

## Communicate To Sell

I love libraries and public transportation. Recently I took a personal field trip on DART (Dallas Area Rapid Transit) and headed to our downtown public library for an art show organized by The Stew Pot, an agency that feeds the homeless. The show featured homeless artists who created these pieces at The Stew Pot's art center.

As I studied the paintings, sculpture, and wall hangings, a gentleman approached me. He proudly walked me over to his work and began to explain the details of his drawings. He told me that his art was his way of expressing himself,



but in jail he was forced to improvise. For paper, he used the front of unused envelopes. For paint, he used the shells of M&Ms and Skittles. For a paintbrush, he used a toothpick. By putting a dab of water on top of an M&M or Skittle, he scraped the color onto the toothpick and then applied it to the envelope. (Yes, that candy we eat works well as paint!)

I had not planned on purchasing any art that day. Yet the man's drawings and story intrigued me. I purchased one beautiful envelope that is now framed and hanging in my office (pictured above). This piece of art inspires me to embrace creativity, perseverance, and a sense of self. It also highlights the three absolute truths about how to communicate to sell.

### Truth #1 — Say something worth saying.

This artist grabbed my attention and shared his knowledge and passion, all in a short amount of time. He had good content. In order to communicate to sell, you must convey your good content

in these ways:

- \* *Share your knowledge.* Your listener needs to know what you know, but watch the fine line between bragging and sharing.
- \* *Show your passion.* You do not need to have an extroverted cheerleader personality. But you do want the listener to realize that you really care about your work and about them. The adage "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care" applies to great communication skills.
- \* *Be aware of the almighty clock.* You are busy professionals with schedules to follow. Your patients lead hectic lives too. Still, your patients want to feel that

### Karen Cortell Reisman, MS

Ms. Reisman, author of "The Naked Truth About Giving Great Speeches," teaches organizations how to increase productivity by communicating effectively. She has been a visiting faculty presenter at The Pankey Institute, a speaker at dental meetings, and president of Speak for Yourself® for 14 years. To get Karen's Top Ten list on how to blow it as a communicator, send a fax to (972) 385-7652 and include your email address. Contact Ms. Reisman at [www.SpeakForYourself.com](http://www.SpeakForYourself.com).



you are really present. If possible, be mindful of their time while giving them the perception that you will take as much time as needed to achieve a mutually satisfying appointment.

\* *Know your audience.* Keep in mind your patient's personality type. Your content will be more analytical, or chattier, depending on what your patient wants to hear.

**Truth #2 — Say it in a way that lets the listener know where you are and where you are going.**

The "envelope" artist explained his work in an organized fashion. He used examples, shared his story, and answered questions. In order to communicate to sell, your thoughts must be organized. Use these tips:

★ *Use stories to make your message stick.* Even with the enormity of the Katrina tragedy and the volume of news reports, it's the individual stories that have moved us. In addition to the struggle and sadness, these stories have also revealed positive moments within this unfolding crisis.

★ *Give the listener a preview,* a flight plan, a map of what you're going to say.

★ *Add examples or metaphors* to aid with our understanding of your message.

★ *Show a picture.* Your "envelope" is your before/after pictures, digital imaging, articulation models, or intraoral photography.

**Truth #3 — Say it with charisma.**

This artist had enthusiasm. I know he believed in himself. Style is being yourself, but on purpose. You don't need to force yourself to behave in ways that belie your own personality. However, there are some proven strategies to show your pizzazz. Follow these tips to deliver your message with strength:

❖ *Believe in yourself.*

❖ *Smile.*

❖ *Have good eye contact* with your patient and/or audience.

❖ *Walk with presence.*

❖ *Sit dynamically forward* when doing consultations and patient case presentations.

❖ *Shake hands firmly.*

❖ *Find commonality* with your patient.

❖ *Avoid repetitive nervous gestures* such as tapping your pencil, pushing hair away from your face, scratching your nose, biting the inside of your lip, etc.

❖ *Stop nervous laughing.* One of my clients would end every sentence with a short burst of

laughter. Although he thought this portrayed a genial nature, this behavior emphasized his lack of comfort with the situation and himself. Not every written sentence should end with an exclamation mark! The same principle applies to your verbiage!

**Cash on delivery**

I dub these three absolute truths "C-O-D." The artist did receive Cash on Delivery because I bought his artwork. For your business of dentistry, be mindful of your content, organization, and delivery. You will communicate to sell when you say something worth saying, when you say it in a way that lets your patient or team member know where you are and where you are going, and when you say it with charisma.

Please enjoy this piece of art. ■

**CORRECTION:** In a prior column titled "Patient Service" (July/August 2005 issue of *Woman Dentist Journal*), the final quote came from Chris Clarke-Epstein, professional speaker, who can be reached at [www.ChrisClarke-Epstein.com](http://www.ChrisClarke-Epstein.com).

© 2005 Karen Cortell Reisman, MS