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Book Review

Say it in Six
Author: Hoff, Ron
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Subtitle: How to Say Exactly what you Mean in Six Minutes or less
Say it in Six reminds us that brief speech is great speech. This is something that teachers need to remember when they deliver a lecture "to students" instead of facilitating learning "for students."
The Books' Topics: We talk too much

The "Burning Issue:" Linchpin of the six-minute speech

Cut to the chase: Slimming down to six means "Dump the junk"

The "Six-Minute Structure"

The style of the Six-Minute Speaker

Learning from the great Six-Minute Speakers of the world

Cutting costs and solving problems in Six-Minutes
The central themes of this book are: Short communications, well thought out, tightly crafted convey meaning better than longer messages

Structured thinking leads to eliminating distracting information from your message

A focus on the audience, not yourself, leads to better communication

People fully pay attention only when the communication is about them
Keywords: Burning Issue

Clothesline Structure

High Wire Structure

Six-Minute Structure: A Do-it-Yourself Kit

Toughen up your Message

The Six-Minute Speaking Style

The Six-Minute "Palm Map:" (Single, Mind-Map Style Note Card for the Entire Speech)
Main Idea: Almost everyone talks too much after minimal preparation. Better preparation allows us to shorten the time that it takes to deliver the message. A shorter message increases the amount of information that our audience receives.

Centering on the audience (their needs, their issues), counts more than lots of words and elaborate descriptions when we want to communicate clearly. (Don't we want to communicate clearly?) And, centering on the audience eliminates our self-centered, nervousness-generating focus upon ourselves.
Quotes: "Six minutes disciplines the mind and tightens the message." (p. - 6)

"Meetings & hellip; are known mainly for their rambling arguments and eternal monologues. A well-made, six-minute speech would stand out like an exclamation point in a sea of commas." (p. - 11)

"The burning issue of this book: U.S. business wastes \$40 billion on mismanaged meetings every year. We look for all kinds of ways to cut costs and overlook the most obvious one. We talk too much." (p. - 17)

"Woodrow Wilson was asked how long it took him to prepare a 10-minute speech. 'Two weeks,' he said. 'How long to prepare a one-hour speech?' 'One week.' 'How long to prepare a two-hour speech?' 'I'm ready now.'" (p. - 54)

"Memorizing is the pits. It instills the fear of forgetting. A memorized speech becomes a 'performance'-- a 'set piece' which can be given to anybody. Audiences hate that. Every audience thinks of itself as different, unique, deserving of special treatment. You should memorize the structure. You can even memorize certain words and phrases that you know will work for you. But memorizing the whole thing, word for word, imprisons your thoughts rather than setting them free." (p. - 61)

"Jurors remember only 60 percent of what they are told. Why? Answer: The case isn't about them. No matter how hard they try, people have trouble paying attention to presentations that aren't about them. Moral: Talk to the self-interest of your audience at all times." (p. - 74)

"Here in Washington, members of the House of Representatives enjoy a privilege that is denied to all of us and envied by most of us.

'When a member makes a speech on the house [sic] floor, stenographers take down every word--type it up--then it's printed in the daily Congressional Record.

'That is, printed after the member has gone over it, corrected it himself, changed his errors, resolved its bad grammar, and taken out everything that--for some political reason--he wishes he had not said.

'Receives of the Record get a version of what was said--corrected, purified, pasturized--and usually fairly dull and often pumped up by 25 to 30 percent.'" (p. - 87)

"Nervousness occurs when you are deeply concerned about yourself. Nervousness is very selfish. You're afraid you'll be boring. You're just plain afraid & hellip; mostly for yourself. How about being deeply concerned about the audience's problems that you have been asked to address? How about being deeply fearful for their welfare?

The sooner you transfer the deep concern you feel for yourself to the deep concern you should feel for your audience, the sooner you'll be over your nervousness. " (p. - 92)
Issues Addressed by the Book: The book address the problem that

meetings, speeches, presentations and other oral communications are too long because 1.) they are not well thought out and planned, 2.) they lack a focused strategy and a narrow focus and 3.) they will not be remembered or acted upon because the audience was lost, bored, or not paying attention. This waste of time, talent, productivity and opportunity costs billions in productivity and outcome payoffs each year.

The author is revolted by this state of affairs, and suggests that a "Say it in Six Revolution" is needed to halt the waste. The Book's Shortcomings: This book doesn't have any shortcomings because it focuses upon speech making. However, the book could also address what speakers have to do when they need to fill larger time slots with other kinds of communication, such as lectures, training sessions and presentations.

The author could also have focused a bit more on the skills required to color and spin the message with language that the audience understands, identifies with and uses. Comments: Teachers should take the Say it in Six message to heart. Not only should teachers clip, crop and curtail the amount of words that they spew to students, but teachers should demonstrate the Say it in Six technique to students, and assist students in improving their communication skills.

The other side of the Say it in Six strategy is to get students to talk. Teachers need to get students to lay ideas out on the table so that those ideas can be examined, not as a coroner examines a cadaver during autopsy; but as a botanist examines newly discovered species of flora deep in the rainforest. Student hinging must be nurtured, cultivated, celebrated and honored.

Therefore, it is OK if students ramble before they can deliver incisive speeches. Consider this to be like baby fat. Cute, cuddly, but later giving way to sleek, buff rock-solid muscle. Summary: Here are the steps for the Say it in Six Structure Get to the point. State the "Burning Issue." No burning issue, no need to talk

Brief overview: Short background summary

How the background leads to the main idea …

How the idea will pay off, create a benefit

What we need to do now. A "call to Action" required from the listener Just remember to apply and synthesize these steps with analysis and evaluation.

We want to avoid converting a learning aid structure into a maze or prison that boxes us in. Remember what havoc we wrought on students ability to write when we taught a generation how to write by "formula?" The "formula" created lots of lockstep student output, devoid of interest, personality, spark, or charm or thought. Use the structure to multiply communication choices, not stifle and limit thinking. Rating (Four Point scale): Useful - 4

Applicable - 4

Relevant - 4

Innovative - 3

Original - 3

Interesting - 3

Overall Rating - 3.5

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