

COMMUNICATION SKILLS  
TO GET YOUR POINT  
**ACROSS**



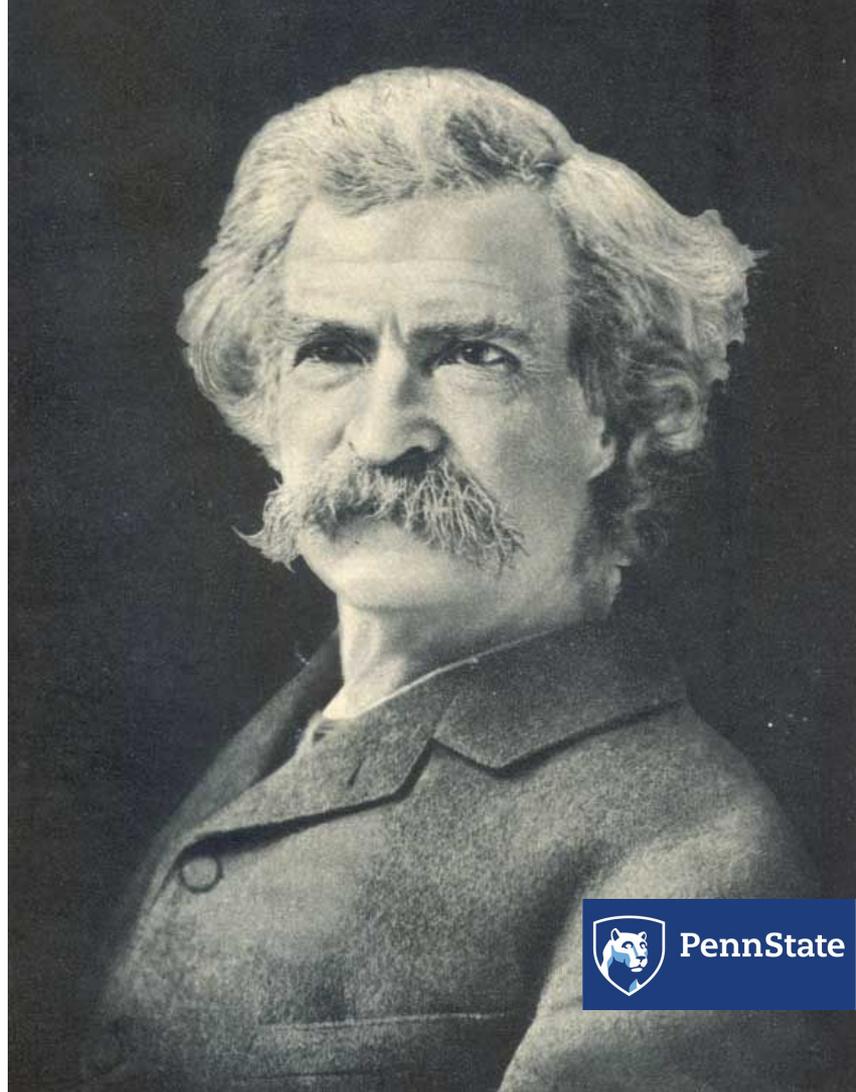
*Start Making Sense*

LATROBE CHAPTER - BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL WOMEN  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14

PennState



*“The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter ...*





*'tis the difference between the  
lightning bug ...*

*... and the lightning.”*



PennState

# COMMUNICATION



Meaning



Method



Modification



Message



PennState

# SEMIOTICS

Semiotics is an investigation into how meaning is created and communicated through signs and symbols.



**Saint Augustine of Hippo**  
354-430

It is a way of seeing the world and of understanding how the landscape and culture in which we live has an impact on communication.



**Ferdinand de Saussure**  
1857-1913



**Charles Sanders Peirce**  
1839-1914

# LINGUISTIC

vocabulary, generic structure  
and the grammar of oral and written language



# VISUAL

colour, vectors and viewpoint in still and moving images



# AUDIO

volume, pitch and rhythm of music and sound effects



## GESTURAL

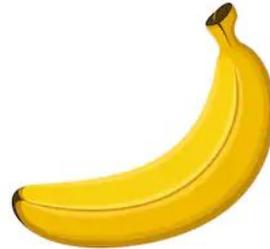
movement, speed and stillness in facial expression  
and body language





## SPATIAL

proximity, direction, and position of layout  
and organization of objects in space



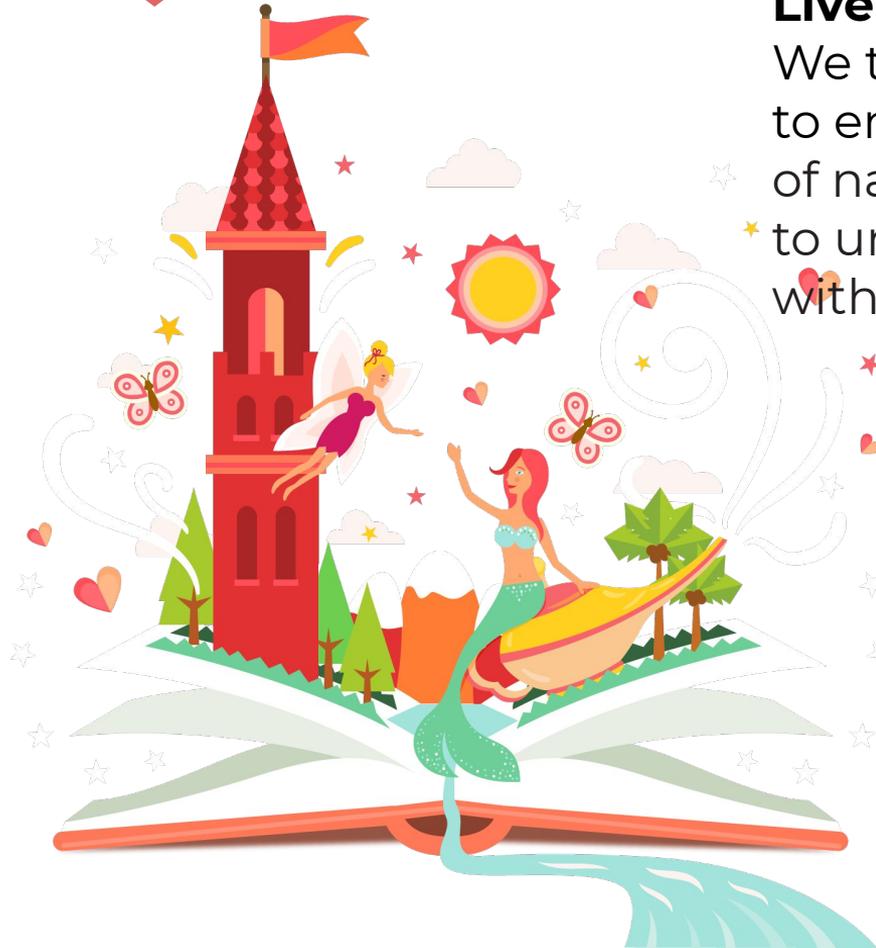
## Using the modes effectively



- Video to show action or transport an audience
- Audio to emphasize compelling quotes or ambient sound
- Graphics to illustrate complicated processes or complex data in a simpler way
- Photos to capture powerful emotion or moments of time

*I hear, and I forget.  
I see, and I remember.  
I do, and I understand.*

(Confucius, 541 BC-479 BC)



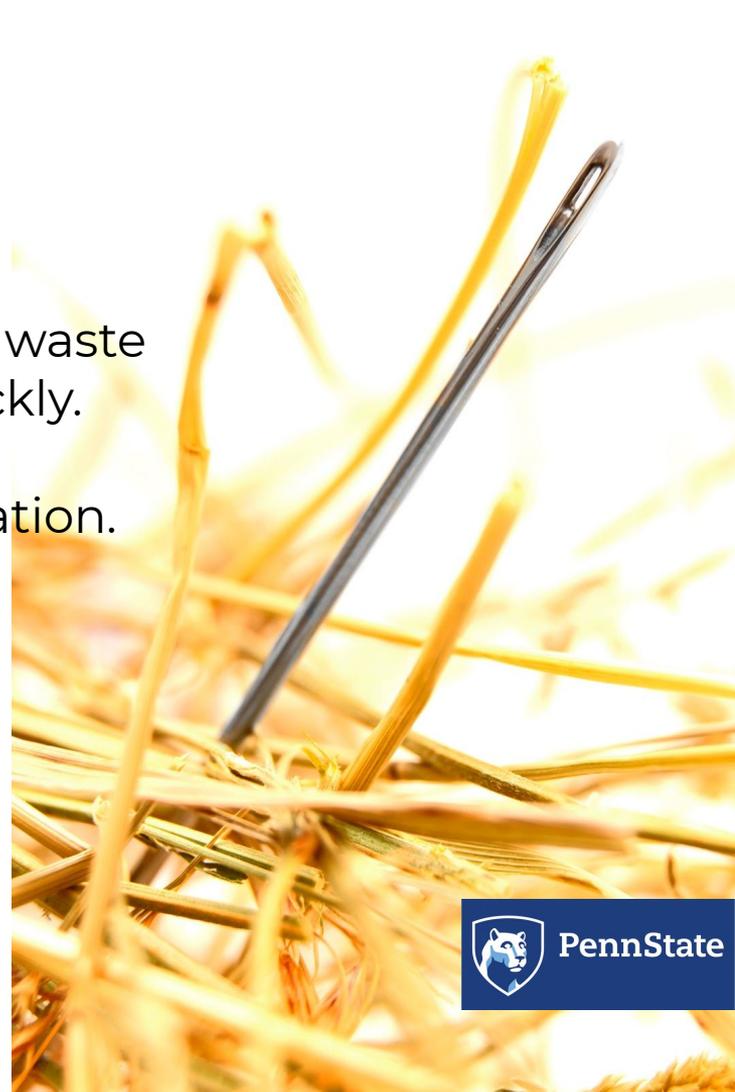
## Live to Tell the Tale

We think in story, which allows us to envision the future. The process of narrative in turn supports efforts to understand—and engage with—people and concepts.



## **Needles in Haystacks**

Time is a dreaded barrier ... no ones wants to waste life Waiting for Godot ... get to the point quickly. Summarize key areas of the message and include easy access to more detailed information. When the brain focuses its full attention on something, it filters out the chaff and improves retention.





## **It's All Greek to Me**

“Jargon is jibberish.” Use plain, simple language. In the end, you are not “dumbing it down,” but rather, expanding the audience — along with both qualitative and quantitative comprehension.



## Comfortably Numb

Attention is an emotion-driven phenomena triggered by the amygdala within the brain's limbic system. A person's multi-dimensional response to stimuli determines the meaning of everything — if we're not feeling, we're not conscious.



PennState



## **The Barracuda Effect**

According to a 2015 peer-reviewed study, human beings are attracted to shiny or glossy things because of our primitive, innate need for fresh water as a resource.



## **What's In It for Me?**

Everything we do is goal-oriented, and our biggest challenge is figuring out everyone else's agenda (in order to fulfill our own).

## **The Grass Is Always Greener**

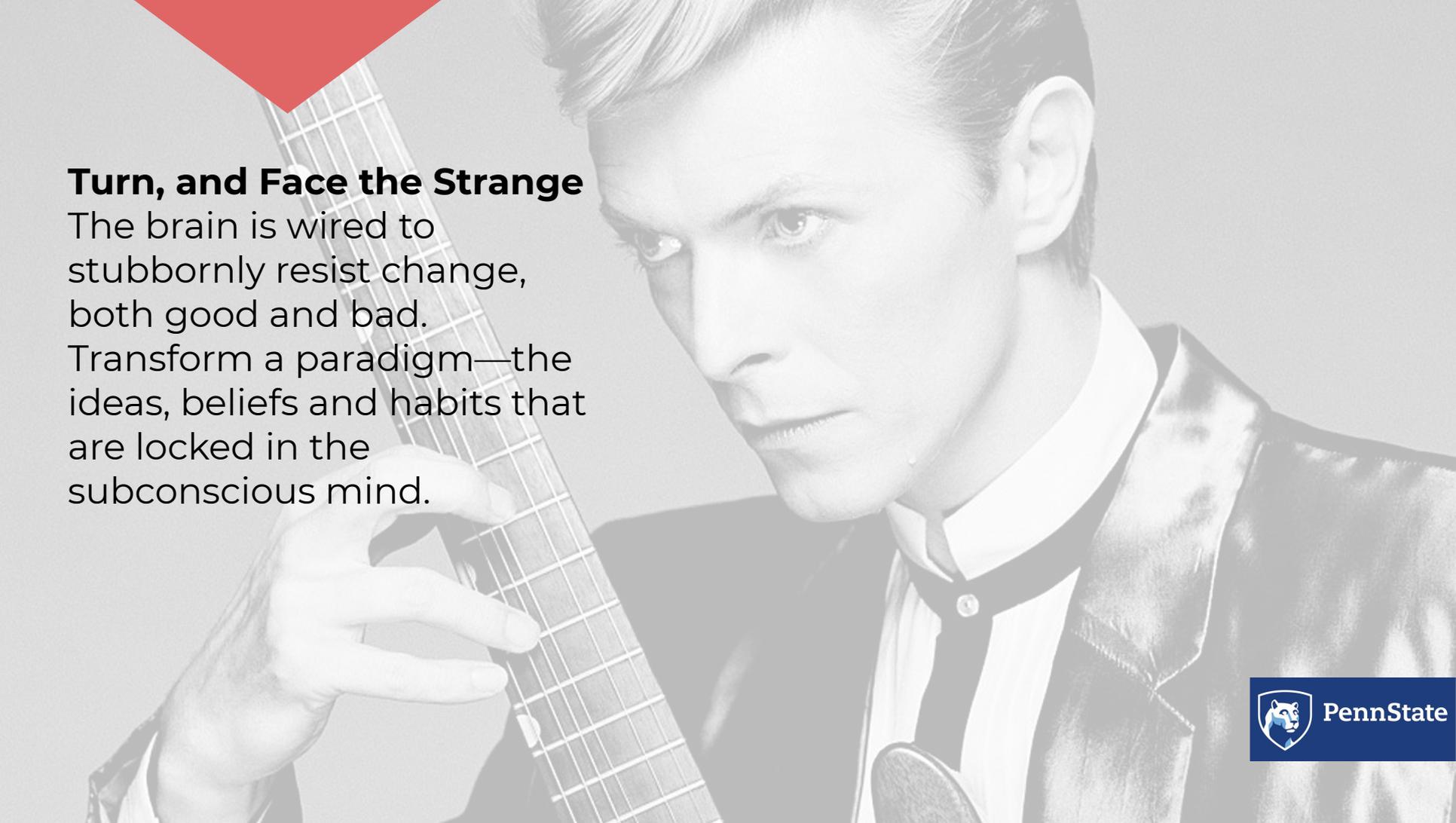
We see the world not as it is, but as we believe it to be. Communication is a matter of context. Analyze the form, content, medium and patterns of messages and how they influence your audience and their environment to make meaning and take action.





## **A Concrete Jungle**

We think in specifics,  
not abstract images.  
In order to be  
meaningful, ideas  
must be connected to  
action. Without it,  
theory exists merely  
for its own sake and  
becomes purely  
academic, not  
practical.



## **Turn, and Face the Strange**

The brain is wired to stubbornly resist change, both good and bad. Transform a paradigm—the ideas, beliefs and habits that are locked in the subconscious mind.

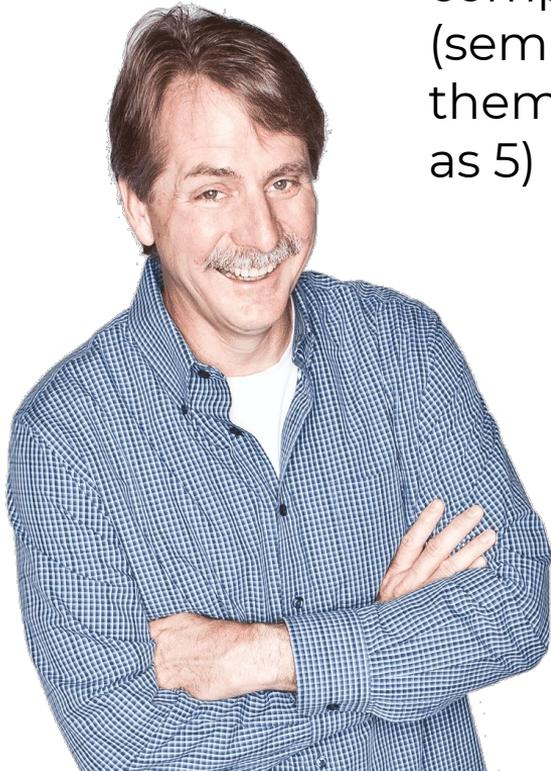


PennState



## **What Goes Up, Must Come Down**

From birth, our brain makes casual, logical connections about cause and effect: if this, then that, and so on. Beware of logical fallacies and understand the important differences among argument, persuasion, and propaganda.



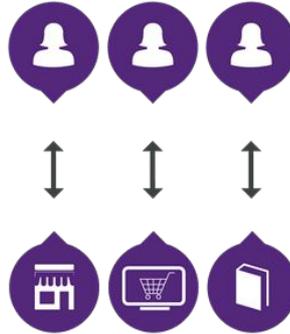
## Here's Your Sign

Our actions and thoughts are often governed by a complex set of cultural messages and conventions (semiotics) dependent upon our ability to interpret them: 1) visual; 2) aural; 3) gestural; 4) spatial; as well as 5) linguistic. The medium is the message.

Single Channel



Multi Channel



Cross Channel



Omni Channel



## “Different Strokes for Different Folks”

Omni-channel marketing, or presenting a consistent message across multiple platforms, provides the opportunities for increased awareness and interactions via a variety of preferred touchpoints.





## Murphy's Law

The brain uses stories to simulate navigation through potential, and often difficult, situations. Always provide a narrative map of possible outcomes/solutions to a given problem.

## Law & Order

Traditional cognition rejects randomness; therefore, it is best to convert data into meaningful patterns that make sense out of chaos.



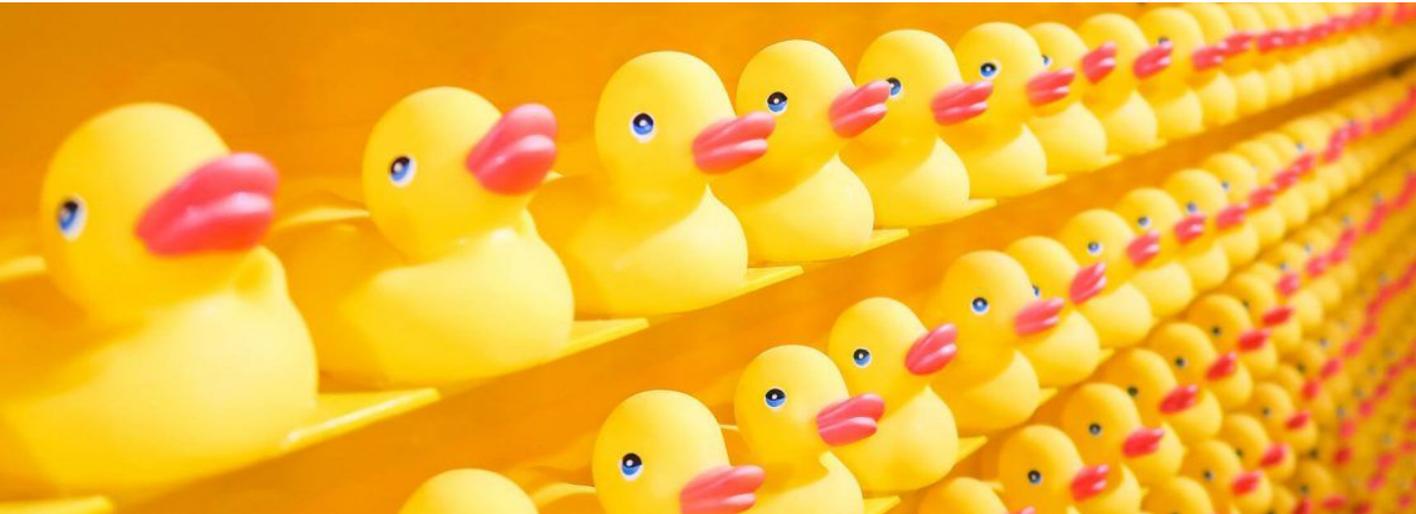
## **Ad Hominem (Guilt by Association)**

Our minds use memories to draw comparisons with the past and present in order to evaluate and make sense of things. Be mindful of previous experiences or past scenarios.



## **Gifts That Keep on Giving**

Aristotle commented on the role of repetition in learning by saying “it is frequent repetition that produces a natural tendency.” It and other mnemonic devices help to improve speed, increase confidence, and strengthen the connections in the brain.



# CATHI GERHARD



Adjunct Professor of English & Professional Communication and Founder of the PA Factorem Continuing Education Program at Penn State University in New Kensington

---

Founder and Editor of the *Laurel Mountain Post* magazine, (2004-2015), named the “Voice of Pennsylvania” by the BBC News.

