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# HBR's 10 Must Reads On Communication



## Synopsis

The best leaders know how to communicate clearly and persuasively. How do you stack up? If you listen to nothing else on communicating effectively, you should at least hear these 10 articles. We've combed through hundreds of articles in the Harvard Business Review archive and selected the most important ones to help you express your ideas with clarity and impact - no matter what the situation. Leading experts such as Deborah Tannen, Jay Conger, and Nick Morgan provide the insights and advice you need to:

- Pitch your brilliant idea - successfully
- Connect with your audience
- Establish credibility
- Inspire others to carry out your vision
- Adapt to stakeholders' decision-making styles
- Frame goals around common interests
- Build consensus and win support

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is one in a series of volumes that anthologizes what the editors of the Harvard Business Review consider to be the "must reads" in a given business subject area, in this instance communication. I have no quarrel with any of their selections, each of which is eminently deserving of inclusion. Were all of these articles purchased separately as reprints, the total cost would be \$60 and the value of any one of them exceeds that. Given the fact that it now sells this one for only \$14.71, that's quite a bargain. The same is true of volumes in other series such as "Harvard Business Review on..." and "Harvard Business Essentials." I also think there is great benefit derived from the convenience of having essential, basic information as well as a variety of perspectives and insights gathered in a single volume. In all of the volumes in the "10 Must Read"

series that I have read thus far, the authors and HBR editors make skillful use of several reader-friendly devices that include "Idea in Brief" and "Idea in Action" sections, checklists with and without bullet points, boxed mini-commentaries (some of which are "guest" contributions from other sources, and graphic charts and diagrams that consolidate especially valuable information. These and other devices facilitate, indeed accelerate frequent review later of key points later. Those who read this volume will gain valuable information, insights, and counsel that will help them to pitch their brilliant idea with high-impact, connect with their audience, establish their credibility, inspire others to embrace and pursue their vision, adapt to stakeholders concerns and decision-making styles, frame goals that are supported by common interests, and build a consensus and then increase it with additional support.

Harvard Business Review's 10 Must Reads on Communication features a compendium of research-laden articles from the flagship publisher's archives on the topic of communication in the world of business. HBR's aggregation includes pieces pulled from across the span of a little over a decade from Deborah Tannen's *The Power of Talk* originally published in 1995 to Nick Morgan's *How to Become an Authentic Speaker* originally published in 2008. While the scope of authorship is relatively narrow in terms of the snapshot in time that is represented by the articles contained therein, its authors represent a wide range of professional capacities including two CEOs, six professors, a sales executive, a communications consultant, and a venture capitalist. Four of the selected articles focus primarily on the art of communicating persuasively. These articles include Gary Williams and Robert Miller's *Change the Way You Persuade*, Robert Cialdini's *Harnessing the Science of Persuasion*, Jay Conger's *The Necessary Art of Persuasion*, and Kimberly Elsbach's *How to Pitch A Brilliant Idea*. Williams and Miller argue that "executives tend to make important decisions in predictable ways and knowing their preferences for hearing or seeing certain types of information at specific stages in their decision-making process can substantially improve your ability to tip the outcome your way." In essence, the takeaway is that what matters most is having the right information at the right time for the right person. As inferred by his article's title, Cialdini writes from the perspective of psychological research which suggests that "there are six basic laws of winning friends and influencing people."

An inevitable fact is that there will always be conversations which will bring about stress, the key is figuring out how to deal with these dialogues when they come up. Weeks' (2001) article highlighted in HBR's 10 Must Reads on Communication speaks to the three main

communication errors individuals face in the workplace and also addresses three ways to counteract possible aversions that this stress brings about. Weeks<sup>TM</sup> (2001) examines the types of stressful conversations one could have. She sums them up as the following introductions into a potential altercation: "I have bad news for you," "What's going on here?" and "You are attacking me!" She suggests that these are three of the phrases that lead to individuals feeling offended, confused and frustrated. She goes on to give three examples, one for each of these scenarios, which help frame her position. I believe she does a great job at making her points in an easy to understand and intriguing way. We all know how important communication is whether in a marriage, between friends and especially within the workplace. I've often heard the phrase uttered, "Communication is key," to which I would have to agree. In order to effectively communicate Weeks<sup>TM</sup> suggests three ways in which we can prepare ourselves for a stressful conversation. "A good start is to become aware of your own weaknesses to people and situations" (Weeks, 2001). Understanding your vulnerabilities is an important way to know how you will react to a certain situation. "Once you know what your danger zones are, you can anticipate your vulnerability and improve your response" (Weeks, 2001, p. 173).

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