

Thaler Pekar & Partners

How to Headline, Highlight, and Bridge Your Way to Effective Communication

Here are 3 simple tools for maintaining control of your message in conversation, whether you are engaged in a media interview, a professional presentation, or another form of persuasive communication.

Headline

- State your conclusion first, and then follow-up with details as time allows.
- By headlining your key message, you ensure your most important points are made first.

Highlight

- Signal the listener that your main message is coming.
This is important for 3 reasons:
 1. Highlighting provides an aural clue for the distracted listener. (Imagine listening to the radio while driving in the rain, with the kids in the car, late for an appointment...you get the power of highlighting.)
 2. Highlighting tells the editor, or reminds the reporter or audience member when they are later reading their notes, of your most important point.
 3. Highlighting reminds *you* to say your most important point!

Sample highlighting language:

- "The most important thing to know is..."
- "Our key message is ..."
- "The real issue is..."
- "The purpose of the study is..."

Bridge

- Use every question you are asked to bridge back to the message you want to give. (Politicians often refer to "pivot phrases" – the phrase that helps you *pivot* from where you are to where you want to be. Since you are most likely speaking passionately about something in which you believe, and persuading someone to take action, I prefer to use the metaphor of *building a bridge*.)

Sample bridge language:

- "I agree we've got a problem and I'd like to go directly to our solution."
- "Actually, that relates to a more important concern..."
- "That deals with one aspect of a larger issue..."
- "I'm not sure about that, but what I do know is...."
- "People may have that misconception, but the truth is..."

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Be heard