



How Innovative Leaders Communicate

Four Data-Driven Steps to
Communicating like an Innovator

Introduction

70% of senior executives consider innovation to be one of the top drivers of growth, but only 35% are confident in their ability to foster innovation.*

Elon Musk. Tim Cook. Reshma Saujani. These leaders come from different fields with different products and visions. But they're all considered world class innovators—a perception many leaders aspire to.

We wondered what effect communication has on a leader's knack for driving innovation among his or her employees.

To find out, we used the QC platform to analyze the content, delivery, and audience perception of more than 1,000 audio and video samples. We also asked our panel of communication experts to rate each one on how innovative the speaker seemed based on his or her communication.

We separated the samples that scored highest in innovation (the top 10%) from the rest of the pack and dove into the rest of the data to identify the traits the most innovative speakers have in common and the steps you can take to demonstrate innovation in your own communication.

One of them surprised us.

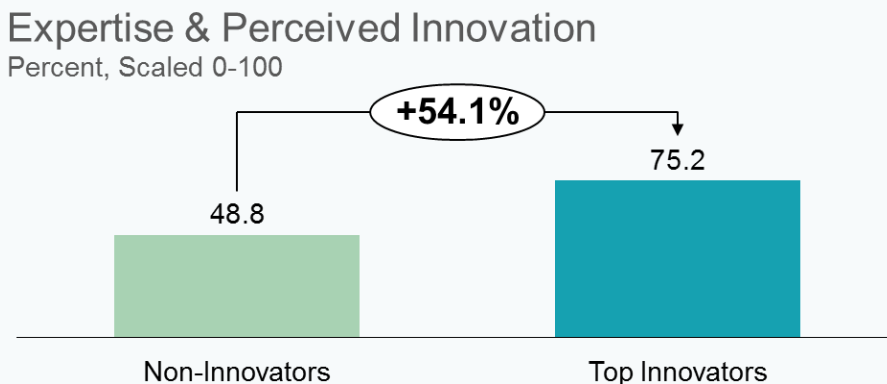


4 Step to Communicating Like an Innovator

1. Show You're an Expert
2. Connect Ideal Outcomes to Present Circumstances
3. Hook Your Audience
4. Sell Your Idea, Not Yourself

1. First, Show You're an Expert

The most innovative speakers were perceived to be 54% more knowledgeable than the others we measured. This was driven by both their messages and the way they delivered them.



Innovative Speakers Offer 77% More Insight than Their Peers

Expertise comes from not only knowing the facts, but truly understanding how something works and its implications for the business or community. Our most innovative speakers demonstrate this understanding by going deeper than the surface, speaking with certainty about the intricacies of the subject matter, diving into cause and effect and presenting as thought leaders in their fields.

Innovators' Stage Presence Highlights Their Expertise

Top innovators owned the stage in a way that assured audiences they were in expert hands. Someone who doesn't know his subject will likely show it through gestures and vocal cues that project uncertainty. But the innovative communicators we measured had a 40% more effective presence than their peers, driven by effective use of movement and eye contact to emphasize key points.

2. Connect Ideal Outcomes to Present Circumstances

The innovators we measured used 11% more present tense than future tense, and 10% more than their counterparts.

Present-centric language is one of the key characteristics of [visionary communication](#), and it makes sense that innovators would share the trait. Although their ideas may seem far-fetched or futuristic, innovators are speaking about their ideas in the context of today. They're not talking about what will happen someday, but about what is happening right now to implement new, business-defining innovations.

It may seem like a subtle distinction, but it's a nuance that makes all the difference for the audience, turning the speaker from some nobody full of empty ideas and predictions, into an innovator finding ways to change the world *right now*.



Example: What Young People are Doing Now that Gives Us Hope for *Tomorrow*:

“This generation coming up—unselfish, altruistic, creative, patriotic—I've seen you in every corner of the country. **You believe** in a fair, just, inclusive America; **you know** that constant change has been America's hallmark, something not to fear but to embrace, and **you are willing** to carry this hard work of democracy forward. You'll soon outnumber any of us, and I believe as a result that the future is in good hands.”

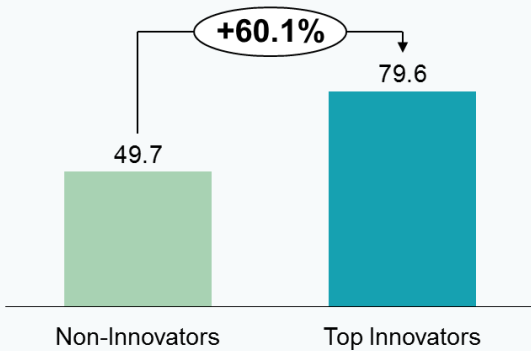
- President Obama, 2017 Farewell Address

3. Hook Your Audience

There’s an old marketing adage, made famous by Chili’s: “You have to use the sizzle to sell the steak.”

The idea is that, without style, audiences will overlook all the substance in the world. Our most innovative communicators had plenty of substance, but they were also full of style; our expert panel perceived them to be 60% more charismatic than the rest of the communicators we measured.

Charisma & Perceived Innovation
Percent, Scaled 0-100



Charisma (which can be learned, despite popular belief) comes down to two things: engaging the audience and demonstrating passion for the subject at hand.

Our innovative speakers did both through engaged posture, animated facial expressions, and the emotion that was audible in their voices. Their excitement was contagious, and their audiences likely caught the bug.

Even the most innovative leaders can’t get results on their own. They have to inspire others to work with them, and the best way to do that is by developing charisma. ([Here’s how.](#))

4. Sell Your Idea, Not Yourself

Innovative communicators used 22% less persuasive language than their counterparts. This one surprised us, so we dug in.

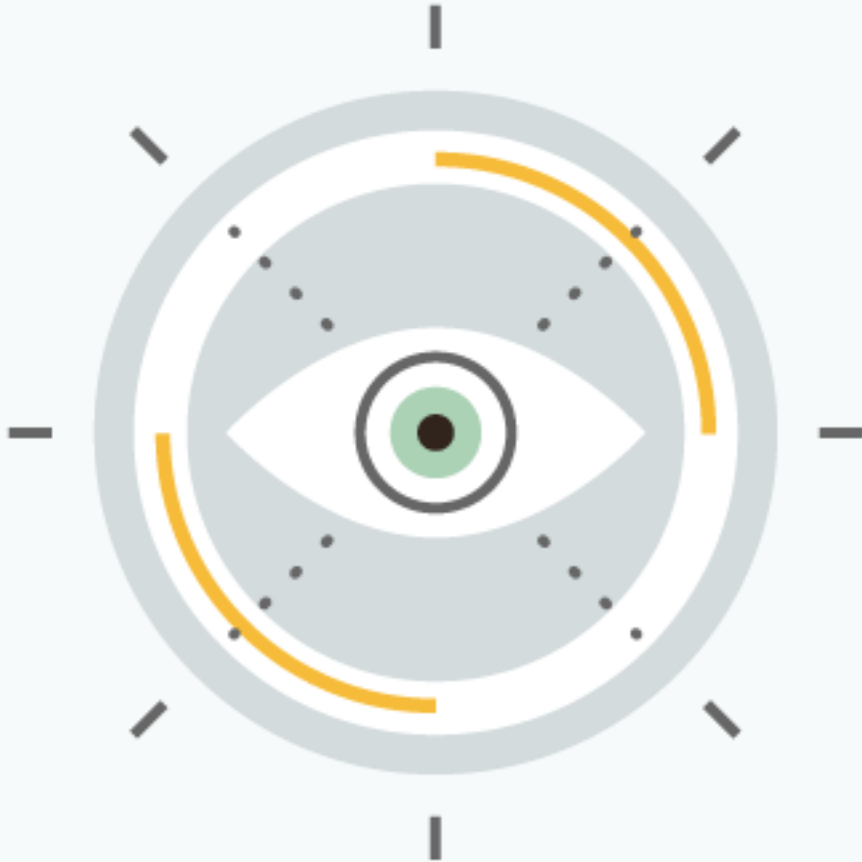
Persuasive language is made up of three types of appeals: logic, instinct, and emotion. [Or head, gut, and heart.](#) We measure persuasion based on these three categories, and when we drilled down into the score, we found that the drop was a result of the innovators using very few appeals to the gut.

But in appeals to the head and the heart, the innovators outperformed their counterparts. This means they're peppering their communication with data points and statistics for logically minded people and using narrative, emotional language to keep the audience alert and engaged.



Appeals to instinct include references to experience, awards, and achievements meant to build credibility with unfamiliar audiences. For speakers like Elon Musk, who have worldwide reputations as innovators, there's no need to focus on building credibility. The same goes for managers whose teams already trust them and consider them to be innovative leaders. You only need to spend time building credibility if your audience has never met or heard of you.

Otherwise, let your innovation speak for itself.



So many leaders aspire to be innovators, implementing unheard-of systems and projects to disrupt the status quo in their industries or their communities. But how do they cultivate a reputation for innovation?

By combining deep expertise and a focus on what we can do *today* with that magnetic quality that attracts followers, our most forward-thinking leaders can demonstrate just how innovative they truly are and inspire audiences to help them make big changes.



Want to learn more?

To learn more about how Quantified Communications can help you improve your organization's communication strategy, contact us at info@quantifiedcommunications.com