

## Chapter 1

# Problems & Power

We're facing a tremendous problem living in the 21st century. The moment when this problem really became clear to us, when it really hit home, was while we were preparing to write this book. We were at an amusement park near our home. It's one of those huge parks with lots of roller coasters, those big death defying, inside out, and upside-down roller coasters. We were there because, for his tenth birthday, our son wanted to go to this park with five of his best friends. In a moment of insanity, we said yes. And so we were at the park with six ten-year-olds. Which, if you think about it, is like herding kittens. Just as soon as you think you've got control of one, another one is wandering off. They're constantly moving, and squirming and going off in all directions. They're all over the place. Ten-year-olds are like this naturally in any situation. But you bring them to an amusement park, a place designed to distract, and it's like

herding kittens in a catnip factory. And here we are, trying to communicate with them. We're the responsible adults and have to make sure that we don't lose any of them.

We're saying "Okay, who's your buddy? Make sure you stay together. What time are you supposed to meet up? Does everyone have a watch?" and so on. And what we're competing with, what we're up against here are roller coasters, arcade games, a water park, music, life-sized cartoon characters, they've got their friends, noise, food, and so on. We're talking to boys who want to get to it. And the last thing they want to be doing, the very, absolute, guaranteed last place on earth they want to be is in the parking lot, listening to us talk about logistics and when to come back.

By the time they went off in all directions we were wiped out and not at all sure that what we were trying to say to them was getting through. We talked about what had happened. Right then we realized that this is exactly like all the situations we, as communicators, face everyday when we're trying to communicate something that is very important. It might be something critical to someone's safety and well being, or vital to support someone in doing what they want to do. It could be an important message for a client in your business. You might be telling a potential client about your unique product or service in order to have them buy from you. Or you could be speaking to staff and colleagues to motivate them to take action in your business. Or you could be trying to get your kids to clean their

room. We have to communicate. We must get through the distractions.

We may not be competing with roller coasters or cotton candy. And we may not have the attention spans of ten-year-olds to contend with but we are dealing with distractions. We are competing with an unheard-of level of disruption that everyone deals with in this day and age.

This is the problem we're facing in the twenty-first century. We've got vast amounts of information coming at us every day, from every conceivable source and we've got to deal with it. We've got the TV, the Internet, driving down the road we see billboards, hear the radio. We've got books, magazines and newspapers. You walk into your office and there are 17 emails, 9 phone calls and 6 people standing outside your office waiting to talk to you. So we're competing with that.

This information overload, this variety of distraction is something that we are all dealing with. Not only are you dealing with it, but more importantly, so is everyone you are trying to communicate with. So your job as a communicator has gotten more complicated and more challenging, as if you needed any more challenges. Your job as a communicator is to somehow break through that distraction, all that noise that bombards people and deliver your communication. Your job is to navigate through the clutter and really connect with them.

We want to mention a few facts here. Just so we can get a sense of the size of this problem. Recently a computer chip manufacturer

announced that they had developed a chip that could house, on one single chip, all the information that had been written down in the history of the world.

*– All of it.*

*– On one chip.*

That's pretty amazing. But what's even more amazing is that while doing this research they discovered that the amount of information we have, as a civilization, written down and documented – fully twenty percent of it was created in 1999. That is an extraordinary statistic. We don't have the stats yet for the years following 1999, but we can be sure that the invention of new information certainly didn't slow down since then. In fact we do know that the amount of information is doubling about every three to five years. Which means that by 2020 the amount of info available will be five hundred times that which is available now.

There are tons of these statistics, each one more shocking than the last. You've likely seen the New York Times Sunday edition. It's actually in the Guinness Book of Records as the largest newspaper in the world. But still it's only one newspaper, on one day, for one week in one city. But that newspaper on an average Sunday contains more information than the average person alive in the 18th century saw in their entire lives.

*And that is The Problem.*

How can we possibly break through that? How can we, when we need to communicate something, possibly get through the barrage of information that assaults those we wish to communicate with, and actually have a conversation with someone? How can we speak to someone who is only saying: “No more! No more! No more!”

That’s what this book is about. All our work, our courses, coaching and now this book are dedicated to cutting through that clutter, to helping people like you transform their communication skills, so that they can truly connect through all the noise that we all, in the modern world, are dealing with.

## Background/History

The **Power to Connect** is about communication. For more than thirty years we’ve been helping people create and deliver effective communication. We’ve created and produced marketing and corporate communication initiatives for Fortune 500 and entrepreneurial clients and produced Emmy-Award winning television programs. We’ve had the privilege of coaching corporate leaders, entrepreneurs, political candidates, professional speakers, and television personalities to become better, more inspiring, more thoughtful, more powerful, and – most importantly – more effective communicators. Working on professional communication has taught us a lot about human communication in general. What we’ve learned through our experiences as coaches for some of the most inspiring and

effective communicators in the world, as well as being speakers ourselves, is what this book is based on.

The following chapters are designed to have you break through the communication clutter, the information noise that distracts all of us. It's based on our experiences. It is a process we use in designing the marketing and communication strategies and the productions that have had so much impact over the years. It is a process that works in all communication situations, whether it be a sales call, a staff performance review, investment portfolio review with clients. This template will lay the foundation for clearer, more effective communication that yields the results you desire.

To begin with, it is best to use this book in practical application. While the theory in this book is sound and effective, it's in the practice that the real results reside. You will see that there are exercises included in the book to take the thoughts presented here and put them into practice, for that's where the results happen. You may wish to read the entire book first and then go back and complete the exercises or you may wish to do the exercises as you go. Either way will work. The most important thing is to become comfortable in applying the thinking housed here. The template serves as a guide, a structure to open up and access your communication in a way you have not done before.

*So let's begin.*

The place to start is first to identify the types of communication situations you are in. Most of us may not even realize how often we communicate on a daily basis. In fact, we may not even think

of ourselves as communicators except at those times when we give speeches, make presentations. In fact, we are all communicators. That's how we get things done with other people. Unless you're locked in a room by yourself 24 hours a day or live in a cave on the top of a mountain, you are a communicator. And your success as a communicator depends on your ability to get your message through the clutter, the morass of others who want to get their message through the clutter. It's not just the CEOs, the bosses, the managers, and the sales people who are communicators. It's all of us; the moms, the computer service guy, the receptionist, the accountant, the lawyer, the planner, the policeman. All are communicators and the better we are at it, the better the results.

So we're all communicators, but when do we communicate? All the time. It's so second nature to most of us, we don't even think of it as communication. But it's still an exchange of ideas and information to influence or direct someone's opinions or ultimately their actions