# The Art of Effective Communication and Collaboration: Strategies for Success

Paul Russell

Overview

- Who - Little bit about me, work history, and accomplishments

- What - Successful techniques and learnings I've discovered throughout my career

- Why – Give you an "old timers" perspective of what employers and work colleagues appreciate that will allow **you to be more successful**
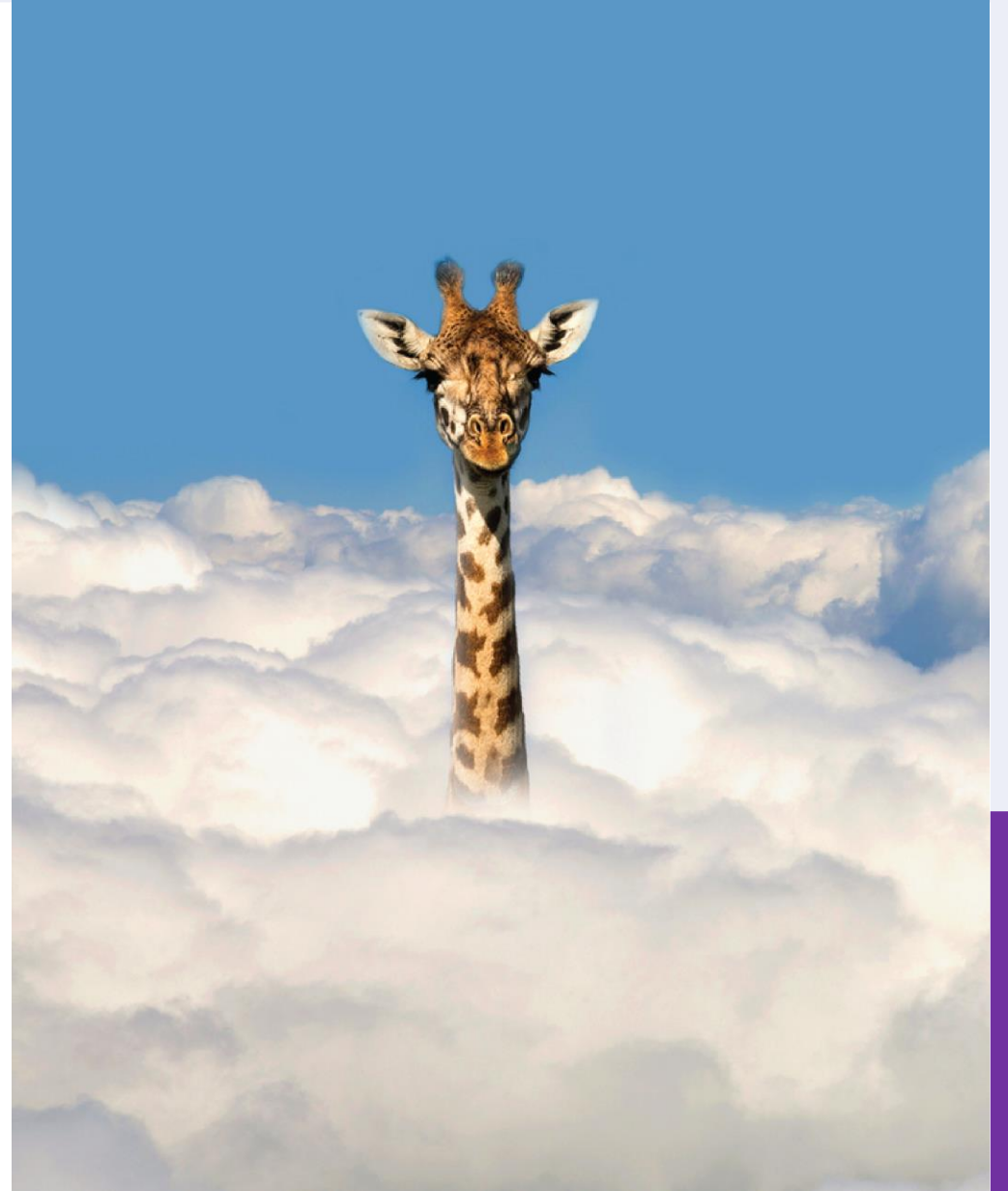
Chronological events

1986 – Earned Bachelor's Degree from **SJSU**, **Industrial Technology with a concentration in Packaging Technology (4th Grad)**.

1986 – Northern Telecom (Telecommunication) - **Packaging Intern** & **Material Handling Engineer**. (1 year)

1987 – Tharco (corrugated and foam packaging supplier) - **Package Design Engineer**. (2 years)

1989 – Hewlett-Packard as the **Corporate Packaging Engineer** and rose to the level of **Global Packaging Engineering Design Program Manager**. (18 years)

    1993 – R3P2 Packaging Council - Received several Environmental Awards and Recognition

    1999 – IoPP Special Recognition Award, given by Golden Gate Chapter

    2000 – IoPP College of Fellows.

    2000 – Distinguished Honorary Award - San Jose State University - Packaging Program.

    2002 – Helped to secure $200K grant from the Packaging Education Forum for the SJSU Packaging Program.

    2004 – Expat assignment in France

    2006 – Consulted with the National Geographic Channel on a segment on packaging "Shrink-Wrapped & Boxed Up".

    2007 –Lifetime IoPP Certified Packaging Professional.

2007 – Applied Biosystems(life science) as the **Senior Global Packaging Manager**, Promoted to **Director of Global Packaging**, Promoted to **VP of America's Logistics** (Life Technologies) (3 years)

    2008 - IoPP Packaging Professional of the Year

2010 – Amazon/Lab126 - **Pkg Engineering Manager**, Promoted to **Senior Manager**, Promoted to **Director of Device Packaging** (10 years)

2013 – Launch Paulie's – chili infused olive oil business

2021 – Retired from Amazon/Lab126 (0.7% still working at AMZN)

2021 – Started Russell Artworks (stone sculpting) and Talkpkg Consulting

2022 – Received ISTA Educational Foundation's R. David LeButt Award for lifetime excellence & continuing education in transport packaging.

Activities

- Authored and presented over 9 technical

- Holds 27 US patents.

- Served on numerous University, Industry, and Standard organization's Boards:

  - Past Global Director (10 years) - International Safe Transit Association (ISTA)

  - Past Director (4 years) - Packaging Education Forum

  - Past Chair and Member - **San Jose State University Packaging Program** Advisory Board

  - Past Chair, Vice Chair, and Member - **Cal Poly State University Packaging Program** Advisory Board

  - Past Member - Institute of Packaging Professionals (IoPP)

    - Past Vice-Chair of EIPS (Electronics Industry Pallet Standard) Task Group

    - Past Chairman of Environmental Task Group R3P2 and M.A.D.E. (Measurement and Analysis of Distribution Environments) Task Group

    - Past Golden Gate Chapter Educational VP, Environmental VP, and Technical Chair

  - Past Member of USNC/IEC Coordinating Committee on Natural Environmental Aspects, American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), and Packaging Machinery Manufacturers Institute (PMMI) - Packaging Management Council (PMC)

- Foundation
- Communication
- People/Perspective
- Metrics

Amazon Leadership Principles (10)

- **Customer Obsession** - start with the customer and work backwards. Work vigorously to earn and keep customer trust. Although leaders pay attention to competitors, they obsess over customers.

- **Ownership** - Leaders are owners. They think long term and don't sacrifice long-term value for short-term results. They act on behalf of the entire company, beyond just their own team. They never say "that's not my job".

- **Earn Trust of Others** - Be sincerely open-minded, genuinely listen, and be willing to examine your strongest convictions with humility.

- **Bias for Action** - Speed matters in business. Many decisions and actions are reversible and do not need extensive study. We value calculated risk taking.

My Operational Style
(what value in others)

- Always trying to advance the ball
- Can do attitude and Easy to work with
- Take the initiative and be Solution Thinking – all problems can be solved
- Clear communication – this means understanding
  - If people don't understand you or you are not listening to them – then communication is not happening
  - Don't rely on e-mail – follow up in person or by phone if needed
  - Think about your audience and their understand of the subject
- Own the inputs as you are accountable for the deliverables
- Trust first then seek to understand
- Don't jump to conclusions or assume – get some basic facts first
  - "Many stories can be written from the same set of facts"
- When speaking - make sure you know what you are talking about
  - Offering a guess or opinion is great – just make sure you <u>say that what it is</u>
- Own the decisions – CCing people on e-mails is <u>only to inform</u>. If you are not willing to stand behind the decision - get input or seek a higher authority.
- Think Big Picture when working the problem

Communication

1) **Be clear and concise**:
   - Avoid using technical jargon and try to communicate in [plain language](#) that everyone can understand.

2) **Listen actively**:
   - Effective communication is not just about speaking, but also about [listening](#) actively. Pay attention to what others are saying and ask questions to clarify any confusion.

3) **Build relationships**:
   - Networking is important in any business environment. Take the time to build relationships with your colleagues, superiors, and clients. This will help you to [build trust and credibility](#), which is crucial for effective communication.

4) **Be respectful**:
   - Always be respectful in your communication, even if you disagree with someone. Avoid using negative or confrontational language, and always be polite and courteous.

5) **Use the right communication channels**:
   - Choose the appropriate communication channels for the message you want to convey. For example, if you need to discuss a complex project, it might be better to schedule a face-to-face meeting rather than sending an email.

Diagram showing PKG at the center with surrounding departments: MARKETING, OPERATIONS, FORWARD LOGISTICS, PRODUCT MANAGEMENT, SALES, COMMODITY MANAGEMENT, LEGAL, COMPLIANCE, TRADEMARK, PROGRAM MANAGEMENT.

6. **Be proactive**:
   - Don't wait for someone else to initiate communication. Be proactive in reaching out to your colleagues and superiors - keep them informed of your progress.

7. **Keep it professional**:
   - Always maintain a professional tone in your communication. Avoid using slang, humor or emoticons in your professional correspondence.

8. **Be open to feedback**:
   - Be open to constructive feedback and use it as an opportunity to improve your communication skills. Actively seek out feedback from your colleagues and superiors to ensure that you are meeting their expectations.

9. **Be culturally sensitive**:
   - In a globalized business environment, it's important to be culturally sensitive. Take into consideration different cultural norms and practices when communicating with colleagues and clients from different backgrounds.

Control the Narrative

Use the ability to shape and direct the conversation around a particular topic or issue.

1. **Set the agenda**: Define the key issues and topics and focus the conversation around them.

2. **Establish the message**: Craft a clear and concise message that aligns with your team's or company goals and objectives. This message should be communicated consistently and repeatedly.

3. **Manage the conversation**: Be aware of the conversation and steer it towards your message. Listen carefully to what others are saying and use their words to reinforce your message.

4. **Choose your words carefully**: Use language that is positive, persuasive, and emotive, but avoid inflammatory or offensive language that could alienate your audience.

5. **Be proactive**: Take the initiative to frame the conversation before others do. Control the narrative by providing the context and background information that is necessary to understand the issue.

6. **Monitor the conversation**: Stay attuned to what others are saying and adjust your message as necessary. Be prepared to respond to criticism or negative feedback in a constructive and positive manner.
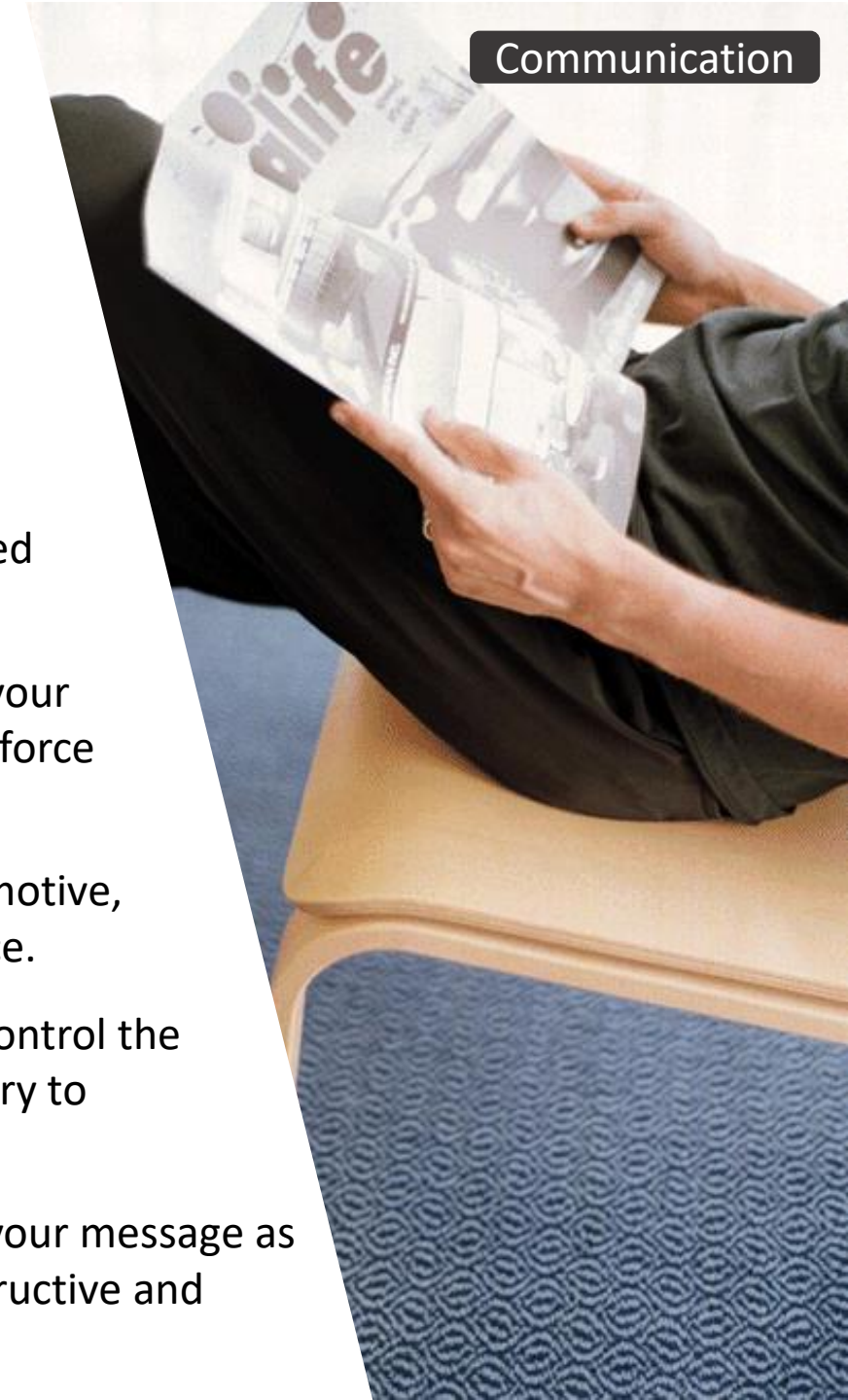
Packaging – the challenges when talking with others

- Lack the understanding of packaging and its codependency with other functions

- Not analytically or systems oriented

- Accustomed to singular focus problems rather than systemic/wholistic systems/interactions

- Fundamentally different thinking styles

- Uncomfortable with the unknown

- No personal experience with the packaging or the process so unaccustomed to or uninterested in packaging
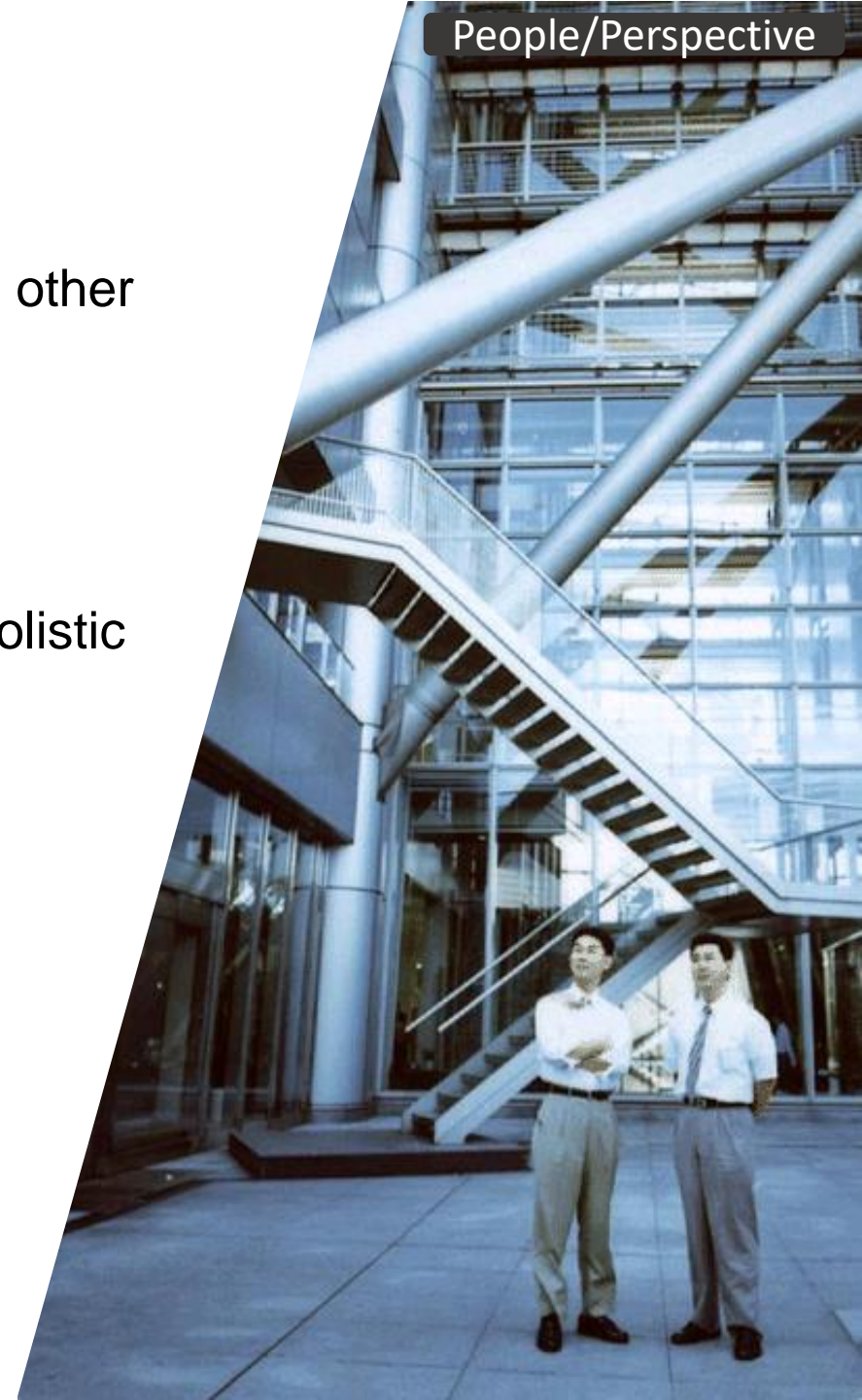
Put yourself in their shoes

You are a project manager or senior executive, being asked to approve an important initiative or plan.

- What kinds of initiatives will you be comfortable approving?

- What kinds of things will you not be comfortable with, even if the supporting data seems compelling?
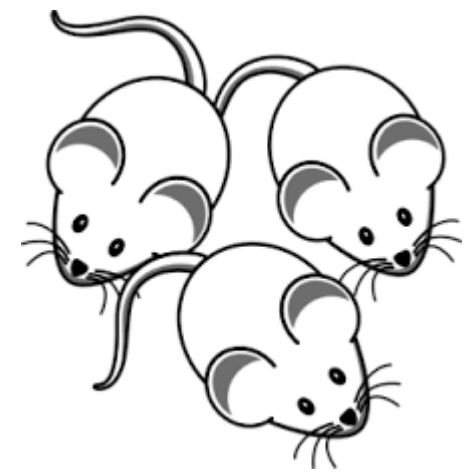
What is important to the decision maker

M   Money
 I   Ideology
 C   Conscience
 E   Ego

When selling an idea, orientate your communication or idea to show how it will help them reach a minimum of one of these items

Influencing Motivators

M.I.C.E.

Money, Ideology, Conscience, and Ego are common factors used by individuals or organizations to influence others because they tap into different motivations, values, and beliefs that people hold.

- Money: The promise of financial gain can be a strong incentive to take a certain action or make a certain decision. This is particularly true in business settings, where financial rewards are often tied to performance or results.

- Ideology: A sets of beliefs and values that people hold, and when people share the same ideology, it can create a sense of common purpose and identity. By appealing to someone's ideological beliefs, individuals or organizations can motivate people to take action or make decisions that align with their shared values.

- Conscience: People have their own moral and ethical beliefs, and appealing to those beliefs can be a powerful motivator.

- Ego: People have a natural desire to feel important, recognized, and respected. By appealing to someone's sense of pride, status, or reputation, individuals or organizations can motivate people to take action or make decisions that will enhance their image or status.

Know Thyself – understand these motivators can help you avoid being manipulated or coerced, and it also makes it easier to understand why others make certain decisions

Importance of Metrics (what is measured is Managed/Improved)

Raw Data

Processed Data

Knowledge

Understanding

Measuring progress
- Allows you to evaluate the effectiveness of your efforts and make data-driven decisions towards specific goals or objectives.

Identifying areas for improvement
- Identifying areas of weakness or inefficiency in a process, product, or service enables you to address those issues and make improvements to enhance overall performance.

Tracking performance
- Enables you to see trends and patterns, which can help you predict future outcomes and make informed decisions and compare it to previous periods or benchmarks.

Communication and transparency
- Provides a common language among teams for communicating performance and progress on goals and objectives across an organization allows more effective collaboration.
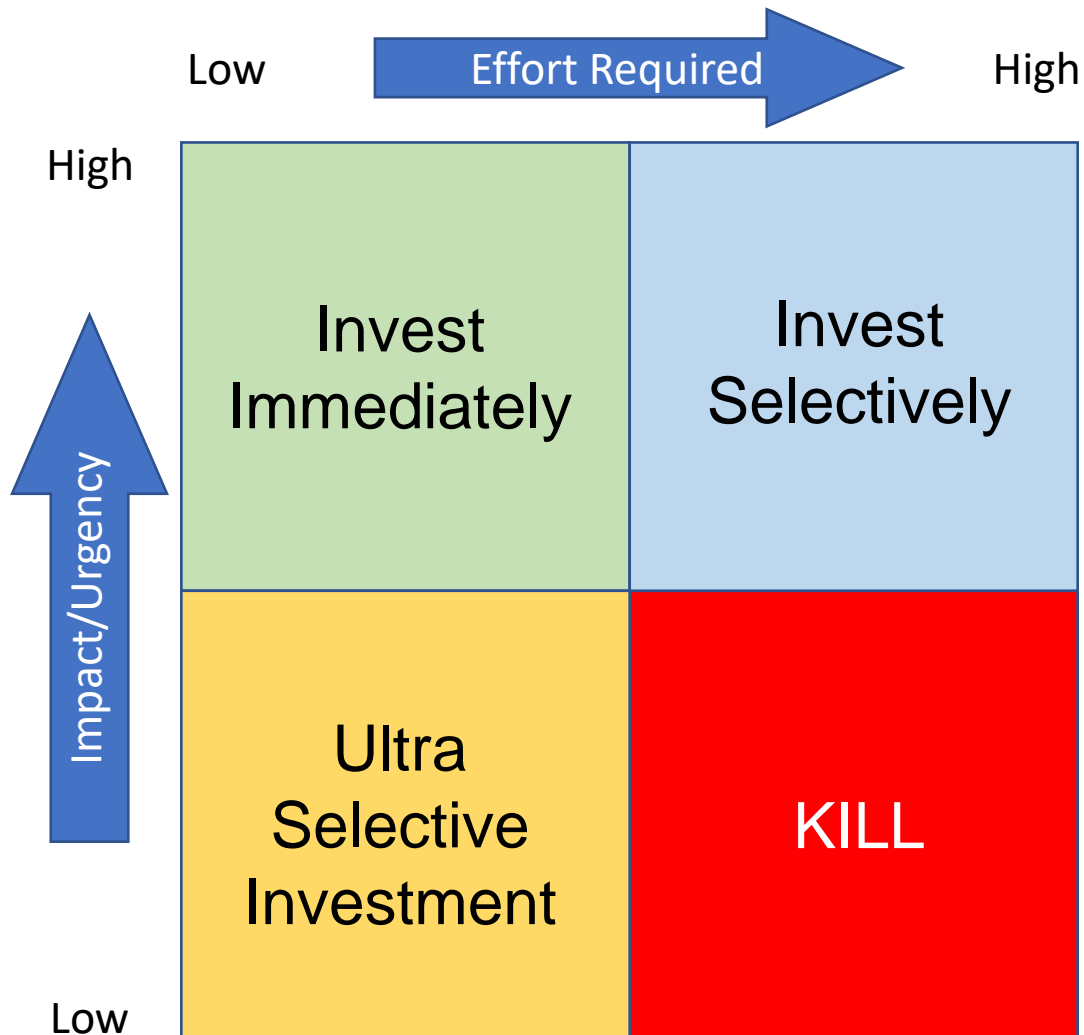
Accountability
- A tool to hold individuals, teams, and organizations accountable for their performance. This can motivate individuals to work harder and achieve better results.

Decision-making
- Analyzing data and metrics, you can make informed decisions about where to allocate resources, how to prioritize tasks, and what strategies to pursue.

Prioritization Matrix

Projects are ranked on IMPACT vs. Effort Required

Effort Required: Low → High

Impact/Urgency: Low → High

	Low ← Effort Required → High
High Impact/Urgency	Invest Immediately	Invest Selectively
Low Impact/Urgency	Ultra Selective Investment	KILL

IMPACT Levels

- **Profit/Cost/ROI**
- **Customer Satisfaction**
- **Strategic Initiative**
- **Technical**
- **Crisis**

Effort Levels

- **Duration**
- **Resources / Funding Required**
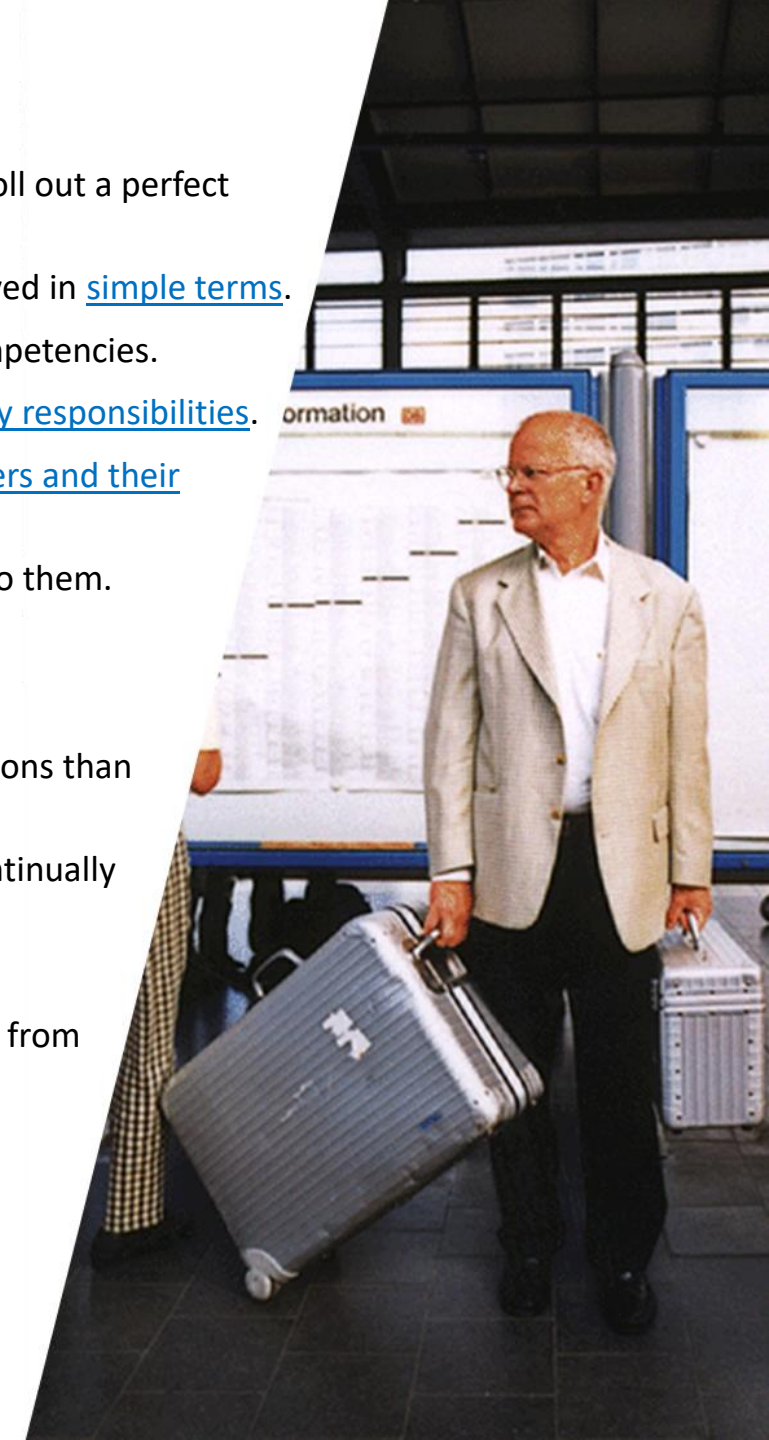- **Control**
- **Technology/Skill Req'd**

When Sharing Information

- Use the listers language (i.e. Mgt- MBA terminology)
  - Relate to company or customer imperatives
- Think Big Picture
- Quick / digestible Information – "Elevator speech"
  - Issue is simple, but solution could be complex
  - KISS - keep it short & simple
  - Show data in understandable form
- Present/exude authority and knowledge
  - Easy win - Sure thing
- Successful conclusion leads listener to their M.I.C.E.

The Thirteen Rules*

1. Aim for the 80% percent solution in development. It's better to decide quickly on an imperfect plan than to roll out a perfect plan when it's too late. However, hit 100% when releasing to production.

2. Find the essence. When it comes time to act, even the most complex situations and missions must be perceived in simple terms.

3. Orient to speed. The ability to react quickly and effectively in chaotic environments usually trumps other competencies.

4. Organize according to the rule of three. In times of stress, most people can efficiently handle exactly three key responsibilities.

5. Focus on the small team. Most of the organization's critical tasks are accomplished by the lower level managers and their subordinates, so anything done to make them more effective will have a large payoff.

6. Operate by end state and intent. Tell people what needs to be accomplished and why then leave the details to them.

7. Establish a core identity for your team. Everyone should feel they're performing an aspect of the same job.

8. Make tempo a weapon. Controlling the pace of competition can exhaust and demoralize them.

9. Keep plans simple and flexible. It's better to have a few options that can be easily adapted to changing situations than to try to make specific plans for every contingency.

10. Make organizational doctrine a living thing. It's good to standardize practices, as long as one of them is to continually refine and occasionally change the practices.

11. Build new tactics around new technology. Fully leveraging technology requires new styles of operating.

12. Get an outside perspective. Insights into organizational, process, or technology improvement can often come from people in seemingly unrelated fields.

13. Reward failure. Someone who never fails probably isn't pushing the envelope.

*Taken from *Corps Business - The 30 Management Principles of the U.S. Marines -* by David Freedman

Reading and Learning tools

- **Corps Business: The 30 Management Principles of the U.S. Marines** by David H. Freedman
    - US Marine Corps is an extremely focused group which is both fast, versatile, and effective in complex situations. The book parallels the military and business management and shows the methodology that creates a strong and effective organization.

- **First, Break All the Rules** by Marcus Buckingham & Curt Coffman
    - Focuses on "four keys" to becoming an excellent manager: Finding the right fit for employees, focusing on strengths of employees, defining the right results, and selecting staff for talent--not just knowledge and skills.

- **Now, Discover Your Strengths** by Marcus Buckingham
    - Focuses on enhancing people's strengths rather than eliminating their weaknesses. Web-based interactive component that allows readers to complete a questionnaire to discover their own top-five inborn talents

- **Get Anyone to Do Anything and Never Feel Powerless Again** by David J. Lieberman
    - Based on psychological principles, this book is less about manipulation and more about observing and influencing people (human behavior).

- **The Prince** by Niccolo Machiavelli
    - Written in old English, this book describes most (not all) power situations very well. From politics to corporations to most settings where advancement, influence and control exist, Machiavelli's observations and rules apply.

- **The Complete Idiot's Guide to Zen Living** by Gary R. McClain
    - Know thyself - Helps to identify what makes you happy, sad, angry, and the art of observation along with techniques to reduce stress so that you can remain calm when conflicts arise.

- **The Art of War** by Sun Tzu
    - Written for war fighting but is applicable to business dealings. Teaches the importance of how and when to fight your battles, but more importantly how to pick the ones you want to fight. You will know the difference and if you follow these simple guidelines, you will succeed

- **Manager Tools** Pod Cast – with Mark Horstman and Mike Auzenne
    - http://www.manager-tools.com/podcasts/manager-tools
    - Manager Tool "Basics": One-on–ones, Feedback, Coaching, & Delegation