

## *What Advice Do Absolute Advisors Have for Others?*

As background, in survey after survey, CEOs and other leaders say **effective internal communication, including strategic communication counsel**, is critical to the performance of their organizations. In fact, in a Deloitte research study, **95%** of the surveyed CEOs rated effective internal communication as a key ingredient for success. Yet, just **22%** said that the delivery of internal communication was effective.

The purpose of the recent ***Being a Strategic Communication Advisor*** [survey](#) conducted by Connect Consulting was to gain intelligence on how strategic communication advisors view their role and their effectiveness in serving leaders.

These results also reveal a gap in expectations between senior leaders and their strategic communication advisors. In addition, the data points to clear differences in the behaviors of effective advisors (what we call “*Absolute*”) and other advisors (what we call “*Accidental*”).

### **Absolute Advisors give 3 types of advice to others**

One of the survey write-in questions was: “What advice/suggestions do you have to help others be a better strategic communication advisor?”

The analysis of the comments shows that Absolute Advisors’ recommendations fall into three categories:

- 1. Take actions** (32 comments)
- 2. Concentrate on your mindset** (25 comments)
- 3. Build relationships** (19 comments)

Some of the more prevalent recommendations are included here. (Note that the comments have been edited to correct for spelling, grammar and clarity.)

#### **Take actions**

- Know the business. By that I mean, know the issues facing your industry, the competitive dynamics and where your organization fits in. Understand your organization’s business model and strategic objectives. Always link communications advice to business value. Execute flawlessly. Measure incessantly.
- Know your business and ensure everything you do has a well-crafted, strategic purpose and plan, with measurable goals. And, be sure to measure and communicate results to the leaders!

- Learn how to say no. Skip the non-value-add administrative work so you can focus on the strategic work that really matters. Have the courage of your convictions. Fight for ideas you believe in.
- Take risks when opportunities arise.
- Constantly look for ways to move “up stack” and offer counsel. The opportunities are hidden. You have to force them sometimes.
- Show value to leaders through increased employee engagement index numbers.
- Support your assertions with data (e.g., numbers, case studies, other evidence).
- Set boundaries with clients. Operate like a consultant would.
- Institute feedback mechanisms to help continuously improve or adjust.
- Try to work on projects that service clients across the company, not just a select few. Your profile will rise and company leaders will start to recognize the value you bring the organization as a whole, not just 'HR', etc.
- Target, recruit and continuously develop talent to build a team that comprises a blend of innovative strategists, “best athletes,” and talented specialists who can execute communications plans with supreme competence.

### **Concentrate on your mindset**

- Put yourself in the executives’ shoes. Understand what they really need to be successful in their role
- Personal reputation is key as is not assuming even apparently similar situations are the same...
- Look after your personal brand and reputation.
- Talk business rather than communication.
- Talk less.
- Think about your role as a marketer in understanding your audience.
- Keep up to date.
- Always listen to your clients with an open mind.
- Do as much homework as you can to stay on top of issues and skills.
- Focus on the business and strategic context: you need to understand these deeply to be able to engage senior leaders. Forget the "communication" part of the role description until you determine that communication is at least part of the solution. Commit to supporting the process and goals in any way you can, without prejudging the solution. From the start, ask questions about business issues, goals and needs.

- Be patient. Set realistic goals.
- Speak the leader's language. Understand the business. Focus on the business objectives. Stay self-aware. Constantly look for ways to improve.
- Really get to know yourself, so you understand your strengths, blind spots, and how others perceive you. (I've been through numerous assessments and 360 reviews.) This will also help you to be able to recognize preferences/styles in others that will allow you to more effectively communicate with them at a level and with messages they will be open to. And if you find a great communicator/strategic advisor, ask them to mentor you.
- Have sound emotional intelligence to understand when advice is called for and when it may not really be needed.

## Build relationships

- Build a relationship with the executive. The better you know him/her (and vice versa), the more likely you will be able to offer honest coaching.
- Keep constantly in touch with executives.
- Build relationships. Be the “go to guy.”
- Engage client staff at every level. By all means build a relationship with the CEO, but ignore at your peril those deep in the organization who get the day-to-day work done.
- Stay connected to the critical flow of information and the organization's lead steers to anticipate issues requiring information support and to formulate communication strategies oriented to desired business outcomes.
- Build strong relationships with the business people in your company and be open learning about the operations as well as the technicalities of the business.
- Take every opportunity to let others see the value you provide (without being arrogant or obnoxious).
- Build relationships by going the extra mile and demonstrating competence.
- Be "in the game" as much as possible on major decision-making.

## About the Absolute Advisors

The survey data showed a divide between two types of advisors: Absolute Advisors and Accidental Advisors.

Absolute Advisors work at **being** strategic advisors. Compared to the Accidental Advisors, Absolute Advisors have adopted more disciplined and targeted practices in three areas: **relationship building, measurement** and **professional development**.

Furthermore, the Absolute Advisors spend 50% or more of their time advising leaders. They enjoy what they do and consider it a career choice.

By contrast, the Accidental Advisors tend to have fallen into their role, which they don't always enjoy. They also spend less than half their time advising.

For more information about the two types of advisors and the survey in general, read the [Strategic Communication Advisor Survey Results By Connect: Executive Summary](#)

## Can you become an Absolute Advisor?

Yes, you can become an Absolute Advisor. Absolute Advisors are made, not born. The skills that separate Absolute Advisors from Accidental Advisors and the rest of the pack are not inborn; you can learn them. And in these uncertain economic times with organizations operating under extreme complexity, leaders need Absolute Advisors more than ever.

## You can become a better advisor through the Strategic Action Group

The [Strategic Action Group](#) is a 10-week mentoring and mastermind intensive that shows you step by step how to develop the consultative, measurement and networking skills that set Absolute Advisors apart.

The group is small — just 12 professionals from different organizations (so you can feel free to talk freely) to encourage interaction and individual attention.

Over the course of the five 75-minute virtual meetings and via interaction between classes in our online communication area, you'll develop a solid grasp of the skills needed to succeed. You'll also create a support group with sounding board that you can continue to tap when the official group is over. And you'll also receive a personal coaching session with [Liz Guthridge](#) to create a plan for applying what you've learned. That way you can improve your confidence, capabilities and credibility.

If you are serious about moving to the next level in your communications career and delivering what leaders want, you need to join the [Strategic Action Group](#). The next session starts on September 16.



Connect is an independent coaching and consulting firm focused on clear and credible change.

Connect's founder Liz Guthridge serves as a strategic advisor to leaders who need to get employees on board with complex new initiatives. Liz also coaches, trains and mentors communication professionals to be effective strategic advisors. Connect's next [Strategic Action Group](#) starts Sept. 16.

For questions about the survey and the [Strategic Action Group](#), contact Liz Guthridge at [liz.guthridge@connectconsultinggroup.com](mailto:liz.guthridge@connectconsultinggroup.com) or 510-527-1213.

For information about Connect, visit [www.connectconsultinggroup.com](http://www.connectconsultinggroup.com)