

Brief
Make a Bigger Impact by Saying Less
 Joseph McCormack

SYNOPSIS

In a world where we are inundated with information and highly inattentive, we have very small windows of time to make an impact with little or no margin for error. This book provides case studies and illustrative examples of messaging success and failure. McCormack provides some simple approaches to trim communication to be more succinct and impactful.

He offers four causes of what he refers to as Mind-filled-ness:

- Information inundation – an unending flood of words, images, sounds and social media
- Inattention – the average attention span is down from 12 seconds to eight seconds over the last five years
- Interruption – a steady stream of problems competing for time and consideration
- Impatience – with the technology in today's workforce we just expect things to happen faster

McCormack also provides four approaches to help you be a master of brevity:

Map it – Always using an outline for writing or presenting allows you to ensure your thoughts are well-organized and your point can be made succinctly. Mindjet is a software that can be used for mind mapping.

Tell it – By embracing storytelling, you cut through the blah, blah, blah and make your message more memorable. Some of the key components of a good story are a strong headline, clear sense of conflict, logical sequence of events, character development and powerful conclusion.

Talk it – Brevity can invite and encourage real, meaningful conversation. The process that McCormack recommends is that one person begins talking, the other person actively listens taking in the entire message, and then at the right point starts to add comments and questions ensuring they stay on the same topic.

Show It – Visuals attract attention and capture the imagination. Some of the ways you can add visuals to your communication are to include Google images in your presentation, draw during your presentation, find short videos on-line, use a whiteboard, color-code your memos and substitute icons for frequently used words.

Review by Chris Gay, Bridge Consulting

Statistics that Add Up

Brief is full of statistics that help make the case for briefer, more succinct communication. Here are just a few:

- Rule of 600. Most people speak about 150 words a minute, yet we have the capacity to hear about 750 words a minute. That's why people are often thinking about one thing while talking about another.
- 304 – the number of emails an average professional receives per week.
- 150 – the number of times an average person checks their smart phone in a day.
- 28 – the average number of hours a professional spends on email each week.
- 60 – the number of times an average worker is interrupted each day – once every 8 minutes
- 25 – the number of minutes it takes to return to a task once you've been interrupted.
- 65% of the population learns visually.
- We remember only 10% of what we hear and 30% of what we read, but we remember 80% of what we see.
- Less than 3% of companies use visual communication.
- 56 seconds – the average time an American spends looking at a web page