

道

LESS & MORE

JASON ALAN FRANZEN

Written & Designed by Jason Alan Franzen | JasonFranzen.com

Edited by Joseph Alan Wachs

Published by Streamline Certified | Dallas, Texas USA

©2016 Streamline Certified | All rights reserved

ISBN 978-099814240-1

Printed in the United States of America

First Edition



For ordering information, visit:

StreamlineCertified.com/orders

For my wife, Laura. Simply the most wonderful.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the written permission of Streamline Certified.

ONE

MORE

MORE OF WHAT?	2
INVESTMENT	12
THOUGHT	14
EFFICIENCY	16
LIMITATIONS	18
THE POWER OF FOCUS	20

TWO

LESS

LESS OF WHAT?	30
WORDS vs. COMMUNICATION	36
AVOIDING THE TEAL DEER	38
MAKING HEADLINES	42
BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT	44
KANSO PRINCIPLE	46
STREAMLINING	50

THREE

THE WAY

FOCUSED COMMUNICATION	74
I AM TAO	88
IDEAS	92
OBJECTIVES	102
LINE OF SIGHT	106
AUDIENCE	114
MESSAGE	122
TECHNIQUE	130
ACTION	142
CONNECTING THE DOTS	158

ONE

MORE



MORE OF WHAT?

My grandfather built a sizable pipe & welding company serving the oil & gas industry across the Midwest in the 1970s.

As the company expanded and made more money, he found he had to spend more time juggling the responsibilities and worries that came with the scale, and he had less time to do what he loved - fishing.

Past a certain point, there was no way earning more money or running a larger company could make the joy of fishing any greater for him. So he took the unusual step of intentionally scaling back the size and growth of the company to remove the strain on him and his employees—allowing him to focus on what he loved.

This decision paid dividends of unexpected proportions.

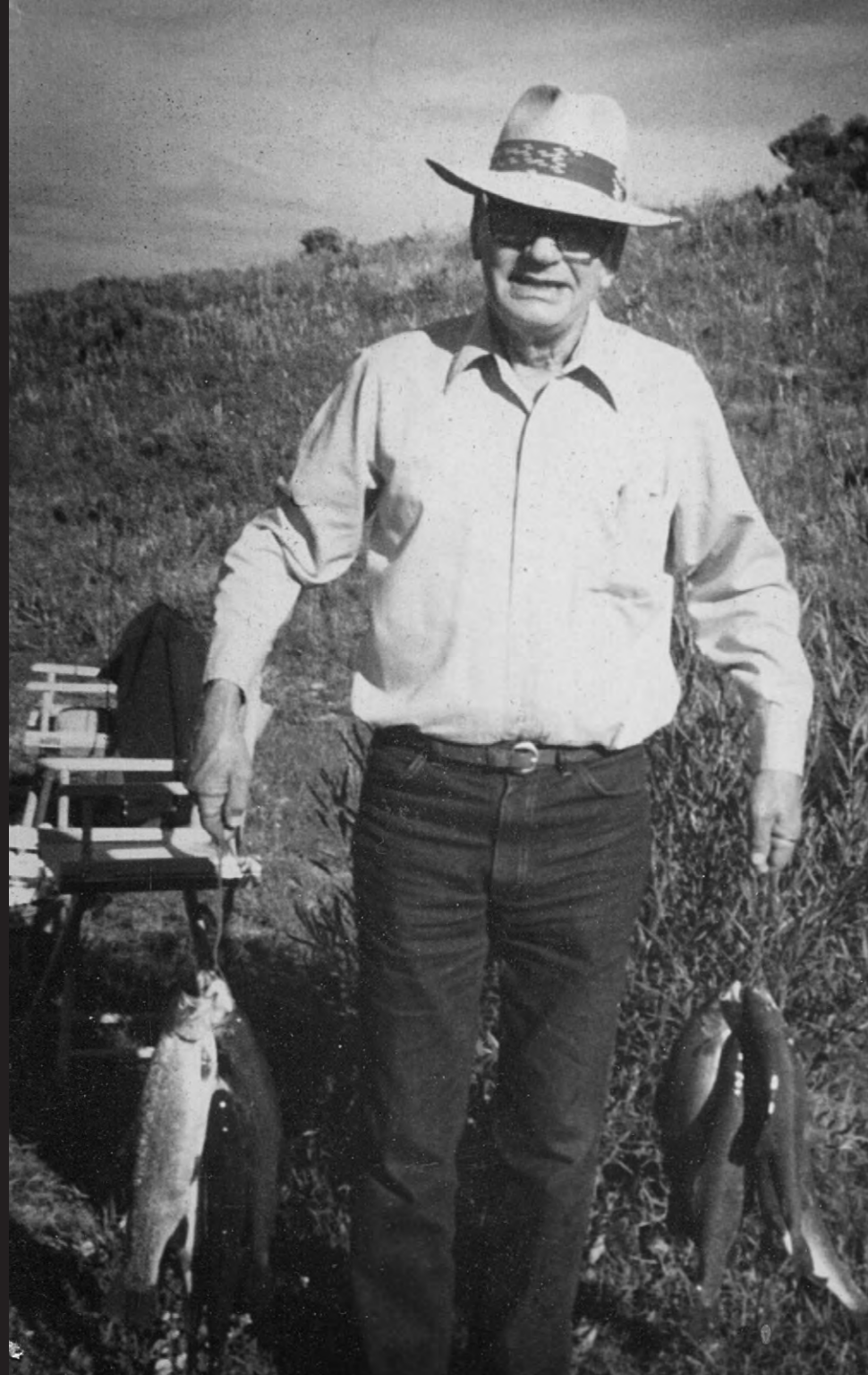
The company was able to focus on fewer, more profitable projects and ultimately made as much money at 1/4 the size as it had in its larger incarnation.

His decision to focus on quality over quantity proved that our desire for MORE is quite often a healthy opportunity to reconsider...more of what?



I still remember the day he took me out of school to go fishing.

The author and Grandpa Hall, 1976



“Any intelligent fool can make things bigger and more complex.

It takes a touch of genius... and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction.”

- E.F. SCHUMACHER

Economist & author of *Small is Beautiful*

MORE SIMPLE.

There is an art to making big ideas easy to grasp. Done well, it makes for incredibly powerful communication. This book lays out a blueprint for streamlining communication in a format that practices what it preaches.

Together, we can lead a revolution for clear, efficient communication that focuses on moving ideas forward. Simply.

Let's begin.

INVESTMENT

“I WOULD HAVE WRITTEN A SHORTER LETTER,
BUT I DID NOT HAVE THE TIME.”

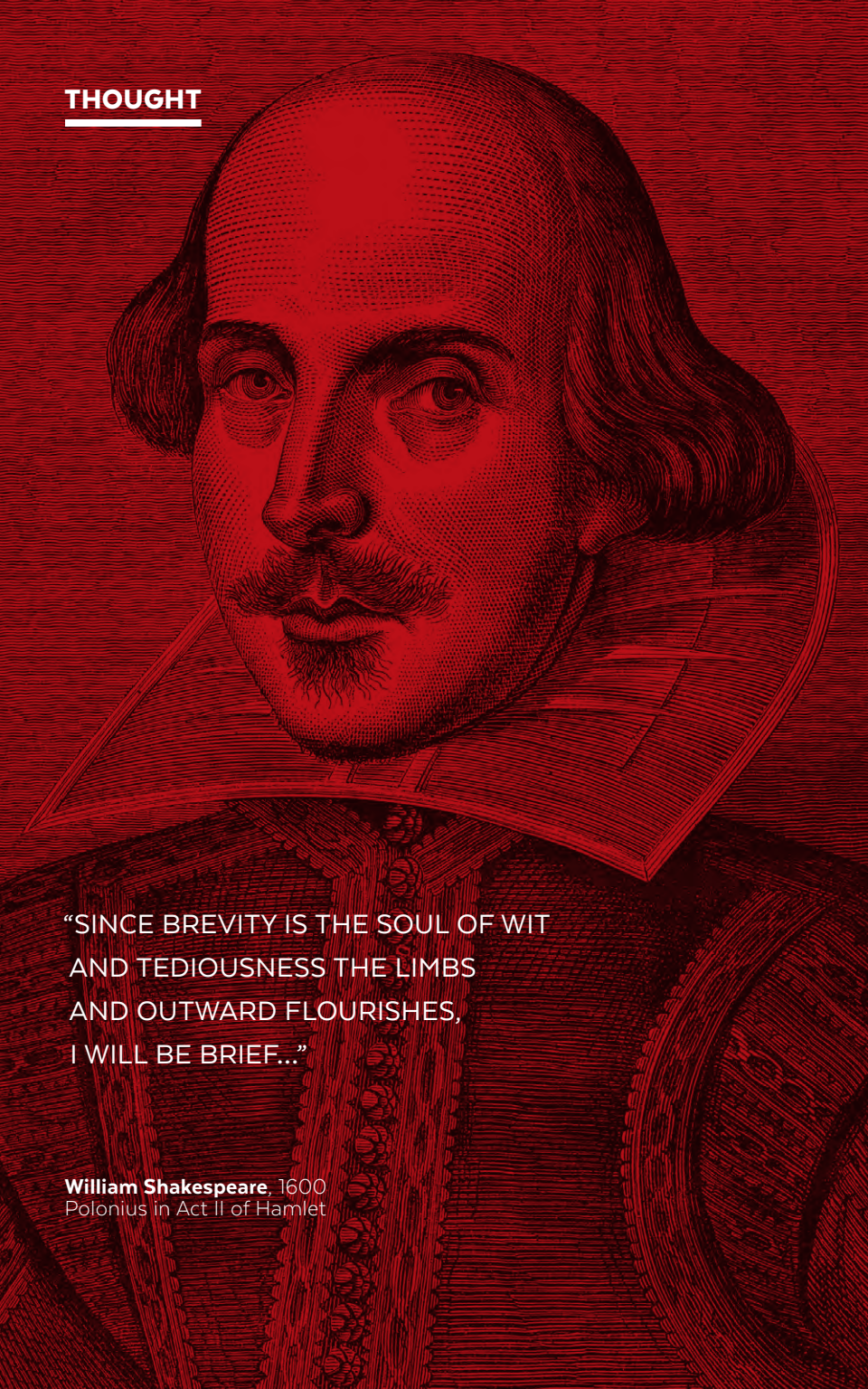
Blaise Pascal, 1656
Philosopher & scientist

Nothing quite captures the spirit of our times like an enigmatic quote from a 17th-century Frenchman musing about his poor communication. Written well before the age of 140 character message limits, this prescient quip highlights a problem just as prevalent today as it must have been then.

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION REQUIRES
AN INVESTMENT OF TIME.**

The throwaway nature of communication in today's digital culture unfortunately emphasizes speed over quality.

**CONVEYING MEANINGFUL AND POWERFUL
MESSAGES IN COMPACT PROSE IS DIFFICULT.
AND WORTH IT.**



“SINCE BREVITY IS THE SOUL OF WIT
AND TEDIOUSNESS THE LIMBS
AND OUTWARD FLOURISHES,
I WILL BE BRIEF...”

William Shakespeare, 1600
Polonius in Act II of Hamlet

Leave it to none other than the Bard himself to make this first important connection:

BREVITY IS A CATALYST FOR THINKING.

As a bookend to Mr. Pascal’s assessment that lengthy communication is a by-product of writing quickly, Mr. Shakespeare correlates concise, pointed communication with being thoughtful. Taking these two ideas together, our postulate takes shape:

**TAKING THE TIME TO THOUGHTFULLY
CONSIDER WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY WILL YIELD
SMARTER AND SHORTER COMMUNICATION.**

Now let’s jump ahead a few centuries.

EFFICIENCY

“LESS IS MORE.”



Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1947
Architect and furniture designer describing minimalism

In borrowing a phrase from the poet Robert Browning (1855), Mies extends the argument for **LESS** by emphasizing the impact-potential of **SIMPLICITY**.

Minimalist architecture and design, a nouveau trend of the time, was elevated as an expression of honesty. In Mies' view, architecture need not express itself with grandiose decoration if it's purpose be true.

Applying this premise to communication, we further bolster the argument for compactness: Succinct communication is more likely to make an impact.

LESS IS MORE IMPACTFUL.

LIMITATIONS

**"IT'S NOT A
BIG IDEA
IF IT DOESN'T FIT
ON A POST-IT NOTE."**

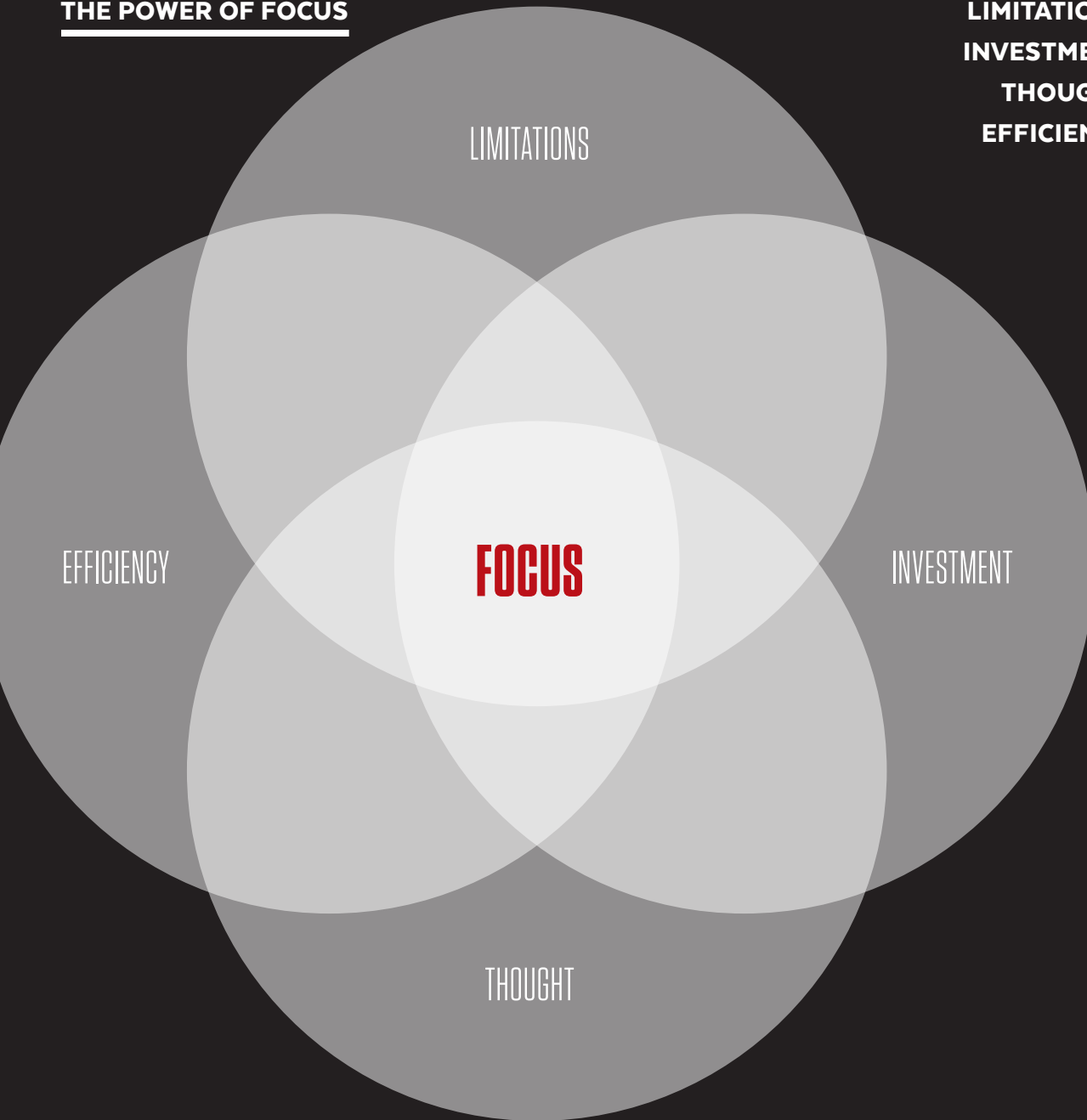
Luke Sullivan, 2015
Thoughtful Ad Man

And finally, a contemporary perspective that closes the loop to Mr. Pascal's insight (a shorter letter with more time) by illustrating the power of constraints. By intentionally limiting ourselves to compact framing, we raise the bar for clarity and conciseness.

Where expansive, limitless space is a playground for ideas, communication is best served by limitations. Self-imposed limits are the catalyst for refinement and distillation.

LIMITS INSPIRE BOLDNESS.

THE POWER OF FOCUS



LIMITATIONS

Self-imposed restraint

INVESTMENT

Time to refine

THOUGHT

Thoughtful consideration

EFFICIENCY

Concentration on the essential

These four elements give us the foundation for focused communication:

L.I.T.E.

WE MUST HAVE LITE TO FOCUS.

ALIGNMENT

When we focus our communication, we are bringing an alignment to:

What we are saying

Who we are saying it to

What we are trying to accomplish


ATTENTION

At the same time, we focus attention by:

Filtering out everything that is not important

Placing emphasis on the most important

Relaying this importance with clarity



**EVERYTHING
STARTS
OUT OF FOCUS.**

**IT IS UP TO US
TO CREATE
CLARITY.**

In reality, most things remain out of focus until specific attention and care are given to bring them into focus.

The work of focusing our communication is just as important as focusing our sight.

IDEAS BROUGHT INTO FOCUS CREATE CLARITY.

MORE OF WHAT?

MORE FOCUS.

Focus is the most powerful factor in creating effective communication.

TWO

LESS



LESS OF WHAT?

A woman at a cocktail party finds herself chatting with three single men while she fumbles through her purse, pulling out her lipstick to reapply it.

She asks the men, “How would I know you still loved me if we had been married for 10 years?”

The first man replies, “We would have a beautiful home with beautiful kids and spend weekends touring the vineyards.

I would never let a day go by when I didn't tell you how much I love you.”

The second man replies, “I would bring you flowers every week as a reminder of how lucky we are to be together.

You would never want for anything and could always trust that our relationship is the most important thing to me.”

The third man doesn't say a word.

He smiles and politely gestures to one of his teeth, while giving the woman a wink.

The woman quickly rubs her tooth to remove a spot of lipstick. Her returned smile makes clear she got the answer she wanted, but wasn't expecting.

SAYING LESS COMMUNICATES MORE.

WORDS VS. COMMUNICATING



WORDS ARE THE VEHICLE FOR CONVEYING MESSAGES.

As the Lipstick parable illustrates, we all have a tendency to rely on words to communicate our thoughts. Yet, no words at all were needed for the thoughtful man to convey his important idea — he would be there for her when she needed him.

When we focus on what we want to **COMMUNICATE**, instead of what we want to **SAY**, we aim for the most efficient way to reach our destination.



COMMUNICATION IS THE VEHICLE FOR PROPELLING IDEAS.

Clear ideas can travel far and fast when they are communicated efficiently. Using a powerful, yet compact vehicle can make sure your ideas arrive smoothly and make a bold impression.

If you still try to defend the infamously friendless man, no longer my 'faithful slave,' as you call yourself! But how do you do? I am frightened you--sit down and tell me all the news." It was in July, 1805, and the speaker was the well-known Anna Pavlovna Schid of honor and favorite of the Empress Mariya Fedorovna. With these words she greeted Prince Vasili Kuragin, a man of high rank and importance, who was the first to arrive at her reception. Anna Pavlovna had had a cough for some days. She was, as she said, suffering from la grippe, grippe being then a new word in St. Petersburg, used only by the elite. All her invitations without exception, written in French, and delivered by a scarlet-liveried footman that morning, ran as follows: "If you have nothing better to do, Count (or Prince), a prospect of spending an evening with a poor invalid is not too terrible, I shall be very charmed to see you tonight between 7 and 8."--Annette Scherer: "Heavens! what a virulent attack!" replied the prince, not in the least disconcerted by this reception. He had just entered, wearing an embroidered court uniform, knee breeches, and shoes, and had stars on his breast and a serene expression on his face. He spoke in that refined French in which our grandfathers not only spoke but thought, and with the gentle, patronizing intonation natural to a man of importance who had grown old in society and at court. He went up to Anna Pavlovna, kissed her hand, presenting his bald, scented, and shining head, and complacently seated himself on the sofa. "First of all, dear friend, tell me how you are. Set your mind at rest," said he without altering his tone, beneath the politeness and affected sympathy of which indifference and even coldness could be discerned. "Can one be well while suffering morally? Can one be calm in times like these if one has any feeling?" said Anna Pavlovna. "You are staying the whole evening, I hope?" "And the fete at the English ambassador's? Today is Wednesday. I must put in my appearance there," said the prince. "My daughter is coming for me to take me there." "I thought today's fete had been canceled. I confess that festivities and fireworks are becoming wearisome." "If they had known that you wished it, the entertainment would have been put off," said the prince, who, like a wound-up clock, by force of habit said things he did not even wish to be believed. "Don't tease! Well, what has been decided about Novosiltsev's dispatch? You know everything." "What can one say about it?" replied the prince in a cold, business tone. "What has been decided? They have decided that Buonaparte has burnt his boats, and I believe that we are ready to buy them." "Prince Vasili always spoke languidly, like an actor repeating a stale part. Anna Pavlovna Scherer on the contrary, despite her fortitude, overflowed with animation and impulsiveness. To be an enthusiast had become her social vocation and, sometimes even when she did not feel like it, she became enthusiastic in order not to disappoint the expectations of those who knew her. The subdued smile which she wore though it did not suit her faded features, always played round her lips expressed, as in a spoiled child, a continual consciousness of her own charming defect, which she neither wished, nor could, nor considered it necessary, to correct. In the midst of a conversation on political matters Anna Pavlovna burst out: "Oh, don't speak to me of Austria. Perhaps I don't understand things, but Austria never has wished to do us any harm, for war. She is betraying us! Russia alone must save Europe. Our gracious sovereign recognizes his high vocation and vocation to it. That is the one thing I have faith in! Our good and wonderful sovereign has to perform the noblest role on earth, and he is so virtuous and noble that God will not forsake him. He will fulfill his vocation and crush the hydra of revolution, which has become more terrible than ever in the person of this murderer and villain! We alone must avenge the blood of the just one.... Whom, I ask you, can you count on? ... England with her commercial spirit will not and cannot understand the Emperor Alexander's loftiness of soul. She has refused to evacuate Malta. She wanted to find, and still seeks, some secret motive in our actions. What answer did Novosiltsev get? None. The Emperor is not understood and cannot understand the self-abnegation of our Emperor who wants nothing for himself, but only desires the good of the mankind. And what have they promised? Nothing! And what little they have promised they will not perform! Prussia has always declared that Buonaparte is invincible, and that all Europe is powerless before him.... And I don't believe a word that Hardenburg says, or Haugwitz. This famous Prussian neutrality is just a trap. I have faith only in God and the lofty destiny of our adored monarch. He will save us." She suddenly paused, smiling at her own impetuosity. "I think," said the prince with a smile, "that if you had been sent instead of dear Wintzingerode you would have captured the King of Prussia's consent by assault. You are so eloquent. Will you give me a cup of coffee?" "In a moment. A propos," she added, becoming calm again, "I am expecting two very interesting men tonight, le Vicomte de Mortemart, who is connected with the Montmorencys through the Rohans, one of the best French families. He is one of the genuine aristocrats, the good ones. And also the Abbe Morio. Do you know that profound thinker? He has been received by the Emperor. Had you heard?" "I shall be delighted to meet them," said the prince. "But tell me," he added with studied carelessness as if it had only just occurred to him, though the question he was about to ask was the chief motive of his visit, "is it true that the Dowager Empress wants Baron Funke appointed first secretary at Vienna? The baron by all accounts is a poor creature." Prince Vasili wished to obtain this post for his own sake. Others were trying through the Dowager Empress Mariya Fedorovna to secure it for the baron. Anna Pavlovna almost closed her eyes to indicate that neither she nor anyone else had a right to criticize what the Empress desired or was pleased with. "Baron Funke has been recommended to the Dowager Empress by her sister," was all she said, in a dry and mournful tone. As she named the Empress, Anna Pavlovna's face suddenly assumed an expression of profound and sincere devotion and respect mingled with sadness, and this occurred every time she mentioned her illustrious patroness. She added that Her Majesty had deigned to show Baron Funke beaucoup d'estime when her face closed. The prince was silent and looked indifferent. But, with the womanly and courtierlike quickness which he had tact had learned to use, he sought to rebuke him (for daring to speak as he had done of a man recommended to the Dowager Empress) abruptly. "Now about your family. Do you know that since your daughter came out everyone has been amazed at her amazingly beautiful beauty. The prince bowed to signify his respect and gratitude. "I could not resist," she continued, "to go to the prince and speak to him amiably at him as if to show that political and social considerations were of no account in our conversation. I think how unfairly sometimes the joys of life are distributed. My youngest son has fate given him such splendid prospects. He is the youngest. I don't like him," she added in a tone addressed to the prince, "and really you appreciate them less than anyone, and so you must be careful not to lose them." "I don't like him," said the prince. "Lavater would have said I lack the bump of humanity." "Don't joke, I mean to have a serious talk with you. I know I am dissatisfied with your younger son? Between ourselves I don't like his face. It assumed a melancholy expression," he was explained at Her Majesty's and you were pitted...." The prince answered, "I am sorry to hear that, but she looked at him significantly, awaiting a reply. "What would you have me do?" he said at last. "You know I am not a father, but I could not for their education, and they have with them a great deal of sense. Hippolyte is at least a quiet fool, but Anatole is an active one. There is only a very slight difference between them." He said this in a natural and animated than usual, so that the wrinkles round his mouth very clearly revealed something unexpectedly unpleasant. "And why are children born to such men as you? If you were a father there would be nothing I could reproach you with," said Anna Pavlovna, looking up pensively. "I am your faithful slave and I alone I can confess that my children are the bane of my life. It is the cross I have to bear. That is how I explain it to myself. It can't be helped!" He said no more, but expressed his resignation to cruel fate by a gesture. Anna Pavlovna meditated. "Have you never thought of marrying your prodigal son Anatole?" she asked. "They say old maids have a mania for matchmaking, and though I don't feel that way myself as yet, I know a little person who is very unhappy with her father. She is a relation of yours, Princess Mary Bolkonskaya." Prince Vasili did not reply, though, with the quickness of memory and perception befitting a man of the world, he indicated by a movement of his hand that he was considering this information. "Do you know," he said at last, evidently unable to check the sad current of his thought

AVOIDING THE TEAL DEER

Let's start by looking at some examples of inefficient communication.

TL;DR

Too Long; Didn't Read

Editors will use the notation TL;DR* to indicate a passage of text which is TOO LONG and thus they DIDN'T READ. This concept is something we encounter every day when faced with lengthy emails or multi-page stories. Our tendency has become to completely skip blocks of text and look for highlights and summaries.

LIKE THIS SIMPLE STATEMENT.

As modern communication bombards us with messages vying for our attention, the need to quickly decide the relevance and key takeaway puts serious pressure on communication to be efficient in order to be effective.

*TL;DR is sometimes pronounced "teal deer", which I picture grazing in a field of unread text.

At the other end of the spectrum we have communication that is too short to effectively communicate a message or idea. For this, I have coined the **TL;DR** counterpoint:

TS;DU

Too Short; Didn't Understand

Text messages, tweets, and cryptically short emails all suffer from an overly aggressive paring down, which inadvertently removes the context and details that make a message effective.

THE GOLDILOCKS CHALLENGE

Recognizing this 'just right' target gives us a tremendous opportunity to create a communication strategy that focuses on efficiency + effectiveness.

The following techniques are an introduction to some of the powerful methods that will help you create streamlined communication.



TOO MUCH



JUST RIGHT



TOO LITTLE



GET THEIR ATTENTION

Headlines are designed to grab your attention by highlighting a key message from a story. This technique has been perfected by journalists to make it possible to scan a page, reading only the headlines, and still get a good sense of what's happening.

ORGANIZE YOUR MESSAGE

Headlines in our communication help organize and highlight what we are saying – providing an in-line summary for the reader to scan and orient themselves with quickly.

SUMMARIZE EFFECTIVELY

The act of writing the headline itself is an effective tool for crystallizing what you want to communicate for yourself and for your audience. To capture an idea with only a few words, the idea must be clear from the start.

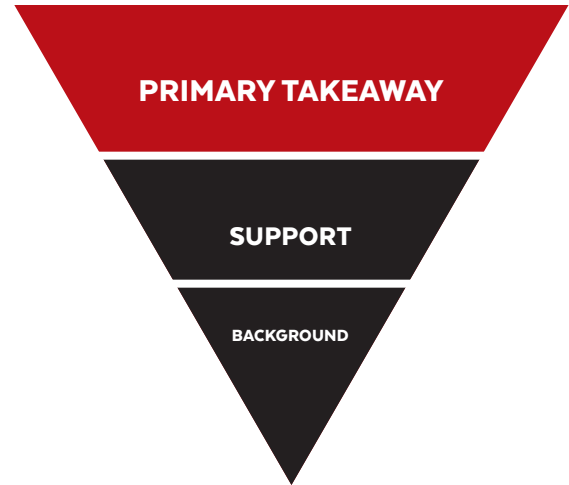
Scan this page and see how the headlines tell the story quickly. In fact, this whole book was designed to be effective if only the headlines are read!

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

LEAD WITH YOUR MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE AND FOLLOW-UP WITH THE SUPPORT.

A powerful technique used in military briefings is another way to condense communication for our modern audience.

Military officials are trained to begin their communication by stating the bottom line of any communication first. Known as **BLUF** for Bottom Line Up Front, this method recognizes that time is most always of the essence, and the key message should not get lost in the middle or fall to the end.



Journalists also use a similar approach known as the 'inverted pyramid'. In this method, the driving factor is to place the most newsworthy information first, followed by context, details then finally basic background information.

Both methods accept the reality that most people will not read the entire prose and want to know the takeaway up front.

KANSO PRINCIPLE

簡素

KANSO is a Japanese principle which emphasizes power through efficiency.

MAXIMUM EFFECT WITH MINIMAL MEANS.

The humble spork is an example of the KANSO principle. This single utensil combining a spoon and fork is brilliantly simple in its ingenuity, yet powerful beyond its size. The total elimination of a second utensil has saved millions of dollars and countless tons of waste across the globe.

Applied to communication, the KANSO principle challenges us to look for ways to reduce or even eliminate parts of communication altogether.

EVERYTHING WE CAN ELIMINATE RAISES THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT WE KEEP.

BEFORE

Let's consider a very common style of communication:

subject: The lights in the chapel steeple

Hey Robert - Sorry to send this out so late, but I'm just now finding time after a busy week around the shop. I wanted to follow up on the discussion we had at our last Charlestown Militia meeting. I've put some thought into this warning system idea and wanted to run this by you. On the off chance we are in fact attacked in the coming days (#ThoseDarnBritish) it would be a real help if you could take some lanterns to the steeple of the church and light them to let me and the rest of the town know what you've seen. I've considered maybe a "blinking" message and maybe even the idea of some swinging of the lanterns, but ultimately settled on a simple (dare I say brilliant) code. If you witness the enemy arriving here in boats, you would place two lanterns in the steeple. This I think will be easy to remember because "water" has two syllables. Do make sure they are placed far enough apart so as not to be confused from a distance. On the other hand, if you see them approaching on land, you would put just one lantern in the steeple. ("land", as you guessed, has 1 syllable). This should be a clear message that will give myself and everyone else for quite a distance a good indication of what we should expect. I can then take this message over to Lexington on the Brown Beauty express (I'm pretty sure old John Lark will let me borrow her). That's all I have for now. Don't hesitate to write back if you have any questions. Paul Revere

AFTER

Now consider streamlining this same message using the BLUF, HEADLINES, and KANSO techniques:

subject: Lantern Signals: One by Land, Two by Sea

Robert -

BRITISH ATTACK WARNING PLAN - CONFIRMED

I wanted to make sure you were aware of the new warning system as decided at our last meeting. This should be easy to remember:

NORTH CHURCH STEEPLE ONLY

We will look for your signal each night in the steeple of the North Church where we understand you have access at all times.

ONE LANTERN IF BY LAND

If you see the British arriving on land, display just one lantern in the steeple.

TWO LANTERNS IF BY SEA

If you see them arriving by boat, display two lanterns, insuring they are separated enough to be clearly two separate lights.

Thanks again for your help with this.

Paul

STREAMLINING



Taken together, these various principles of efficient communication lead to the practice of **STREAMLINING**.

You're likely familiar with this concept when it comes to making planes, trains and automobiles aerodynamic. A streamlined form for these vehicles minimizes their resistance as they move and allows them to travel easily at high speed, using less energy.

AERODYNAMIC STREAMLINING

To design or provide a form that presents very little resistance to a flow of air or water; increasing speed and ease of movement.

You may also have heard streamlining used in processes, where the aim is to increase efficiency by using simpler methods and fewer steps. You might streamline an ordering process or checkout system.

PROCESS STREAMLINING

To make more efficient and effective by employing faster or simpler working methods.

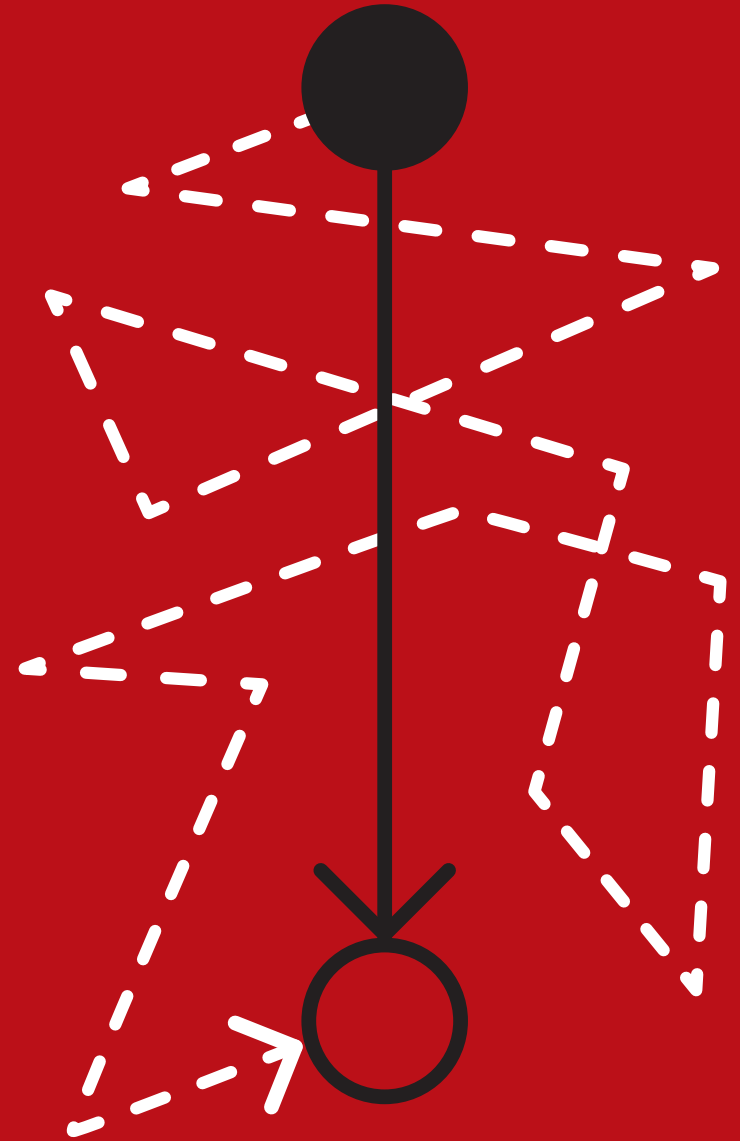
In both cases, the intent is to address two factors that slow things down: FRICTION and DRAG.

FRICTION

Resistance from an outside source that something encounters while in motion.

DRAG

A force that slows progress while something is in motion.





STREAMLINING A BUSINESS MODEL

Mrs. Haltom teaches band at Millard North High School. Her group of 120 students will be traveling to a competition, and she is looking to get t-shirts for everyone to wear on the trip.

She's worked with her local screen printer before to have shirts made, and she's not looking forward to the experience. The process has been complex and time-consuming in the past.

Her local printer, Koala-Tee Screen Printing, offers a wide selection of shirts in an infinite variety of colors. They also offer a broad range of design options and combinations of ink colors that make it difficult to establish a final price. She needs to let the students and parents know in advance how much money to bring since she must pay for the order up front.

While the printer justifiably believes their pricing model offers her great flexibility, from her perspective, the entire process is weighed down by choices and complexity.

KOALA-TEE PRICING

Blank Shirts	120 @ \$5 - \$7 each	\$600 - \$840
Art Fee	1 @ \$75	\$75
Screen Fees	6 @ \$15	\$90
Print Fees	6 @ 25¢ /color / shirt	\$180
Delivery Fee	\$25 / box	\$50

ORDER TOTAL: \$995 - \$1,235

COST PER SHIRT: \$8.29 - \$10.29

This year, she decided to use a different company, Galapagos Sportswear, which offers band t-shirts through their website. She can select from one of their dozens of band-specific designs, have her school name printed on them, and place the order without leaving her office.

But it's their pricing model that really makes her day:

GALAPAGOS PRICING

100+ shirts: \$10 each

Artwork Included

Screens Included

Printing Included

Delivery Included

ORDER TOTAL: \$1,200

With the Galapagos model, she knows exactly how much each student will need to pay - a simple, round number. Galapagos has reduced the number of choices for the shirts and design, but for Mrs. Haltom, this means the complexity has been reduced by an order of magnitude.

With fewer choices, Galapagos has significantly increased their efficiency in producing the shirts, in turn increasing their profit margin. The shirts end up costing about the same for the students, but with less friction and involvement throughout the process, everyone involved gets what they want with far less hassle.

LESS IS MORE REWARDING.



TRUE STORY

Galapagos Sportswear was my first entrepreneurial venture; started in my parent's garage in 1990. Created just two years after I was out of high-school, the business model was classically disruptive in providing significantly more value through far fewer choices.

*The Galapagos model became the foundation for my life-long passion for **LESS IS MORE** in business.*

STREAMLINING COMMUNICATION

The aim of streamlining communication is to shape communication in a way that reduces friction and drag, allowing messages to move smoothly and efficiently in order to achieve their goal.

REDUCING COMMUNICATION FRICTION

Streamlined communication removes the unnecessary complications that cause messages to be misunderstood or misinterpreted. For example, a focused, clear message aimed at just a few individuals eliminates the friction produced by complex, group-oriented communication.

ELIMINATING PRODUCTIVITY DRAG

Streamlining also focuses on the goal of good communication: Helping move ideas forward and the actions needed to give them momentum. When we effectively streamline communication, we are able to stay focused on progress and not process.

COMMUNICATION SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO MOVE SMOOTHLY.

STREAMLINED COMMUNICATION IS

A POWERFUL MEANS TO AN END.

LESS OF WHAT?

LESS FRICTION.

Reducing friction in communication allows our messages to travel further, faster, and with greater ease.

"The ability to simplify

means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak."

- **HANS HOFMANN**

20th century abstract expressionist painter

THREE

THE WAY

...and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named
of the enduring and unchanging name. (Conceive
of us) having no name, it is the originator of heaven
and earth, (conceived of as) having a name, it is the
Father of all things. Always without desire we never
are found, if its deep mystery we would sound, but
desire always within us be, its outer fringe is all that
we shall see. Under these two aspects, it is really the
empty, but as **communication** development takes
place, it receives the different names. Together we
form the Mystery. Where the Mystery is the deep
it is the gate of all that is subtle and wonderful. All
in the world know the beauty of the beautiful, and
in doing this they have (the idea of) what a gift is,
they all know the skill of the skillful, and in doing this
they have (the idea of) what the want of skill is. Con-
sider that **attention** existence and non-existence give
birth to the one to (the idea of) the other, that comple-
ment and excess produce the one (the idea of) the other
in length and shortness fashion, but the one the
is of the other, that the musical notes and tones
become harmonious through **revolution** the relation
one with another, and that being before and behind
give the modern idea of one following another. The
one the sage manages affairs without doing any thing
and conveys his instructions without the use of or-
ganization. All things spring up, and there is not
which declines to show itself, they grow, and there
is no claim made for their ownership, they go through
their processes, and there is no expectation (of a re-
ward for the results). The work is accomplished, and
the name is given to it (the idea of) the name. The

FOCUSED COMMUNICATION

With so much communication battling for our attention, streamlining requires we do more than just play defense

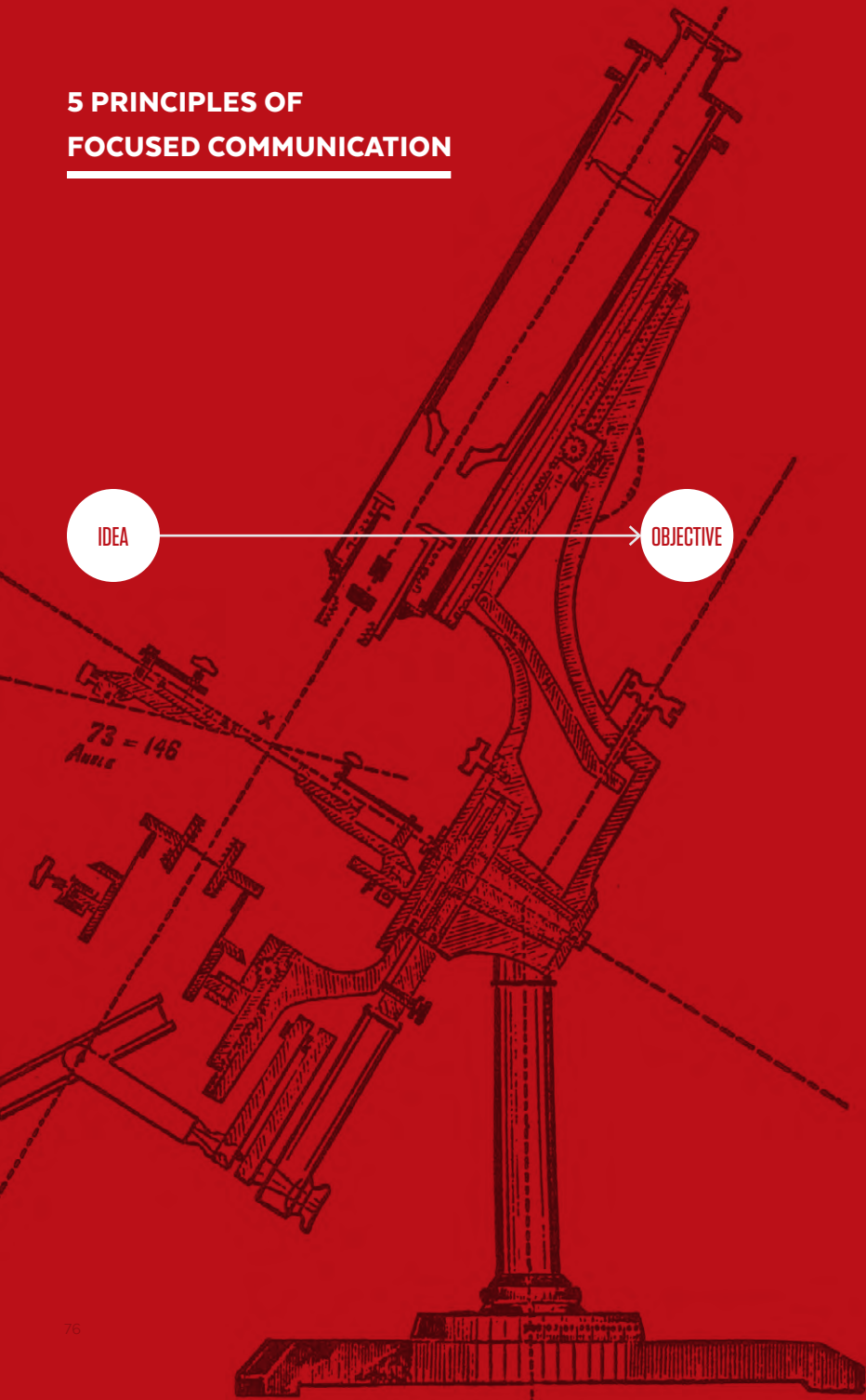
IT'S TIME FOR A REVOLUTION.

With streamlining, the best defense is a good offense. We have the opportunity to switch our mind set away from broad, responsive communication to one which is laser-focused and active. What we call:

FOCUSED COMMUNICATION

Communication that directs attention and activity towards a particular aim.

5 PRINCIPLES OF
FOCUSED COMMUNICATION



1

**FOCUSED
COMMUNICATION
DIRECTLY CONNECTS
AN IDEA TO
AN OBJECTIVE.**



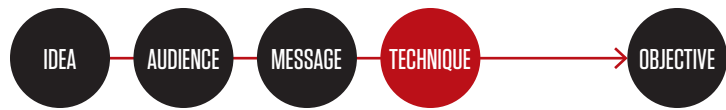
2

**FOCUSED
COMMUNICATION
IS TAILORED
SPECIFICALLY TO
THE AUDIENCE.**



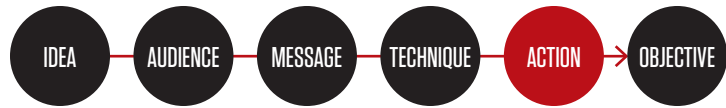
3

**FOCUSED
COMMUNICATION
STATES A
STRAIGHTFORWARD
MESSAGE.**



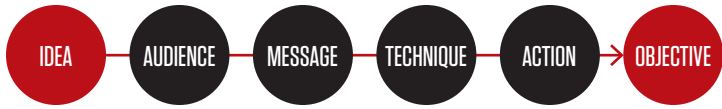
4

**FOCUSED
COMMUNICATION
USES APPROPRIATE
TOOLS AND
TECHNIQUES.**



5

**FOCUSED
COMMUNICATION
MAKES CLEAR
THE ESSENTIAL
ACTION.**



I AM TAO

道

TAO IS THE WAY.



TAO

Pronounced 'dow', TAO is a classic Chinese concept dating back to the 6th century.

Originally presented by philosopher Laozi in his work *Tao te Ching*, TAO has a number of ascribed meanings, all of which relate to "the way".

**I AM TAO IS THE WAY OF
FOCUSED COMMUNICATION.**

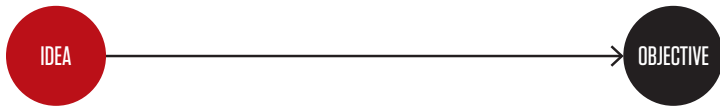
As a mnemonic, I AM TAO is a helpful way to remember the 5 Principles of Focused Communication.

I	IDEA
A	AUDIENCE
M	MESSAGE
T	TECHNIQUE
A	ACTION
O	OBJECTIVE

The phrase itself is a reminder of the core techniques for achieving Focused Communication.

It's simple, elegant, memorable, and meaningful.

IDEAS



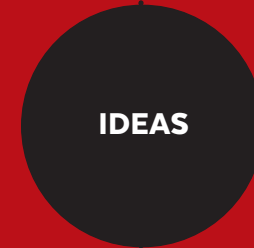
**FOCUSED COMMUNICATION DIRECTLY
CONNECTS AN IDEA TO AN OBJECTIVE.**

Let's dissect the 5 Principles of Focused Communication to get a more clear picture of how they can guide us in creating truly effective communication.

We can start by understanding the catalyst for most communication, an **IDEA**.

Let's start by considering some related concepts, **IDEAS**, **THOUGHTS** and **VISION**.

THOUGHTS



VISION

THOUGHTS

Opinions or observations resulting from the act of thinking.

Janice in accounting sure is in a bad mood.

My computer is running slower today than normal.

I hope it's not cold in New York when I get there.

Thoughts on their own are simple **OBSERVATIONS** we make about the world around us.

VISIONS

A special type of thought that envisions a future state or an aspiration.

Next quarter will be our biggest one yet.

I think we'll double the size of our team by next year.

We should retire and live on a beach in Mexico!

These thoughts add a level of clarity and specificity, and primarily state an **OBJECTIVE**.

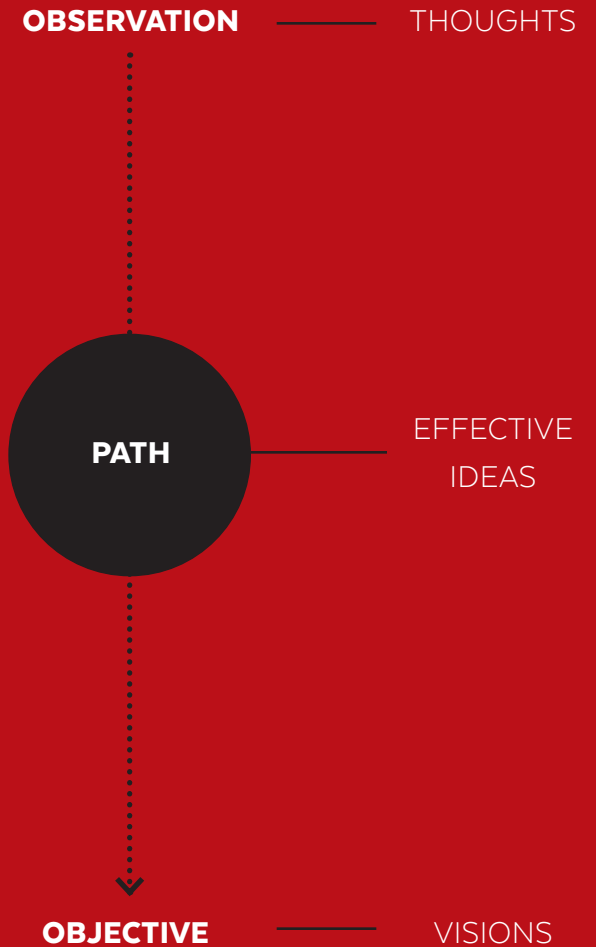
EFFECTIVE IDEAS

Ultimately, the thoughts that are most effective are those that build on the **OBSERVATION** and **OBJECTIVE** by adding a clearly defined **PATH**. These are **IDEAS**.

We can reach this month's target by Thursday, if everyone closes their pending deals.

I will decide which car to buy, once I test drive the three I am considering.

I'd like to get your feedback on the proposal by the end of the day.



An effective idea with a clear path to an objective creates the foundation for Focused Communication. Conversely, unfocused communication that is populated by non-actionable thoughts and aspirational vision create an environment filled with suggestions and hopes, but very little clarity.

CLARITY IS KEY

One of the most common sources of drag on productivity is the lack of specifics in communication. Streamlining our communication focuses on removing the ambiguity that creates drag on our message.

**FOCUSED COMMUNICATION
MAKES OUR INTENTIONS EXPLICITLY CLEAR.**

BLURRY COMMUNICATION

I hope to get your thoughts on this soon.

Can you let me know a time that will work for you?

We're preparing to get started on your project.

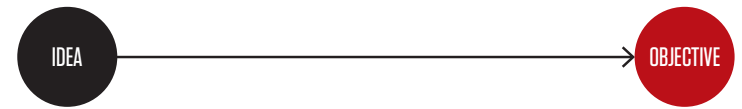
FOCUSED COMMUNICATION

I would appreciate receiving your feedback by Wednesday at the latest.

Can we connect on Monday or Tuesday at 2:00 for a quick review call?

We will be kicking off the project internally on Friday with our whole team.

OBJECTIVES



EFFECTIVE IDEAS INCLUDE A WELL-DEFINED OBJECTIVE.

OBJECTIVE

The goal you are aiming to accomplish with your IDEA.

The objective of an idea can be small or large, but it should always be clearly stated. Plenty of misunderstandings arise when we are left to try and interpret exactly what is being asked of us.

With Focused Communication, we shine a bright light on the objective so there can be no doubt about our aim.

VAGUE

We have a lot of work to do, so unfortunately we will all need to stay late tonight.

CLEAR

We should be able to finish the presentation tonight by 7:30 if we all work together on our sections.

VAGUE

I hope you'll be able to set some meetings while we're in town next week.

CLEAR

Will you please set up meetings with our top five distributors for Thursday or Friday while we are in town for the conference.

Most of the time, our objective is well-known, but not well-stated. With emails and other types of asynchronous communication, this lack of clarity can lead to communication loops solely because the objective was vague.

When we make a point of being specific about what we are trying to achieve, our messages have far less drag and move forward with streamlined efficiency.

LINE OF SIGHT

Making the connection friction-free between our idea and objective maintains a **LINE OF SIGHT** between the two. A line of sight insures that the starting point and our target are never obscured by turns or obstructions that would make it impossible to clearly see the destination.

In communication, we get in the way of this line of sight by introducing unnecessary tangents that take us off course. Seemingly innocuous additions and explanations can take a message off course and make the real objective hard to pinpoint.

Toby -

As you probably saw on the news, the weather at the end of the week for Houston is going to be quite a mess. There is a good chance the whole office will be closed Thursday and Friday, and this means we are juggling the training schedules. Anne is already in Houston and was expecting to teach the “Leader’s Journey” workshop on Wednesday and the QN on Friday. Glenn from the Houston office made the call and they are just going to have the QN on Wednesday and push the LJ out until next month. Anne will need the QN manuals to be delivered by Tuesday. She will leave the LJ manuals you already sent there for use next month, so no need to worry about having these sent back. I’ve let Anne know she can expect these. Please do whatever it takes to make sure they are there tomorrow. Let me know if you have any questions - I’ll be in the office all afternoon and then out tomorrow morning at a dentist appointment.

- Stacy

Toby-

The training Anne had scheduled for Wednesday was switched from “Leader’s Journey” to “Quantum Negotiation”. We will need you to ship the 15 QN manuals to Houston overnight (tonight!) to make sure they are there Tuesday ahead of her training. Thank you for your quick attention to this.

-Stacy

THE SHORTEST DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO POINTS

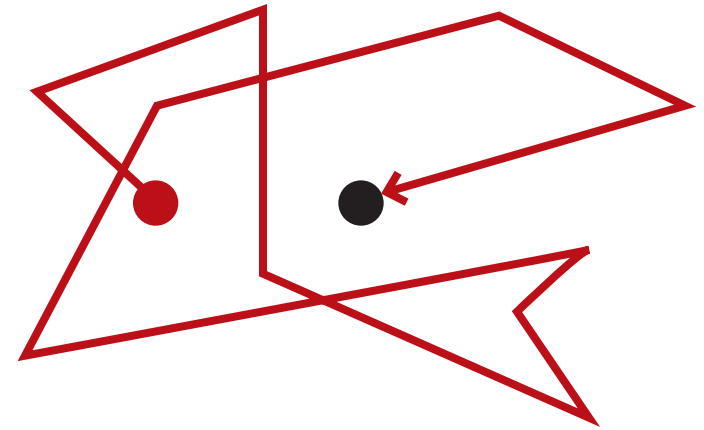
The connection between the idea and the objective is ideally the shortest it can be while still getting there smoothly. We can't leave out critical information, and we should avoid straying off course with too much context. Striking the right balance is our aim.





TOO LITTLE INFORMATION

We can sometimes forget to connect the dots between the idea and objective, leaving out truly necessary context and reasoning. When the connection is not clear, questions will surely arise and slow down the progress, or stop it completely.

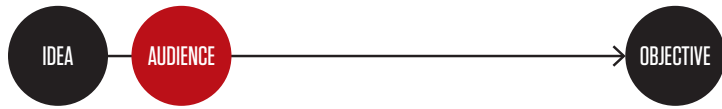


TOO MUCH INFORMATION

The path from idea to objective can feel like a joyride, with tangents and side excursions only eventually ending up at the destination. These side tracks create resistance as your real message is lost in the mix. Leaving out unrelated information maintains the focus.

MAINTAIN A LINE OF SIGHT TO YOUR OBJECTIVE TO AVOID GETTING LOST.

AUDIENCE



FOCUSED COMMUNICATION IS TAILORED SPECIFICALLY TO THE AUDIENCE.

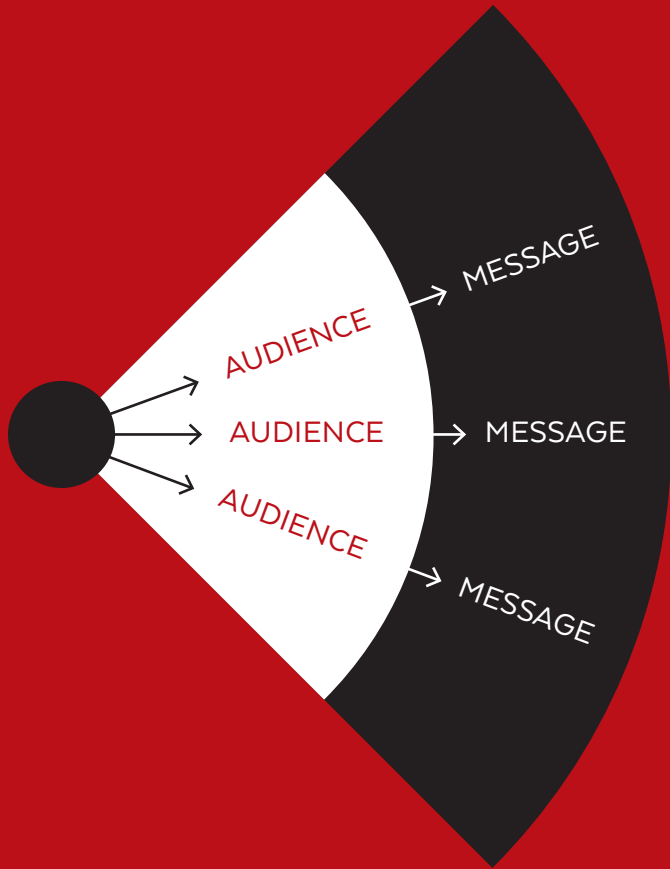
THE AUDIENCE FOR YOUR IDEA

Identifying the right **AUDIENCE** for our idea is a critical factor in how effective our communication will be.

AUDIENCE

The individual or group who has a stake in the objective and can play a role in bringing your idea to fruition.

Consider your audience the lens through which you can focus and aim your idea. If your audience is large, the message becomes unfocused. When you limit your audience, your message becomes sharp and personalized to everyone you are addressing.



THE MORE NARROW YOUR AUDIENCE,
THE MORE FOCUSED YOUR MESSAGE.

A CLEAR AUDIENCE MAKES FOR A CLEAR MESSAGE

When we limit our audience, everything that follows in our communication is more focused as well.

When our message is tailored specifically for our audience, it is much easier to connect with each individual's stake in the objective.

And finally, the actions we identify are targeted solely at the refined audience, all of whom have a stake in the idea already.

BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP

With a small audience for our message, we have an opportunity to make stronger connections. Making our communication personal means our tone can become more personal as well.

Address your audience directly and by name.

Clarify how your idea can impact them.

Specify what role they play in the objective.

Emphasize opportunities for engagement.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS CONVERSATIONAL.



WHERE'S ALDO?

Where are you?

What time is it where you are?

Are you working now?

Is now a good time?

Modern communication has made it possible to casually communicate with individuals around the world, at any time with minimal effort. We have grown accustomed to being connected to colleagues in different cities, time zones, countries and continents—in real-time.

This advancement in technology and connectedness comes with a new level of awareness that has been overlooked in most communications.

ADAPT TO YOUR AUDIENCE

Thoughtful communication pro-actively takes into account the environment of our audience. Showing consideration for how, where, and when our audience will receive our message can make a big impact on how our message is received.

**THE ENVIRONMENT OF OUR AUDIENCE
TRUMPS OUR OWN.**

MESSAGE



FOCUSED COMMUNICATION STATES A STRAIGHTFORWARD MESSAGE.

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO CONVEY?

CONVEY

- 1. To make an idea understandable to someone*
- 2. To transport or carry from one place to another*

Our MESSAGE is how we convey our idea to our audience in a way that is absolutely clear. Our audience should not have to parse our communication to discover the message. Our aim is to make our intent clear, not clever.

AN EFFECTIVE MESSAGE
IS SHORT,
PERSONABLE,
AND MEMORABLE.



**THE MESSAGE IS THE MEAT OF
FOCUSED COMMUNICATION.**

At the heart of all good communication is a message of substance. Our message gives our audience a reason **why** they want to play a role in taking our idea to its objective. A strong message will make the meaning and importance of what we are conveying obvious.

NOT TOO LITTLE, NOT TOO MUCH. JUST RIGHT.

The art of presenting our message effectively comes down to the skills we need to balance the depth and clarity. Too much depth and the message can easily get lost. Not enough detail and the message can end up feeling hollow.

RARE

Messages that have not been properly cooked will typically:

be long and rambling

lack obvious focus

be overly personal

create more questions than answers

JUST RIGHT

Messages that are cooked just right aim to:

maintain a personal tone

use clear, straightforward language

provide necessary context

OVERCOOKED

Messages that are overcooked will often:

be unnecessarily brief

include minimal or no context

have little personal flavor

lead to questions due to lack of key context

RARE

MEMORABLE MESSAGES
ARE COOKED MEDIUM.

JUST RIGHT

OVERCOOKED

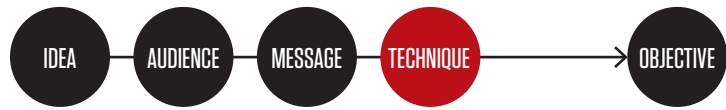
"Simplicity is about

subtracting the obvious and
adding the meaningful."

- **JOHN MAEDA**

Design Technologist

TECHNIQUE



**FOCUSED COMMUNICATION
USES APPROPRIATE TOOLS & TECHNIQUES.**

*If all you have is a hammer,
every problem looks like a nail.*



SMART TOOLS

Tools are designed to make our work easier by amplifying our personal skills and strengths.

If we need to drive a screw into a board, there are a few tools we might consider. We could use a sledgehammer — the brute force approach — but this would also damage the board and probably the screw as well.

The smart choice would be a screwdriver, which gives us greater control. Better yet, we could use a *power screwdriver* that performs the hard work for us so that we can stay focused on the accuracy.

Setting a nail to hang a picture? A hammer is your best choice. Tightening a loose plumbing fixture? You had best use a pipe wrench.



SKILLS WITH MORE TOOLS
MAKE OUR WORK EASIER.

MODERN TOOLKITS

Our modern toolkit is more commonly full of software than hardware. We've seen an explosion of new tools developed over the past 20 years, all of which have been designed to amplify our work.

At the heart of all of these tools is a potential to communicate more clearly and efficiently.

Like the hammer warning, there is a risk of adopting a favorite tool and seeing every communication as an opportunity to use it.

If all you have is PowerPoint, every problem looks like it needs a deck!

When we know how to use a variety of tools, we can choose the most appropriate one for the message we want to send. Choosing the right tool makes the quality of our work the focus, not the effort.

PRESENTATION TOOLS

POWERPOINT & KEYNOTE

CALCULATION TOOLS

EXCEL & NUMBERS

CONNECTION TOOLS

EMAIL, WEBEX & SKYPE

ORGANIZATIONAL TOOLS

BASECAMP & PROJECT

DESIGN TOOLS

ILLUSTRATOR & SKETCH

IMAGE TOOLS

PHOTOSHOP & PAINT

NOTE TOOLS

EVERNOTE & NOTES

MUSIC TOOLS

LOGIC & PRO TOOLS

WRITING TOOLS

WORD & PAGES

VIDEO TOOLS

FINALCUT & PREMIER

3D TOOLS

EXCEL & NUMBERS

**IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY
TO KNOW HOW TO USE OUR TOOLS.**

As tools evolve, we must adapt and learn their benefits, or risk using a manual screwdriver in a world of powered ones. Fortunately, the emphasis for most modern tools is ease of use. Where software once came with 2” thick manuals, we now regularly install and use apps without so much as a quick help guide!

**SMART TOOLS ALLOW US TO FOCUS ON OUR
IDEAS AND OBJECTIVES.**

TECHNIQUE

A skillful way of achieving something

SELECT THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB.

Our communication **TECHNIQUE** begins with choosing the most effective tool for the job. Instead of reaching for the trusty hammer, we should first consider:

What is the best way to connect with my audience?

What is the message I want to convey?

How can I make that message memorable?

What tool will amplify my strengths?

What approach will help me focus my message?

TOOLS & TECHNIQUES:
WEIGHING THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

WHICH TOOL?

SENDING AN EMAIL

asynchronous connection - slow interaction
detail and depth-friendly
documented for reference

VS

AN INSTANT MESSAGE

synchronous connection - quick interaction
minimal context
undocumented history

WHICH TECHNIQUE?

A CALL

quick to arrange
location-independent
no face-to-face connection

VS

A MEETING

cumbersome to arrange and coordinate
location-dependent
face-to-face connection

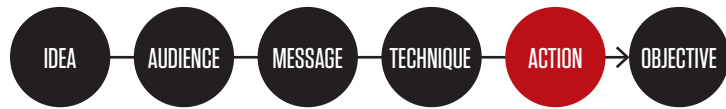
TOOLS & TECHNIQUES WORK TOGETHER

When we are conscious of our choices in the tools we use and the techniques we choose, our messages are given a tremendous boost.

Our tools and our techniques for using them create the momentum to push our ideas further, faster and with less resistance.



ACTION



FOCUSED COMMUNICATION MAKES CLEAR THE ESSENTIAL ACTION.

ACTION IS WORK

This is where the rubber meets the road.
The **ACTION** connecting our idea to the objective is **WORK**.

Our ideas won't magically realize themselves because we want them to. And, when we're enlisting the help of others to achieve our goal, it means we need to be specific about what it's going to take.

PASSIVE COMMUNICATION BLOCKS ACTION

Focused communication, which always includes an essential action, is the exact opposite of passive communication. Unfortunately, passive communication has a tremendous foothold in our conversational vernacular. How many times a day do we encounter things like these:

“I wanted you to take a look at...”

“Just following up on...”

“See below.”

See below and do what? Passive communication is filled with ambiguous suggestions and ideas that are implied, while never coming out and definitively requesting an action or decision. This type of communication ultimately leads to confusion, more questions and an endless loop of indecision.

COMMUNICATION VS. WORK

A tell-tale sign that a passive attitude is rampant is seen in environments that are communication-centric. Organizations or teams that focus on constant communication are typically prioritizing consensus over progress. We should be wary of:

The infinite-loop email chains
Regularly scheduled meetings
Follow-ups to follow-ups

COMMUNICATION AS A MEANS TO AN END.

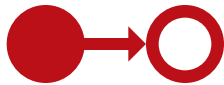
When communication becomes the objective, passive communication has won.

**FOCUSED COMMUNICATION IS
ACTIVE COMMUNICATION.**



PROCESS-FOCUSED

Meet
Call
Research
Update
Draft



GOAL-FOCUSED

Find-out
Decide
Design
Write
Deliver

ACTIVE COMMUNICATION IS GOAL-FOCUSED

Active Communication gives our audience clarity in what they need to actually move an idea forward. By staying focused on the goal, our communication will naturally carry a spirit of progress.

Our aim should be to orient all of our communication toward the goal and away from the process—to avoid or break communication cycles.

**YOU HAVE THE POWER TO STOP
ENDLESS LOOPS.**

ACTION TIMING

The notion of *when* an action is needed is as critical as the action itself. It's not enough to simply define the action, we need to go one step further and always connect a sense of timing. We almost always know when we want or need something completed, yet too often we neglect to attach this directly to the action. When we include this, our audience can clearly understand the expectation and priority they should assign to it.

By including the expectation of timing, along with the context, we make it easy for our audience to schedule their work.

EVERY ACTION REQUIRES AN INDICATION OF TIMING TO COMPLETE.

Wendy,

Attached are the drafts of the brochure for your review - let me know what you think.

Christopher

VS

Wendy,

I've attached the brochure drafts for your review. I would like to get your comments back by the end of the day today so I can implement these in the morning and then get sign-off from Marketing tomorrow.

Christopher

CHECK

The actions of most of our communication often translate into “to-do” items for our audience.

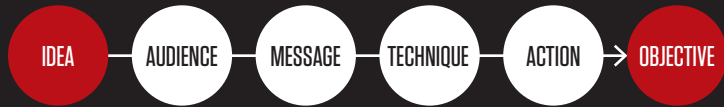
The more specific we are, the easier it is for these to-dos to be created and then completed.

Review & return feedback to Christopher by EOD

And therein lies the magic of action-oriented and focused communication. A little more clarity and focus yields an exponential impact on productivity - for both ourself and our audience.

KNOWING WHAT TO DO
IS THE KEY TO PRODUCTIVITY.

FOCUSED COMMUNICATION



MORE FOCUS WITH LESS FRICTION IS
MOST EFFECTIVE

“It is vain to do with more

what can be done with less.”

- WILLIAM OF OCKHAM

12th century philosopher

CONNECTING THE DOTS



Focused Communication is

the shortest path to clarity.



With clarity and efficiency

Ideas are more **effective**.



Ideas that are effective

can change the world.

In the end, communication
comes down to choosing

quality over quantity.

Less is more powerful.

道

Dear Reader,

Modern communication is a game often played defensively.

By switching to offense, we can lead a revolution for clear, efficient communication that is focused on moving ideas forward.

WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

Everyone who recognizes the deterioration of quality communication and wants a new approach to confront this problem in their personal and work lives.

THE BIG IDEAS IN THIS BOOK

1. Less is more powerful.
2. Focused communication makes ideas effective.
3. Effective ideas will change the world.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Share the ideas in this book with your colleagues and friends to join the revolution for more simple communication.

Viva la simplicity!

i.zen

IDEA

Presented first, in direct language

OBJECTIVE

Paints a clear picture of the goal

AUDIENCE

Defined and Identified

MESSAGES

Straightforward and easy to spot

ACTION

Connected directly to the audience

TECHNIQUE

A short and honest personal letter

5 PRINCIPLES OF FOCUSED COMMUNICATION

IDEAS > OBJECTIVES

Focused Communication directly connects an idea to an objective.

AUDIENCE

Focused Communication is tailored specifically to the audience.

MESSAGE

Focused Communication states a straightforward message.

TECHNIQUE

Focused Communication uses appropriate tools and technique.

ACTION

Focused Communication makes clear the essential action.

I AM TAO



THE AUTHOR



JASON ALAN FRANZEN

For over 25 years, Jason has watched technology improve and communication regress. His efforts to resolve this trend can be seen in the work of his design studio, More Simple, and through his training program, Streamline Certified.

JasonFranzen.com

SINCERE APPRECIATION

My wife, Laura, for blessing me with her trust and grace.
Mom for supporting all of my dreams.
Dad for showing me the joy in working hard and smart.
Grandpa for showing me the power of independence.
Debbie Haltom for teaching me to love learning.
Joseph Alan Wachs for his unrelenting support and belief.
Stephan Mardyks & David Covey for championing simplicity.
Prince for inspiring my creative life.

COLOPHON

DESIGN

Book design and layout by Jason Alan Franzen

This book is set in Texta type from Latinotype foundry and Tungsten type from Hoefler & Co.

Photos are from the Shutterstock library and the author's collection.



STREAMLINE CERTIFIED

LESS & MORE introduces the foundation of Focused Communication, an approach expanded upon and developed for practical application in the training program Streamline Certified. To learn more about bringing Focused Communication to your organization, visit:

StreamlineCertified.com