

PUBLIC SPEAKING & STORYTELLING
FOR PROJECT MANAGERS & ENGINEERS

Rashid N. Kapadia

Necessary Bridges



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Public Speaking & Storytelling for
Project Managers & Engineers

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Rashid N. Kapadia

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With infinite gratitude I dedicate this work to ...

My parents, for their limitless love and their sterling examples. And for invaluable memories of contentment, erudition and equanimity.

My wife and son, for their limitless love and their selfless support. And for making us the blessed family we are.

I would also like to dedicate my work to ...

All engineers and project managers, past, present and future. Alas, too often, “the world little knows ... nor long remembers ...” the greatness of our professions.

All who bring passion and purpose to public speaking, storytelling and oratory.

All who set audacious goals, long to build necessary bridges and make the world a better place.

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Preface

“It always seems impossible until it is done.”

— Nelson Mandela

I remember being truly mesmerized, watching a scene from the movie *Invictus*. This is the scene in which the president of South Africa summons the captain of its national rugby team to his presidential office, and plants the seed of an idea: “Win the Rugby World Cup; our broken nation needs this of you. Together, we must all become ‘One Team, One Nation.’”

This movie portrays a portion of the multifaceted book called *Playing the Enemy* by John Carlin. It is one of the best sports books I’ve read, covering one of the greatest sports stories of all time; but it is much more. It is an inspirational self-help book. It is a book about a political genius who faced multiple impossibly difficult challenges, and who responded with, “It always seems impossible until it is done.” It is a book about an epic injustice and an epic reconciliation. It is a book about a leader, who perhaps more than anyone else on this planet, mastered the art of making friends and influencing people. It is a book about a superb public speaker. It is a book, which describes the most unlikely exercise in political seduction ever undertaken. And it is a book, which led to a superb scene in a marvelous movie.

President Nelson Mandela (NM): Tell me, Francois, ... what is your philosophy of leadership? How do you inspire your team to do their best?

Captain of the Springboks Rugby team, Francois Pienaar (FP): By example ... I’ve always thought to lead by example, Sir.

NM: Well that is right ... that is exactly right. But how to get them to be better than they think they can be? That is

*very difficult, I find. Inspiration, perhaps. How do we inspire ourselves to greatness, when nothing less will do? How do we inspire everyone around us? I sometimes think it is by **using the work of others.***

On Robben Island, when things got very bad ... I found inspiration in a poem.

FP: A poem?

NM: A Victorian poem ... just words ... but they helped me to stand when all I wanted to do was to lie down.

But you didn't come all this way to hear an old man talk about things that make no sense.

FP: No, no, please Mr. President ... it makes complete sense to me. On the day of the big match, say a test, in the bus, on the way to the stadium, nobody talks.

NM: Ah yes, they are all preparing.

FP: Right. But when I think we are ready, I have the bus driver put on a song, something I've chosen, one we all know ... and we listen to the words together ... and it helps.

NM: I remember when I was invited to the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona. Everybody in the stadium greeted me with a song. At the time the future ... our future, seemed very bleak. But to hear that song in the voices of people from all over our planet made me proud to be South African. It inspired me to come home and do better. It allowed me to expect more of myself.

FP: May I ask, what was the song, Sir?

NM: Well ... it was Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika ... a very inspiring song.

We need inspiration, Francois, ... because in order to build our nation, we must all exceed our own expectations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQhns5AwAkA>

I wondered why this scene moved me so deeply. I thought long and hard about it. Engineers all too frequently cannot leave great feelings, or well enough alone. They try to “figure it out.” You already know this. I wasn’t really satisfied with anything I initially came up with. That changed after I was exposed to the worlds of public speaking and storytelling.

After spending a few years trying to improve my public speaking and storytelling skills, I got a much better appreciation and understanding of why I was so mesmerized by the powerful *Invictus* scene. It is the same power that public speakers and storytellers everywhere attempt to harness.

I know I want to exceed my own expectations on a regular basis. Who doesn’t? But to hear and see it dramatized this way was a game changer.

Vikas Jhingran has written a book called *Emote: Using Emotions to Make Your Message Memorable*. In his approach (with his uniquely analytical articulation of the role of emotions in speech craft), he recommends that we start writing a speech after having made a clear decision of the “final emotion” we want to leave the audience with.

Well, the emotions that I was left with at the end of this scene would be a fabulous way to feel at the end of any speech or presentation—regardless of whether I was in the audience or speaking to an audience.

I have drawn much inspiration from the movie *Invictus*, and especially from using **the work of others**.

In *Necessary Bridges*, I have used **the work of others** extensively. I acknowledge with much gratitude all that is available to us on the road to exceeding our own expectations. I have meticulously credited sources. Whenever I have cited the work (or the words) of others, I have italicized them. In the unlikely event I have inadvertently omitted to cite a

source, I apologize in advance. The oversight error is entirely my own.

To the reader, if I have cited sources in a way that seems excessive, and occasionally disrupts the smooth flow of reading, or requires you to read too much italicized font, I ask your indulgence. It is an essential compromise: I ask your understanding.

Over many years as a project manager and engineer, it became clearer and clearer to me project managers and engineers were inadvertently compromising their professional and career advancement by not being “good enough” in public speaking and storytelling.

I committed to write this book because I inadvertently stumbled into a hole. I became aware of a gap, a mismatch; one that I could no longer ignore.

Briefly, these conclusions dawned on me: (1) there is a mismatch between what project managers know they need to excel at: and with what they commit to excelling at: and (2) there is a mismatch between what engineers think they need to know and learn: and with what they really need to know and learn. Put differently, this topic found me and in an inexplicable way commanded me to act! “Write a book, Rashid. Evangelize public speaking and storytelling to project managers and engineers. In time they will thank you for this contribution to our professions.” A bonus benefit: Writing a book on a subject helps the author become an expert on that subject.

The primary purpose of this book is to get project managers and engineers to commit to acquiring expertise in public speaking and storytelling. The secondary purpose is to provide (just) enough content (accompanied by exercises, examples and directions to other resources—i.e. the work of others) to keep the commitment strong and sustained over

years. There is plenty of marvelous content out there.

This book is NOT about technical presentations or presentations specific to the professions of engineering and project management. The content of this book is generic and exposes the reader to the basics of public speaking and storytelling.

This analogy may help explain my thinking. In the 1970s there was a revolution in which personal computers began entering our lives in a major way. Two dominant companies driving this revolution were Microsoft and Apple. Microsoft focused on providing really useful and ubiquitous products, but they were (in my opinion) not too concerned, perhaps even indifferent, to the design and the beauty of the products. Apple, on the other hand (in my opinion), was deeply concerned about the design and beauty of its products, perhaps obsessively so.

I see the Microsoft approach as one to which possibly engineers and project managers (at least of my age and background) default. Certainly that was my approach. I mean, “Who cares what it looks like as long as it works well?” It was only after the stunning success of products like the iMac, the iPod, the iPhone, the iPad, the MacBook Air etc., that the advantage of great design dawned on many of us.

I have come to believe that deciding to lavish deliberate attention and care on public speaking and storytelling can make the same difference to our professions that Apple’s “design is very important” approach made to the computer (and computer-based consumer devices) industry.

This book has been conceived and created more as a product to be used in combination with other resources, than as a stand-alone book. It has been developed as a guide book providing course work. It has been conceived as an incubator of and companion to a self-development project,

of minimum two years duration. It has been conceived with the intention that the reader will return to it multiple times over the duration of the self-development project, and read it along with other recommended books simultaneously. This is also called syntopical reading.

Indeed, here is a sample recommendation. I recommend that you procure a book called *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading* by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, and read that book in parallel with *Necessary Bridges*. You will extract much more value out of *Necessary Bridges* if you follow this approach.

It is my hope (dare I say vision), that someday in the not too distant future, project managers and engineers will routinely be thought of not only as smart and educated individuals, but as excellent public speakers and storytellers too; the way Apple products are thought of as marvels of engineering and are beautifully designed, too. Why? Because these are essential skills to move any human endeavor along. Public speaking and storytelling are essential skills to (using a line from Apple's Think Different ad) "*to push the human race forward.*" Public speaking and storytelling skills are lubricating oils that keep the machinery of engineering, project management and relationship management running super-smoothly. And engineers and project managers have moved — indeed, pushed — the world forward as much as or more than any other profession.

It is my hope that engineers and project managers increasingly communicate in a way that leaves everyone around them experiencing the same final emotion I felt at the end of the *Invictus* movie scene; inspired and committed to exceeding their own expectations.

It always seems impossible until it is done!

Chapter 16

Finding Flow Through Public Speaking and Storytelling

“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive. Because what the world needs most is more people who have come alive.”

— Howard Thurman

PS&ST make me come alive. Setting clear goals and moving toward them make me come alive. The marvels of engineering make me come alive. Some challenges associated with difficult projects make me come alive. Wonderful relationships make me come alive. Marvelous conversations make me come alive. Being part of a high-energy, positive group that is working toward self-improvement makes me come alive. The list goes on. Watching JFK’s “We Choose to Go to the Moon” speech makes me come alive. Watching the movie “On Human Destiny” at Space Center Houston makes me come alive. I understand that what all these may have in common, for me, is that they get me into some kind of low-grade-flow-state, and it is this combination state-of-body-and-state-of-mind that makes me feel alive.

Not surprisingly, I had heard of the flow state off and on over the years, especially associated with athletes, musicians, and performers. After listening to Martin Seligman’s TED Talk “The new era of positive psychology,” I began to investigate it more seriously.

Seligman suggests that there are three different sources of happiness, which are the pleasant life (positive emotions, positive affectation), the good life (engagement, seeking mastery, working from your highest strengths), and the meaningful life (contributing to a purpose that is greater than you). He goes on to describe those who experience the good life as being enormously capable of flow. He refers to Mike Csikszentmihalyi’s TED Talk. I listened to it. Once again I knew that I was in the presence of a trailblazer. For me this

was new knowledge. This led me to Csikszentmihalyi's book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*.

If you are not familiar with *Flow*, plan on watching Csikszentmihalyi's TED Talk, "Flow, the secret to happiness." Syntopically reading the transcript along with this chapter, now or later, is a good idea. http://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_on_flow

This was my introduction to Flow, and it stayed dormant in my memory until I heard Fareed Zakaria (a CNN television talk show host) interview author Steven Kotler around the time of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xt9xN9k3SCE>

Steven Kotler's basic argument was that at the physical level, the elite athletes were basically the same, and those athletes best able to get into the flow state, and stay there for the duration of the contest had the advantage.

The basic premise of Kotler's book, *The Rise of Superman* is that there is a (highly elusive) state of being (an optimal state of body-brain combination) called the flow state. Two characteristics consistently associated with flow are (1) It always feels good: It is always a positive experience, and (2) It functions as a performance enhancer. Kotler even describes flow as being "The telephone booth where Clark Kent changes clothes, the place from where Superman emerges."

Here is Steven Kotler's talk at Google, "The Rise of Superman: Decoding the Science of Ultimate Human Performance".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1MHyyWsMeE>

I have edited Kotler's exact spoken words for reading clarity and brevity.

When I was 30 years old, I got Lyme's disease. I spent the better portion of three years in bed. It's like having the worst flu crossed with paranoid schizophrenia. By the end of this, the doctors had pulled me off medicines. My stomach lining was

bleeding out. There was nothing else they could do for me. I was functional 5–10% of the time. My mind was totally shut down. My body was in so much pain I could barely walk. I was hallucinating. My short-term memory was gone. My long-term memory was gone. It was all gone. At this point I was going to kill myself out of practicality. The only thing I was going to be from here on out was a burden to my friends and family. It was really a question of “when” and not “if” at that point.

In the middle of all this negative thinking a friend of mine showed up at my house and demanded that we go surfing. ... And she was insistent, wouldn't leave and kept badgering me. And finally I agreed, thinking, “What is the worst that can happen?” ... They took me out, helped me out, and gave me a big board. After about 30 seconds a wave came ... and I paddled into it ... and popped up into a completely different dimension. My senses were incredibly acute. I was clear-headed for the first time in years. ... The most incredible thing was that I felt great. I felt alive. The first wave felt good. I caught four more waves. After five waves, I was gone. They had to take me home. For 14 days I couldn't walk again. On the 15th day I went back to the ocean and I did it again. Again it felt great.

The cycle kept repeating itself. Over six months' time, I went from about 10% functionality to about 80% functionality. My first question was, “What the hell is going on? Surfing is not a cure for the auto-immune condition.” Second, “I am a science writer by profession,” so this led me to find out what was going on with me.

I strongly recommend that you plan to watch this entire talk. Allow for 75 minutes.

For me, this story is even more amazing than Joshua Foer winning the USA memory championship.

If you are interested, here are a couple of links, one to an HBR article by the author, and the other to some Flow-related

videos.

<http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/05/create-a-work-environment-that-fosters-flow/>

<http://riseofsuperman.com/videos/>

Just like there are USA and World memory championship events, there is a Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking contest held every year. It is probably not a well-known contest except in public speaking, storytelling, and Toastmasters circles. I have studied DVDs of many of these contests, and have read some “How to Win the Championship” type of books on this subject. Now, I cannot help but wonder, if what was really going on at the level of neurobiology was that the winners (World Champions of Public Speaking) were better able to enter the flow state than the rest of the competition. It certainly seems to be an avenue worth investigating. I suspect flow states contributed significantly to victory in these annual contests. I suspect that future competitors best able to get into the flow state, while competing, may have a decided advantage.

I have been so taken up by this book, and the argument that deliberate practice in the flow state is the optimal route toward acquiring expertise, that I have made it one of my personal goals for PS&ST. My goal: I want to be able to enter the flow state each and every time I am public speaking or storytelling. In this state I will be most present, least distracted, best able to connect with my audience, best able to forget myself, and best able to serve my audience.

I recommend that you too make this one of your goals on your PS&ST voyage. “I will engage in deliberate practice in the flow state as much as I can. I will attempt to enter the flow state each and every time I am public speaking, presenting, or storytelling.” This decision could be the one that contributes to your acquisition of expertise at double the rate of what was

previously considered normal. This decision could be the one decision, more than any other, that transforms you into a selfless speaker. This decision could be the one that enables you to listen to and draw energy from your audiences more than any other.

One of my most basic mantras in PS&ST is “This is not about me.” The flow state seems to be the ideal state to practice this mantra, because, as a matter of neurobiology, the parts within my brain that make “me” conscious of “me” are effectively shut down. In this state there is no differentiation (in cognition) between the speaker, the speech, and the audience.

So how does one get into this elusive flow state? According to Steven Kotler, one way is to know about flow triggers and surround oneself with as many of them as practical. He identifies 17 flow triggers, and separates them into four categories: external, internal, social, and creative.

What these triggers do is drive attention into the now, into the present, to the task at hand, and they shut out all other distractions and thoughts. This allows for maximum concentration and focus on the task at hand—and on nothing else. Many of our brain sub-systems that are normally (not-flow-state) “on” are effectively switched “off.” These sub-systems, which normally make us aware of time, and aware of ourselves, go off-line. We no longer have any awareness, cognition, or consciousness of either time or ourselves.

If you remember from Csikszentmihalyi’s TED Talk, (minutes 8–11) he says that we can process about 110 bits of information per second. The more of these 110 bits are devoted to the task at hand, the less are available for us to be conscious of ourselves, our bodies, time, etc. This, I will confess, makes a lot of sense to me.

Another characteristic of the flow state is that there is a massive release of multiple neurotransmitters. This makes us

feel very good.

Therefore, in an effort to enter the flow state, one option is to surround ourselves with as many of these flow triggers as practical.

Another point the book makes is that the flow state is a part of a cycle; one which starts with (1) *struggle*, is followed by (2) *release*, which is then followed by (3) *flow*, and finally followed by (4) *recovery*.

When reading through the list of flow triggers, I couldn't help but notice that many of these conditions are present during PS&ST, making PS&ST a good opportunity to get into flow.

Here are the triggers as identified by Steven Kotler in his book, *The Rise of Superman*:

External: (1) Risk, (2) Rich environment, (3) Deep embodiment.

Internal: (4) Clear goals (more stress on clear, less stress on goals), (5) Immediate feedback, (6) Challenge/skills ratio.

Social: (7) Serious concentration, (8) Shared (clear) goals, (9) Good communication, (10) Equal participation, (11) Element of risk, (12) Familiarity (everyone knows everyone, all are on the same page, there is shared knowledge, there is a common language, communication is based on unspoken understandings), (13) Blending egos (collective humility, no one hogs the spotlight, everyone is involved), (14) A sense of control (a combination of autonomy and competence) (15) Close listening, (16) Always say YES (interactions should be additive, not argumentative. The goal is momentum, togetherness, and innovation from amplifying each other's ideas).

Creative: (17) Creativity is flow hack.

Let me comment a little more on point 6: challenge to skills ratio. It is sort of the same thing we read earlier in chapter 6. ("Talent is Overrated": *Noel Tichy, a professor at the University*

of Michigan business school and former chief of General Electric's famous Crotonville management development center uses a diagram of three concentric circles. He labels the inner circle "comfort circle," the middle one the "learning zone," and the outer one "panic zone." **Only by choosing activities in the learning zone can one make progress. That's the location of skills and abilities that are just out of reach.** We can never make progress in the comfort zone because these are activities we can already do easily, while the panic zone activities are so hard that we don't even know how to approach them. **Identifying the learning zone, which is not simple, and then forcing oneself to stay continually in it as it changes, which is even harder**—these are the first and most important characteristics of deliberate practice.)

A key element is to set the challenge of the task at hand just outside the range of present skills. How much? About 4–5% more. This is the amount of stretch that requires full concentration, without anxiety leading to stress/panic, also called stretching without snapping. At this level of challenge the result is not certain. We may succeed, or we may not. We have to give the challenging task our best attention, and we are better able to receive immediate feedback, i.e. we are actively looking out for what is working and what is not working.

A fundamental difference between us (you and me) and elite athletes, is that elite athletes have become masters at identifying challenges that are +4% above current skills and training at that challenge level. The road to magic and extraordinary performance (and PS&ST expertise) is 4% + 4% + 4% + 4%, day after day, week after week, month after month and year after year. Self-knowledge is essential to knowing limits, and to setting 4% harder goals.

Now we are told that corporations are beginning to emulate the elite athlete approach. Here is something from the Google

Talk.

Major companies, including Microsoft, Ericsson, Patagonia and Toyota have realized that being able to control and harness this feeling of FLOW is the holy grail for any manager.

It seems serendipitous that PS&ST are surrounded by lots of these flow triggers. A reminder: The main benefit of a flow trigger is that it forces our attention back into the “now,” into the present moment. Yes *FLOW = No Wandering Mind*. Yes *FLOW = No Awareness of Self or Ego*. Yes *FLOW = No (or dilated) Awareness of Time*. If after a presentation you wondered, “Where did all the time go?” you were probably in a low-grade flow state.

While we know that action adventure athletes have essentially become the best flow hackers on Earth, I suspect PM&Es are also decent flow hackers—after all, our professions place high demands on us. I can see, in my mind’s eye, that PM&Es can, with planning, ingenuity, community, and new tech devices, take this to another level.

A pragmatic way to get to the flow state is to surround ourselves by as many of these flow triggers as we can. Let’s investigate if these flow triggers are present, or can be made present while we engage in PS&ST.

Let’s make a checklist of these triggers.

External

1. Risk—*certainly*. *There is risk associated anytime we PS&ST. We make ourselves vulnerable. We may miss an important point or connection between ideas that will reduce our professional credibility. We may stumble and stammer. We may make outright fools of ourselves. We may have a bout of stage fright. We may be asked questions we do not know the answers to. Yes there*

is risk each time we PS&ST, so we have this flow trigger in place—good.

2. Rich environment—*certainly. Any audience, small or large, that has focused its attention on us will capture our full attention. We have to pay attention—we cannot even imagine being distracted or drifting off. Yes there is a rich environment each time we PS&ST, so we have this flow trigger in place—good.*
3. Deep embodiment—*certainly. We discussed (in chapter 7) the various aspects of body sensations when the attention of a large group of people is directed on us. We may well feel some anxiety and some element of the fight-or-flight response: We cannot fully control this. We can use this to our benefit by recognizing “Good, these sensations in my body will force me to direct my attention into the now, to pay full attention to my audience, and will fortuitously help propel me further into flow.” Yes there is a strong possibility of experiencing deep embodiment each time we PS&ST, so we likely have this flow trigger in place—good.*

Internal

4. Clear goals (with high stress on clear)—*certainly. If we do not have clear goals, it is 100% our own fault. Why are we even presenting without clear goals? Why would anyone do that? One more motivation for having clear goals is that they act as a flow trigger. For example, a clear goal of an icebreaker speech is to share myself; more specifically, my background, interests, and ambitions. One clear goal is that I want all of us to have final emotions and thoughts that we have a lot in common. Yes we can certainly ensure that we have clear goals in place each time we engage in public speaking and*

- storytelling, so we have this flow trigger in place—good.*
5. Immediate feedback—*certainly. One excellent reason to memorize a speech is that this frees us up to listen to and connect with the audience. Listening and connecting to an audience is to know what the audience is thinking and feeling. This is immediate feedback. Yes we can have an opportunity for immediate feedback each time we PS&ST, so we can have this flow trigger in place—good.*
 6. Challenge / skills ratio—*certainly. We may have to work hard at this but it is achievable and, if we do not have this flow trigger in place, we can change that.*

Social

7. Serious concentration—*certainly.*
8. Shared (clear) goals—*hopefully.*
9. Good communication—*hopefully.*
10. Equal participation—*yes & no. A speech must sound conversational, but it is not a conversation. It can be a shared emotional rollercoaster ride, and it can be two-way flow of a positive energy. The more the audience feels like it is participating, (i.e. shares the speaker's emotions) the better—we have another flow trigger in place.*
11. Element of risk—*certainly.*
12. Familiarity (everyone knows everyone, all are on the same page, there is shared knowledge, there is a common language, communication is based on unspoken understandings)—*depends on venue and audience. It is worth noting that the more the familiarity, the better the chances of finding flow.*
13. Blending egos (collective humility, no one hogs the spotlight, everyone is involved)—*hopefully.*

14. A sense of control (a combination of autonomy and competence)—*achievable*.
15. Close listening—*achievable*.
16. Always say YES (interactions should be additive, not argumentative. The goal is momentum, togetherness, and innovation from amplifying each other's ideas)—*achievable*.

Creative

17. Creativity is flow hack.—*It depends*.

Yes, we have the opportunity to surround ourselves with a significant number of flow triggers. This is good.

How can we pragmatically proceed?

Take a look at Kotler's Google talk (minutes 35 to 42:30) and devise a plan made on this model. Taking a screenshot of the graphic at minute 35:22 may be useful to visualize and create a mind map for an entire speech project.

Struggle (beta brain waves: cortisol and norepinephrine)
36:15–38:00

For me, I see the speech preparation, or presentation preparation, phase as a struggle phase. There is researching, gathering of ideas, sources and stories, brainstorming, rewriting and mind mapping the script. There is usually doubt and occasionally despair. There may be time constraints. There is struggle when deciding on and constructing slides and other visual aids. There is struggle when deciding the staging of the delivery. There is struggle when practicing alone. There is struggle when receiving necessary feedback. Yes, there is certainly struggle associated with speech writing. This is good. We can appreciate the fact that this struggle is the pathway to flow. The more you struggle with the preparation, the better.

Reminder from Vikas Jhingran's book, *Emote*.

A speech when first conceived is rarely as beautiful as it ends up. Sometimes the final emotion, or the key idea is the only thing that remains from the original version.

The process of refining from the first draft to the final version of the speech is really where great speakers distinguish themselves.

Minute 36:15-38:00 of the Google talk is a good reminder of the struggle phase. The more of this we go through, the likelier we are to get into flow.

Release (alpha brain waves: nitric oxide) 38:00–38:45

In PS&ST, I equate this phase with pre-speech routines. Following some of my coaching with Sandra Zimmer, I began doing these routines diligently, as they were clearly working. So it was nice to find an explanation of sorts here—always makes the engineer in me happy. My pre-speech routines can be seen in Appendix 4. I suggest you experiment and have your own pre-speech routine in place—especially now that we know it is a part of the flow matrix. We can appreciate the fact that this release is on the pathway to flow. The better we can enter the release phase the more likely we are to find flow.

Flow (theta and gamma brain waves: dopamine, endorphins, anandamide) 38:45–40:30

We want to get into flow because it is always a positive experience and we are at our best. This is the ideal state to be in when giving a presentation. This is the Holy Grail. It is worth remembering that there are various levels of flow, so even getting into a low-grade flow state, for only a portion of your talk, is forward progress.

This is my *thirteenth wish* for you. May you eventually find flow every time you PS&ST.

Your audience will prefer to see you in flow. Period. One way to serve your audience is to be an expert at getting into the flow state.

Recovery (delta brain waves: serotonin, oxytocin) 40:30–42:30

Now that we know about this phase, it is important that we plan for it and allow it to do its work. I find the idea that this is where the consolidation of learning occurs, where the “just acquired higher skill” becomes the “new normal skill” to be fascinating. Without this phase we are not ready for the next +4% challenge.

This reminds me of something about running and exercising. Our muscles do not actually grow when running or exercise, rather they break down. It is only in the recovery stage between runs that the muscles rebuild and grow. I am guessing (and this is wild speculation on my part) that disciplined sleep routines, evangelized in chapter 6, also have a beneficial role in the consolidation of learning, in getting us to the “new normal.”

I think that PM&Es will probably embrace this approach (finding flow as a holy grail when PS&ST) more than the rest of the world of PS&ST. There is elegance, science, planning, and benefit that the PM&E in me finds very appealing.

Flow is not so much PS&ST becoming easy, but it is PS&ST becoming easier. Flow is not so much PS&ST becoming totally rewarding, but it is PS&ST becoming more and more rewarding (more reward chemicals/neurotransmitters in circulation within our bodies). This is biology. Flow in PS&ST is not so much us becoming totally selfless, rather it is us becoming, as a matter of biology, less aware of our selves. Good enough for me!

About the Author

Rashid N. Kapadia, a marine engineer and project manager for decades, discovered the transformational power of public speaking, storytelling and oratory after joining a Project Management Institute (Houston) sponsored Toastmasters club.

He also discovered, to his surprise and dismay, that too many engineers and project managers seriously underappreciate—even shun—these transformative skills.

Having always seen himself as an ambassador for his storied and challenging professions, he has made it a personal mission to evangelize PS&ST to engineers and project managers around the globe.

Connect

To book the author to speak at your event or to learn more about his work and how he can help you, please visit NecessaryBridges.com or rashidkapadia.com.

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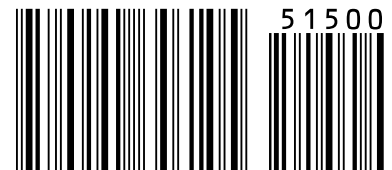
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