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Improving Communication Skills

Conveying Ideas

Professor Maurice Schweitzer

Communication Goals

- Convey our ideas
- Gather information
- Change relationships

Key Principles to Convey Ideas

- Grab attention
- Send a message
 - Simple
 - Persuasive
 - Memorable



Remember to ski and snowboard responsibly. www.boeriusa.com

boeri[®]
it's your head

Grab Attention

- Gain attention
 - Surprising
 - Puzzle
 - Emotional
 - Individual stories trigger empathy
 - “If I see one I will act” (Mother Theresa)
 - Video from a patient’s perspective

Persuasive

- Credible
 - Invoke authority
 - Experience
 - Trust

Simplicity

- Focus on a single message
 - “It’s the economy stupid.” (Clinton)
 - “THE low cost airline.” (Southwest Airlines)
 - Commanders intent (US military)
 - Don’t bury the lead



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Make Messages Memorable

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Tell a Story

- Willie Horton
 - George H. W. Bush vs. Michael Dukakis
 - Lee Atwater, Bush Campaign Manager, “By the time we’re finished, they’re going to wonder whether Willie Horton is Dukakis’ running mate.”
 - Willie Horton was serving a life sentence for murder
 - Weekend furlough
 - Raped a woman & stabbed her husband
 - Dukakis was in favor of the furlough program
 - This story derailed Dukakis in 1988

Memorable

- Vivid
 - National Geographic (Afghan refugee)
- Keep it simple
 - Chronological order

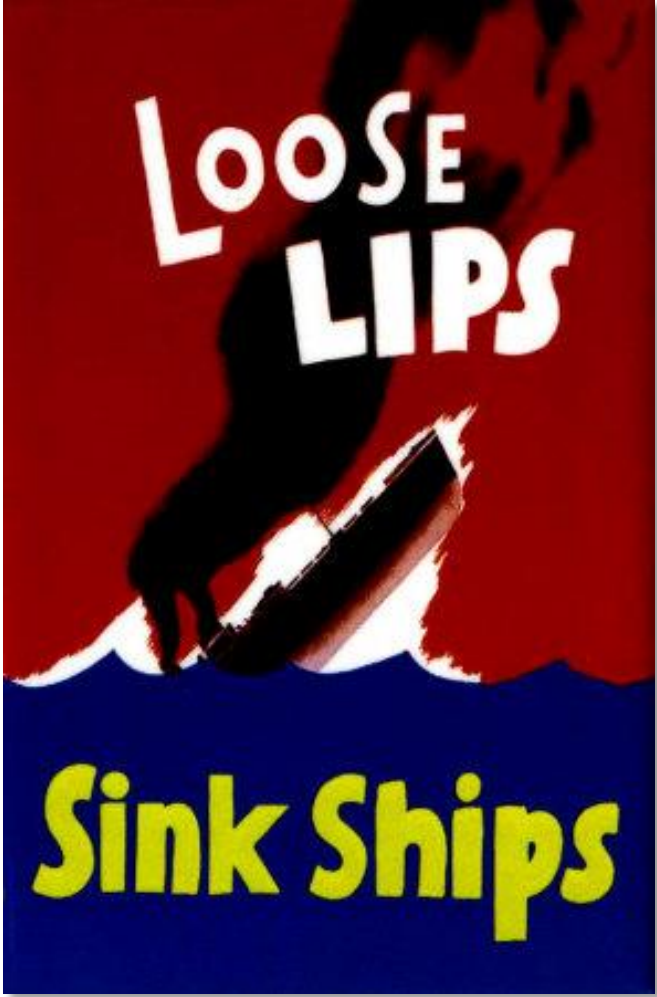
Accessible

- Analogy
 - “Copyrights are property.”
 - “We are only as strong as our weakest link.”
 - “Closing the barn door after the cows have gotten out.”

Figures of Speech

- Rhyming
 - OJ Simpson Trial
 - “If the glove doesn’t fit, you must acquit”

Figures of Speech



Concrete

- Offers ideas for specific action
 - “Put a man on the moon within the decade.” – John F. Kennedy
 - Boeing in the 1960s
 - “The 727 must seat 131 passengers, fly nonstop from Miami to New York City, and land on Runway 4-22 at La Guardia.”
 - Runway 4-22 is < 1 mile
- Avoid vague directions
 - “Maximize shareholder value”
 - “Continuous improvement”

Narrow Focus

- CEO Lee Iacocca of Ford
 - “under 2,000 pounds and under \$2,000” available in 1970
 - In 1970, Ford introduces the Ford Pinto



Narrow Focus

- Ford Pinto: 1970-1980 “The barbecue that seats four.”
- Rear-end collisions could burst the fuel tank
 - Fuel tank behind the rear axle in less than 10 inches of crush space
 - 56 people died in Pinto fires
 - Time Magazine included the Pinto in its list of the 50 worst cars of all time
- Debate
 - Was Ford was aware of the design flaw?
 - Perhaps it was cheaper to pay off lawsuits than redesign the vehicle



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Asking Questions

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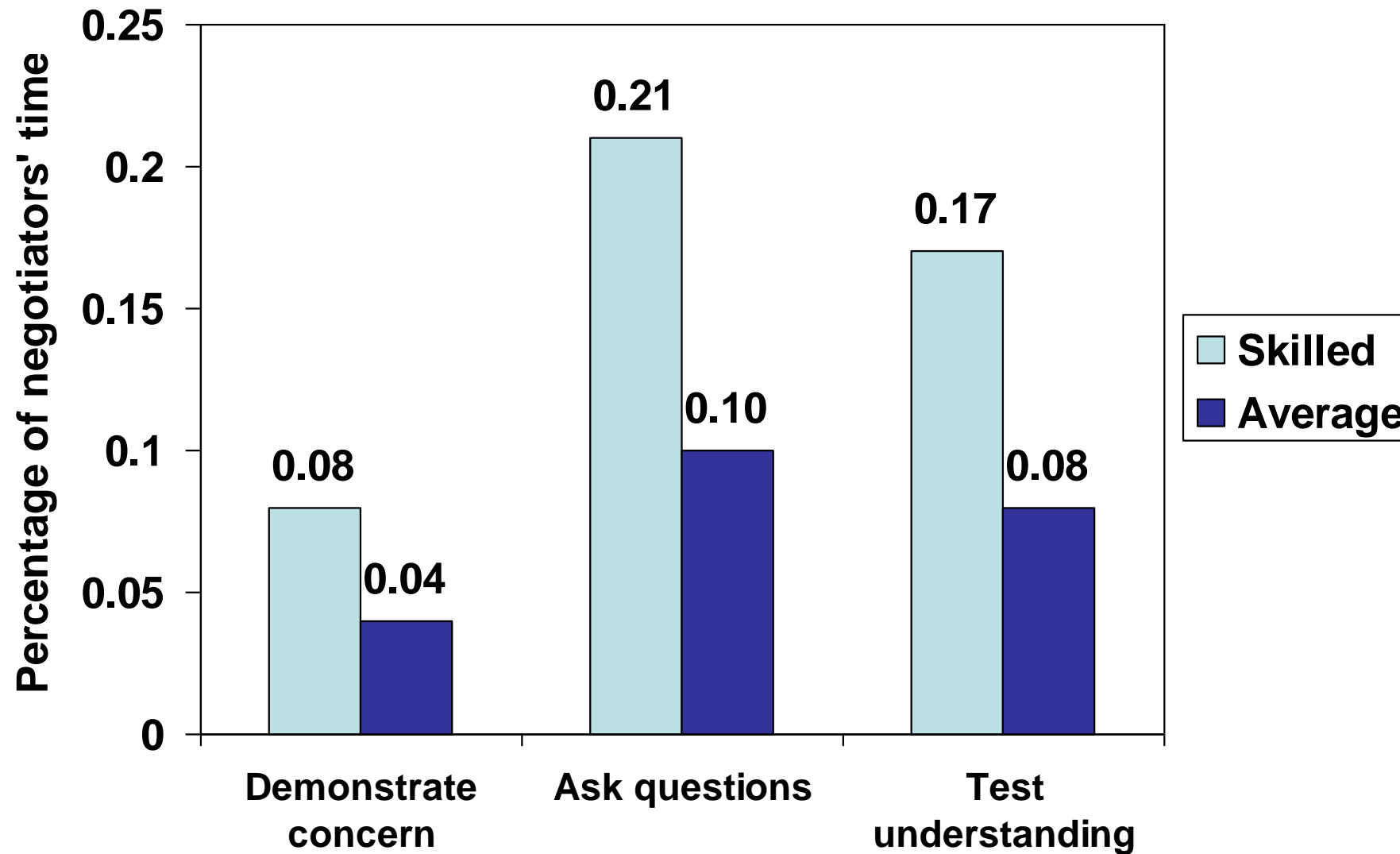
Ask for it

- University of Chicago received a \$1m grant from Mrs. Field of the Marshall Field Department Store.
- Administration at Northwestern University were shocked. Mrs. Field lived in Evanston, Illinois and had been a supporter in the past.
- They called Mrs. Field, she explained, “The people of the University of Chicago asked. You didn’t.”

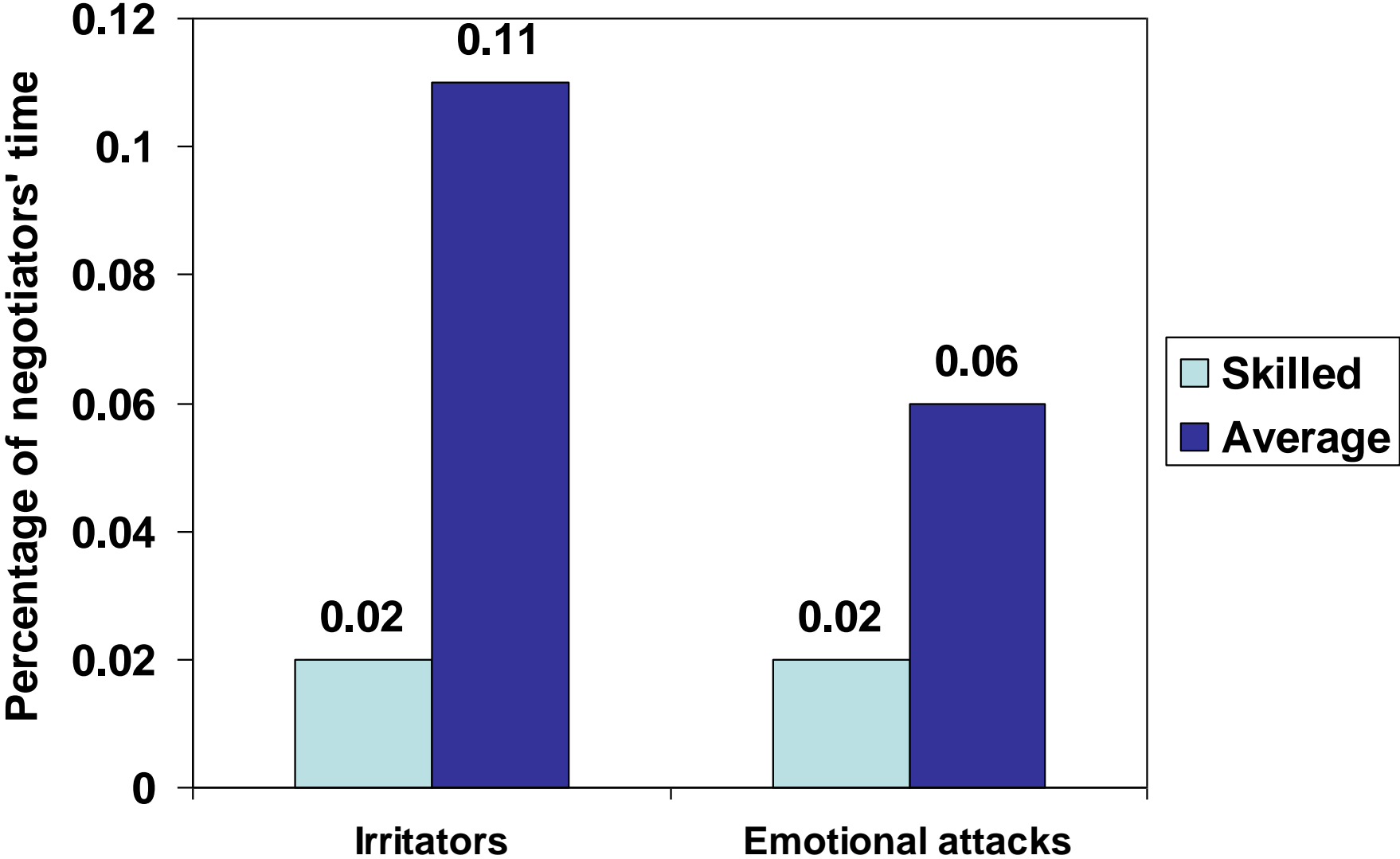
Comparison of Skilled vs Average Negotiators

- Neil Rackham study of 102 labor negotiators
 - Compared superior and average negotiators before, during, and after negotiation
 - Ability based upon peers and counterparts assessments

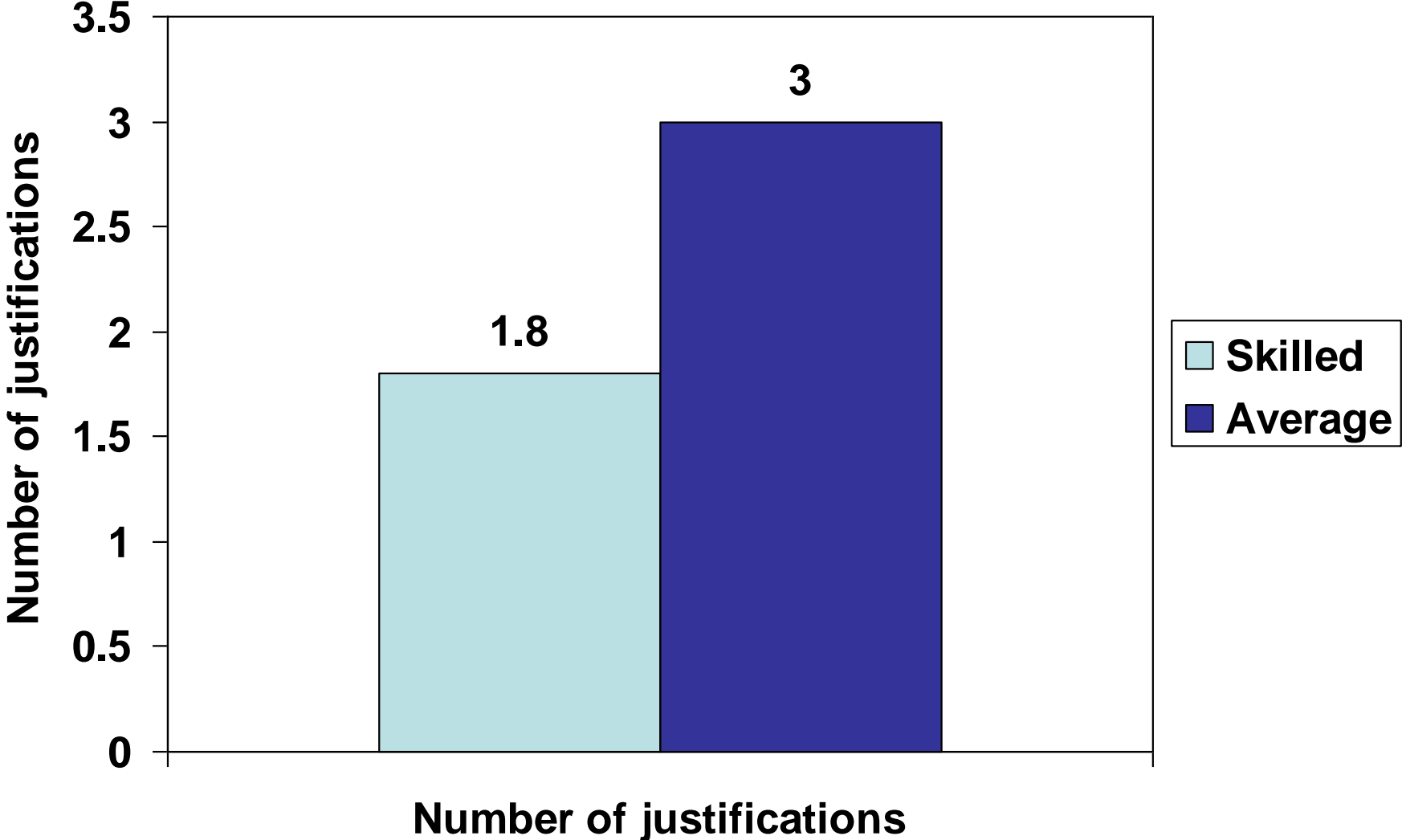
Skilled Negotiators in Communication



Skilled Negotiators in Communication



Skilled Negotiators in Communication





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A Deeper Look at Questions

Professor Maurice Schweitzer

What Questions Do (Linguistics)

- Structure Conversation (Clark, 1996)
- Moves narrative forward
 - “And what happened next?”
- Pauses to ensure understanding
 - “Do you know what I mean?”
 - “How did you know who was calling?”
- Solicit information
- Guide answers

Leading Questions

- Study where participants watched a driver's education film of an accident (Loftus & Palmer)
 - How fast were the cars going when they smashed into each other?
 - How fast were the cars going when they bumped into each other?
 - How fast were the cars going when they contacted each other?

How fast were the cars going?

Verb	Mean Speed Estimate
Smashed	40.8
Bumped	38.1
Contacted	31.8

Leading Questions (Loftus)

- Do you get headaches frequently, and if so, how often?
 - 2.2 per week
- Do you get headaches occasionally and, if so, how often?
 - 0.7 per week
- Other examples
 - Could you be impartial if you knew the defendant was a member of a gang?
 - When did you stop taking money?

Implanting Memories (Loftus)

- Participants watched a video of car driving on a country road
- “How fast was the car going?”
- One week later, asked participants again “Did you see a barn?”
 - “How fast was the white sports car going while traveling along the country road?”
 - “How fast was the white sports car going when it passed the barn while traveling along the country road?”
 - One week later: “Did you see a barn?”
 - Yes: 17.3% vs 2.7%

What Do Questions Do?

- Gather information
- Reveal information
 - About the asker
 - Consequently elicit different information

(Malhotra and Bazerman, 2007; Nierenberg, 1986; Shell, 1999; Thompson, 2005)

Experiment



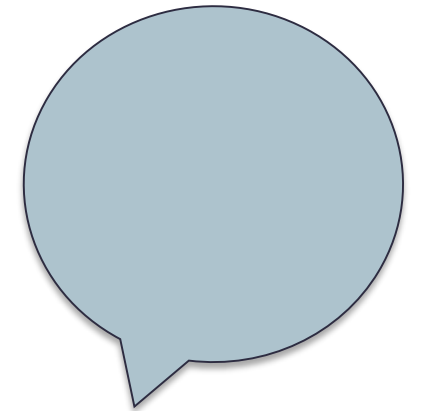
Participants assigned to role of Seller



Negotiate sale of used iPod



Receive question from Buyer



Offer info regarding iPod

Manipulation

General question: What can you tell me about it?

Positive assumption question: It doesn't have any problems, does it?

Negative assumption question: What problems does it have?

Question Disclosure

Specificity reveals
knowledge

General question:

What can you tell me about it?

Positive assumption question:

It doesn't have any problems, does it?

Negative assumption question:

What problems does it have?

Question Disclosure

Directness reveals
assertiveness

General question:

What can you tell me about it?

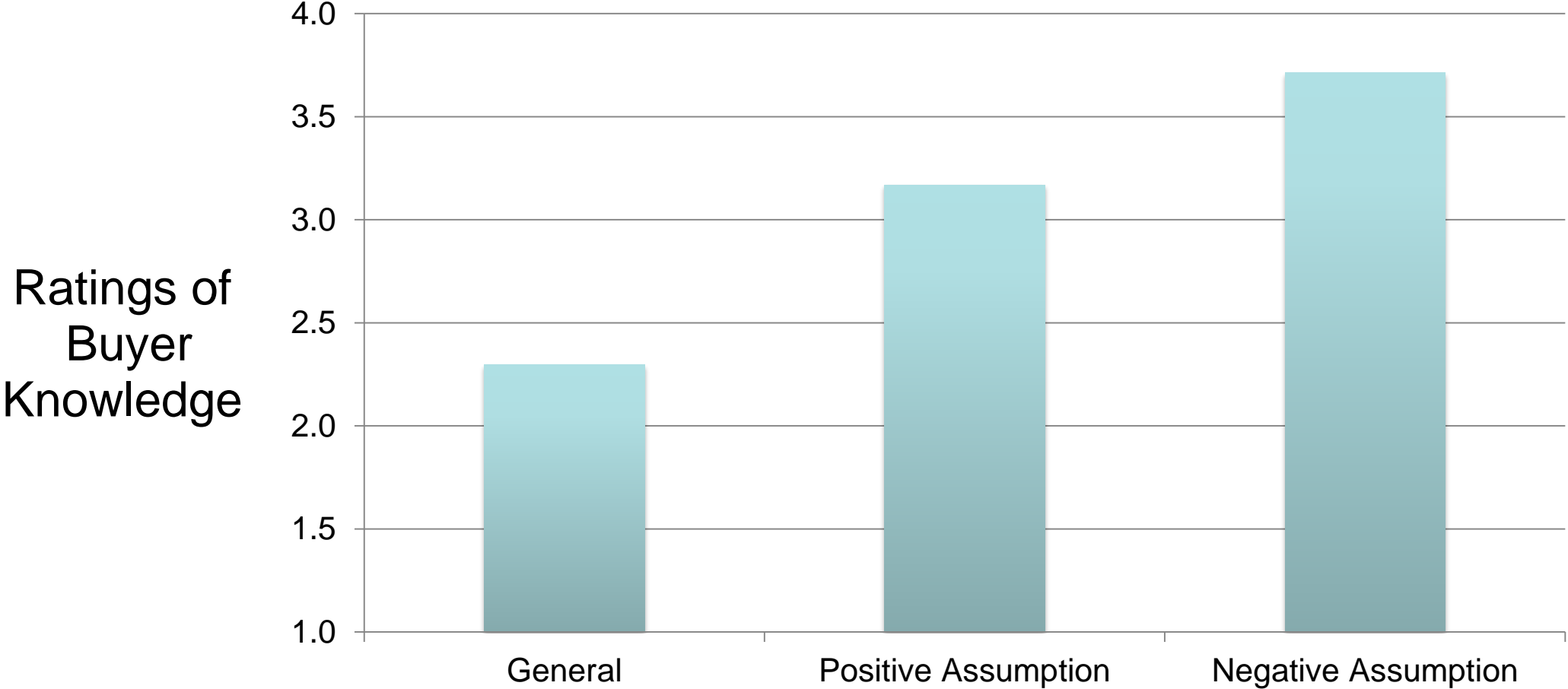
Positive assumption question:

It doesn't have any problems, does it?

Negative assumption question:

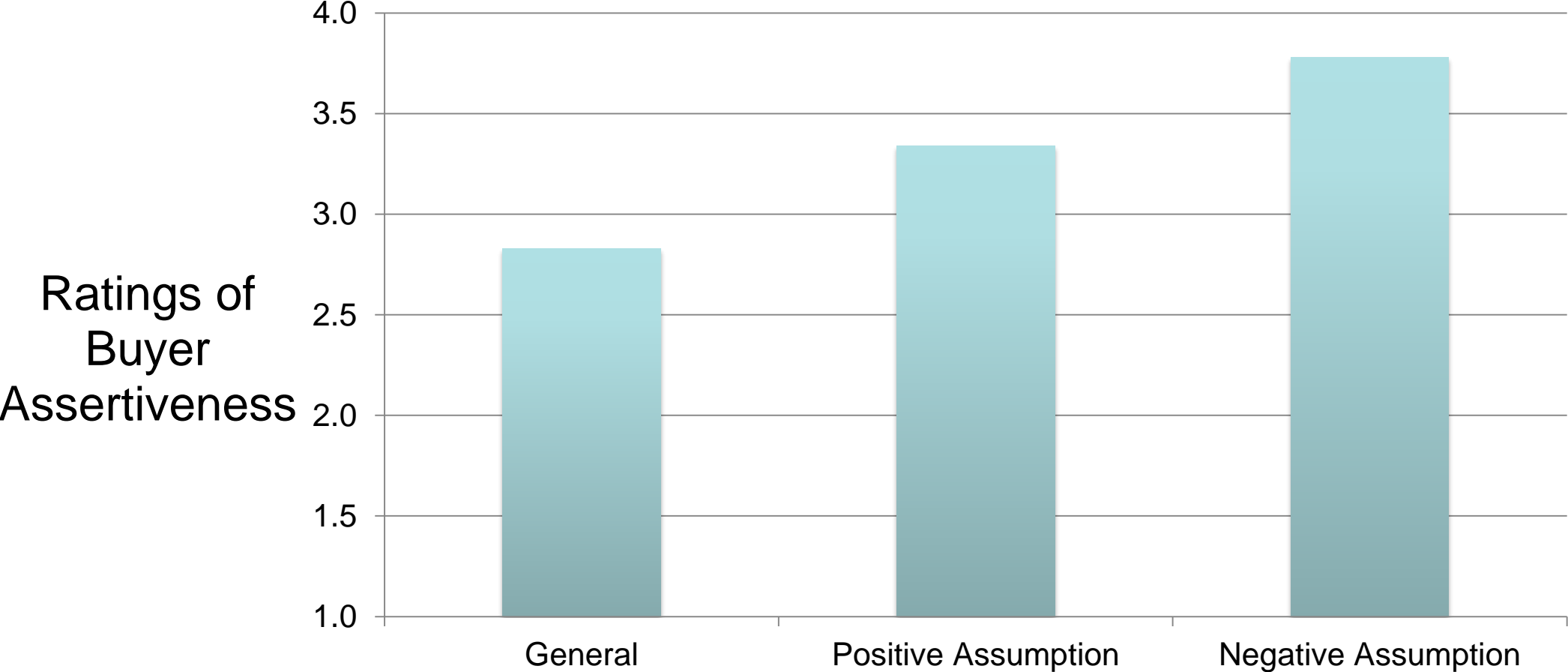
What problems does it have?

Results: Perceptions of “Buyer”



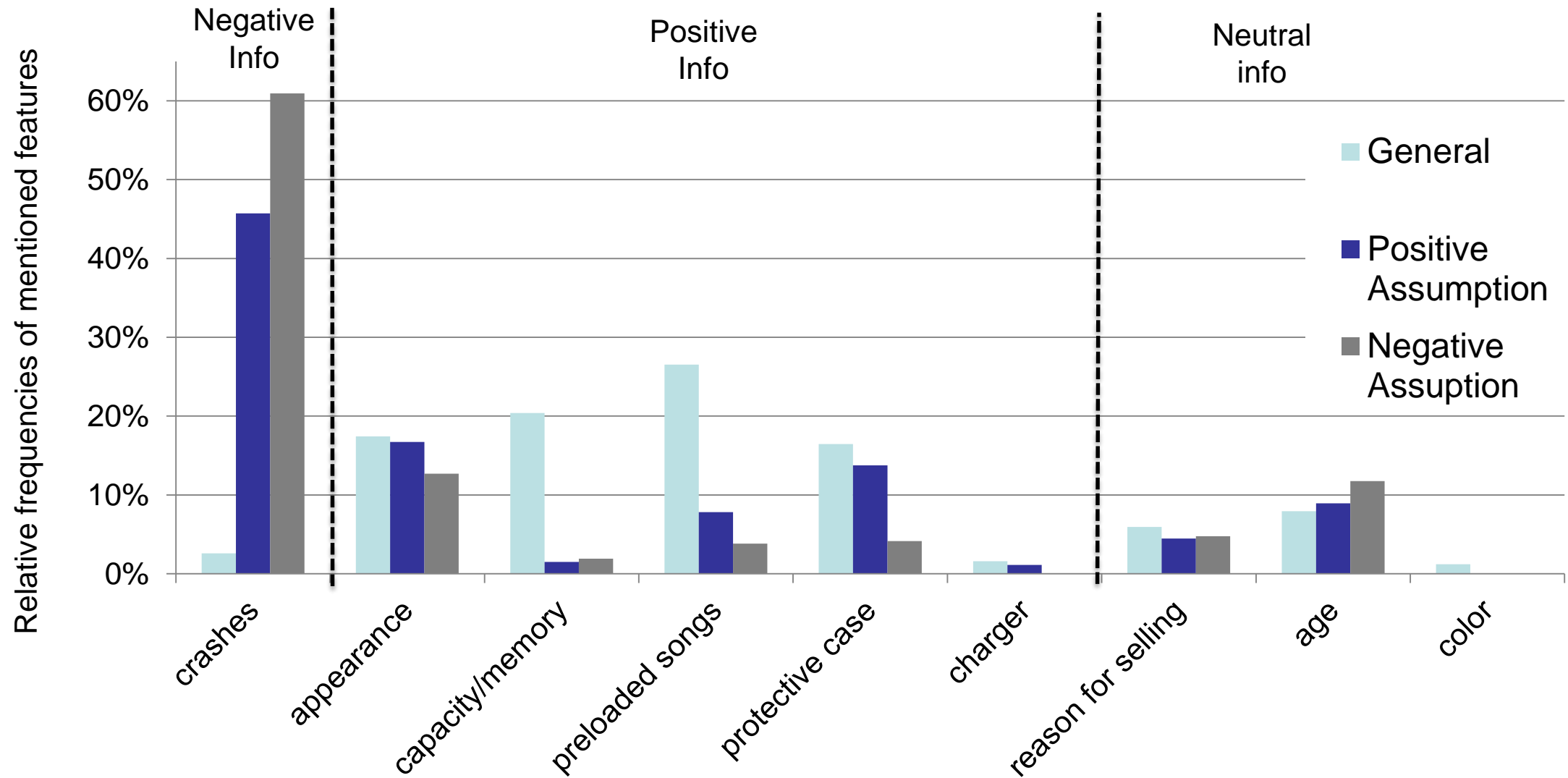
$F(2, 216) = 73.3, p < .001$
Contrast: $F(2, 216) = 126.2, p < .001$

Results: Perceptions of “Buyer”



$F(2, 216) = 27.8, p < .001$
Contrast: $F(2, 216) = 38.9, p < .001$

Results: Content of Seller's Responses



Summary

- Ask questions
- Seek disconfirming information
 - What medications have you missed?
 - What challenges are you facing meeting this deadline?



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Active Listening

Professor Maurice Schweitzer

Active Listening

- Using the communication process
 - Learn information
 - Build relationships
 - Demonstrate concern and interest in others
 - Shift emotions
- Ask questions
- Demonstrate interest
- Probe further

Active Listening

- Questions that require elaboration
 - “what...? when...?”
- Encourage a counterpart to expand on their responses
 - “tell me more about...” “I’d like to hear more...”
- Speak less

Active Listening

- Demonstrate interest both verbal and non-verbal
- Verbal: Minimal encouragers
 - Cues that indicate your presence and attention
 - “uh-huh” “yes”, “right”, “go on”, “ok”
 - nodding
- Non-verbal: Mirroring
 - Demonstrate interest
 - Repeating the last few words or gist of the counterpart

Active Listening

- Probe further
 - Summarize information, demonstrate perspective taking, and seek clarification
 - Combine paraphrasing with follow-up questions
 - “Let me make sure I understand what you’re saying... the depreciation values for last year came from... (paraphrase) but the current values are missing...?(follow-up question)”

Active Listening

- Asking Questions
 - Seek elaboration
 - Avoid talking
- Demonstrating Interest
 - Minimal encouragers
 - Mirroring
- Probe Further
 - Summarize
 - Ask follow-up questions



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Nonverbal Communication

Professor Maurice Schweitzer

Bush and Merkel, G8 Summit, St. Petersburg, 2006



Nonverbal communication

- Most communication is nonverbal
 - By various estimates 70-90% of communication is nonverbal
- Nonverbal communication enables:
 - You to communicate your message more effectively
 - You to interpret other's reactions more effectively



Cross Cultural Differences

- High-context cultures
 - Infer information from context / rely heavily of nonverbal signs (Asian, Latin American, Middle Eastern)
- Low-context cultures
 - Rely on content of message (European, North American)
- Symbols mean very different things
 - “ok symbol”, haptics, holding hands, patting someone on the head

Types of Nonverbal Communication

- Kinesics
 - Symbols created by the body
 - Gestures 'ok symbol'
 - Gesticulations, facial expression, eye contact, appearance
- Paralanguage
 - Inflection, tempo, emphasis add meaning to oral language
 - In writing: Highlighting, bold, all capital letters
- Haptics
 - Tactile contact
 - Taking one's hand, putting a hand on one's shoulder

Types of Nonverbal Communication

- Proxemics

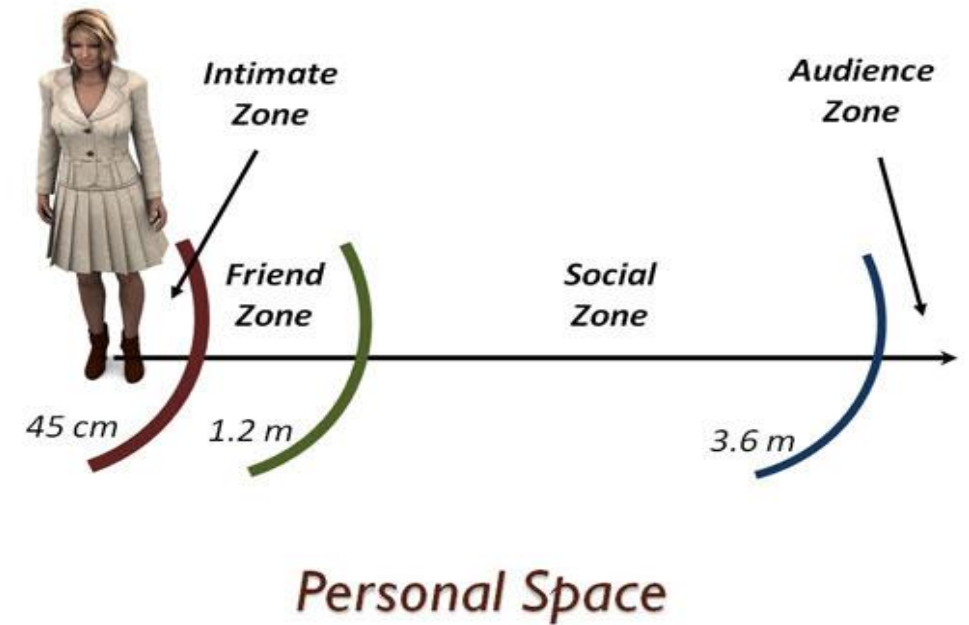
- Distance

- Intimate distance: within 18"
 - Personal distance: 18" to 4'
 - Social distance: 4' to 12'
 - Public distance: 12' +

- Use of space: room size, color, lighting, table configuration, office layout

- Chronemics

- Use of time
 - Promptness, handling of deadlines, pace of negotiations





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Communication Media

Professor Maurice Schweitzer

Communication Media

- Negotiating a job offer at Nazareth College
 - Counters by asking for other concessions in an email



Communication Media

As you know, I am very enthusiastic about the possibility of coming to Nazareth. Granting some of the following provisions would make my decision easier.

- 1) An increase of my starting salary to \$65,000, which is more in line with what assistant professors in philosophy have been getting in the last few years.
- 2) An official semester of maternity leave.
- 3) A pre-tenure sabbatical at some point during the bottom half of my tenure clock.
- 4) No more than three new class preps per year for the first three years.
- 5) A start date of academic year 2015 so I can complete my postdoc.

I know that some of these might be easier to grant than others. Let me know what you think.

Communication Media

Thank you for your email. The search committee discussed your provisions. They were also reviewed by the Dean and the VPAA. It was determined that on the whole these provisions indicate an interest in teaching at a research university and not at a college, like ours, that is both teaching and student centered. Thus, the institution has decided to withdraw its offer of employment to you.

Thank you very much for your interest in Nazareth College. We wish you the best in finding a suitable position.

Advantages from E-mail & Texting

- Asynchronous
 - Opportunity to multi-task
 - More time to think/respond
- More equal medium of communication
- Can evade questions
- Reveal less information such as emotional reactions
- Easy medium to communicate with many people
- Keep a record

Media Richness

- Face to face media is the best
 - Most effective in communicating our messages and reading other people
 - Can shake hands or give an embrace
- Video-conference
- Telephone
- Writing
- Voicemail*
- E-mail*
- IM*

*Electronic messages are easily replicated and forwarded

E-mail Prescriptions

- Avoid e-mail for sensitive matters
 - Write as if the email will be forwarded
- Avoid e-mail for nuanced, delicate matters
 - Higher chance of being misunderstood
 - Reduced social cues
 - Reduced social awareness
 - Empathy, guilt, social conventions

E-mail Prescriptions

- Work at relationship building
 - Messages often appear more assertive than intended
- Consider meeting face to face or calling someone in reply to an e-mail
- Write e-mail as if many people will read it
 - Forwarded e-mail can have unintended consequences



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Threats

Professor Maurice Schweitzer

Air-Traffic Controllers

- On August 3, 1981, nearly 13,000 air-traffic controllers went on strike after negotiations over wages, hours and benefits broke down with the federal government
- President Ronald Reagan:
 - "They are in violation of the law, and if they do not report for work within forty-eight hours, they have forfeited their jobs and will be terminated."
 - On August 5, President Reagan carried out his threat and fired the 11,359 air-traffic controllers who had not returned to work
 - On October 22nd the air traffic controllers union was officially decertified

Consequence

- U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese considered this to be the defining act of Reagan's Presidency.
 - Foundation for Reagan's subsequent legislative and diplomatic successes

When to Use Threats

- Get attention
- Send a message (Status quo is unacceptable)
- Set a precedent

Auto Workers and Meat Packers

- In 1984, Canadian Auto Workers went on strike against General Motors
- Each day of the strike cost the company millions of dollars in lost production
- After 13 days, General Motors conceded to the principal demands of the autoworkers

Hormel Meat Packers

- In 1985, Hormel meat-packers in Austin, MN went on strike
- Management, however, was prepared to keep production going
 - Manning the factory themselves
 - Hiring replacement workers willing to work for less
- Few of the demands were ever met
- The majority lost their jobs permanently
- The meat-packers over-estimated the impact of imposing their threat-based consequences, failing to realize that management had recourse to alternative labor

Iraq Example

- June 20, 2004, a video was released showing a South Korean man taken hostage by Iraqi militants
- Kidnappers delivered an ultimatum to South Korea's government:
 - “We ask the government of South Korea to pull their forces out of Iraq and not to send additional forces. Otherwise, we will send this hostage's head back to [you]. And you have 24 hours, starting tonight.”
- South Korean officials refused to halt military deployment
- A second video was released only two days later, showing the decapitation of the South Korean man

Iraq Example

- The following month a Filipino truck driver was taken hostage in Iraq
- His kidnappers declared that they would free him when “the last Filipino [troop] leaves Iraq on a date that doesn't go beyond the end of this month.”
- The Philippine government swiftly withdrew its 51-member presence in Iraq
- The hostage was released the next day

Wise Threats

- Are you **WILLING** to follow through?
 - Make credible threats
 - Avoid threats that hurt you more than your counterpart
 - Make reasonable demands
 - The other side should be able to comply with the demand
- Consider **INTERESTS**
 - Plan your threats
 - Avoid rash threats driven by emotion
 - Frame threats in terms of how compliance will further the other side's interests
 - You want to motivate, not punish
 - “If we get back to work, we will be productive...”

WISE Threats

- **SAVE FACE**
 - Your face: Don't make irrational or wimpy threats
 - Their face: Make it easy for the other side to meet your demands; give them the appearance of choice
 - Beware of inciting reactance and revenge: Aim for respect
- Be **EXACT** in your threat
 - IF ... Then...: Say what you are going to do and when you are going to do it (a clear deadline)
 - Be specific about what the counterpart can do to prevent you following-through
- If you don't follow through, you lose credibility, and if you do follow through, it will cost you something— at least in the short-run

Dealing with Threats

- Threats push our neurological buttons (we crave retaliation).
- Try not to be...
 - Too tough: Avoid conflict spirals
 - Too weak: Consider when conceding to demands will reinforce domineering tactics
 - Consider ignoring the threat
 - Negotiators abandon their threats 77% of the time when the threats go unreciprocated

Responding to Threats

1. Diagnose the motivation behind the threat

- The victim: your counterpart is feeling frustrated or offended, the threat may have emerged from his desire to be heard and acknowledged
- The pragmatist: This straight-shooter is informing you of a strong outside alternative or a real constraint
- The bluffer: This could reflect insecurity or a desire to dominate. The threat may be merely a ruse

Responding to Threats

2. Express understanding

- Listen to feelings, acknowledge grievance, and express understanding for their troubles. Soothes the victim

3. Ask questions

- Questions reveal the intensity of the threat and also reveal novel solutions. Helps understand a pragmatist

4. Label the threat

- Labeling a threat neutralizes negative intent and boosts sense of control. Counteracts the bluffer

5. When all else fails....

- Deliver a counter-threat to establish credibility. Then immediately shift focus to identify interests



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The Benefits of Goals

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The Benefits of Goals

- Over 400 managerial studies show that goals:
 - increase effort
 - increase persistence
 - increase performance

“The beneficial effects of goal setting on task performance is one of the most robust and replicable findings in the psychology literature.”

— Locke, Shaw & Saari, 1981, p. 145

Goals & Motivation

- The more difficult the goal, the higher the performance
- Goal proximity matters
 - More motivated towards the end to achieve the goal
- Goals
 - Focus attention
 - Increase effort
 - Boost persistence

Setting Goals

- Set clear specific goals
 - Challenging but achievable: 80-90% of performance
 - Set a series of short-term goals
- Commit to goals
 - Visualize/write it down
 - Tell other people
 - Develop a plan
- Feedback



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Goal Setting Pitfalls

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Wells Fargo & The “Gr—eight initiative” (2016)

- The goal: Sell at least 8 financial products per customer (checking account, debit card)
- Opened 2 million false accounts to meet sales goals
 - Fired 5,300 employees
 - Paid \$185 million in fines
- “We are eliminating product sales goals because we want to make certain our customers have full confidence that our retail bankers are always focused on the best interests of customers” - CEO John Stumpf

Goals Gone Wild

- Goals also have negative effects
 - Focus attention too narrowly
 - Increase risk taking
 - Lead to unethical behavior

Narrow Goals

- General Motors and the “29” goal
 - 2002 had 28.2% of US market
 - Set a goal of capturing 29%
 - Execs wore “29” pins
 - GM expanded its offerings of interest-free loans and “no money down” incentives to reach 29%
 - Lost money on a per unit basis
 - “Fixated on this target, the firm went on to make decision after disastrous decision that helped drag it to the brink [and past the brink] of bankruptcy” (Forbes.com)
- UK Health Commission recently reported 400 deaths at Stafford hospital (2005-8) due to excessive focus on targets

Increased Risk Taking

- HUD goal for Fannie Mae & Freddie Mac in 2003
 - 2001-2003: Set a goal of 20% mortgages for low or very-low income families
 - Up from 14% in 1997-2000
 - Bankruptcy and government bailout in 2008
- Lab research in negotiations
 - Negotiators with goals are less likely to reach profitable agreements
 - Make larger demands
- 1996 Mt. Everest disaster
 - Described as “destructive goal pursuit” to reach the summit

Jolly Green Giant Example



Unethical Behavior

- MiniScribe in the 1980s
 - Goals = quarterly earnings → employees shipped bricks
 - Company eventually went bankrupt
- Sears automotive in the 1990s
 - Goal = \$147/hr in sales
 - Staff overcharged for work and made unnecessary repairs
 - Affected reputation for years
- Lab experiment (Schweitzer, Ordóñez, & Douma, 2004)
 - People cheat when they fail to meet challenging goals

Atlanta Public Schools

- Atlanta School Superintendent: Beverly Hall
 - In 2009 “National Superintendent of the Year” for turning around Atlanta Schools
 - 50,000 students’ standardized tests starting in 2001
 - Indicted in 2013
 - “Hall placed unreasonable goals on educators and ‘protected and rewarded those who achieved targets by cheating.’”
 - State Investigation: Cheating occurred in more than half the districts
 - Over 180 teachers implicated

Unethical Behavior

- Goals can lead to unethical behavior by:
 - Using unethical behavior to meet goals
 - Misrepresenting performance to meet goal



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Making the Most of Goal Setting

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Should We Ever Use Goals?

- Goals can:
 - Be used effectively to direct effort
 - Inform and communicate what is valued
 - Can be especially useful for straightforward tasks
- Goals should be used cautiously
 - Monitor behavior when people are close to the goal

Related Topics

- Performance goals v. learning goals
- Organizational culture
 - Strong cultures can curtail the risks associated with goal setting



WARNING

Goals may cause systematic problems in organizations due to narrowed focus, increased risk taking, unethical behavior, inhibited learning, decreased cooperation, and decreased intrinsic motivation.

Use care when applying goals in your organization.



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Crossing the Finish Line

Professor Maurice Schweitzer

The Importance of Endings

- “Listen to Paris”
- Crisis negotiator communicated with Paris via a helicopter and yes or no questions



The Importance of Endings

- Even in unusual cases, what may seem like a single occurrence, can be a repeated interaction





“Bush refused to gloat.”



Wharton
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