
communication - how much is in the words?

Posted by B1B*Stella - 2009/08/20 09:17

hello all,

How many of you are familiar with the statistic that only 7% of what we mean is conveyed by the words we use whilst 38% is conveyed by our voices and a massive 55% by our facial expressions?

I hope at least some people are feeling slightly uncomfortable now and wondering where I'm going with this. Just like I was last night at a talk by a professional - I felt uncomfortable that I had to interrupt and challenge her but I couldn't let it go any further.

The statistics are accurate - they come from a study by an eminent psychologist Albert Mehrabian who was studying communication - but only in a very limited set of circumstances. It's the misapplication of them that's so problematic.

To hear Albert Mehrabian himself explain why he 'cringes every time he hears the statistics' listen to Radio 4s More Or Less programme <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/console/b00lyvz9>

Or you can watch a quick video www.wordsthatmovemountains.com/orphan/page32/page31/page31.html

Or chat to me here or give me a call. We've got to dispel this myth for our own credibility as communication professionals!

Warm regards,
Stella

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Re:communication - how much is in the words?

Posted by vanessarandle - 2009/08/21 08:11

Stella

I pondered this statistic in relation to my work, graphic recording, and weighed up what my work would be like with less emphasis on, or even without, the words. To capture the real meaning of a presentation in one of my large graphics I listen very carefully to the words that people say. I then create an appropriate visual to represent what's being said. Quite often, I have my back to the person speaking so what I hear, and how I hear it, is critical to recreating its essence in the form of a graphic. I hear the tone, timbre and pitch of the person speaking however, I rarely get to see the body language that goes with it. So, what am I getting at? For me, in the work that I do, the statistic so often quoted by presentation professionals (including myself in the past, if I'm honest!) is turned on its head. What ends up in one of my graphics is a visual interpretation of what people say, not a visual representation of their body language or their voices! In my work, the words people use are fundamental to creating an impactful graphic - without them, I'd be lost (and out of work!).

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