

THE NEW LOL

What do you think of when you see “LOL”? Perhaps you used it in a text you sent recently. Maybe you commented “LOL” on a thread or photo on one of the social media platforms you have an account with. Chances are, you used this acronym for “laughing out loud” at some point in the recent past. It’s become an iconic symbol of a new language—a language that conveys messages with as few words and letters as possible. What if I proposed a new meaning for LOL? One that is far more influential and necessary?

THE LOL EVERYONE SHOULD BE USING

There’s a language more critical for communication and success in your career than any that are currently offered at schools or are being used for today’s tech gadgets and apps. There’s a language to learn that paves the way for a better future, a more successful and fulfilling career. It’s a language that inspires, persuades, and provokes lasting change, one in which you will gain enormous self-confidence and enable you to communicate common things in uncommon and memorable ways. What language is this? The language of leading (LOL)! This language allows you to communicate in such a way that prepares you to succeed in school, your career, and life.

THE LAST TIME YOU TRIED TO LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE . . .

The idea of learning a new language may prompt memories of a certain foreign language class you were required to take in high school and/or college. The

one where you struggled to comprehend and retain a language that you’d likely not use again. You sat for nearly an hour a day, every day, for a few years, because since 1975, your high school required at least two years of it. Also, if you were college-bound, they required at least two, if not three, years to apply. You had to take it simply to tick a box if nothing else.

For most—if not all—of you, you likely lived through those classes with boredom and frustration that often felt like a colossal waste of time. You had other, more important competing interests, and this class was hardly your priority. And to make matters worse, you were surrounded by classmates who had zero interest in learning it. The class just slogged along endlessly. That certainly didn’t help your motivation to learn it. Your only goal was to get an A for the sake of your transcript, and whether you learned the language or not didn’t matter.

The sad truth of all this is that when graduates are asked if they actually use their foreign language classes in their career, only one out of one hundred Americans can claim fluency taught from an American high school or college. That’s noteworthy, because since 2008, nine out of ten US schools offered foreign language instruction—with only a 1 percent success rate. What a disappointing statistic. The thing is, research proves learning a new language is good for us, and for some it’s beneficial in both their personal and professional lives. For all, in theory, it improves our cognition, makes us more creative, and helps us see things from other points of view.

NOT YOUR TYPICAL “FOREIGN” LANGUAGE

What if a new language had been offered instead of the traditional foreign languages? What if, at the beginning of the semester, your teacher told you that through this new language you'd learn to . . .

- **win friends and influence people**
- **master nonverbal communication techniques, including body language and intuition**
- **confidently and boldly deliver messages with purpose**
- **listen with intent, and**
- **that what you would learn would not just matter in the four walls of that classroom, but in the world around you.**

Think how valuable this skill set would have been to you in high school as you transitioned to college. Imagine if you had learned this in preparation for college interviews, and then were able to build upon it once in college, helping you establish critical internships and jobs. This language is essential for climbing to the top of your career.

How would this accomplish so much? The language of leading, or the ability to lead, helps individuals develop a mindset of success early on, one that emphasizes the importance of speaking skills, resilience, empathy, and emotional intelligence.

Read the papers, watch the news, all we seem to read are words that are destructive, and it's a daily event. Many of our leaders' words and actions are offensive and are costing their careers. They never learned the language of leading. They just waited until they stumbled and are now suffering the consequences. The LOL teaches you to be conscious not only of what you say, but also of what others hear.

Like the languages required in high school and college, the LOL is a relevant form of communication. Unlike these traditional foreign languages, the LOL is a universal language that, if taught and adopted, would not only significantly improve your career, but positively impact the world around you.



CHUCK GARCIA is the founder of Climb Leadership International and coaches executives on leadership development, public speaking, and emotional intelligence. He is also an Adjunct Professor at Columbia University where he teaches Leadership Communication in the Graduate School of Engineering.

A 25-year veteran of Wall Street, he spent 14 years in sales and marketing at Bloomberg in a variety of leadership positions. He was Director of Business Development at BlackRock Solutions, an arm of the world's largest investment manager, and was a Managing Director at Citadel, a prestigious alternative investment manager.

He is also a mountaineer and has climbed some of the world's tallest peaks, including Mount Kilimanjaro, Mount Elbrus, the Matterhorn, as well as mountains in Alaska and the Andes.