

COMMUNICATE THE COMMUNICATION



Prime Point Srinivasan

PRIME POINT FOUNDATION

Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's Foreword for PreSense100

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
Former President of India



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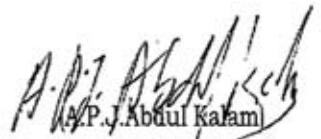
FOREWORD

I am very happy to know that the PreSense monthly ezine published by Prime Point Foundation is bringing out a book based on some of the unique articles, interviews and events published in its editions so far since from March 2006. The 100 issues of the publication have gone through an eventful journey, focusing on knowledge capture and important knowledge dissemination. I recollect my direct association with PreSense in July 2008, when I launched the cartoon character, 'Prince', created exclusively for PreSense.

I see PreSense continuing in its journey under the mentorship of Prime Point Srinivasan, maintaining its status as a must-read ezine, in the fast moving and evolving world of communication, knowledge and connectivity.

I congratulate the Editorial Team of PreSense for bringing out the 100th Edition as a Collector's Digest.

28th May 2015


(A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)

About Prime Point Foundation



**PRIME POINT
Foundation**

Prime Point Foundation, a Non-Profit Trust and NGO was founded in December 1999 by Shri K Srinivasan

(popularly known as Prime Point Srinivasan), a former Senior Banker and a Digital Journalist and Communication Professional, to promote leadership and communication skills among the youth. Very eminent persons are associated with the Foundation.

In the past 26 years, the Foundation has organised several seminars, workshops, training and interactive sessions, both offline and online, on various subjects of national interest. The Foundation manages various online discussion groups and podcasts on communication and digital journalism.

The Foundation has started 5 initiatives viz. eMagazine PreSense, Sansad Ratna Awards, Next Gen Political Leaders, Digital Journalists Association of India and Education Loan Task Force, to create awareness in various domains. All these initiatives are managed independently by passionate experts. These initiatives are non-commercial, and focussed on youth.

About eMagazine PreSense



PreSense: The eMagazine
PreSense was started in
March 2006 on the

suggestion of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam to promote positive journalism. Till July 2026, the Foundation has published 233 editions. Dr Abdul Kalam has written the foreword for the Digest of articles up to 100 editions. PreSense publishes the cartoon character Prince, which was launched by Dr Abdul Kalam in 2008.

COMMUNICATE THE COMMUNICATION



Prime Point Srinivasan
PRIME POINT FOUNDATION

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Introduction

Dedication



To **Lord Sri Krishna**, the Almighty, my eternal guide and strength. Like the flute that sings only through His touch, this book flows through His divine will. May it serve as an offering at His Feet and illuminate minds with wisdom and purpose.

🙏 Jai Shri Krishna! 🙏

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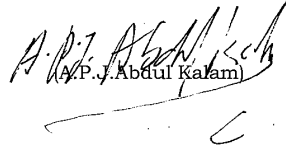
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Author's Profile



K. Srinivasan, popularly known as Prime Point Srinivasan, after serving the banking industry for more than 25 years, took voluntary retirement in 1998 to start his own public relations and communication consultancy.

He also founded Prime Point Foundation in 1999 for promoting communication awareness. On the suggestion of Dr Abdul Kalam, he started an eMagazine PreSense in 2006 for positive journalism and also Sansad Ratna Awards in 2010 to honour the outstanding Parliamentarians.

He founded other flagship initiatives like Digital Journalists Association of India (DiJAI) and Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL).

He is considered as one of the communication and perception management experts. He introduced the concept of Image Audit to study the hidden perception of stakeholders. He has authored several books and received several awards for his digital journalism.

Srinivasan can be reached at prpoint@gmail.com

Please also visit his site www.primepointfoundation.in

Prime Point Foundation: 26 Years of Empowering India's Youth



**PRIME POINT
Foundation**

Since 1999, Prime Point Foundation has been helping young Indians become better leaders and communicators. Founded by Shri K Srinivasan, a former banker turned digital journalist, this non-profit organisation has grown into one of India's most respected youth development platforms.

What We Do

The Foundation runs five key programmes that make a real difference:

eMagazine PreSense - Started in 2006 following Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's suggestion, this digital magazine promotes positive journalism. With 233 editions published till July 2026 and recognition from the India Book of Records, it includes the popular cartoon character Prince, which Dr Kalam himself launched in 2008.

Sansad Ratna Awards - Since 2010, these prestigious awards honour India's best-performing MPs and Parliamentary Committees. Dr Kalam inaugurated the first ceremony, and over 15 years, 143 Awards have been presented. The India Book of Records acknowledges this as the largest parliamentary award programme run by civil society.

Next Gen Political Leaders - This programme trains young people who want to enter politics, connecting them with experienced Ministers and MPs through workshops and mentoring sessions.

Education Loan Task Force - Helping students and families understand education loans since 2010. The team has answered over 30,000 questions and helped resolve 5,000 serious complaints with banks.

Digital Journalists Association of India - Training journalists to adapt to the digital age, including AI through workshops and seminars with industry experts.

All programmes are run by passionate volunteers and focus entirely on helping young people succeed. Prime Point Foundation proves that dedicated efforts can create lasting changes in Indian democracy and society.

Author's Note

A life shaped by communication

I spent the formative decades of my professional life serving a public sector bank. To those who knew me in that world, I was perhaps an unusual presence — because whilst I served the bank faithfully and with complete dedication, I was always, at heart, a communication person.

I recognised early in my career that the greatest professional challenge any organisation faces is not financial, not operational, and not even strategic. It is communicative. The ability to speak clearly, listen deeply, and build genuine trust between human beings — that is the engine upon which every other function runs. Get communication right, and almost everything else follows. Get it wrong, and no amount of technical brilliance or financial strength can save you.

This conviction shaped everything I did. It led me to set up a corporate communication department at the Zonal Office of my bank during 1988, three years before the initiative in Delhi — an initiative that was, at the time, ahead of its moment. It led me to work closely with senior management during one of the most difficult periods in the bank's history, when the institution was navigating a genuine crisis and needed, more than anything else, a steady, clear, and trustworthy voice. That experience — of managing

communication not in the comfortable calm of ordinary times, but in the heat and pressure of institutional crisis — taught me more about the true nature of human communication than any classroom ever could.

When I took voluntary retirement from the bank in 1998, to establish my own Public Relations and Communication consultancy, I carried those lessons with me. I had the privilege of serving a wide range of clients — among them Indian Bank and Anna University — and each assignment deepened my understanding of how communication, done with integrity and precision, can transform relationships, repair trust, and build lasting reputations.

But perhaps the most extraordinary chapter of my professional life was the period I served as the spokesperson for Shri Kanchi Sankaracharya Shri Jayendra Saraswathi Swamigal — one of the most revered spiritual leaders in India. In that role, I was present for national-level discussions of the deepest significance. I watched how language — chosen carefully, spoken at the right moment, in the right tone, to the right audience — could move institutions, change perceptions, and hold the attention of an entire nation. I spoke to the media on behalf of a dignitary whose every word carried enormous weight. The responsibility was immense. The education it provided was beyond measure.

The idea that never changed

Across all of these worlds — banking, consultancy, spiritual leadership, academia — I observed something that became, over time, the central conviction of my professional life.

Technology changes. Lifestyles change. The platforms through which we communicate change with breathtaking speed. The telegram gave way to the telephone. The telephone gave way to email. Email gave way to WhatsApp. WhatsApp is already giving way to platforms we have not yet named. Each of these transitions has been celebrated as a revolution, and in many ways, each one has been.

But here is what has not changed, and what I believe will never change: the human being on the other end of the message.

We are still the same creatures we have always been — hungry for respect, sensitive to tone, wounded by indifference, uplifted by genuine warmth, and capable of extraordinary things when we feel truly heard and understood. Our communication algorithm, as I have always told my students and my team, has not changed. We are dealing with human beings. We will always be dealing with human beings. And to communicate well with a human being, you must first understand what it means to be one.

That is the idea at the heart of this book. It is not about mastering any particular technology or platform. It is about mastering the timeless, irreducible, gloriously complicated art of connecting with another person — in a text message or a boardroom presentation, in a WhatsApp group or a Supreme Court argument, in a performance review or a press release.

To the next generation — this is written for you

I want to speak directly to the young professional reading these words.

You are, without question, the most technically capable generation in human history. You carry in your pocket a device more powerful than the computers that sent men to the moon. You can learn any skill, access any information, and connect with any person on earth within seconds. Your potential is, in the most literal sense, limitless.

And yet.

I have watched — across decades of mentoring, teaching, and working alongside young professionals — a quiet and deeply troubling erosion. Not of intelligence. Not of ambition. But of the human qualities that make intelligence and ambition worth anything at all.

I have watched brilliant young people send messages that are technically correct and humanly cold. I have watched them sit in rooms with exceptional senior professionals and

hear nothing, because they were already composing their response before the other person had finished speaking. I have watched them launch ten projects with great fanfare and abandon nine of them the moment the first difficulty arrived. I have watched them use words like "ASAP" and "soon" and "at the earliest" — words that feel like commitments but are, in truth, the language of avoidance.

I have watched them, in their understandable anxiety to appear global and modern, quietly distance themselves from the very cultural inheritance that is their greatest strength. They have forgotten — or perhaps were never taught — that India's freedom was not won in a day. That this nation's institutions were built brick by brick, stone by stone, by men and women who sacrificed everything they had so that we could live the lives we live today. That our traditions of respect for elders, of the Guru-Shishya bond, of seeking wisdom before asserting opinion — these are not relics of a lesser time. They are load-bearing walls. And when we remove them in our rush to appear contemporary, we do not become more modern. We become less grounded.

This book is my attempt to say these things — not as a lecture, not as a reprimand, but as a conversation. Twelve conversations, to be precise, with twelve remarkable professionals who have each lived these truths in their own fields and in their own ways. I hope you will read them not as the views of an older generation looking backward, but

as the hard-won wisdom of people who have walked the road you are about to travel, and who want nothing more than to see you walk it well.

You do not have to agree with everything in these pages. You do not have to accept every suggestion or adopt every framework. But I ask only this: read with an open mind. Resist, just for the duration of these twelve chapters, the instinct to dismiss the unfamiliar as irrelevant. Some of these ideas are two thousand years old. Some were born in a banking crisis in Delhi. Some emerged from a cup of coffee in Chennai on an ordinary afternoon.

All of them are offered with love.

On the making of this book

A book, like a human being, is never the product of a single mind.

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to Ramesh Sundaram, Joint Managing Editor of PreSense, whose meticulous editing and proofreading have brought a discipline and elegance to these pages that I could not have achieved alone. Ramesh is, in the truest sense of the word, a craftsman — a man who understands that the difference between a good sentence and a great one is often a single word, chosen or rejected with care. His contribution to this book is immeasurable, and his commitment to excellence has been a constant source of inspiration.

To R. Nurullah — journalist, author, Governing Council Member of the Sansad Ratna Awards, and one of the finest minds I have had the privilege of calling a close friend and brother — I owe more than this note can express. His insights on listening, attitude, and consistency, and his willingness to share the wisdom of fifty years in journalism, have given Chapter 11 its heart and its soul. His presence in this book, as in my life, is a gift I do not take lightly.

To Priyadharshni Rahul — Supreme Court Advocate and founder of Next Gen Political Leaders — whose sharp legal mind and warm personal generosity brought depth and dimension to our conversation on reputation and resilience. Her support throughout the making of this book has been both practical and deeply encouraging.

To Deepa Lenin — senior HR professional, author, and journalist — whose empathy, professional insight, and sustained encouragement have been a quiet but powerful force throughout this journey. Her perspective on the silent struggles of today's young professionals has shaped this book in ways that are visible on every page.

And to the eleven remarkable men and women — Sukruti, Sakthi, Deepa, Sridhar, Parthasarathy, Priyadharshni, Hemalatha, Ramesh, Suparna, Mohan, and Nurullah — who gave so generously of their time, their stories, and their wisdom to make these conversations what they are: this

book belongs as much to you as it does to me. You are its beating heart.

This book, in the most heartfelt sense, would not exist without Sukruti Narayanan — a Chennai girl now living in Sydney, Australia. For years, she insisted across our Zoom conversations that my nearly five decades of professional experience in communication deserved to be recorded for the benefit of the next generation. I am grateful to Sukruti for motivating me to write this book.

And with a full heart and folded hands, I offer my most humble pranams to Lord Sri Krishna — whom I have always regarded as the greatest Communication Strategist the world has ever known. On the battlefield of Kurukshetra, He did not win with force or command, but with words — words that became the Bhagavad Gita and have guided humanity for five thousand years. Every book I have written, I dedicate to Him. This one, a book about communication, feels the most fitting dedication of all.

Prime Point Srinivasan

Communicate the Communication

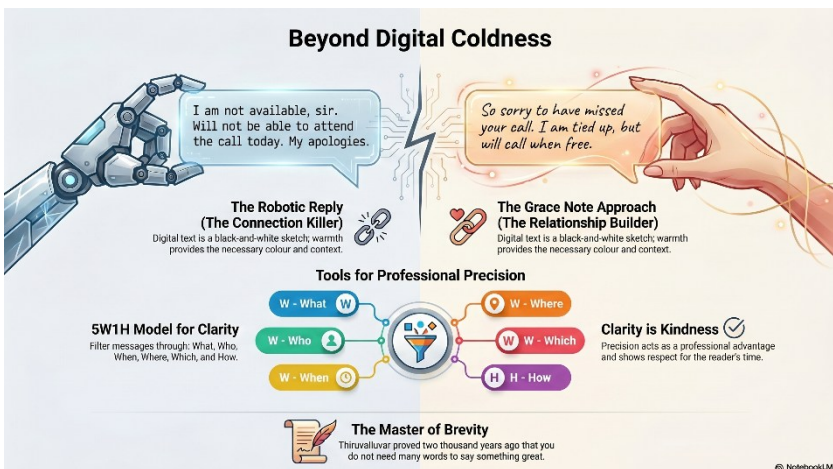
"Great communication is not a collection of techniques. It is a way of being — precise in your words, consistent in your commitments, humble in your listening, and honest in your relationships. When you communicate from that place, you do not just convey information. You build trust."

— **Prime Point Srinivasan**

Chapter 12

Chapter 1: Adding the Human Touch to Digital Messages

Modern messaging often sends facts but kills the human touch. Learn to use tone, the 5W1H model, and the power of brevity to build real professional impact.



The Case Study: A Lesson in Digital Coldness

It was a typical Tuesday afternoon in Chennai. The humid air felt still, and the clock seemed to move in slow motion. A young, well-educated professional was deep in her work when her phone buzzed. It was a call from me — someone she considered a senior mentor. She could not pick up at that moment. Shortly after, I sent her a simple text: "When you are free, please call me up."

Being busy, she fired off a quick, efficient reply. It was polite and technically correct. She hit send and went back to her work, feeling she had handled the situation well.

But had she?

This incident became the foundation for a profound lesson in communication. I recently discussed this case with Sukruti Narayanan. Sukruti is a remarkably multi-faceted professional based in Sydney. She is a well-known motivational speaker, a corporate professional, and an author of three books. Her diverse career also includes being a talented actor, a journalist, a popular TV personality, and an expert in Robotics and AI.

I shared the reply that young professional had sent to my phone:

"I am not available, sir. Will not be able to attend the call today. My apologies."

I read this to Sukruti and paused. "So, Sukruti," I asked, "what do you think of this message?"

Sukruti thought for a moment. "It is clear, Sir. She explains she is busy and offers an apology. The information is conveyed, isn't it?"

I nodded slowly. "The information was conveyed, Sukruti. But the connection was lost."

Hearing the Silence: The Problem with Digital Tone

"The issue," I explained, "is that in our race for efficiency, we often strip the soul out of our words. We remove the tone."

In person, our tone does the heavy lifting. Our voice, our facial expressions, and our eyes show our true meaning. However, a text or email is just a black-and-white sketch. The person reading it must fill in the colours based on their own mood or assumptions.

Think about the phrase: "How are you feeling?" Spoken softly with a smile, it shows genuine care. Spoken with a sneer, it becomes a sarcastic insult. Spoken in a low, flat voice, it can even feel like a threat.

"That professional meant to be respectful," I told Sukruti. "But without her voice, the text felt cold and abrupt. It created a small crack in our professional relationship where there should have been a bridge."

The Grace Note: Adding Warmth to Your Words

Sukruti asked, "How could she have sent the same information but made it feel better?"

"She didn't need to write a long essay," I laughed. "She just needed a grace note. In music, a grace note is a small extra note that adds beauty. In communication, it smoothens the message."

I showed her a better way to handle that text:

"So sorry to have missed your call, sir. I'm tied up in a meeting right now, but I will call you the moment I am free. If it is urgent, please feel free to text me."

This works because it acknowledges the other person first. It gives a simple reason for the delay and offers a clear, proactive plan for the next step.

"You must always know your audience," I reminded her. You must choose your words based on who is reading. A casual text to a friend is one thing, but a message to a senior leader or a client requires a higher level of care.

The Journalist's Tool: The 5W1H Model

"This is not just for short texts," I continued. "It is the cure for long, confusing emails too. In the professional world, clarity is kindness. To achieve this, we use a tool from journalism: The 5W1H Model."

Before you send any important message, check if you have clearly answered:

What is the main information or action required?

Who needs to be involved or informed?

When is the specific deadline or timeline?

Where will this take place (the location or digital platform)?

Which option or choice is preferred?

How should the next steps be carried out?

Applying 5W1H to a Multi-Faceted Career

"Sukruti, you manage a remarkable range of roles," I said. "As an actor, you study the nuances of human character. As a TV anchor and journalist, you seek the facts. As an AI and Robotics expert, you deal with complex logic. In every one of these fields, your success depends on how quickly you connect with your audience."

The 5W1H model is the perfect framework for someone as active as you. When you are preparing a keynote speech or a corporate presentation, this tool ensures your talk is not just a collection of thoughts. It tells your listeners exactly what the core point is, why it matters to them, and how they can use your insights immediately.

For a busy professional, this framework acts as a filter against clutter. It allows you to be comprehensive yet very brief, which is vital when you are balancing many different responsibilities. Instead of wandering, you get straight to the heart of the matter. In our fast-paced world, being precise is a major professional advantage. It shows you are a leader who respects other people's time.

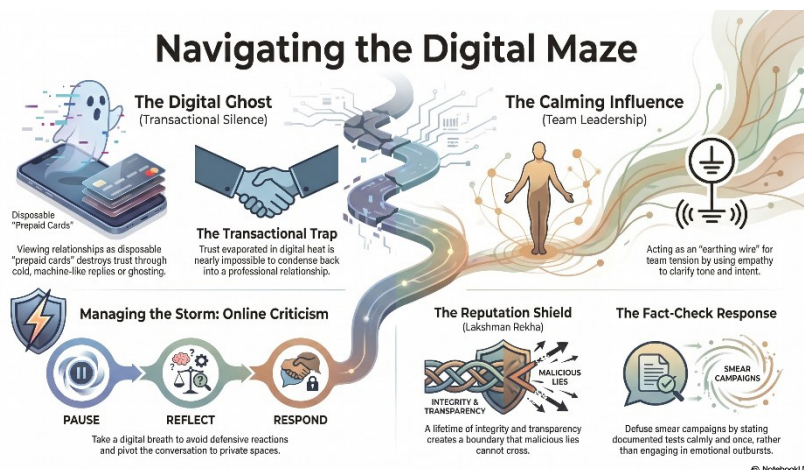
"The first master of brief messaging was not a modern tech CEO," I added with a smile. "It was the ancient Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar. Two thousand years ago, his Thirukural shared deep universal truths in very few characters. He proved you do not need many words to say something truly great."

Takeaway

- Add a Grace Note: Do not just send facts. Use a small phrase of warmth to keep the human connection alive.
- Use the 5W1H Framework: Test your emails and speeches against the What, Who, When, Where, Which, and How. This makes your communication clear and comprehensive.
- Respect the Reader's Time: Like Thiruvalluvar, aim for brevity. Clear, concise communication is the highest sign of professional respect.
- Know Your Audience: Adjust your tone based on your relationship. Never let a machine-like reply break a human bond.

Chapter 2: How to Manage Group Chats and Online Criticism

In our hyper-connected era, digital tools often create more distance than depth. Learn to master the unwritten rules of group chats, handle online criticism with grace, and build a lasting reputation.



The WhatsApp Tussle: A Case Study in Digital Friction

Last week, a friend of mine named Rohan, a project manager at a bustling tech firm in Bengaluru, shared a story that has become all too common in the Indian corporate landscape. His team was racing against a suffocating deadline. To keep the momentum going, they relied on their project WhatsApp

group — a non-stop stream of pings, data updates, and hurried instructions.

On a tense Tuesday evening, Rohan, feeling the weight of the delivery, sent a crisp message to the group: "We need the final reports on my desk by 9 AM sharp. No delays."

In his mind, he was being a direct and efficient leader. But in the digital ether, his words transformed. The vibrant flow of the group chat suddenly froze. A junior designer, usually the spark plug of the office, replied with a solitary, cold "Okay." Another team member sent a thumbs-up emoji that felt more like a white flag of surrender than a sign of agreement.

By nightfall, Rohan realised his "efficient" message had been branded as aggressive and distrustful. "I was just trying to be quick," he told me, his voice heavy with frustration. "How did it go so wrong? I spent the entire night sending individual patches to my team to smooth things over."

Rohan's story is a modern-day fable. We fire off words from our smartphones, stripped of our smiles and reassuring presence, and we hope for the best. But as I often say, hope is not a communication strategy.

The Digital Ghost and the Transactional Trap

I was reflecting on Rohan's predicament when I sat down for a coffee with Sakthi Prasanna. Sakthi is now a senior communication professional at a top multinational company, but twenty years ago, he was one of my brightest university students. Despite his high-flying career, he still reaches out

to discuss strategies, maintaining that traditional Indian bond of Guru-Shishya that I value so deeply.

"Sir," Sakthi began, "why has the digital space become such a minefield? Even with someone as experienced as Rohan, a simple text can unravel months of team morale."

I looked at him and nodded. "It is because we are communicating in a vacuum, Sakthi. We have adopted the tools of the future, but we have forgotten the timeless rules of human engagement. We are speaking more, but connecting less. Have you noticed the rise of the Digital Ghost?"

Sakthi sighed. "You mean ghosting? It's rampant, Sir. One moment a person is engaging with you, and the next — silence. No replies, no acknowledgments. It's like they've vanished."

"Exactly," I replied. "This stems from a dangerous, transactional mindset. In the corporate world, many now view relationships like a prepaid mobile card — useful only as long as there is a balance of utility. The moment a person gets what they want — a job lead, a piece of advice, or a connection — the other person becomes disposable. They forget that life is a cycle; the person you ignore today while you are in the clouds of success is the very person you may need when you return to the ground."

I shared a thought that always bothers me. "In India, we see people fighting passionately for the rights of street dogs, showering them with biscuits and affection. Yet, those same individuals often fail to show a tenth of that courtesy to a human being who once helped them. Trust, once evaporated

in the digital heat, is very hard to condense back into a relationship."

Standing Firm in the Storm of Online Opinions

"But Sir," Sakthi interjected, "what about the public stage? My team is often terrified of posting opinions on LinkedIn or X (formerly Twitter) because of the trolls. One post can invite a storm of negativity. How do we navigate that?"

I smiled, remembering an editorial I had recently written. "Sakthi, in a democracy, everyone has a sovereign right to differ with you. When you step onto a public platform, you are essentially walking into a town square. You must expect a few stones along with the flowers. The secret is not to wear yourself out trying to catch every stone."

I told him about an instance where a dear friend had sent me a scathing, lengthy email disagreeing with my political analysis.

"What was your rebuttal?" Sakthi asked, leaning forward.

"There was no rebuttal," I said simply. "I replied: 'Sir, that is my view, which I have published. You have every right to hold your views, and I respect them. Thank you very much.' Then, I immediately pivoted. I asked about his daughter's wedding and when he was next visiting Chennai. I chose the person over the point. When you argue online, the fire only grows. You have stated your view; you don't need to win a trophy in the comments section."

I explained to Sakthi that handled correctly, criticism is just feedback. I suggested a simple mental shift:

- The Trap: Immediately typing a defensive, heated reply.
- The Solution: Taking a digital breath. Do not reply instantly.
- The Pivot: Acknowledge their right to an opinion, and if they are a friend, move the conversation to a private, offline space.

Your Reputation: The Ultimate Digital Shield

Sakthi looked thoughtful. "That works for opinions, Sir. But what if it's a malicious attack? What if someone is spreading lies about my company or my personal integrity? A grace note won't stop a smear campaign."

His tone was serious, and so was my answer. "That requires a strategic shield, not a knee-jerk reaction. First, use the law of the land and the rules of the platform. Every digital space has a report button for a reason. If it is defamatory, hit it."

"Secondly," I continued, "provide a Fact-Check response. State the facts clearly, calmly, and once. A message like, 'The information in this post is inaccurate; the documented facts are as follows...' is far more lethal to a lie than an angry outburst. You can even mention that you are seeking legal counsel. It signals that you are professional, not emotional."

"However," I added, tapping the table for emphasis, "the most powerful defence is built years before the attack happens. It is your Image Audit. If you have run your career or your company with transparency and honesty, your reputation

becomes a Lakshman Rekha that lies cannot cross. People who know your history of integrity will see the malicious post for exactly what it is — a desperate fabrication. A lie cannot stand for long against a lifetime of truth."

The Thread that Holds the Group Together

Finally, we went back to Rohan's WhatsApp dilemma. "So, how should a leader like Rohan fix the icy atmosphere in a group?" Sakthi asked.

"A leader must be the Earthing wire for the team's electricity," I explained. "If Rohan noticed the silence, he should have acted as the calming influence. A simple follow-up would have changed everything: 'Hi team, I know my last message was a bit blunt — just feeling the pressure of the 9 AM deadline! I have complete faith in your work. Let's cross the finish line together.'"

That second message shows empathy. It acknowledges that the leader is human and that he values the team's feelings as much as their output. In any group — whether it's a corporate team or a family circle — there will be vocal types, sensitive types, and direct types. A master communicator is the thread that weaves these different beads into a single, strong necklace.

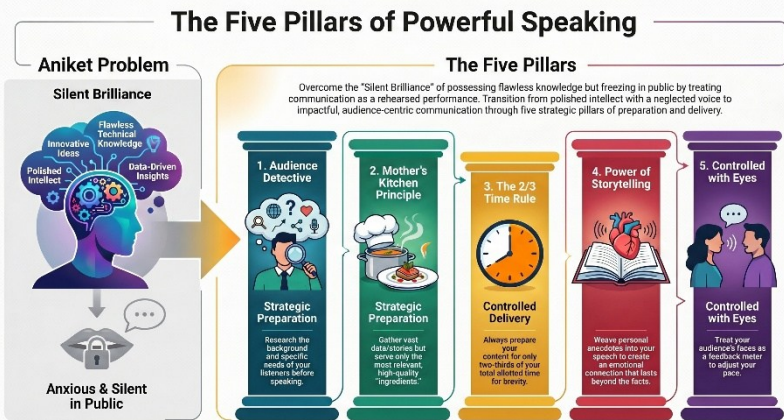
Takeaway

- Avoid Transactional Ghosting: Treat every digital interaction as a long-term investment. The person you ignore today is the bridge you may need to cross tomorrow.

- **Disengage from Public Debates:** You don't need to win every online argument. Acknowledge the other person's right to disagree and preserve the relationship instead of the ego.
- **Build Your Reputation Shield:** Integrity is your best defence against misinformation. Consistent, transparent actions over time create a brand that lies cannot easily tarnish.
- **Be the Group's Calming Influence:** If you are a leader or admin, use Repair Messages to clarify your tone and reaffirm your trust in the team during high-pressure moments.

Chapter 3: Overcoming Anxiety in Public Speaking

In a world of digital brilliance, many professionals remain silent in public due to crippling anxiety. Reclaim your voice by mastering the five pillars of public speaking and the discipline of preparation.



© NotebookLM

The Silence of Brilliance: A Case Study

A few months ago, I was invited to sit on an interview panel for a graduate recruitment programme at a leading multinational company. We were searching for the sharpest young minds to join a high-stakes innovation team. One candidate, Aniket, was a star on paper. His academic record was flawless, his portfolio was packed with creative projects,

and his references were glowing. We were all eager to meet him.

When Aniket walked into the room, he was polite and well-dressed, but I could see the tension in his shoulders. He sat down, his hands clasped so tightly in his lap that his knuckles were white. The initial questions were simple ice-breakers, designed to put him at ease. Yet, with every query, his answers grew shorter and his voice softer.

When we asked him to explain a complex project he had led — the very project that had impressed us most — he froze. The silence that followed was heavy. He looked down at his hands, his face flushed with embarrassment. He mumbled a few disjointed sentences before losing his train of thought completely. It was clear he knew his subject inside out, but the words simply would not come. He left the interview looking utterly defeated.

Aniket's story is not an isolated one. It is the story of a generation that is articulate in text but anxious in speech; brilliant in private but silent in public.

The Lost Art of Language: Polishing the Intellect, Neglecting the Voice

I was reflecting on this heartbreaking experience when I met Deepa Lenin. Deepa is a senior HR professional heading the department of a leading organisation. She is also an accomplished author and a freelance journalist. Given her role in HR, she sees Anikets every single day.

"It was painful to watch, Deepa," I confessed as we sat down to talk. "He had all the knowledge, but he couldn't communicate it. Why are so many talented young people struggling with this crippling anxiety?"

Deepa nodded, her expression one of deep empathy. "I see it in my recruitment drives constantly, Sir. We have bright minds who are technically perfect but communicatively hesitant."

"It is because we have changed what we value in education," I began. "We have polished the intellect but neglected the voice. Think back to my generation. Many of us grew up in rural areas, studying in government schools without sophisticated tools. But we had an environment that revered language."

I painted a picture for her of my childhood. "I remember our teachers insisting we read *The Hindu* every single day. The paper arrived a day late in our village, but that didn't matter. We had to read it and be ready to discuss it the next day. And every night at 9 PM, the All India Radio English news bulletin was our classroom. Our parents insisted we listen — not just for the news, but for the impeccable English. They understood that the ability to express a thought was as important as the thought itself."

I contrasted this with today. "Now, the focus is entirely on domain knowledge. If you study engineering, you only study engineering. I have seen colleges where the English class is borrowed to finish the Science syllabus. Language has become a soft skill — a secondary priority. The result is a

generation that has developed a fear of formal language, born not of inability, but of a lack of practice."

The Five Pillars of Powerful Speaking

"So, how do we help them, Sir?" Deepa asked. "How do we rebuild that lost confidence?"

"Public speaking is an art, not a terror," I reassured her. "And like any art, it can be learned. It stands on five simple pillars."

Pillar 1: Become an Audience Detective

"Before you think about what you will say, you must think about who you are saying it to," I emphasised. Research your audience. What is their background? What do they need to hear? Speaking to students requires a different energy than speaking to senior executives. A great speech is not a monologue; it is a dialogue tailored to the hearts of the listeners.

Pillar 2: The Mother's Kitchen Principle

"Think of your preparation like your mother's kitchen," I told Deepa. She smiled at the metaphor. "When a mother cooks for three people, she doesn't just have three spoons of salt in her pantry. She has kilograms of salt, rice, and dal. She has every spice imaginable. But for that one perfect dish, she chooses only what is necessary, in just the right amount."

"Your research should be the same. Fill your mental pantry. Gather far more stories and data than you will ever use. Then, you can select the finest ingredients to create a message that is truly flavourful for your audience."

Pillar 3: Be the Master of Your Time

"One of the biggest mistakes educated people make is over-preparing," I warned. "If given fifteen minutes, they prepare a thirty-minute speech to show off everything they know. This leads to rushing or being cut off."

"The rule is simple: Always prepare for two-thirds of the time you are given. If you have 15 minutes, prepare for 10. The natural pauses and storytelling will fill the rest. Leave them wanting more, not looking at their watches."

Pillar 4: The Power of a Good Story

"Facts speak to the mind, but stories speak to the soul. Why do people still flock to hear the Ramayana or Mahabharata? We know the stories, yet we listen again and again. It is a human tendency. A good speech should be woven with personal anecdotes. When you tell a story, you create an emotional connection that lasts long after the applause has faded."

Pillar 5: Listen with Your Eyes

"A speech is a live performance. You must look into their eyes, not at the ceiling or your notes. Their faces are your feedback meter. If they are fidgeting, you need to change your pace or ask a question. Great speakers converse with their audience, even in silence."

Practice: The Bridge Between Fear and Fluency

"These pillars provide the architecture," I continued, "but practice is the cement that holds them together."

Communication is not a theory; it is a skill. A musician must practise her instrument every day; a doctor must practise medicine. Why should communication be any different?"

Deepa agreed. "In HR, we often find that people are afraid of being judged. They are terrified of making a mistake in their English."

"I see it all the time," I shared. "During a college Q&A session, there is often total silence. But the moment I walk to my car, my phone buzzes with WhatsApp messages from those same students asking the questions they were too shy to ask in public. The only way to conquer this fear is to face it. Speak up in team meetings. Volunteer for presentations. Every opportunity is a chance to get comfortable with the sound of your own voice."

I even shared a personal secret with her. "In my younger days, I would lock myself in a room and rehearse in front of a mirror. I would record my voice and listen back. Even today, after decades of speaking, I never go on stage without mentally rehearsing. I never take it for granted."

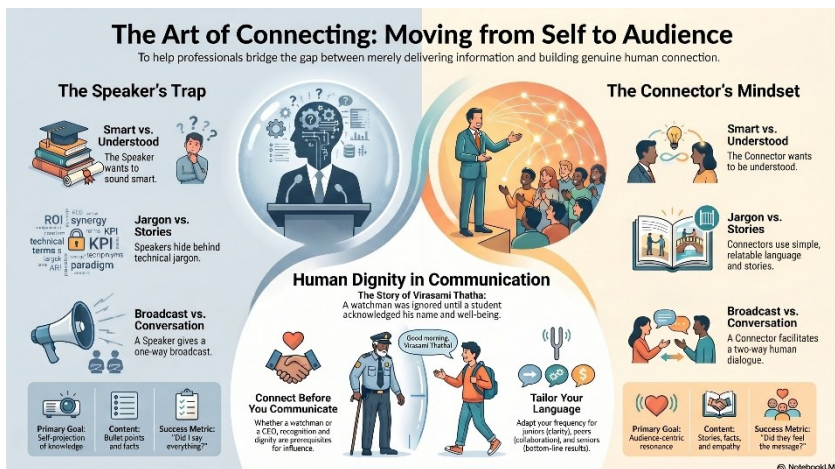
Takeaway

- **Prepare Like a Mother:** Stock your mental pantry with deep research, but serve only the most relevant ingredients to your audience.
- **Respect the Clock:** Use the two-thirds rule. Prepare for less time than you are allotted to allow for natural flow and engagement.

- **Connect Through Stories:** Move beyond bullet points. Use anecdotes to speak to the hearts of your listeners.
- **Practice is Non-Negotiable:** Use the mirror method or record yourself. The more you hear your own voice in private, the less it will fail you in public.

Chapter 4: Building a Bridge: How to Connect with Your Listeners

Successful communication is not about how much you know, but how well you resonate. Break free from the Speaker's Trap, learn the languages of different professional levels, and discover the magic of plugging in to your audience.



The Unheard Masterpiece: A Case Study

Sameera, my friend's daughter, is one of the most brilliant data analysts I know. A few weeks ago, her company was considering a major strategic pivot. Sameera's team was tasked with analysing the market data to guide this high-stakes decision. For weeks, she barely slept, immersing

herself in spreadsheets and predictive models. The result was a masterpiece — a comprehensive, 50-slide presentation that laid out every possible angle with irrefutable logic.

The day of the presentation arrived. The audience was the company's C-suite: the CEO, the CFO, and department heads — seasoned, time-poor executives who live for bottom-line results. Sameera began by explaining her complex algorithms. She walked them through slide after slide of dense charts and technical jargon. But as she spoke, a shift occurred. The CEO started glancing at her watch. The CFO began discreetly scrolling through emails. By the time Sameera reached her powerful conclusion, the energy in the room had evaporated. Her proposal, despite being technically sound, was shelved as being "too complex to action."

Sameera was devastated. "The data was perfect," she told me later. "Why didn't they listen?"

The Bridge and the Fortress: A Conversation with Sridhar Raj

I recently sat down with U Sridhar Raj, a dynamic young entrepreneur from Chennai. Sridhar manages several businesses with hundreds of employees and is well-known for his uncanny ability to turn loss-making units into profitable ones through sharp marketing and communication.

"Sir," Sridhar said, "I see this often. Brilliant people building fortresses of facts, but forgetting to build the bridge."

"Exactly, Sridhar," I replied. "Sameera fell into the Speaker's Trap. Her focus was entirely on herself — her knowledge and

her performance. She treated the audience like a passive bucket to be filled with information, rather than an active participant in a conversation."

I shared a table with him to explain the two mindsets:

- The Goal: The Speaker wants to sound smart; the Connector wants to be understood.
- The Preparation: The Speaker gathers only facts; the Connector gathers facts, stories, and empathy.
- The Language: The Speaker hides behind jargon; the Connector uses simple, relatable words.
- The Delivery: The Speaker gives a one-way broadcast; the Connector has a two-way conversation.
- The Metric of Success: The Speaker asks, "Did I say everything?" while the Connector asks, "Did they feel the message?"

The Scholar and the Horse Cart Driver

To illustrate this to Sridhar, I shared a story I often use in my lectures. A hundred years ago, a highly educated scholar was invited to a nearby town to address a Satsang of fellow scholars. He prepared a deep, intellectual lecture and set off in a horse cart. When he arrived, it was raining heavily. The hall was empty. Not wanting to waste his preparation, the scholar turned to his uneducated horse cart driver and said, "Since you are here, I will deliver my lecture to you."

On the way back, the scholar asked, "So, how did you find my lecture?"

The driver replied, "Swamiji, I am a simple man. I maintain four horses for my profession. I give them grass only to the extent they can eat. I do not give them more or less than they can handle."

The scholar was stunned. He realised he had failed the most basic test of communication. The presentation is for the audience to understand, not for the speaker to exhibit their knowledge.

Mastering the Three Professional Languages

"In your journey as an entrepreneur, Sridhar," I continued, "you deal with three distinct groups. Each requires a different frequency."

- Your Juniors and Mentees: They look to you for clarity. They need to know the why behind the what. Use encouraging language and create a safe space for questions.
- Your Peers and Colleagues: Here, the language is we. It is about collaboration and mutual respect. You are not commanding; you are cooperating.
- Your Seniors and Leaders: They speak the language of the bottom line. Start with the conclusion. Tell them how your idea saves money or improves efficiency.

The Magic of Virasami Thatha: A Lesson in Human Connection

"But beyond business levels," I told Sridhar, "there is a deeper level of connection. I once mentored a PhD student who complained that her apartment watchman was a grumpy old man who never helped her move her bike."

I asked her, "Do you know his name?" She hesitated. "I think it's Virasami." "Have you ever called him by his name?" "No."

I told her to try an experiment. "Tonight, stop, look him in the eye, and ask: Virasami thatha, epdi irukeenga? Saapteengala? (Grandpa Virasami, how are you? Have you eaten?)."

The next morning, she called me, amazed. "Sir, it was magic! He had already pulled my bike out and wiped the seat clean. He was smiling!"

"Sridhar," I said, "she didn't give him a tip. She gave him dignity. Whether it is a watchman or a CEO, you must connect before you communicate."

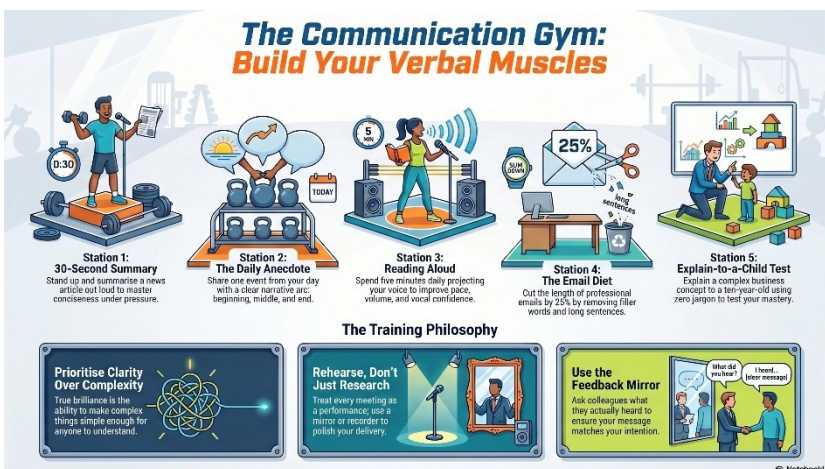
Takeaway

- **Check Your Mindset:** Are you trying to look smart (The Speaker's Trap) or trying to be helpful (The Connector's Mindset)?
- **Speak the Right Language:** Tailor your depth and speed based on whether you are talking to a junior, a peer, or a senior executive.
- **The Two-Way Street:** Don't dump information; invite interaction.

- The Power of Recognition: Use names, show genuine interest, and acknowledge the human being in front of you. Connection is the prerequisite for influence.

Chapter 5: Daily Exercises to Improve Your Communication

Communication is not a subject to be studied; it is a performance to be rehearsed. Bridge the gap between knowledge and skill by building your own Communication Gym and mastering the art of simple brilliance.



The Pitch That Fell Flat: A Case Study

I was recently catching up with Parthasarathy Reddy, a young and high-energy entrepreneur from Andhra Pradesh. Parthasarathy is known for his restless spirit and his drive to implement new ideas in the retail sector. He shared a story about his close associate, Kumaran.

"Sir," Parthasarathy began, "Kumaran is one of the most brilliant minds I know. A few months ago, he had a chance to pitch a truly innovative sustainable tech start-up to a group of angel investors. He had done everything by the book — market research, financial projections, and he'd even memorised the best theories on how to deliver a winning pitch."

But when the day arrived, something went wrong. "He walked in confident," Parthasarathy continued, "but the moment he opened his mouth, the hook came out as a mumble. His powerful narrative felt weak and disjointed. He fumbled with his slides, his voice lacked conviction, and the passion that had fuelled him for months simply vanished. The investors were polite, but they told him the presentation lacked impact. Kumaran was heartbroken. He told me, 'I had all the right information, but there was a huge gap between the idea in my head and the words in my mouth.'"

The Musician in the Meeting Room

"Parthasarathy," I said, "the reason is simple. Communication is not a subject you study in a library; it is a performance you rehearse on a stage. Knowing the theory of communication is like reading a recipe; it doesn't mean you can cook the meal."

"A musician doesn't just read sheet music; she plays the notes until her fingers move with effortless grace. A dancer rehearses steps until his body tells the story. Why should communication be any different? You cannot become a great communicator simply by reading about it. You have to do it."

I shared my own ritual with him. "When I was starting out, I knew I had to conquer my fear of public speaking. I would lock myself in a room and rehearse in front of a mirror. I watched my expressions and my gestures. I recorded my voice and listened back to hear where my tone faltered. Even today, I never wing it. Every audience deserves a prepared performance, not a lazy, improvised one."

Building Your Communication Gym

"But Sir," Parthasarathy asked, "we are busy running businesses. We don't always have a stage to practice on. How do we stay in shape?"

"You don't wait for a marathon to start training," I advised. "You need a Communication Gym — a set of daily exercises to build your verbal and written muscles. Use the small, everyday opportunities to hone your craft."

I walked him through five essential workouts for his daily routine:

- **Spoken Clarity:** Pick up a news article. After reading it, stand up and summarise the key points out loud in exactly 30 seconds. Record it on your phone. This trains you to structure your thoughts quickly and speak concisely under pressure.
- **Storytelling:** Every evening, share one anecdote from your day with a family member or a friend. Frame it with a beginning, a middle, and an end. This develops your ability to craft compelling narratives.

- **Vocal Confidence:** Spend five minutes a day reading aloud. Pay attention to your pace and volume. Project your voice as if you are speaking to someone across the room.
- **Email Diet:** Before you hit send on any professional email, challenge yourself to cut the length by 25%. Remove the filler words and shorten long sentences.
- **Explain to a Child Test:** Take a complex idea from your business and try to explain it in simple terms to a ten-year-old. If you can make it clear without using jargon, you have truly mastered the subject.

The Art of Simple Brilliance

"Parthasarathy," I continued, "the biggest barrier for educated people is the desire to sound intelligent. We use complex words and long sentences, thinking it adds credibility. But that is a misunderstanding. You aren't communicating to showcase your knowledge; you are communicating to be understood."

I gave him the example of the legendary Indian statesman, C. Rajagopalachari, fondly known as Rajaji. "Rajaji was a towering intellectual. When he wrote for his magazine *Swarajya*, he used dense, scholarly language because he was writing for a high-level audience. But this same man wrote versions of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* for children. The language there is so simple that an eighth-standard student can enjoy it. He proved that true intelligence is the ability to make complex things simple."

"So," Parthasarathy noted, "if my team is confused, I have failed, no matter how clever I sounded."

"Precisely," I said. "Make it simple, simple, simple. Your goal is for the common person to understand."

The Gift of Feedback: Your Professional Compass

"Lastly," I added, "no practice is complete without a coach. After you give a presentation or lead a meeting, go to a trusted colleague and ask for honest feedback. Ask them: 'What was the one message you took away?' and 'Was there any point where you felt lost?'"

Feedback is a mirror. It shows us what the audience is actually seeing, which is often very different from what we think we are projecting. Embrace it. Let it be the compass that guides your daily workouts in the Communication Gym.

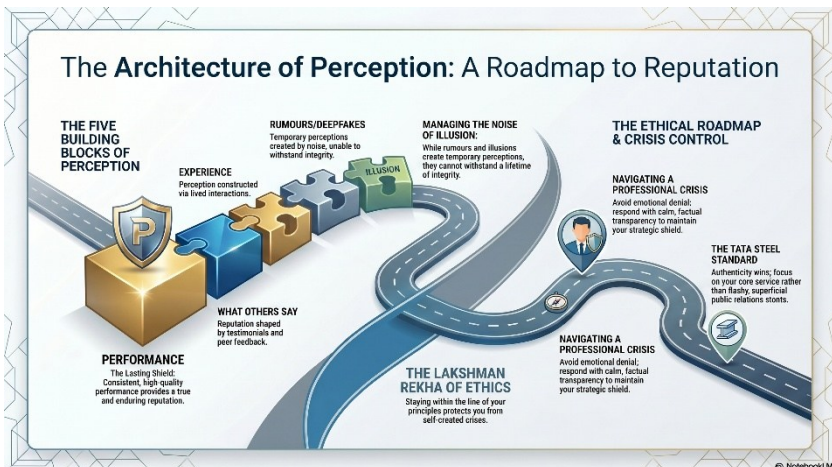
Takeaway

- **Rehearse, Don't Just Research:** Treat every important meeting or pitch as a performance. Use the mirror and voice recorder to polish your delivery before the event.
- **Visit the Communication Gym Daily:** Practice the 30-second summary and the Email Diet to keep your communication muscles sharp.
- **Prioritise Clarity Over Complexity:** Follow Rajaji's example. True brilliance lies in making your message simple enough for anyone to understand.

- Seek Honest Feedback: Use your colleagues as a mirror. Understanding how your message actually landed is the only way to improve your next performance.

Chapter 6: How to Build and Protect Your Reputation

In the face of crushing defeat or public crisis, communication is your most powerful tool for recovery. Learn how to reignite your inner fire, navigate the Lakshman Rekha of ethics, and build a personal brand that stands the test of time.



The Weight of a Crushing Defeat: A Case Study

I recently spoke with a friend, David, a dedicated team leader at an environmental non-profit organisation. For over a year, his team had poured their hearts into a major fundraising campaign for a reforestation project. It was David's brainchild — his mission. When the campaign launched, the initial results were promising. However, a sudden shift in the

economic climate caused donations to dry up. The campaign fell catastrophically short, and the project was shelved.

David called me a week later, his voice a mere whisper. "I let them all down," he said. "All that work for nothing. I don't know how I can face them again. Maybe I'm just not cut out for this." He sounded like a warrior who had dropped his sword in the middle of the most important battle of his life.

The Arjuna in All of Us: Re-energising the Sleeping Mind

I carried David's story to my next conversation with Priyadharshni Rahul. Priyadharshni is a prominent Advocate practising in the Supreme Court of India in Delhi. She handles nationally sensitive cases and is highly respected for her sharp arguments in the highest court. Beyond the law, she is a keen political analyst and founded the NGO Next Gen Political Leaders to develop the country's future leadership.

"Priyadharshni," I replied, "what you are describing is the oldest and most human of all communication challenges. It is the heart of the Bhagavad Gita."

I urged her to think of the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Arjuna, the world's greatest warrior, looks upon the opposing army and sees his own kin. His spirit breaks. He puts down his bow and tells Krishna, 'I cannot fight.' At the most critical juncture, the most powerful man on the field was completely demotivated.

"Krishna didn't offer simple platitudes," I explained. "He engaged in the most powerful form of motivational

communication. He reminded Arjuna why he had to fight, speaking of Dharma and duty. Every day, we are all Arjunas standing on our own battlefields. In those moments, we need a Krishna — a mentor or a trusted friend — to move our mind from sleeping mode into active mode."

Crossing the Lakshman Rekha: Managing a Crisis

"Most crises are self-created," I stated. "They happen because someone crosses the Lakshman Rekha. In the Ramayana, Sita was safe as long as she stayed within the line Lakshmana drew for her protection. For us, that line represents our ethics and principles. When greed or arrogance pushes us to cross it, we invite trouble."

I described the common traps people fall into:

- The Emotional Denial: Many people issue a heated, defensive statement or blame others. This adds fuel to the fire. The solution is to stay silent, stay calm, and analyse the facts first.
- The Sycophant Trap: Leaders often surround themselves with people who only tell them what they want to hear. Instead, one must seek objective, credible experts who will tell the hard truth.
- The Camouflage Mistake: Some try to hide the problem with a flashy PR stunt. A brief, honest, and transparent statement is far more powerful.
- The Adversary's Trap: If you react exactly as your opponent predicted, you give them the publicity they

seek. Sometimes, the most strategic response is to not engage on their terms at all.

The Architecture of Perception: Performance is the Brand

"This is the art of perception," I said. "Think of Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. You perceive him as kind and humble. This is because perception is built piece by piece over time."

I explained that for professionals, perception is built through five main channels: Performance, Experience, What Others Say, Rumours and Deepfakes, and Illusion. Of these, only consistent performance is a true and lasting shield.

I shared the legendary story about Russi Mody, the Chairman of Tata Steel, at an international exhibition. Dissatisfied with a pavilion full of steel products and industrial data, Mody pointed out that the true heart of the Tata brand was its commitment to CSR and nation-building. A panicked manager, misunderstanding the instruction, removed every piece of steel-related material. When Mody returned to find a pavilion of only social projects, he snapped sarcastically: "Since you've removed everything else, why don't you just put up a small sign at the exit gate saying: We also make steel."

The manager took the instruction literally and had the board commissioned. When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited the next day, she saw that humble little sign at the exit, burst out laughing, and highly appreciated it as a stroke of marketing genius. From that day forward, it became the official tagline

of Tata Steel's advertisements — capturing their brand perfectly.

Takeaway

- **Reignite the Mind:** When demotivated, seek a mentor or Krishna to move your mind from a sleeping mode to an active, purposeful mode.
- **Stay Within the Lakshman Rekha:** Crisis is often avoided by adhering to ethics. If a crisis occurs, respond with calm, factual transparency rather than emotional denial.
- **Performance Over Advertising:** Your brand is built on what you do and how you make people feel. Consistent, high-quality performance is the only shield against rumours.
- **Control the Narrative:** Use the five-part architecture of perception to ensure that your stakeholders see the reality of your integrity and service.

Chapter 7: The Importance of Dress Code and Punctuality

Your clothes, your watch, and your mindset speak long before you open your mouth. Master the non-verbal cues of attire and punctuality, and discover how a humble attitude — modelled by Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam — is the ultimate architect of your professional reputation.



The Fundamental Right to Wear Jeans: A Case Study

A good friend of mine — a brilliant young man and a recognised expert in social media strategy — was recently invited to deliver a guest lecture to MBA students at a prestigious university in Chennai. On the day of the lecture,

he arrived at the university campus in his casual attire of a stylish t-shirt and well-fitting jeans, ready to inspire.

He never got the chance. He was met at the door by the Head of the Department, who politely but firmly informed him that he could not address the students. The reason? The university maintained a strict formal dress code for all guest speakers — a detail specifically mentioned in the invitation letter. Inside the auditorium, the students were already seated, wearing smart blazers as a mark of respect for their guest.

My friend argued. He spoke of his fundamental rights, of personal expression, and insisted that his knowledge, not his clothes, was what mattered. The HOD remained unyielding. The lecture was cancelled. It was a needless collision between two different worlds.

The Armour of Respect: A Conversation with Hemalatha

I recently discussed this Jeans vs. Formal friction with Smt. Hemalatha. Hemalatha is a vibrant entrepreneur and a senior office bearer in a national political party. Despite her high-ranking positions in both business and politics, she is known for being incredibly down-to-earth and socially conscious.

"Srinivasan Sir, it isn't about tradition versus modernity," she said. "It is about communication. Your friend forgot that his clothes were speaking long before he had a chance to. The message his jeans sent to that formal institution was one of disrespect."

"Exactly, Hemalatha," I agreed. "Professional attire is, in essence, our Armour of Respect. It signals that we take the occasion, the institution, and the people seriously. Think of a lawyer in the Court, a priest in a temple, or even a political leader with their party shawl. These aren't fashion choices; they are symbols of dignity and context."

The Currency of Punctuality: What Your Watch Communicates

"If our dress communicates respect for an institution," I asked Hemalatha, "does our sense of time communicate our respect for people?"

"Undoubtedly," she affirmed. "Punctuality is the currency of trust. When you are on time, you are saying: I value your time as much as my own. Being late isn't fashionable; it's a sign of a disordered mind."

I shared my own discipline with the Prime Point Foundation. "If my invitation says 10 AM, I start exactly at 10 AM, even if only two people are there. I do this to honour those who respected the time. Habitual lateness sends a message of arrogance. Why should a whole room wait for one person? Furthermore, rushing because you are late raises your blood pressure and creates unnecessary anxiety. Punctuality is actually a form of self-care."

The Engine of Action: The Power of Attitude

"Attitude is the engine; everything else is just the exhaust," I said. "If your internal mindset is to respect others, you will

instinctively be on time. If your attitude is to present yourself with dignity, you will naturally dress appropriately."

To illustrate this, I shared a moving story from the time Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was the President of India. "I had gone to Rashtrapati Bhavan with a few of his old friends for a private chat. At one point, I realised the official photographer wasn't there to capture the moment. Dr Kalam overheard my concern. He could have easily pressed a button on his sofa to summon an aide. Instead, to our utter astonishment, the President of India stood up and started walking toward the door to call the photographer himself."

Hemalatha was visibly moved. "That is incredible humility, Sir."

"That is Attitude, Hemalatha," I replied. "He was the most powerful man in India, but in his mind, he was just a friend attending to a small wish. It is in these small, unguarded moments that our true character is communicated."

Takeaway

- **Dress for the Context:** Your attire is your Armour of Respect. Align your clothing with the norms of the institution to ensure your message is heard without distraction.
- **Punctuality is Discipline:** Arriving early is a sign of respect for others and a tool for your own mental peace. Build trust by making your watch a reliable communicator.

- Attitude is the Operating System: Your external actions are symptoms of your internal mindset. Cultivate a Learning and Humble Attitude to drive professional excellence.
- Watch the Small Moments: True character is communicated in spontaneous actions. Follow the example of Dr Kalam — don't let your position cloud your humanity.

Chapter 8: Solving Disagreements and Managing Ego

Mastering the art of emotional restraint and strategic silence to transform trivial sparks of conflict into monumental opportunities for growth and lasting professional alliances.



The Spark in the Server Room: A Case Study

At a fast-growing software company in Hyderabad, two brilliant engineers, Arjun and Bala, were the stars of their department. Arjun was a meticulous planner; Bala was a creative firebrand. For years, their opposing strengths had created a perfect synergy.

Then came the Phoenix Project. During a team meeting, they disagreed on a single line of code. What should have been a five-minute technical debate turned toxic. Soon, they stopped

speaking. Team members began taking sides. The collaborative spirit dissolved into a silent, simmering office war. Deadlines were missed, and the project was on the brink of failure. A tiny spark, fanned by ego, had grown into an inferno.

The Anatomy of a Firestorm

I sat in my study when Ramesh Sundaram came to visit. Ramesh is a legend in Indian journalism — four decades of ensuring that not a single comma was out of place in one of India's leading dailies. He is the ultimate unsung hero of the newsroom, a man who knows that a poorly chosen word can start a riot or stop a war.

"Ramesh," I began softly, "conflicts arise almost never from major issues. If you trace any great conflict back to its source — whether in a boardroom or on the world stage — you will find a small, silly, ego-driven spark."

"A conflict needs three ingredients: A Trivial Spark, Emotional Fuel (the ego-driven reaction), and a Lack of Calm. To manage conflict, you must control your immediate reaction. The words you speak in anger are like an arrow shot from a bow; you can never pull them back. In a moment of heat, the best communication strategy is silence."

"But Sir," Ramesh smiled, "is silence not seen as a weakness in today's aggressive world?"

"On the contrary, Ramesh! It is a Lakshman Rekha for your reputation. It shows immense strategic strength. I would

rather lose an argument and keep a friendship, than win an argument and lose a friend."

Hanuman: The Masterclass of First Impressions

"For that, Ramesh, we must look to the greatest diplomat the world has ever known: Hanuman."

I painted the scene from the Kishkinda Kanda of the Ramayana. Sugriva, fearing Rama and Lakshmana are assassins, sends Hanuman to investigate. Hanuman approaches them with grace. After their first meeting, Rama describes Hanuman not as a vanara, but as the most perfect communicator he has ever met.

"Five things, Ramesh. Five things that every professional in India should emulate:"

- **Appropriate Words:** Not a single word was wasted.
- **Grammatical Precision:** His speech reflected a structured, disciplined mind.
- **Brevity:** He was brief. He respected Rama's time.
- **Musical Tone:** His voice was pleasant, creating immediate trust.
- **Perfect Modulation:** He spoke loud enough for Rama to hear, but soft enough that others couldn't eavesdrop. He was submissive yet powerful.

"He turned a potential battle into a lifetime alliance," Ramesh whispered.

"Exactly. Hanuman didn't make Rama feel interrogated; he made him feel curious. That is the Calm Centre. When you speak from that place, you don't just communicate information — you connect souls."

Takeaway

- The 24-Hour Rule: When faced with a conflict or an insulting message, wait 24 hours before responding. Silence is a strategic weapon, not a white flag.
- Identify the Gift: In every crisis, stop and ask: What new door has this closed door forced me to find? Focus on the opportunity, not the irritation.
- The Hanuman Standard: Aim for brevity, precision, and a pleasant tone. Respect the listener's ego more than your own.
- Separate the Person from the Problem: Conflict dies when you stop attacking the individual and start addressing the issue with a calm, problem-solving mindset.

Chapter 9: Leading Across Different Ages and Genders

A heartfelt exploration into the delicate balance of power between the relentless energy of youth and the deep-rooted wisdom of experience, and the urgent need for both to evolve in the age of AI.



The Invisible Wall in Pune: A Case Study

Nancy was, by every measure, a rising star. At just twenty-nine, she had been promoted to Head of Production at a well-regarded automotive parts company in Pune. Her team was composed of six section supervisors, the youngest of whom was forty-eight. The resistance she faced was not open

rebellion; it was subtle — a kind of polite, passive defiance that felt like an invisible wall.

In meetings, when she proposed a new workflow, Mr Kulkarni, the senior-most supervisor, would smile faintly and say, "A very interesting idea from a modern textbook, madam. But on the factory floor, things are a little different." She was working twice as hard as any of her male predecessors, yet she felt like she was failing. "I feel like I'm a principal in a school where the teachers don't believe I've passed the tenth standard yet," she confided in me. "How do you lead people who have already decided you are not their leader?"

A Dialogue of Generations

Nancy's lonely struggle was the story I carried to my next conversation with Suparna Gangal. Suparna is a senior International Television journalist based in Pune, a vibrant professional who travels across the nation, meeting a staggering variety of people.

"Nancy has the title and the qualifications on paper, Suparna," I began. "But she has no real authority. What Nancy is facing is one of the most common and difficult leadership challenges today. Her company gave her a position, but it did not teach her how to earn her power. We think leadership is about intelligence, but it is actually about connection."

The Probationer and the Patriarchs

"I learned this early in my career," I told Suparna. "When I joined the bank as a young probationary officer in the early seventies, I was barely twenty-three. Suddenly, I was

supervising men in their fifties with twenty-five years of experience."

"I was fortunate. My manager told me on my first day: Srinivasan, your position gives you a chair in the office. It does not give you a place in their hearts. You must earn that yourself."

"So, I made it my mission. I understood these senior clerks were my encyclopaedias. During office hours, the hierarchy was clear. But outside, I erased it. I visited their homes, had lunch with them, and played with their children. Before leaving, I would prostrate before these elders and seek their blessings. In the office, they were my subordinates, but in their hearts, I was like their son."

The New Era: Upskill or Be Left Behind

"But there is something else, Suparna, something I must emphasise today. With technological advancement and the growth of AI, the time has come for seniors to understand that mere years of experience are no longer a shield."

"In the future, mere age and experience are not going to command respect," I said firmly. "Seniors have to face brilliant youngsters who are digital natives. If the seniors want to remain competitive and earn the respect of these youngsters, they must upskill. They must learn to unlearn and relearn new concepts. If they remain stagnant, they cannot expect the youth to follow them simply because they have been there longer."

The Hand That Steadies

"For Nancy," I said, "the solution is twofold. First, she must connect as a person. She should have tea with Mr Kulkarni — not to talk about work, but to ask about his life and the history of the company. She must make him feel like a respected elder, not a subordinate."

"But the organisation must also step up. They cannot throw a young leader — especially a woman — into the deep end without mentoring. Every young leader needs a senior mentor to act as a sounding board and help them navigate the human challenges and unwritten rules of the office."

Takeaway

- **Earn the Heart, Not the Chair:** Your position is a title, but your authority is built on human connection and genuine respect for the people you lead.
- **The Power of Prostration:** Respecting the age and wisdom of seniors outside the professional hierarchy can transform them from silent resistors into your most loyal protectors.
- **Adapt or Stagnate:** Seniors must understand that in the age of AI, experience alone is insufficient. Constant upskilling and a willingness to learn from the youth are essential to remaining relevant.

- Mentorship is Vital: Organisations must provide young leaders with senior mentors to bridge the generational divide and ensure that energy and wisdom are synergised rather than conflicted.

Chapter 10: The Final Secret: Everything Depends on Your Audience

Unlocking the ultimate secret of impactful communication by shifting the focus from self-projection to audience-centricity, ensuring every word resonates with the heartbeat of the listener.



The Identical Stranger: A Case Study

Last year, a friend who works in Human Resources at a major IT firm in Bengaluru shared a story of quiet frustration. Her company had an opening for a coveted data analyst position, and they received over five hundred applications. As she began the initial screening, a strange pattern emerged. They had all used the same templates, the same buzzwords, likely

generated by the same AI tool, with only their names and university degrees changed. "It was impossible to see the real person behind the words," she told me. "They were all identical strangers."

A Meeting of Minds: Finance Meets Communication

I was sitting in my usual spot when S. Mohan walked in. Mohan is a stalwart in the world of finance — a Senior Chartered Accountant with fifty years of experience. He has seen the rise and fall of corporate empires and is an undisputed expert in corporate finance.

"Srinivasan," Mohan began, "I see these identical strangers even in the corporate boardrooms. Brilliant youngsters with high-profile degrees walk in, but they speak a language that is technically sound yet emotionally bankrupt. Why is there such a disconnect?"

"Mohan, we have the best tools in history, yet we are failing at the most basic human task: making ourselves understood. We are writing for ourselves, not for the audience."

The Chef's Dilemma: One Shirt Does Not Fit All

"Imagine, Mohan, that you are a highly qualified chef — a master of everything. One day, you see two ads. One is from an Arab Sheikh staying in Chennai; he wants a personal chef. The second is from an orthodox South Indian Brahmin billionaire. Most people send their standard bio-data to both. The Sheikh reads it and sees you are a master of sambar and idli. He discards it. The Brahmin gentleman reads the same paper and sees you are a celebrated expert in mutton biryani.

He is horrified. You, the perfect candidate, are rejected by both because your message was irrelevant to their specific needs."

The Inverted Pyramid: Capturing the Editor's Soul

Mohan looked thoughtful. "I often see grand press releases from companies we audit. They spend lakhs on PR agencies, but the news hardly gets any space. Why?"

"Most corporate press releases are written to please the Chairman's ego, not to help an Editor. The audience for a press release is not the public — it is the Editor. I always advise them to use the Inverted Pyramid style. Put the most important, juicy fact at the very top. If the lead doesn't provoke the Editor's interest immediately, the rest of your release is headed for the bin."

Unpaid Ambassadors: The Fortress of Loyalty

"In my fifty years, I've noticed that the most successful companies aren't just good at external PR; they are masters of internal connection," Mohan said.

"You are absolutely right, Mohan. Look at the TVS Group. Their leadership would invite floor-level workers and their families for dinner. Not for speeches, but to chat with the spouses and give gifts to the children. When the industry went on strike, the families told the workers, 'This company cares for us; you must go to work'. That is a fortress of loyalty."

The Liftman's Test: The Standard of Clarity

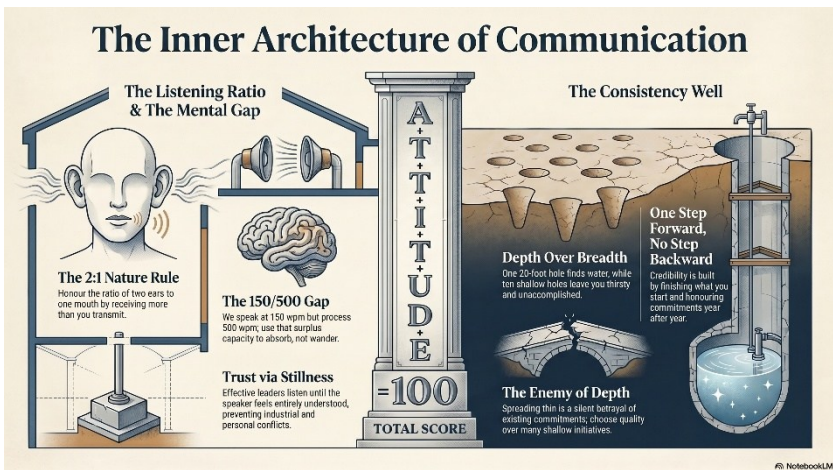
"To test your clarity, follow the example of S.S. Vasani, the legendary editor of Ananda Vikatan. He would take a script from a literary giant and give it to the building's lift operator. He'd say, 'Read this and tell me if you understand it.' The writers were furious! But Vasani told them, 'Our magazine is read by millions of ordinary people like this liftman. If he understands it, the world will.' We must come down from our intellectual pedestals to communicate."

Takeaway

- **Tailor the Message:** Never send a generic résumé or press release. Research the specific needs of your audience and lead with the most relevant fact.
- **Avoid Superlatives:** In professional communication, let the facts speak. Convince with data and stories, not adjectives.
- **The Liftman Standard:** If an ordinary person outside your field cannot understand your core message, your communication has failed. Simplify without being simplistic.
- **Upskill or Fade:** Regardless of your age or experience, the AI era requires constant learning. Respect is a product of your current competence, not your past history.

Chapter 11: The Inner Architecture of Communication

In a world racing towards artificial intelligence and digital brilliance, three timeless human qualities are quietly disappearing — the discipline to listen, the courage to maintain a consistent purpose, and the attitude to honour what came before. Without these three, no amount of skill or knowledge can build a lasting professional life.



The Unheard Mentor: A Case Study

Aryan was, by every visible measure, a young man destined for greatness. At twenty-six, he had a postgraduate degree from a premier institution, a sharp analytical mind, and the kind of confident energy that fills a room the moment he

walks in. He had just joined a well-regarded media organisation in Chennai as a senior editorial associate.

His direct supervisor was a veteran journalist of thirty years — a quiet, unhurried man named Krishnamurthy, whose instincts about a story were, in the newsroom's collective memory, almost never wrong. In their very first editorial meeting, Krishnamurthy gently suggested a different angle rooted in his decades of experience. Aryan nodded politely. But the moment the meeting ended, he whispered to a colleague: "These old-timers are stuck in the past. They simply do not understand how the new audience thinks."

He proceeded with his original approach. The story underperformed badly. Three months later, Aryan had quietly developed a reputation in the office — not for his talent, which was genuine, but for being someone who did not listen, dismissed senior counsel, and abandoned half his projects when the next exciting idea arrived. His editor described him, privately and with some sadness, as "a powerful engine with no steering."

Aryan's story is not a story of incompetence. It is a story of attitude.

A Conversation Decades in the Making

It was a calm Thursday evening when I sat down with my dear friend R. Nurullah. At seventy-three, Nurullah carries his five decades of journalism with the easy grace of a man who has nothing left to prove. He began his career when newsrooms smelled of ink and deadlines were met on instinct and

integrity. Over fifty years, he covered prime ministers and chief ministers, witnessed the arc of independent India's political story from the ground, and authored several acclaimed books in Tamil that have enriched the literary and journalistic traditions of this state.

Today, he serves as a Governing Council Member of the Sansad Ratna Awards — the prestigious parliamentary recognition programme that Prime Point Foundation has sustained for fifteen years — and as Co-Chairman of the Digital Journalists Association of India (DIJAI). In Tamil Nadu's journalistic community, his name commands immediate and unqualified respect.

I shared Aryan's story with him. He did not respond immediately. He looked out of the window for a long moment, in the manner of a man who has seen this story play out a hundred times across five decades.

"Srinivasan," he said finally, "when I started in this profession, my first editor told me something I have never forgotten. He said: Nurullah, you have two ears and one mouth. Nature has already told you the ratio. Honour it."

The Vanishing Art of Listening

"That ratio," I replied, "is being reversed today. We live in an era of broadcasting, not receiving. Everyone is speaking; almost nobody is truly listening."

"In journalism, listening is everything," Nurullah said, leaning forward. "P.V. Narasimha Rao was the finest listener I ever observed in public life. He would sit in absolute stillness

whilst a person spoke, and when he finally responded, the person felt entirely understood. Narendra Modi carries that same quality into public interactions. He listens before he speaks, and when he speaks, it lands."

I added the dimension that I used to teach my MBA students. "Nurullah, science tells us that our brain is capable of processing approximately 400 to 500 words per minute. Yet the average speaker delivers only 150 words per minute. That gap — those remaining 250 to 350 words of unused mental capacity — is where the danger lives. The untrained mind fills that gap by wandering. The speaker is still talking; the listener has already left the room."

"But a trained mind — and this is what meditation and focused practice can build — uses that surplus capacity differently. It reprocesses what was just heard. It repeats the speaker's last point internally, absorbs it more deeply, and uses the remaining capacity to formulate a genuinely thoughtful question. That is the difference between hearing and listening."

I shared my classroom experiment with him — how I would repeat an important concept twice during a lecture, then ask the working professionals how many times they had heard it. Ninety percent would say once. "When I mentioned it the first time," I explained, "one group was mentally elsewhere. When I repeated it, they returned — but the first group had wandered off. Only those whose minds happened to be present on both occasions heard it twice. This is why every important point in a speech must be repeated. Not because

the audience is inattentive by choice, but because the listening gap is a biological reality."

Nurullah nodded slowly. "And most industrial relations conflicts that I have seen reported over five decades begin not with a wage dispute but with a worker who felt unheard. When senior managers stop listening, they do not lose information. They lose trust. And trust, once lost in an organisation, is the most expensive thing to rebuild."

The ATTITUDE Equation

"But Srinivasan," Nurullah said, sitting back, "listening is a skill. It can be taught and practised. What worries me more deeply — and I say this having watched fifty years of India's story — is the attitude of today's young generation. That is a harder thing to fix."

I smiled. "Nurullah, I sometimes share a small observation in my talks — that if you assign the value of one to A, two to B, three to C, and so on through the alphabet, the word ATTITUDE adds up to exactly one hundred. A-T-T-I-T-U-D-E: 1+20+20+9+20+21+4+5. One hundred. In lighter vein, attitude is quite literally everything."

He laughed, genuinely delighted. "That is wonderful. And completely true. I will borrow that."

"The challenge today," I continued, more seriously, "is a specific kind of attitude that I find deeply troubling. It is the attitude that says: all that came before me is inferior. That the wisdom of elders is outdated. That traditional values are

embarrassing. That India's past is something to be ashamed of rather than built upon."

Nurullah's expression grew serious. "I have covered India's political and social history for fifty years, Srinivasan. This nation's freedom did not arrive with a single speech or a single march. Lakhs of freedom fighters sacrificed their youth, their families, and their lives — brick by brick, stone by stone — so that we could sit here today in a free country and speak our minds. When a young person dismisses that inheritance with a shrug, I do not feel angry. I feel grief."

"We have begun," I said, "importing a culture that was never ours. In our anxiety to appear global and modern, we have started treating our own traditions — our respect for elders, our culture of seeking blessings, our value of the Guru-Shishya bond — as quaint relics. But these are not relics. They are load-bearing walls. Remove them, and the structure weakens."

"In the newsrooms of today," Nurullah reflected, "I see young journalists who will interrupt a senior mid-sentence, who address editors by first name without being invited to, who argue with thirty years of editorial experience on the basis of two years of confidence. I do not oppose their energy — their energy is magnificent. What I mourn is their unwillingness to receive before they transmit."

The Depth of the Well: On Consistency

"And what earns that place in people's hearts, Srinivasan?" Nurullah asked.

"Consistency," I said simply. "Not brilliance. Not ambition. Consistency."

I shared with him the principle that has guided my own professional life: one step forward, no step backward. Prime Point Foundation, which we have now sustained for twenty-six years. PreSense, our eMagazine for positive journalism, published continuously for twenty years on the personal suggestion of Dr Abdul Kalam. The Sansad Ratna Awards, which have recognised 143 Members of Parliament and parliamentary committees over fifteen years and which has become the most sought-after parliamentary recognition in India. None of these were built in a season of excitement. All of them were built day after day, year after year, without deviation.

"I am regularly urged to add new initiatives," I told him. "Well-meaning people suggest new awards, new platforms, new programmes. I decline — not from lack of ambition, but from hard-won wisdom. Every new commitment, unless it is deeply considered, is a silent betrayal of an existing one. Spreading thin is the enemy of depth."

Nurullah understood this completely. "It is like two men digging for water," he said. "One digs ten shallow holes across a wide field. The other picks one spot and digs twenty feet. Only one of them finds water."

"Exactly," I replied. "Today's young professionals are magnificent at starting. They launch projects with great fanfare, build momentum for a few weeks, and then pivot to the next exciting idea when the first one demands patience."

The result is a life full of beginnings and empty of completions. Credibility is not built by what you start. It is built by what you finish, and what you continue to honour, year after year."

Takeaway

- Honour the Listening Ratio: God gave us two ears and one mouth. Use the surplus mental capacity — the gap between 150 words spoken and 500 words processed — to reprocess, absorb, and formulate thoughtful questions. Listening is a discipline, not a passive act.
- Repeat to Reach: Whether speaking in a boardroom or a classroom, every important point must be stated at least twice. The listening gap is biological — not a character flaw — and great communicators account for it.
- ATTITUDE is Everything: $A+T+T+I+T+U+D+E = 100$. Cultivate the attitude of a learner, not a broadcaster. Respect the wisdom of those who came before — not because they are older, but because they have paid a price for their knowledge that no classroom can replicate.
- Honour Your Inheritance: India's freedom, India's institutions, and India's culture were built brick by brick across generations. Root yourself before you reach outward.

- One Step Forward, No Step Backward: Take on only what you can complete with full commitment. Fewer promises, fully honoured, build more credibility than many promises carelessly made. Depth of purpose is the only foundation upon which a lasting reputation can be constructed.

Chapter 12: The Language of Precision — And a Journey Completed

Every vague word is a small betrayal. Every inflated promise is a borrowed credibility that must one day be repaid. And every truth left unspoken between two professionals is a wall built where there should have been a window. In this closing chapter, we return to where it all began — and discover that the secret of all great communication is, and has always been, the courage to be exact.

The Language of Precision

Overcoming Vagueness to Build Professional Credibility

NAVIGATING THE DANGER ZONES



The ASAP Trap
Replace vague terms like 'soon' or 'ASAP' with specific dates and times to provide certainty.



The Overclaim Culture
Credibility is built in the gap between what you promise and what you actually produce.



Feedback Phobia
Avoid sycophancy; precise, timely, and respectful feedback is a gift essential for professional growth.

RAISING THE PROFESSIONAL BENCHMARK

Under-promise and Over-deliver
Secure your reputation by consistently exceeding the specific expectations you set for yourself.



The Thiruvalluvar Standard
Adopt the highest form of intellectual honesty by delivering truths in the fewest possible syllables.



"Precision is a form of respect"
Being exact tells the other person you value their time enough to give them certainty.

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The Benchmark That Kept Falling: A Case Study

Vikram was a sales manager at a mid-sized technology firm in Bengaluru. Bright, articulate, and ambitious, he was the kind of professional who lit up a client meeting. His presentations were polished, his energy was infectious, and his promises — made with complete sincerity in the heat of a pitch — were generous to a fault.

"We will have the integration ready very soon," he would tell clients. "The proposal will reach you at the earliest." "I will revert to you ASAP." And in those moments, he meant every word. But "soon" passed. "The earliest" arrived and departed without the proposal. Clients did not receive lies from Vikram — they received something more corrosive: uncertainty. They never knew when to expect him, what to plan around, or whether his word was a commitment or a gesture. One by one, quietly, they began taking their business elsewhere.

When his manager finally sat with him and asked what had gone wrong, Vikram was genuinely confused. "I always delivered," he said. "Maybe a little late, but I always came through." His manager looked at him steadily and replied: "Vikram, in the client's mind, late without warning is the same as never."

Vikram had not failed because of incompetence. He had failed because of imprecision — in his language, in his promises, and in his inability to hear the hard truth when it was offered to him early enough to matter.

The Return: A Conversation That Completes the Circle

Some books are written because an author has something to say. This book was written because a remarkable young woman refused to let me stay silent.

When I first sat down with Sukruti Narayanan for the conversation that became Chapter 1 of this book, I did not know that her gentle, persistent nudging would lead to twelve chapters, a cast of eleven distinguished professionals, and a journey through the full landscape of human communication. Today, as we reach the final chapter, it feels entirely right — indeed, it feels inevitable — that it is Sukruti's voice that closes what her encouragement opened.

Sukruti is, by any measure, one of the most multi-faceted professionals of her generation. Now settled in Sydney after growing up in Chennai, she carries the warmth of this city in everything she does. She is a celebrated film actor, a media personality of considerable reach, a communication professional, an author of three books, and a qualified expert in Artificial Intelligence and Robotics. In Sydney, she built a distinguished career in the sales division of one of Australia's leading telecommunications companies, winning multiple awards for performance and client relationship excellence — experience that gives her a sharp and personal understanding of exactly what happens when professional communication is imprecise.

I shared Vikram's story with her. She did not need a moment to recognise it.

"Sir," she said, with that directness that has always made her such a remarkable conversation partner, "I lived inside that story for years in my telecom career. In sales, your word is literally your currency. The moment a client cannot predict you, they begin pricing in the risk of dealing with you. And that price is usually your contract."

The ASAP Trap: When Vagueness Becomes Culture

"Sukruti," I said, "I want to share something that troubled me deeply. A few weeks ago, I asked a young professional — a close junior of mine, a man in his thirties holding a senior position in a multinational company — to send me a document. He replied promptly and pleasantly: 'I will send it soon, Sir.'"

"I advised him gently: do not say soon. Do not say ASAP. These words tell me nothing I can plan around. Tell me instead: I will send it by Wednesday at 5 PM. Give me a day. Give me a time. Make me a promise I can hold you to."

Sukruti leaned forward. "What did he say?"

"He accepted the suggestion graciously. But then he said something that stopped me cold. He said: 'Sir, this is the first time in my career that anyone has suggested I be specific. In our industry, ASAP has become the accepted standard.'"

"And that," I continued, "is precisely the moment that frightened me. Not that one young man was using vague language — but that an entire professional culture had accepted vagueness as the norm, and nobody was pushing back."

I told Sukruti what I had told him. "I said: the fact that the system has accepted ASAP does not make it acceptable. It simply means the benchmark has fallen — and nobody noticed, because we were all too busy justifying the fall instead of correcting it."

"Think of a class where the average mark fifteen years ago was ninety. Today it is seventy. What does a healthy institution do? It asks: how do we return to ninety? But what do we increasingly see? We see the seventy being celebrated as an achievement. In another three years, it becomes sixty — and that too is justified. In government offices, in legislatures, in corporate cultures, we have developed a dangerous habit of lowering the benchmark to meet our performance, instead of raising our performance to meet the benchmark."

Sukruti was quiet for a moment. "Sir, in my telecom sales experience, the highest performers I worked with shared one habit above all others. They were specific. They said I will call you Thursday at ten. They said the revised quote will be in your inbox by Friday noon. Their clients trusted them not because they were always the most talented, but because they were always the most precise. Precision, I learnt, is a form of respect. It tells the other person: I value your time enough to give you certainty."

"Thiruvalluvar understood this two thousand years ago," I added. "His Thirukural delivered eternal truths in the fewest possible syllables — not because brevity was fashionable, but because he understood that precision is the highest form of

intellectual honesty. Every unnecessary word is a small act of disrespect to the reader."

The Overclaim Culture: Borrowed Credibility

"The cousin of vagueness," I continued, "is overclaiming. And in today's professional culture, it has reached epidemic proportions."

"I see it constantly in pitches and proposals," Sukruti agreed. "People promise delivery in two weeks when they know it will take five. They describe themselves as experts in tools they have barely used. They tell the client what the client wants to hear, rather than what the client needs to know."

"And the mathematics of it," I said, "are ruthless. A professional who promises in five days and delivers in three is remembered with admiration. A professional who promises in two days and delivers in five is remembered with suspicion — regardless of the quality of the work. Credibility is not built in the delivery alone. It is built in the gap between what you promised and what you produced."

"Under-promise and over-deliver," Sukruti said softly. "It sounds so simple."

"It is simple. What is not simple is the ego that stands in the way. The desire to impress in the moment is one of the most expensive instincts in professional life. It costs us the very reputation we are trying to build."

The Feedback Phobia: The Truth Left Unspoken

"And yet," I said, "even when people know all of this — even when they recognise the vagueness, the overclaiming, the slipping benchmarks — they often say nothing. Because the third great failure of professional communication today is the fear of honest feedback."

"In my telecom teams," Sukruti reflected, "the highest-performing managers were the ones who told you the truth — kindly, specifically, and immediately. Not in an annual review three months after the mistake. They said: In that client call this morning, when you said ASAP, I saw the client's expression change. Tomorrow, let us try this instead. Specific. Respectful. Timely."

"The alternative," I said, "is the culture of the Shamchakiri — the sycophant who tells the leader only what the leader wishes to hear. It feels kind. It is, in truth, one of the cruellest things one professional can do to another. It robs them of the mirror they need to grow."

"Feedback is not criticism," Sukruti said. "It is a gift. The professional who can give it with precision and receive it with grace is the rarest and most valuable person in any organisation."

A Journey Completed: With Gratitude

As our conversation drew to its close, I felt the full weight and warmth of the journey this book has been. Eleven remarkable professionals — Sukruti, Sakthi, Deepa, Sridhar, Parthasarathy, Priyadharshni, Hemalatha, Ramesh, Suparna,

Mohan, and Nurullah — had each, in their own voice and from their own world, helped illuminate a different facet of the most fundamentally human of all skills: the ability to communicate with clarity, warmth, and integrity.

But this book would not exist at all without the woman sitting across from me.

"Sukruti," I said, and I felt the words carry more than their surface meaning, "when you first told me that I had a book inside me — that the lessons I had gathered across decades of professional life deserved to reach a wider audience — I was not immediately convinced. You were persistent. You were encouraging. You refused to accept my hesitation."

She smiled, in the way that only someone from Chennai who has made the world her home can smile — with a warmth that crosses every distance.

"I am glad you did not listen to your hesitation, Sir," she said quietly.

"I listened to you instead," I replied. "And that has made all the difference."

To Sukruti Narayanan — actor, author, communication professional, technology expert, sales champion, and the most persistent nudge I have ever been grateful for — this book is, in no small measure, yours. You saw it before I did. You believed in it before it existed. Every chapter carries, somewhere within it, the echo of your encouragement.

Thank you from the first word to the last.

Takeaway

- **Replace Vagueness with Dates:** Never say ASAP, soon, or at the earliest. Say by Thursday at 5 PM. Precision is not pedantry — it is respect for the other person's time and plans.
- **Guard the Benchmark:** When an entire culture accepts a lower standard, the temptation is to justify it. Resist. Our task is always to raise the standard, never to lower the expectation.
- **Under-Promise, Over-Deliver:** The gap between your promise and your performance is where your reputation lives. Make that gap work in your favour — every single time.
- **Give Feedback with Precision:** Vague praise and vague criticism are equally useless. Be specific, be respectful, and be timely. A precise truth, delivered with kindness, is one of the greatest gifts one professional can offer another.
- **Complete the Circle:** Great communication is not a collection of techniques. It is a way of being — precise in your words, consistent in your commitments, humble in your listening, and honest in your relationships. When you communicate from that place, you do not just convey information. You build trust. And trust, built word by careful word over a lifetime, is the only professional legacy that truly endures.

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About the Book

In an era dominated by rapid digital messaging, *Communicate the Communication* serves as an essential guide to reclaiming the human touch. Aimed primarily at young professionals, this insightful book bridges the critical gap between technical brilliance and effective interpersonal connection. Through twelve engaging chapters, it offers practical frameworks such as the 'Communication Gym', the 5W1H model, and the 'Hanuman Standard' for conflict resolution. Drawing upon decades of professional experience and timeless cultural wisdom, the book teaches readers how to listen deeply, lead with empathy, and build an enduring, trust-based professional reputation.

About the Author



K. Srinivasan, widely known as Prime Point Srinivasan, is a distinguished digital journalist, publisher, and perception management expert based in Chennai. After dedicating over 25 years to the banking industry, he took voluntary retirement in 1998 to establish his own public relations consultancy. In 1999, he founded the Prime Point Foundation to promote communication awareness. Inspired by Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, he launched the eMagazine *PreSense* in 2006 to champion positive journalism, and later established the Sansad Ratna Awards in 2010 to honour outstanding parliamentarians. He is also the founder of the Digital Journalists Association of India (DIJAI) and Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL). An accomplished author, Srinivasan continues to mentor the youth and shape modern communication strategies across India.