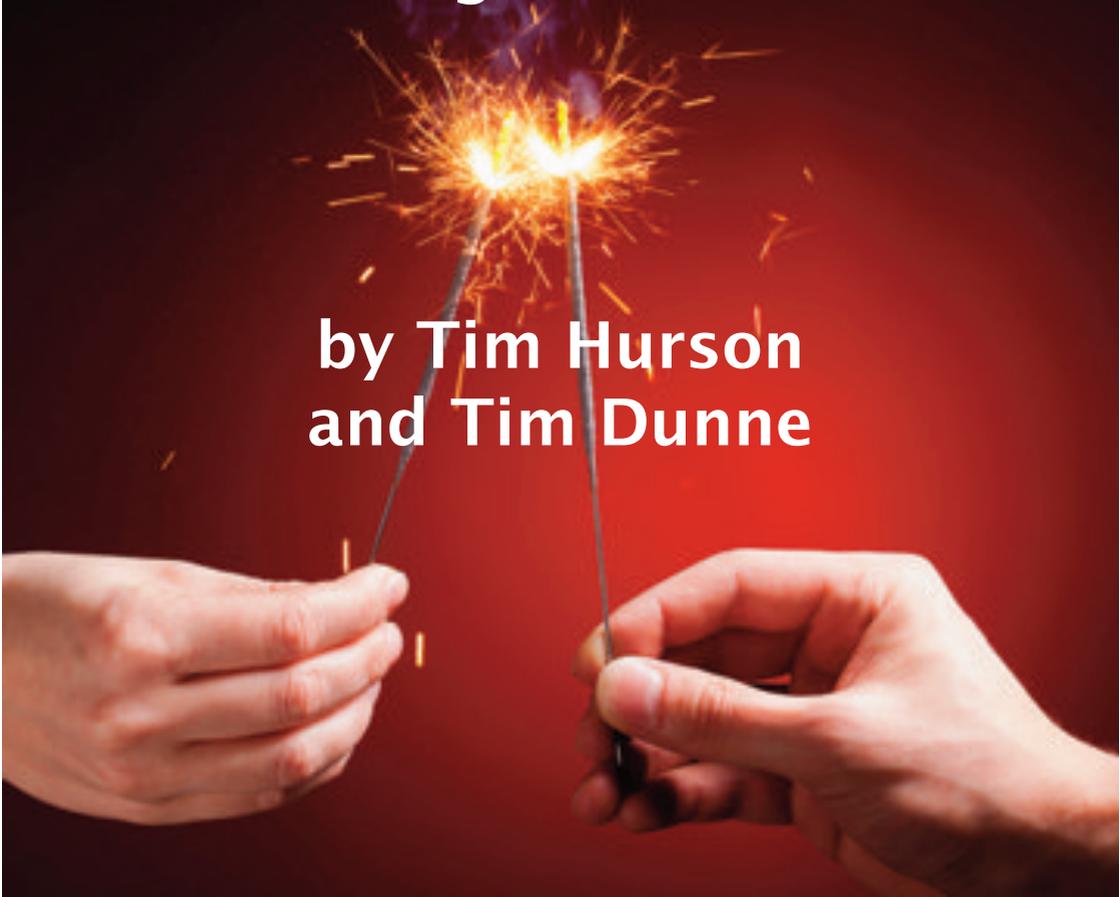


# Speak to be Heard

Ignite people's interest by  
connecting with what  
energizes them

by Tim Hurson  
and Tim Dunne



# Introduction

Have you ever been in a conversation and realized you weren't connecting? What you were saying made perfect sense, but for some reason, the other person just wasn't getting it. Wasn't getting *you*.

The problem is that we all tend to talk about things that energize *us*, but that don't necessarily energize the other person. Unless there's energy, there's very little chance of a connection. And unless you make a solid connection, there's no chance of making a sale.

Based on working with thousands of business people and research by psychologists Dr. Gerard Puccio and Dr. Kobus Neethling, we've found that in business settings most people are energized by one of six things — Context, Results, Ideas, Process, Action, or People.

People energized by Context need to know that proposals have been adequately researched before they can commit to them. They value details, accuracy and precision. They often ask the questions starting with "Why?"

People energized by Results are focused on outcomes. They are interested in strategies as opposed to tactics, and they want to know how proposals will produce those results. They often ask questions stating with “What?”

People energized by Ideas are big picture thinkers. They are usually bored with details, but love exploring new, and sometimes off-the-wall ideas. They often use language containing words like “What if?” and “Why not?”

People energized by Process want to know that proposals have been thought through in terms of workability. Like context people, they value details, but they are more interested in how things will work going forward. They often ask questions starting with “How?”

People energized by Action want to get going. They are more interested in tactics than strategies. They often speak rapidly and are impatient with slow thinkers and slow talkers. Their language is often characterized by “What’s next?” questions.

People who are energized by People see the human side of the equation as the most important. They don’t jump into business conversations, but spend time setting the tone of meetings first. Their most common questions start with “Who?”

Although very few people are affected by only a single energizer, almost all of us will gravitate to one or two primary energizers. Just look around at your friends and colleagues and you'll quickly get a sense of which of the six energizers seems to influence their view of the world. Because each of us sees the world in a particular way, it's useful to try to communicate in a way that people can relate to. This is true for salespeople and for anyone genuinely interested in having a productive and meaningful conversation.

If you try to relate to a person energized by Context in the same way as a person energized by People, you won't connect. They're interested in—energized by—very different things. They speak different languages. If you want to get through, you have to speak a language they can relate to — not to manipulate them, but literally to connect with them. To give them a fair chance they “get” you are and what you have to say.

If you had a psychological questionnaire, you could easily identify what energizes other people. But you can't give your clients or business colleagues a personality test. You need to identify them on the fly—by how they dress, act, speak, and what they surround themselves with. And once you've identified what energizes them, you need to speak in a way that connects with them—that will help them understand you.

That's what this short guide is about. On the following pages you will find some of the key clues that can alert you to what energizes the people you may be meeting with. We'll cover the most common signs — visual, verbal, and behavioral — that will help you identify who you're talking with so you can communicate more effectively. Each of the short sections ends with what we call the Five Communication Commandments for each type of energizer — five things that you can do and say to help you connect better with the people you meet.

We hope you find this little guide useful.



**Energized  
by  
CONTEXT**

## **CONTEXT: Look for...**

- Clutter-free, well-organized desk and office, few personal mementos
- Neatly stacked documents, often flagged with post-its
- Credentials, certificates, mission statements, reference books
- Neat, conservative dress
- Concise emails, often with questions

## **Listen for...**

- Analytic, precise language
- Professional jargon, acronyms, short-forms
- Crisp, precise voicemails
- Tendency to correct others' errors
- Many clarifying questions
- "Why?" questions

## CONTEXT: Consider...

People energized by context seek safety in facts. They distrust assumptions based on incomplete data or poor analysis. They ask many clarifying questions. Before making decisions, they need to know what the situation is, where the data comes from, what experts think, and who else has been checked with.

If you jump too quickly to the next item on your agenda, they may assume you haven't thought issues through. Be prepared to explain the methodology for gathering, validating, interpreting data and to offer details on how your approach minimizes risks and anticipates contingencies.

Even when you think you've dealt with all their concerns, they may ask to return to issues you've already covered. They are not trying to be difficult. It's just their nature. Be as clear as possible. If you don't have immediate answers to their questions, say so, and offer to find out as soon as possible.

Don't expect final decisions during the meeting. They need time to think things through. Offer to provide further information in a followup meeting.

# FIVE COMMUNICATION COMMANDMENTS

Five keys to productive meetings with those energized by CONTEXT:

1. Have (and stick to) a printed agenda, with outcomes for each item.
2. Expect to cover less ground than with other people, but more thoroughly.
3. Confirm they are okay with each agenda item before moving on.
4. Offer detailed support: spec sheets, timetables, price lists, testimonials.
5. Take notes on follow-up data you need to supply.



**Energized  
by  
RESULTS**

## **RESULTS: Look for...**

- Sparse desk, little overt evidence of work
- Possibly some research reports, executive summaries
- Desk or chair in power position, possibly elevated, backlit or framed in some way
- Framed family photos, few other personal items
- Diplomas, formal acknowledgments of achievement, expensive art
- Deliberate, careful dress
- Concise emails (sometimes sent by assistants), specifying topics, outcomes, start/end times

## **RESULTS: Listen for...**

- Confident, to-the-point, directive language
- Voice mails with few niceties, often recorded by assistants
- “What will?” questions

## **RESULTS: Consider...**

People energized by results like to be in control. They may look at your agenda and immediately jump to items that concern them most. They are usually explicit about their focus on the big picture and desire for results. Be prepared to answer one of their most common questions: “Why are we here?”

They resent people who waste their time. They want to get down to business. When the meeting is over, they want to move on to their next task, not hang around with you.

They appreciate accuracy, but not necessarily detail. They want bottom-line summaries from credible sources. They like to know that data and its interpretation are supported by authorities. When assessing results, they want to know what the strategies are for achieving them.

They are often keenly aware of the messages they send through attire, body-language, position in room, and their words. They may arrange meetings so they are backlit. If you meet in a living-room setting with a chair and couch, the chair is for them.

# FIVE COMMUNICATION COMMANDMENTS

Five keys to productive meetings with those energized by RESULTS:

1. Have a headline agenda, with brief objectives for each item
2. Link proposals to industry drivers and strategies
3. Discuss strategies/results, not tactics/processes
4. Be candid about costs, benefits, risks
5. Demonstrate that meeting has been a productive use of their time



**Energized  
by  
IDEAS**

## **IDEAS: Look for...**

- Visually stimulating workspace, filled with reminder notes, photos, articles
- Dress ranges from deliberately stylish to careless, almost never conservative
- Stacks of paper, files, desk toys, books, games, items that appear unrelated to work
- Desk may be less a work area than a surface to put things
- Emails written with speed, often with typos, other errors, exclamation marks

## **IDEAS: Listen for...**

- Open, expressive, “Wow!”
- Jumping from topic to topic
- Analogies, metaphors, stories
- Expressions of big-picture, abstract thinking
- “What if?”, “What else?”, “Why not?” questions

## IDEAS: Consider...

People energized by ideas love to play with possibilities. They like to riff on assumptions, intuitions, associations. They can lose track of time as they explore options and alternatives. They are de-energized by data, details, tactics.

They like to start with the big picture of the meeting or issue. They see the world through aesthetic lenses, and enjoy things they perceive as beautiful, elegant, or unique. The beauty of an idea is more important to them than how to implement it.

They are comfortable with ambiguity, jumping from one idea to another, making seemingly random connections. They are comfortable with other people floating unexpected ideas based on random associations.

Often their ideas are half-formed and quickly forgotten. You can help them by taking notes on the ideas they generate and linking to them later. Because they have so many of them, it is sometimes difficult for these people to land on a single idea. You can help by suggesting criteria for comparing or evaluating ideas, especially if you can do this visually, using grids or sketches.

## **FIVE COMMUNICATION COMMANDMENTS**

Five keys to productive meetings with those energized by IDEAS:

1. Don't offer an agenda. Give overview of meeting.
2. Focus on high-level strategies. Avoid details, tactics, practicalities.
3. Use pictures, diagrams, back-of-napkin sketches.
4. Don't force them to closure before they are ready.
5. Give them time to incubate on ideas (may entail following up by voice or email)



Energized  
by  
PROCESS

## **PROCESS: Look for...**

- Clean, functional desk, often with nameplates, business card caddies
- Chair arranged with back to door, facing computer
- Possibly cubby holes for organizing items
- Color-coded stacks of paper, neatly laid out
- Process diagrams, flow charts, spreadsheets
- Neat dress, often with pocket protectors, retractable key chains, phone holsters
- Extensive note-taking during your meeting
- Direct, factual emails without metaphors, analogies, exclamations, emoticons

## **PROCESS: Listen for...**

- Careful, precise, often technical language
- Facts and figures
- Accurate summarizing statements
- “How?”, “When?”, “Where?”, “How much?” questions

## **PROCESS: Consider...**

People energized by process admire practical, well-structured plans and procedures, based on detailed, step-by-step thinking. They need time to consider options, evaluate, and develop their own ideas.

Because they are good at spotting holes and inconsistencies, they may seem to be hypercritical. They enjoy “looking under the hood” and tweaking things to make them work better. In assessing processes, they want to see timetables and detailed implementation plans. Expect them to break down your processes, examine them, and put them back together.

They value careful and precise language and want direct, detailed answers to questions. They are not persuaded by anecdotes or generalities. They want concrete, measurable success criteria. They respond well to demonstrable success and proven track records. They like tangible evidence — charts, tables, spreadsheets — and sometimes require additional backup data to support the primary data.

# FIVE COMMUNICATION COMMANDMENTS

Five keys to productive meetings with those energized by PROCESS:

1. Have, follow, and refer to logical written agenda.
2. Give them opportunity to compare plans and proposals.
3. Leave time for them to ask questions.
4. Answer questions with precise data, with print support if possible.
5. Show backup plans, risk-mitigation strategies.



**Energized  
by  
ACTION**

## **ACTION: Look for...**

- Desk cluttered with recent mess
- Signs of projects on-the-go, schedules, to-do lists, reminders
- Mementos of past achievements
- Emails with short sentences, contractions (“Saw this, thought u’d be interested.”)

## **ACTION: Listen for...**

- Decisive, controlling, often fast-paced language
- Impatience, often cutting off other people’s statements
- “When?”, “By when?”, “What’s next?”, “Who’s on that?” questions

## **ACTION: Consider...**

People energized by action seek safety by exercising control over situations. They like to get into action mode quickly and can become impatient when others take longer to think things through. They value early indications of progress. They tend to be decisive, and often relate well to decisiveness in others.

They don't need plans to be perfect before implementing them. They are generally comfortable accepting a degree of risk, as long as they see the possibility of course corrections along the way. On the other hand, they are uncomfortable if they don't get feedback on how projects are doing. To them no news is bad news.

When they ask for evidence supporting your proposal, help them visualize how it might work in their situation, what they might learn from experiences of others, and how they might adapt for their own needs.

Because they are always busy, don't be surprised if your meeting is interrupted by calls, text messages, or brief visits. They are happy for meetings to end once they feel they have enough information to move on.

# FIVE COMMUNICATION COMMANDMENTS

Five keys to productive meetings with those energized by ACTION:

1. Avoid long explanations, detailed agendas.
2. Use to-do list, visibly checking things off as you go.
3. Stress that you and your team will give feedback and regular check-ins.
4. Focus on near-term progress and tactics over strategy.
5. Don't overstay your welcome. They have other things to do.



**Energized  
by  
PEOPLE**

## **PEOPLE: Look for...**

- Greeting with welcoming gestures, touching, warm handshakes
- Photos of family, friends, colleagues, group shots
- Bowls of candies or other favors for guests
- Overt facial expressions, open body language
- Informal meeting venues (in cafeteria, walking down hall, small side table)
- Emails with exclamation marks, all caps, emoticons

## **PEOPLE: Listen for...**

- Friendly, warm or humorous language
- Signs of informality, references to other people, personal touches
- Friendly, personal, even funny voice messages
- “Who?” questions

## PEOPLE: Consider...

People energized by other people may sometimes seem to leap out of their chair to greet you. They almost always take time to set the climate of a meeting before getting down to business. Small talk is important to them.

For them, human interaction is more important than optimizing critical paths or the bottom line. Their eyes may glaze over when the subject drifts to technical or financial intricacies. They prefer to make decisions intuitively, based on emotional input, fairness, empathy, group norms, and opportunities for interpersonal engagement.

The relate well to testimonials and opinions of people they admire or respect. They value the opportunity to talk with others who have used a proposed product or service. Personal referrals are meaningful to them.

They are okay with colleagues or staff popping their heads in, interrupting the meeting, sometimes for minutes on end, and may even invite them in and introduce you to them.

# FIVE COMMUNICATION COMMANDMENTS

Five keys to productive meetings with those energized by PEOPLE:

1. Do not immediately offer an agenda.
2. Warm up with small talk, comments about what you see in the office.
3. Explain how your proposal will affect people they work with.
4. Use informal, expressive words, phrases, body language.
5. Ask about personal interests.