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The Presenter's Paradox: More is Less

"This report, by its very length, defends itself against the risk of being read." — Winston Churchill

When it comes to presenting information, more is not more.

It's less.

In fact, "more" can do more harm, than help.

In the book, [What More Can I Say?: Why Communication Fails and What to Do About It](#), Dianna Booher explains the Presenter's Paradox and what to do about it.



The Presenter's Paradox

The Presenter's Paradox is that the presenter thinks more information is better.

But it's not.

The reader or listener "averages" all the pieces of information, and walks away with a single message.

As a result, the presenter waters down their higher-value stuff with lower value stuff, when they present too much information.

Additionally, the presenter needs to avoid overloading or overwhelming the reader or listener's absorption rate. From a listener, or reader point of view, more is not more value. It's more information to sort through. It's more information to make sense of. And, it's more information to synthesize.

Presenters Think that More is Better

More is not better. If you've ever been on the receiving end of a lecture, or when somebody is on their soap box, you know what I mean.

Via [What More Can I Say?: Why Communication Fails and What to Do About It](#):

"We perceive situations, value, and penalties quite differently—depending on whether we're communicating them or hearing them.

*The natural tendency for communicators is to think that more is better. (That's why it's so easy for parents, managers, or leaders to lapse into lecture mode!) **Human nature leans toward excess.***

If this is healthy, then thinner is healthier. If pricing on the regular soft drinks makes sense, then the Super-Size drink seems like a steal. If jogging three miles a day keeps you in shape, then training for a marathon should make you super fit. If investing \$20,000 in this start-up is a good deal, then why not sink half your life savings into it?"

Common Examples of How Presenters Go to Excess

If you've ever read a laundry list of benefits or a resume that never ends, or a book that's too long to even begin, you get the point.

In an effort to be complete, a presenter ends up creating complexity, or worse, they take away the punch of their high-value insights or information.

Via [What More Can I Say?: Why Communication Fails and What to Do About It](#):

"People transfer that same thinking to the workplace when they prepare a resume, write sales proposal, describe product benefits, launch a marketing campaign, or tout their favorite political candidate. They go to excess. In a resume, they try to list ALL their past accomplishments or credentials. In the product description, they list ALL the features and benefits. In the sales proposals, they list ALL the reasons to deal with their organization. Their reasoning? 'Well, it's an extra; it can't hurt' But it does."

"More" Cheapens the Perceived Value

When researchers study the impact of more information, such as throwing additional items into an offer, they find that it cheapens the perceived value.

Via [What More Can I Say?: Why Communication Fails and What to Do About It](#):

"More is not better, according to the Presenter's Paradox studies. When presenters offer extra 'benefits,' the offer does not necessarily have an additive effect. Often the 'extra' cheapens the perceived value of the overall benefit and even subtracts real value—as measured by what a customer is willing to pay for a product or service. At best, the low-value 'extra' may leave a negative impression of the high-value value benefit."

Listeners Walk Away with a Single Impression

Listeners “average” all the pieces of information they hear into a single message.

At some point, it's diminishing returns.

A few high-value pieces of information do better than more pieces of information.

Via [What More Can I Say?: Why Communication Fails and What to Do About It](#):

“Here's what they discovered: When making an offer, communicators intuitively think more is better. They consider each item as a single add-on component, increasing the value of the whole offer or message or apology (as the case may be).

But listeners don't look at the situation the same way. Instead, they 'average' all the pieces of information they hear and walk away with a single impression. The same premise held true whether the messages were positive or negative, or whether the 'bundled' offers involved similar or dissimilar items, or whether all were monetary or non-monetary items.

Not only did 'more' add less, it actually harmed the rest.”

Don't compete on more.

Focus on less quantity, but higher value information.

I could say more on this, but I think it's enough said.

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