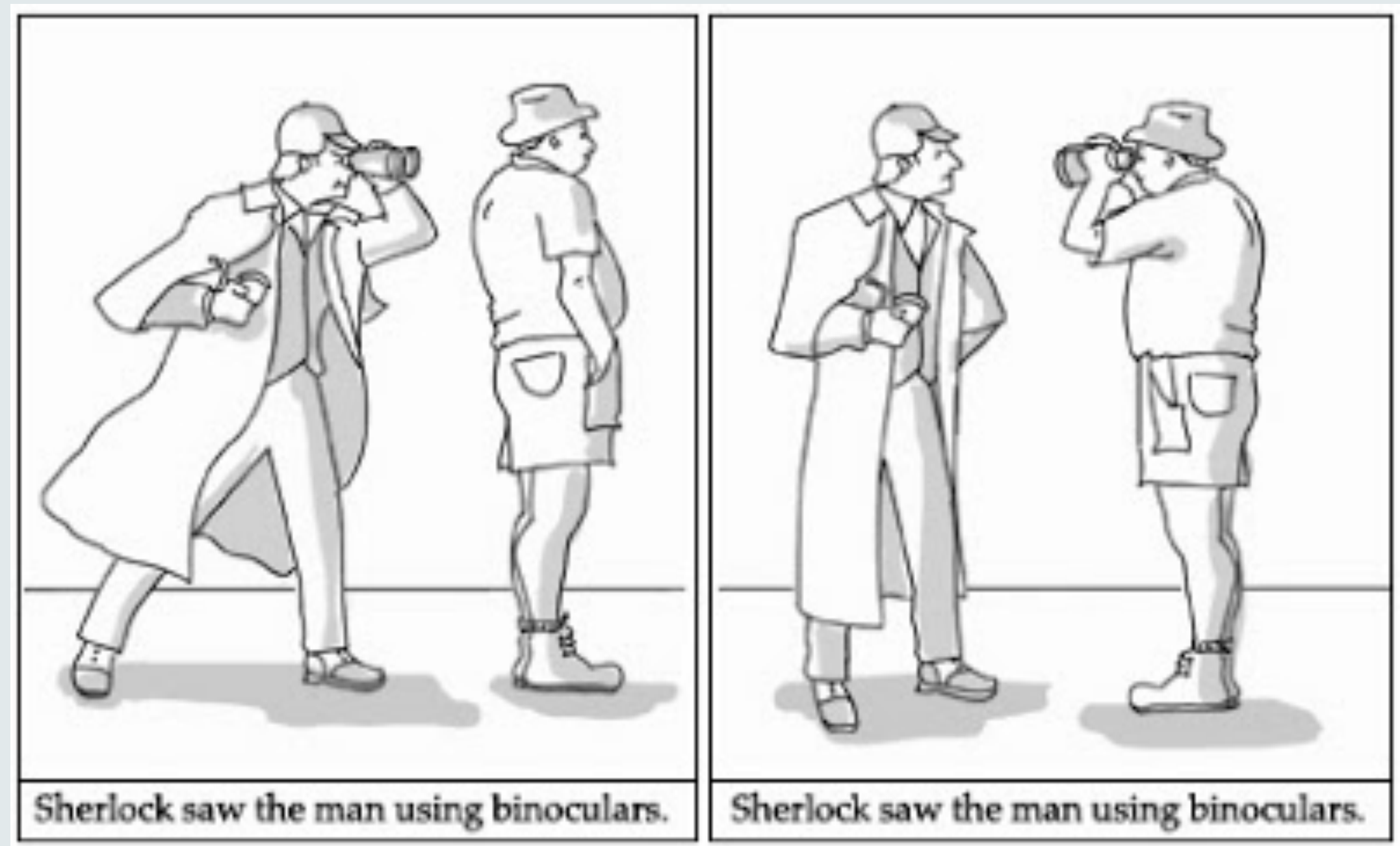




# Effective Encoding

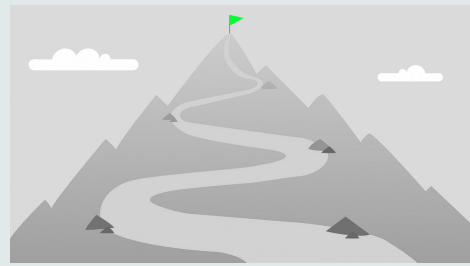
## *Lacks Ambiguity*

- Beware of jargon and unknown terms
- Passive



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# Effective Encoding

## *Lacks Ambiguity*

- Business communication is not flirting\*

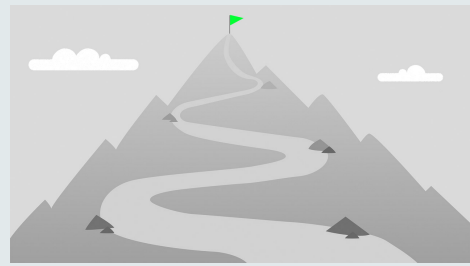
*(side note, directness might be more effective than flirting in social situations)*

- Be direct, not nuanced
- Word/Language selection
- Active voice, not passive voice



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# Effective Encoding

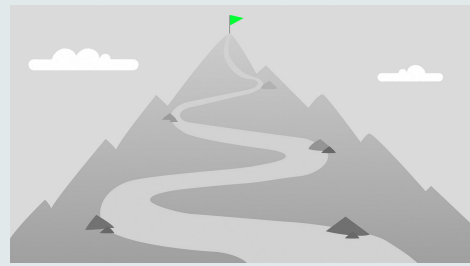
## *Tailored for recipient*

- Recipients are not universally the same (age, communication styles, channel preferences )
- Not all recipients have the same background knowledge on a topic
- Individual versus Mass distributed messages



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# Effective Encoding

## *Conveys intentions*

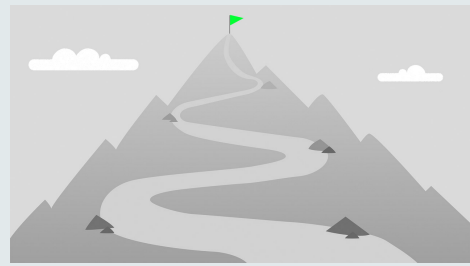
- Seek to minimize decoding errors
- Articulate idea/goal/proposal assertively
- Minimize noise with too much wordiness/non-important information



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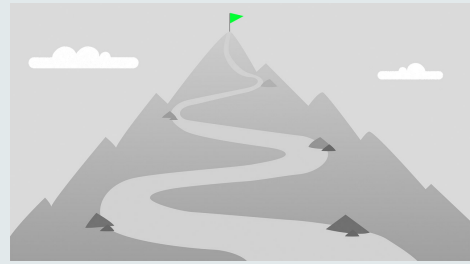


# Effective Encoding

## *Channel Selection*

- Channel switching versus maintaining based on
  - Topic (project update v HR issue)
  - Recipient/s
  - Channel options
  - Channel structural affordances





# Effective Encoding

## *Channel Selection*

- Take away - communication channels all have advantages and disadvantages for their selection and use. The key is to be aware of their differences and make encoding decisions on the channel to best help you to achieve your purpose without ambiguity.

