

LESS IS MORE COMMUNICATION

Salespeople face two challenges in communicating with customers. The first is getting their attention. The noise level and competition for their attention is at an all-time high.

W. Edwards Deming wrote that the average worker faces 50 interruptions per day. He wrote that prior to the Internet and the consequent avalanche of email and text messages.

People multi-task, so you can anticipate that customers will respond to the chirp of their cell phones during your conversations.

Consumers receive daily approximately 600 advertising exposures.

Requests by bosses, peers, subordinates, customers, and family members trump your attempt to get the buyer's attention.

The second challenge is the speed of communication:

According to Gallup, the average worker's attention span is approximately three minutes.

The average movie scene is slightly more than 60 seconds, down significantly over the past few decades.

The average television commercial is between 15-30 seconds.

We get our news in sound bites or MSN headlines.

Editors require novelists to write stories with sufficient velocity to keep the reader engaged. I just finished reading a best-selling novel, 572 pages and 103 chapters. That is a quick 5.5 pages per chapter.

If you want to communicate powerfully, say less. Since elevators are getting faster, you must speed up your elevator speech. I call this faster evolution a *purpose statement*. In as few words as possible, tell the customer what business you are in. My purpose statement is: "We are in the business of helping B2B salespeople sell profitably and aggressively." If I (and you) deliver this effectively, the buyer will ask, "How do you do that?" I have the buyer's interest and permission to continue. Then, elaborate. When building the purpose statement, be specific with your target customer (in my example, B2B salespeople) and your value proposition (in my example, sell profitably and aggressively). Keep it short. Avoid clutter. Trim.

The most powerful speeches throughout history did not waste words. John F. Kennedy's famous *Ich bin ein Berliner* speech lasted 674 words. Ronald Reagan's *Challenger Address* to the American people was 652 words. Franklin D. Roosevelt's *Pearl Harbor Speech to the Nation* was 521 words. Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*—the most famous of all—was a scant 268 words. The *Lord's Prayer* is 70 words. Do you really need to overstate your argument to customers? If you want to communicate more with customers, say less.

Author byline: Tom Reilly is a professional speaker and author of twelve books. Tom is literally the guy who wrote the book on *Value-Added Selling* (McGraw-Hill, 2010), the book that started the value selling revolution. For more information on Tom's presentations, training, and products, visit his website www.TomReillyTraining.com or call his office, 636-537-3360.