

# Communication Skills For ~~Dummies~~ Engineers

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# Hi, I'm J.

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<https://github.com/jonathantower/communication-skills-for-engineers>

# If You Give \$50, So Will I!

## **bit.ly/water-ccc**

*"charity:water is a non-profit organization that provides clean and safe drinking water to people in developing nations. The organization was founded in 2006 and has helped fund 22,936 projects in 24 countries, benefiting over 4.6 million people." - Wikipedia*

*"4/4 Stars"  
- CharityNavigator.org*



charity: water

# Summary

1. Model of Communication
2. Basic Communication Tips
3. Listening
4. Diversity
5. Communication Media
6. Tools
7. Ideas Further Action

# **\*\*Disclaimer**

Far from a perfect communicator  
Learned a lot the hard way  
Me presenting this session



How Do You Identify An Outgoing Programmer?

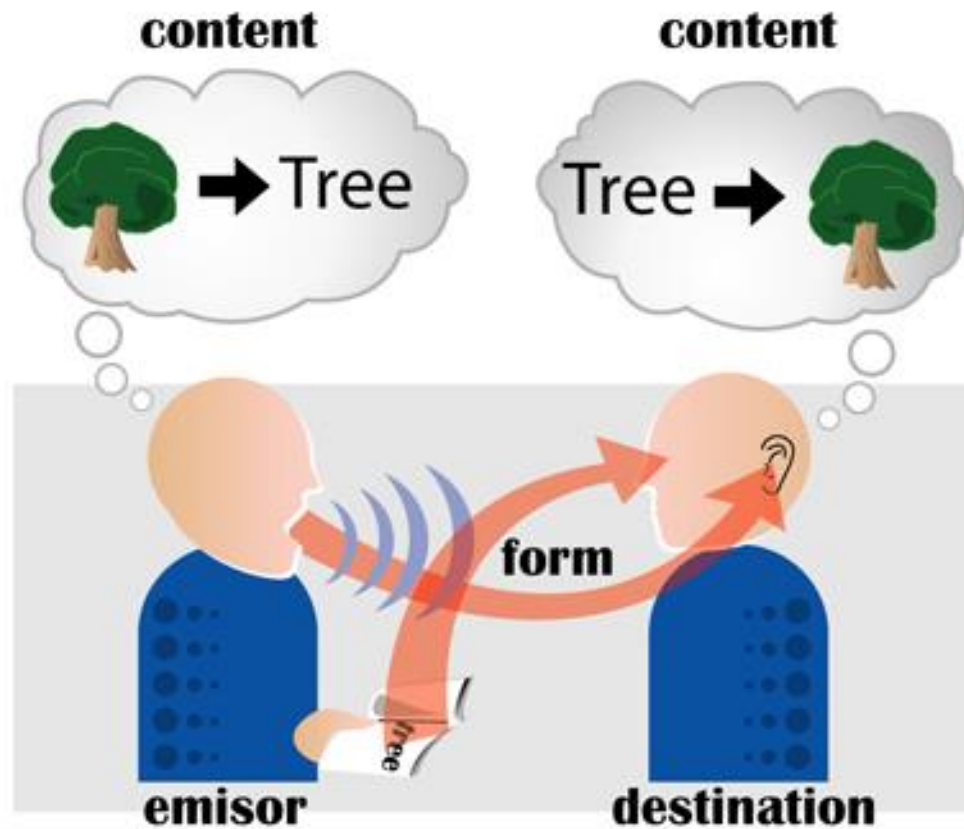




# How Do You Identify An Outgoing Programmer?

They stare at *YOUR* shoes when they talk to you.

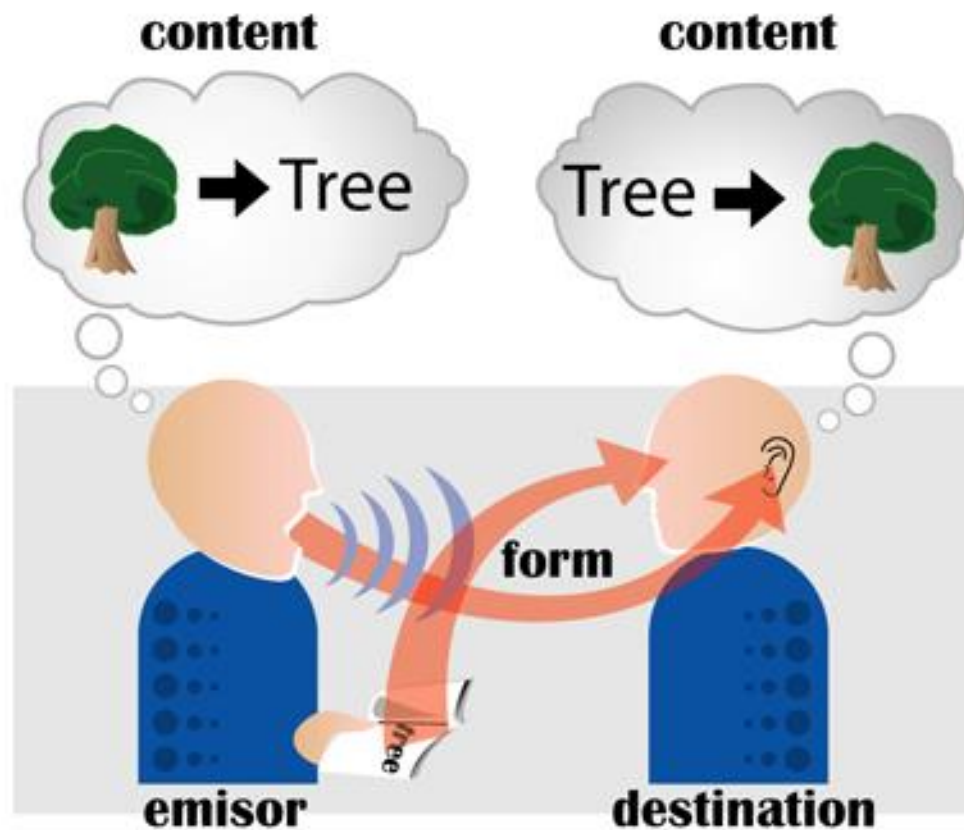
# Model of Human Communication



1. Idea
2. Encoded
3. Transmitted
4. Decoded
5. Idea



# Model of Human Communication



1. Idea
2. Encoded
3. Transmitted
4. Decoded
5. Idea

**PROBLEMS**

**IDEA  $\neq$  IDEA**

# Basic Communication Tips

# Be Precise

Include enough details

Don't assume someone knows

# Be Concise

Don't ramble

Don't repeat yourself

Remember your audience

The art of the executive summary

# Use Nonverbal Communication

Not just IQ, develop your EQ

Crossed arms

Eye-contact



# Use the “Yes, and...” Rule

# Assume the Best

# Listen!

"Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

- Steven Covey

70-80% of waking hours in communication, of that

9% writing

16% reading

30% speaking

45% listening

<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/CM150>

# Active & Reflective Listening

# Reflective Listening

1. Focus and eliminate distraction
2. Embracing the speaker's perspective without necessarily agreeing
3. Mirroring mood and tone
4. Summarize what was said in your own words



# Active Listening

1. Pay Attention
2. Show That You're Listening
3. Provide Feedback
4. Defer Judgment
5. Respond Appropriately

# 1. Pay Attention

Undivided attention

Acknowledge the message

Recognize non-verbal communication

Eye-contact

Put aside distracting thoughts

Don't mentally prepare a rebuttal

Avoid being distracted by environmental factors

## 2. Show That You're Listening

Use body language to convey your attention

Nod occasionally

Smile and use other facial expressions

Open posture

Comments like yes, and uh huh.

# 3. Provide Feedback

As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said.

May require you to reflect and ask questions.

Use paraphrasing

Ask clarifying questions

Summarize the speaker's comments

*Tip: If you find yourself responding emotionally to what someone said, say so, and ask for more information: "I may not be understanding you correctly, and I find myself taking what you said personally. What I thought you just said is XXX; is that what you meant?"*

## 4. Defer Judgment

Interrupting is a waste of time

Allow the speaker to finish a point before questions

Don't interrupt with counter arguments



# 5. Respond Appropriately

Use active listening

Be candid, open, and honest

Assert your opinions respectfully

Golden rule

# Communication and Diversity

# Gender

Over-generalizations are dangerous  
Some things are conditioned by culture  
Differences are not right/wrong  
Can be source of miscommunication

## **Giving Orders**

Softening demands or statements

## **Asking Questions**

Gathering Information vs showing interest

<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/he-said-she-said>

# Minority Groups

Empathy, empathy, empathy

Assume the best

Be curious rather than offended

Don't be defensive – assume you'll make mistakes

Remember there are different norms and mores

# Autism Spectrum

Don't take style personally

Be clear / tendency toward literal

Expect limited eye contact

Assume difficult past experiences

Don't condescend or talk down

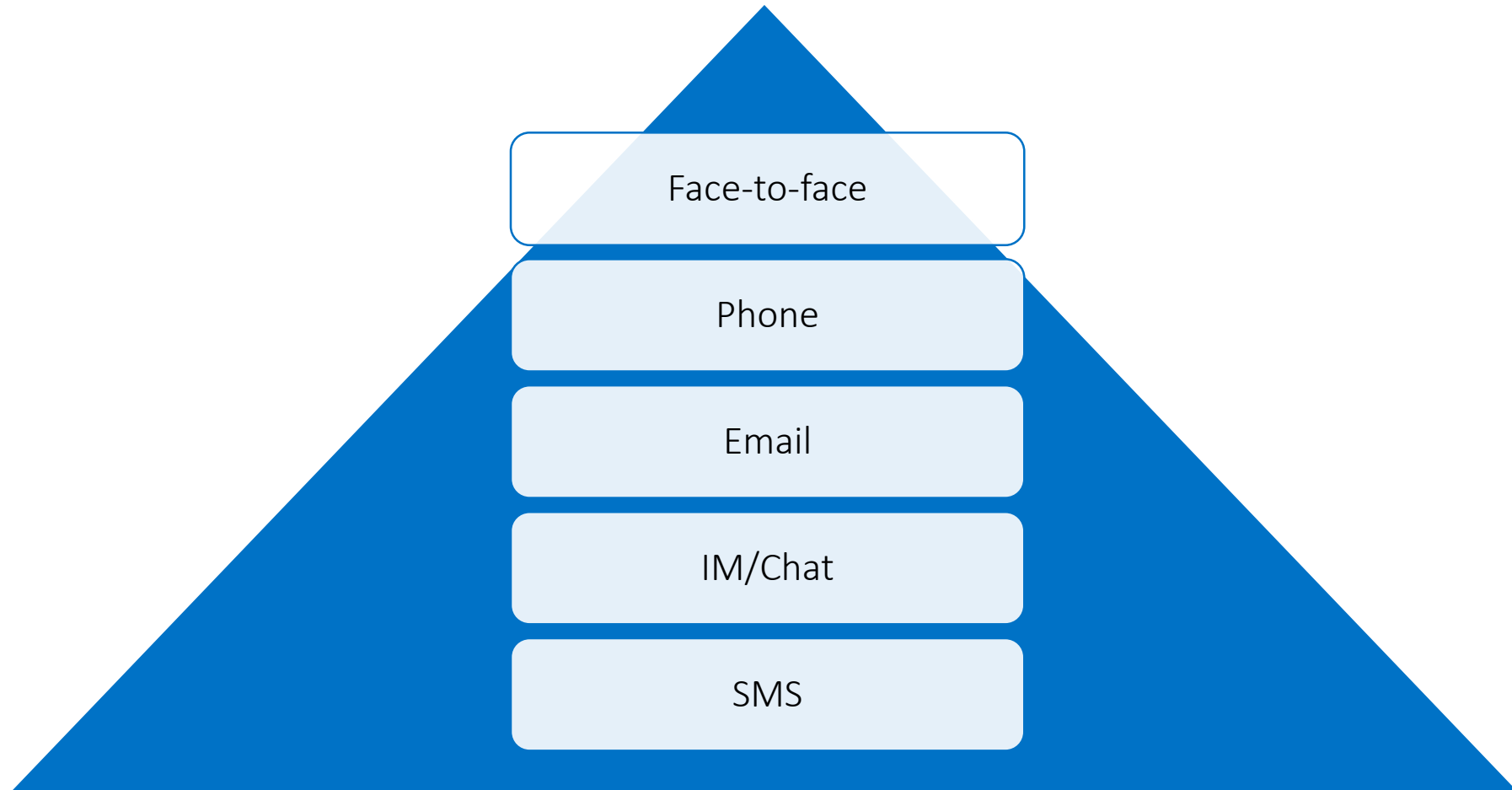
Avoid talking loudly or yelling

Don't touch without warning

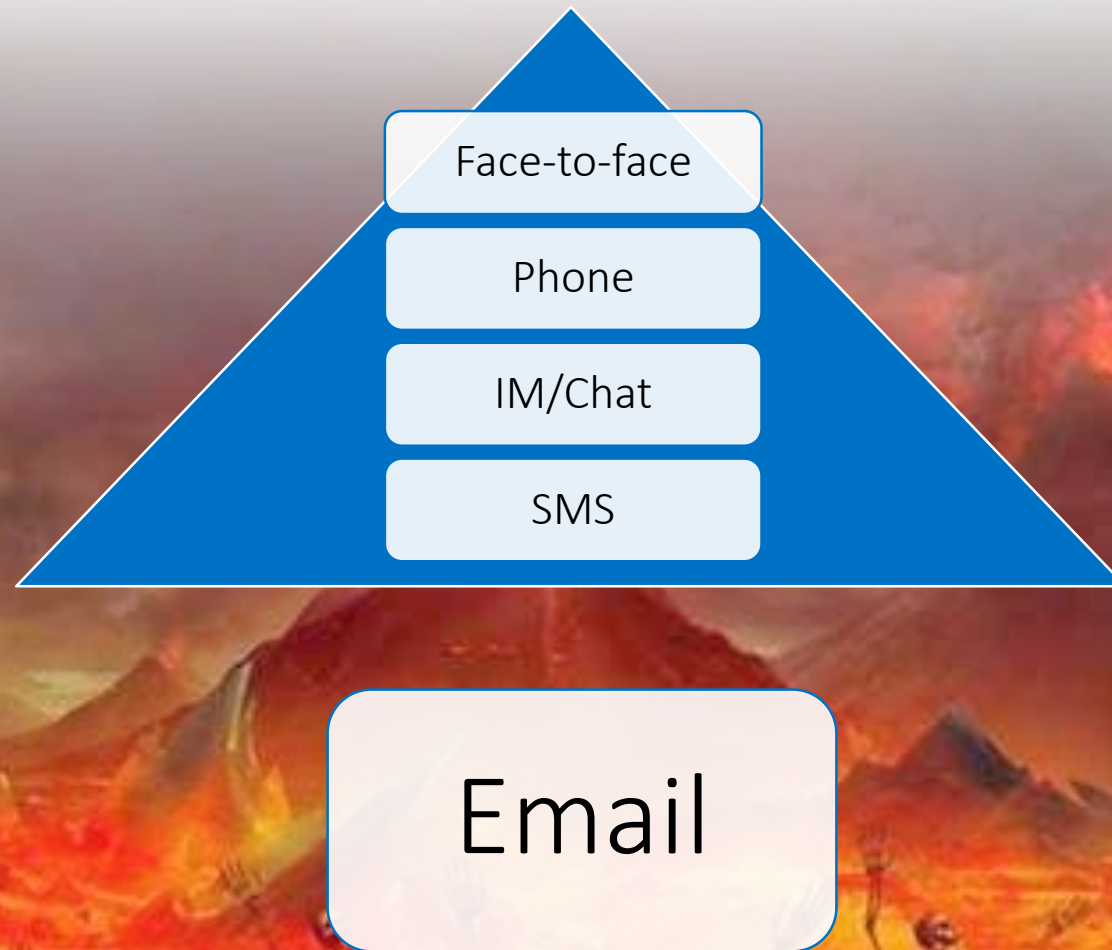


# Communication Media

# Communication Media



# Communication Media



# Face-to-Face

More trust

Richer communication (multiple channels)

Best way to resolve conflict

Often more creative and collaborative

Quicker back-and-forth

Tends to be single-threaded

# Some Face-to-Face Tips

Eye contact

"I feel..." statement

"Oh yeah? Well *MY* dad..."

Silence your brain while listening

Ask questions

# Phone

Includes some non-verbal communication information

Quicker back-and-forth

Tends to be single-threaded

# Some Phone Tips

Identify yourself

"Is now a good time to talk about..."

Plan ahead

Know what you want and keep it short

Know your relationship

Use oral cues (mmhmmm, yes, ok...)

# Email

Takes longer to compose sometimes

Most people get too much

Too easy to CC people for FYI

Good at capturing information for the record



# Some Email Tips

Don't write paragraphs, write lists

Keep it short and about one thing

Change the subject line to match

Don't CC/BCC people who aren't actively involved

Never send an email angry

Avoid addressing more than one person

Lead with your need

Use out-of-office

Review before sending

# IM/Chat

Quickest back-and-forth of electronic media

Can reduce focus and flow

Allows recipient to prioritize

Best at quick questions to unblock

# Some IM/Chat Tips

Greeting, showing interest

Best if you've already met

Abbreviations

NO bad news

Be patient

Be quick

Make it clear when you're done

# SMS

Slowest and most potentially disjointed

Greatest potential to interrupt

Good for after-hours attention

# Some SMS Tips

Get permission (4%)

Don't text off-hours unless necessary

Don't text when you're with others

Avoid complicated replies

Limited use of emojis, only to add non-verbal content

Limited abbreviations

Keep it professional

# Tools

# Unifying Platforms

Slack

Microsoft Teams

Basecamp

# Task Tracking

Jira

Trello

VSTS

Github



# Video Chat

Skype

Slack

Google Hangouts

Etc.

# Meeting

GoToMeeting

Join.me

Skype for Business

WebEx

Etc

# Document Sharing

Dropbox

Onedrive

Google Drive

Etc

# Ideas for Further Action

Writing class, blogging to practice written communication

Improv, acting, speaking at conferences to practice spoken

Other (listening)

# Recap

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