



APPEAL TO EMOTION AND YOU'LL MOVE MOUNTAINS

BEFORE YOU READ THE REST OF THIS ARTICLE, REMEMBER THIS: EMOTION PRECEDES REASON.

In *The Power of Communication*, Helio Fred Garcia, a well-respected crisis manager and phenomenal communicator, wrote, "Humans are not thinking machines. We're feeling machines who also think. We feel first, and then we think. As a result, leaders need to meet emotion with emotion before they can move audiences with reason."

Consider how we make decisions in our personal lives and you'll see what Garcia means. Think about a young man who is going to propose to his girlfriend. What does he need to do in order to convince her to say, "I do"?

Does he employ a logical argument? Does he get down on one

knee and start listing off statistics about how married couples enjoy four times the wealth and, on average, live longer than single people do?

No. That's totally unromantic. Totally unemotional. So what does he do? He makes an emotional appeal. He expresses his love. He may tell his girlfriend how much she means to him and how he can't bear the thought of living without her.

The truth of the matter is, that it's emotion that often guides the major decisions we make in our lives - not facts and figures. And in my experience, the very same is true for the audiences, both large and small, you will encounter in your professional life as well.

THE SALESPERSON THAT CAN SELL

When you are in front of someone and want to persuade them to believe in or take action from what you're saying, you have to sell it. The great marketing agencies of the world figured this out long ago. If they want someone to buy something, the best probability of getting them to make that purchase is to appeal directly to their sense of emotion. Then, in order to feel better about that purchase, people support their decisions with logical justifications.

Let's say you're selling a widget. This widget accomplishes a task faster than any other widget. While that's definitely great, it's also very factual. Merely communicating this widget's lightning-fast abilities often won't be enough to close the sale.

Good salespeople will not only highlight the facts that make the widget superior to other products in the market, they will focus on why those facts matter, how it will benefit them. In the case of our speedy widget, they'll communicate how faster speeds can help a client solve a given problem. There is emotion wrapped up in that appeal - you're saving someone time, effort, and most likely helping them make money. These are solutions that help someone get excited about the future.

Channeling a core emotion (in this case excitement) fuels motivation, which yields action.

It's only through a speaker's ability to make an audience feel something that they eventually close the sale. People, both in their personal and professional lives, make decisions that they feel are the right things to do rather than simply the logical thing to do.

So, the key ingredient in selling whatever it is you want to sell? Emotion.

BACK TO MOVING MOUNTAINS...

Let me give you an example of a time when emotion moved a proverbial "mountain." When the United States Olympic hockey team glided onto the ice to face the Soviets in Lake Placid, New York, on Feb. 22, 1980, Cold War tensions had reached a boiling point.

The winner would advance to the finals to play for the gold medal, but there was far more at stake in upstate New York in 1980 than mere Olympic glory. The game had come to take on a great deal of symbolic importance. It was Communism versus Democracy. Free markets versus centralized control. East versus West.

Before the match, things looked bleak for Team USA. Having lost to the Soviets 10-3 in a previous exhibition, the Americans were given zero chance of winning by the media and hockey pundits. The Soviets were the most dominant team in the history of Olympic sports. With a win-loss record of 62 - 6, they arrived at Lake Placid having won four straight Olympic gold medals.

The Americans weren't supposed to win.

Before the big game, Herb Brooks - the coach and two-time Olympian - walked into his locker room and came face-to-face with a team that looked as if it had conceded victory. Brooks had a keen sense of what we call situational awareness - an ability to take the pulse of his players by reading non-verbal cues. His players looked defeated.

He knew he had to do something to get their attention, so he did what all great communicators do: He gave his team a call to action: Win this game. But he did it in a way that relied more on emotion than reason. He delivered the following speech:

Great moments are born from great opportunity. And that's what you have here tonight, boys. That's what you've earned here tonight. One game.

If we played them 10 times, they might win nine. But not this game; not tonight. Tonight, we skate with them. Tonight we stay with them, and we shut them down because we can.

Tonight, we are the greatest hockey team in the world.

You were born to be hockey players—every one of you, and you were meant to be here tonight. This is your time. Their time is done. It's over. I'm sick and tired of hearing about what a great hockey team the Soviets have. Screw 'em. This is your time. Now go out there and take it!"

That's all he needed— 123 words delivered with passion and intensity. In that moment, Brooks gave birth to a locker room full of believers. Watch Kurt Russell's depiction in the movie *Miracle* and you'll notice a few important techniques all communicators should remember when making an emotional appeal.

- When Brooks walks into the locker room, he waits 15 seconds before he utters a word. He uses that silence to create dramatic effect to ensure he has their attention.

- When he starts his speech, he begins with impact. "Great moments are born from great opportunity." He's in the moment. There is no past, no future. Just one game. "Tonight we shut them down because we can."

- He ends with a call to action and emotional appeal that strikes a nerve with his team, which goes out and does exactly what he wants them to do. Win that game.

If Brooks had appealed to his team's sense of logic, the game would have been over before it ever began.

Want to move an audience to your cause? Or change their minds about a given topic? Or convince them to get out of their seats and go buy something they swore they never would?

Then do what Herb Brooks did: appeal to your audience's base emotions and you'll be able to move mountains. Because remember, emotion precedes reason.