



Surviving Verbal Conflict®

*“What Every Public Service Professional Needs to Know
About Verbal De-escalation”*

Intersections of Violence: Domestic Violence, Sexual
Assault and Child Abuse Conference



Wednesday, April 13th, 2017
Norfolk Waterside Marriott Hotel
Norfolk, Virginia

Presented by:

Sgt. Daniel Nieters



Sgt. Daniel C. Nieters



Daniel is a graduate from North Carolina State University and a 14-year police veteran of the Raleigh Police Department. He was promoted to corporal in 2004 and was transferred to the Raleigh Police Training Academy in 2007. He was promoted to sergeant in 2010 and remained at the Training Academy as the Raleigh Police Commandant. For the past year he has been served as a field operations sergeant where he is still assigned.

During his career he has trained over 400 basic and lateral police recruits. He presented at the Problem Oriented Policing Conference for Speeding in Residential Neighborhoods in 2002 and received a Goldstein Award for his effort. Daniel developed and implemented a Field Training Program for the Raleigh Police Department creating consistency between the Academy and the field.

Daniel is an instructor in Defensive Tactics and is very passionate about training police officers and public service professionals in the use of verbal de-escalation skills. He has trained hundreds of sworn and civilian personnel in the field of *Surviving Verbal Conflict* and has been rated as an outstanding career-impacting instructor.

Presentation Outline

I. Introduction – Verbal Conflict is A Fact of Life

- A. Goals of the Presentation and My Personal Message to You
- B. Don't Let Your Training Tape Run Out
 - 1. *Unhappy Customer* – Handling a tough case . . . cold!
- C. Why Do “Guardians of Community Welfare” Fall Prey to “Rope-A-Dope”
 - 1. The “Role of Hypervigilance in Rope-A-Dope”
 - 2. Always Ask Yourself the Veteran Communicators Overriding Question
 - a) “Just how important is all this?”
- D. Fundamentals of Verbal Deflection
 - 1. *Empathize* - See the world through the eyes of the other
 - a) Replay – “Let me start over, that didn't come out right”
 - b) Find common ground- “I see where you're coming from, if you were a police officer what would you do if someone...”
 - c) Provide people options – And, there is always a better option- Alternatives and consequences
 - 2. *Paraphrase*— I hear what you're saying “However...”
 - a) “Don't debate when you are trying to de-escalate.”- Dolan
 - b) Don't bring negative people home with you for dinner

II. How “Guardians of the Peace” Verbally De-escalate conflict – Winning Community Confidence and Trust

- A. *Warning Signs* – Notice when verbal conflict is about to change your career and your life and not in a good way (*Why can't people just act more like me?*)
- B. The descendants of Valley Forge want to know WHY
- C. Connect to the wisdom of Aristotle - Introducing Chief Dolan's *Rhetorical Continuum*
- D. “Audiences are made not found” - Aristotle

(Graphic – The Rhetorical Continuum: *How Aristotle would de-escalate people under the influence*)

1. Ethos
2. Logos
3. Pathos

E. Rhetorical Continuum

Safety first – Establish the ground rules

1. Situation I - ***Meet and Greet***: Ethos– Ethical appeal- Reason for encounter
 - a) Credo – Yes, your appearance and what you say matters – You’re your credibility (*80% of people comply with our requests and directives when we act and look the part of the professional*)
 - (1) Manage your moment of truth
 - (2) From the receiver’s point of view- 93% Delivery Style
 - (3) Human Universals
 - b) Chief Dolan’s *Language of The Street Fallacy*
 - (1) Beware of position courage
 - (2) Avoid creating workplace jeopardy
 - (3) Chief Dan Savages’ “G rated communication concept”
 - (4) Get Ready “*Service Provider Schitz-storm is on Scene*”
2. Situation II - ***Explain***: Logos: Logical appeal - Explain the Why
 - a) Commanders Intent - Raise organizational morale by telling people WHY and explaining the rationale for the decision, practice or policy.
3. Situation III - ***Options***: Pathos - Emotional appeal
 - a) What’s in this for me? - Greed motivates
 - b) Alternatives/Consequences
4. *Act / Closure –To comply or not comply the citizen’s decision*
 - a) Resolve the conflict
 - b) Exhaustion of the Rhetorical Continuum Strategies
 - (1) Confirm decision
 - c) Disengage
5. The *Rhetorical Continuum* in action
 - a) Examples

- (1) Responding to situations with difficult people
- (2) Can we leave them better than we found them at their worst?

III. More Tools for Your Tool Box

IV. You Too Can Survive Verbal Conflict

- A. Take-A-Ways
- B. Closing Comments

Section 1

Verbal Conflict is A Fact of Life

The Inevitability of Verbal Conflict

“Conflicts are a normal part of life; how we deal with them can make a big difference. Often when people resolve conflicts, one person ends up a winner, and one loses out. This may solve the problem for the moment, but resentment and bad feelings can cause more problems later.

Another way to look at conflicts is to try to find a WIN-WIN solution, in which both sides can benefit. In this way, conflicts are turned into opportunities to grow and make things better. This approach is the cornerstone of "conflict resolution" - an important tool for bringing peace into our personal lives, our communities and to our world.”

– Robert Alan Silverstein

Goals of “Surviving Verbal Conflict” Presentation

- Provide public service professionals with expanded verbal de-escalation tools
- Enhance *Public Service Excellence*
- Improve relationships between the public service professional and the community members they serve
- Decrease complaints
- Honor the proud tradition of the public service professionals serving as community “Guardians of the Peace”

My Personal Message to You

- SVC Will Save Your Career and More
- Assist you with Managing Hypervigilance
- Help you Become who you Admire
- Provide you with the tools to deflect verbal abuse

Don't Let Your Training Tape Run Out

– Handling an unhappy citizen. . .



Want to Improve Morale at Home and Work?

Raise expectations and tell people why!

"The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it."- Michelangelo

"Public Service Professionals Are "Guardians of the Community Welfare"

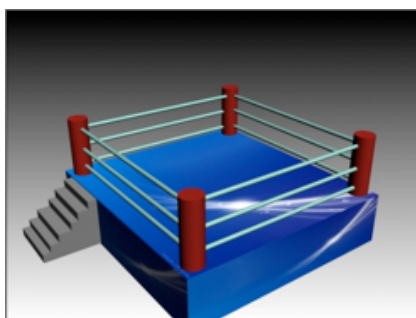
"I am a public service professional who is a guardian of the community welfare. When I provide service, I will strive to leave people better than I found them at their worst. When called upon to provide service, I will first use my professional presence as persuasion. When I meet resistance, I will, when feasible, use my verbal skills of persuasion to provide service and enhance community welfare. If verbal persuasion is rendered ineffective by the resistance I encounter, I will professionally disengage and/or summon additional assistance. This is what I am called to do."

-Chief Harry P. Dolan, (Ret.)

Why “Guardians of Community Welfare” Fall Prey to the: “Rope-A-Dope Syndrome”¹

To take people off their game: *“You don’t make them mad, you make them angry”*

- Muhammad Ali



Why do people verbally assault you? - IT WORKS!

Don’t get rope-a-doped!

Boxing champion Muhammad Ali recently passed away and as I was growing up I admired him as a boxer. Besides being a talented athlete, Ali was a master at using psychology against his opponents. One of his most successful psychological tricks was what he called the “rope-a-dope.” The rope-a-dope technique was primarily focused on getting his opponent to “lose his cool.”

Ali would allow his opponent to get in close and pummel him for a while. Ali would use his arms to protect his face and torso, and lean back against the ropes, using the elasticity in the ropes to help absorb the impacts of his opponent’s blows. While his opponent would swing at him, Ali would *verbally taunt* his opponent as he ducked, weaved, and absorbed some blows. The verbal taunts and insults would enrage his opponent—who would swing harder and faster, over and over again. Before long his opponent would become exhausted from the exertion of all of the swings, and would no longer be thinking clearly because of his anger over the verbal insults. It was at this point that Ali would strike, coming off the ropes full of energy and with a clear mind to fight his opponent. This strategy won him many fights. He called it the rope-a-dope because he was able to *rope* in his opponent and get him to act like a *dope*. Ali’s goal, as he would later describe, was not to put fear in his opponent but to fill them with anger.

Far too often today, I believe, public service professionals are being rope-a-doped by manipulative people. YouTube© is filled with videos of service providers who have fallen prey

¹ Hauser, T. (1992). *Muhammad Ali: his life and times*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

to the rope-a-dope by a consumer of service who has taunted the public service professional into acting like a dope. We need to keep our guard up against the rope-a-dope.

How Do You Know When You Have Been Rope-A-Doped?

There are several clear warning signs that you have been successfully rope-a-doped and are about to say or do something that will have a negative impact on your career. One is the “resume recital” which sounds something like, “Do you know how long I have been a _____? I don’t have to take this _____. I was a _____ since before you were born!”

Another warning sign is the Robert De Niro impression from the movie *Taxi Driver*. You know what this sounds like – “You talkin’ to me? ARE YOU TALKIN’ TO ME? I know you aren’t talkin’ to ME like that.”

A third warning sign, as described by Sgt. Danny Nieters of the Raleigh Police Department, is the *insult see-saw*. For example, the citizen taunts you with an insult and you reply back with the same insult. This sound like, “**** me? No, **** you!”

A fourth warning sign is when you start to say things like, “You know, I don’t get paid to take this ****” or “I don’t have time for this ***.” Sorry folks, but those of us who voluntarily signed up to work in people in crisis signed up to take verbal “this ***.” As for having enough time for “****,” unless it is an emergency, you *do* have time for “***.”

A fifth warning sign that you are off your game and have been successfully rope-a-doped by a manipulative person is when you disregard your officer safety by puffing up your chest and moving in close, nose-to-nose with an emotionally distraught consumer of service, often with your hand raised and finger pointed at the person. You know better.

Finally, the ultimate warning sign that you have been rope-a-doped is when you threaten the person with discontinuing service. “Do you want me to cut off your service?!” This angry rhetorical question looks ridiculous when the person responds with the question that cannot be intelligently answered in such a situation: “Lose my right to service for what?” Some painfully unwise responses to this last question have been uttered by service professionals in viral videos.

How Should You Handle the Rope-A-Dope?

The first step in preparing to handle the rope-a-dope is to be aware that the tactic exists, to watch for it, and identify it for what it is. **Consider a rope-a-dope to be an attack on your career because it is. If you fall prey to it, you could easily do or say something that could ruin your career and deny you that pay, benefits package, and pension you have worked so hard to earn.**

When you spot the rope-a-dope, you should be able to say to yourself, “Aha, the rope-a-dope. Well this person isn’t going to get me. I’m not bringing this miserable human being home for dinner with me.” You may ask what I mean by, “bringing him home for dinner?” This means you

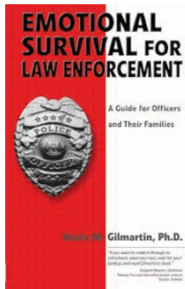
talk about this person at the dinner table with your family saying things like, “I don’t care if he complains” or “He was a jerk.” We know, however, that you do care about the complaint. Deep down you know he or she performed a solid rope-a-dope on you and you agonize inside, or with your significant other, about what might happen to your career because of what you said. So watch for, and spot, the rope-a-dope.

The next step is to use verbal deflectors to get past the verbal abuse. **A verbal deflector briefly acknowledges the insult, but then immediately follows with a conjunction that redirects the conversation back to the point at hand.** For example, a citizen might say, “This isn’t fair and you don’t care.” Your response could be, “I hear what you’re saying, you think I’m not fair, however here is my reason for talking about this with you today. Other common deflector statements include, “I appreciate that,” “nothing wrong with that,” “I understand that,” and “I might feel the same way if I was in your situation.” These deflectors have been used for decades by experienced officers on the street, and their effectiveness has been studied and advocated by authors like Dr. George Thompson, creator of *Verbal Judo*®. Always remember that the deflector is followed by “however” and a redirection back to the business at hand. “I hear you and I see you’re upset, HOWEVER, I need to discover what I can do to be of assistance”.

Another step to handling the rope-a-dope is when you realize that you have just been successfully sucked in and fallen for the ploy. When you catch yourself having been successfully rope-a-doped, call a time out. Some damage to your career may have already been done, but the situation still might be salvageable if you reverse course now. If you continue down the rope-a-dope path, it will only get worse for you. To call a time out, use the nonverbal “time-out” signal used in basketball and say, “Whoa, that didn’t come out right. Can I start over? We got off to a bad start there, so let’s start over.”

Managing the Hypervigilance Rollercoaster

Produces public service professionals who are Emotionally Over-Invested at Work, and Emotionally Under-Invested at Home



Hypervigilance and “The Magic Chair”



Avoid the “I Usta” Syndrome

Don't Be an Eeyore!
Victim-Based Thinking



Become an Emotional Survivor

“Emotional survivors are good public “service” professionals. They are also good golfers, good bike riders, good fishermen, good football coaches, good spouses, and good parents. They are multi-dimensional people.” -Dr. Kevin Gilmartin²

Learn How to Deflect Verbal Abuse and Stop Bringing People Home with you for Dinner Who Verbally Abuse you at Work!

“Between the stimulus and the response there is space, and in this space, lies our power and freedom”. - Victor Frankl

I. First: Always Ask Yourself the Veteran Communicators Overriding Question

➤ **“Just how important is all this?”**

II. Second: Empathize & Paraphrase: See the world through the eyes of the other and reflect your understanding back to the other in his/her words

- Find common ground- “I see where you’re coming from, if you were a police officer what would you do if someone...”
- Provide people options – And, there is always a better option- Alternatives and consequences
- “So what you’re saying is....., is that right?”
- “You would rather be arrested than simply comply with my lawful request”
 - ✓ I hear what you are saying, and I got that, **however....**
 - ✓ I understand that you are angry, and I might be too under the same circumstances, **however....**
 - ✓ I hear that, and I’m listening, **however...**
 - ✓ I can see you are upset, and I’m sorry you feel that way, **however...**
 - ✓ It seems that way, and I agree it’s difficult, **however...**
- Proceed with Caution (three types of people)
 - ✓ Agreeable,
 - ✓ Challenging and
 - ✓ Manipulative People

² Gilmartin, K. M. (2002). *Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement: A Guide for Officers and Their Families*. Tuscon, AZ: E-S Publishing.

III. **Third: Practice the Fundamentals of Deflection**

- Deflect verbal abuse – Amateurs respond to words; Professionals listen for the meaning of words behind the emotion and respond accordingly
- Don't debate when you are trying to de-escalate
- Single Voice - One person talks at a time
- Avoid the Natural Tendency to Fill People with Adrenaline
 - ✓ **Don't create Jeopardy**
- Take *time outs* – Use the Time Out sign to slow things down



"Time Out"



"Slow Down"

- Why Deflect Verbal Abuse
 - ✓ You are a "*Guardian of Community Welfare!*"
 - ✓ Deflection is key to "**Avoiding the Rope-A-Dope Boxing Ring**".
 - ✓ Keeps you from bringing negative people home with you for dinner.



Never argue with a fool. Onlookers may not be able to tell the difference." -Mark Twain³

³ Twain, M. (1998). *The Wit and Wisdom of Mark Train: A Book of Quotations*. Mineola, NY: Dover.

Section 2

How “Guardians of Community Service” Verbally De-escalate Conflict – *Winning Community Confidence and Trust*

Recognize the Warning Signs

Notice when verbal conflict is about to change your career and your life and not in a good way

- “Self-Referential Language” (*Resume’ recital*) taking words personally as a challenge to one’s position and experience
- Facial expressions/body language
- “You talkin’ to me _____?”
- “I don’t get paid to take this _____.”
- “I don’t have time for this _____.”
- “_____ See-Saw”
- “Do you want me to _____?”

Don't Take Anything Personally

“Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.”

- Miguel Ruiz

The descendants of Valley Forge want to know **WHY**

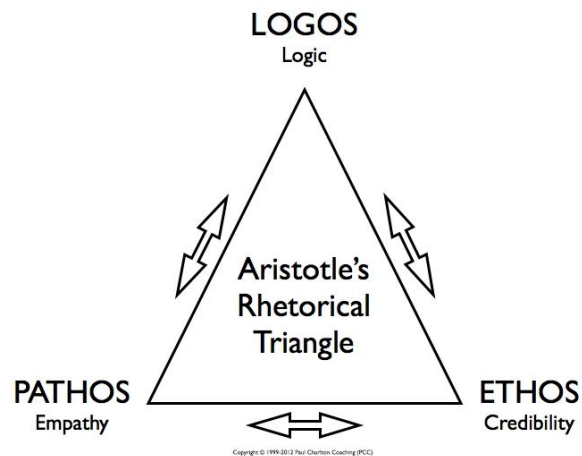
lesson learned from Friedrich “Baron” Von Steuben and the significance of **WHY**!

‘The genius of this nation is not in the least to be compared with that of the Prussians, Austrians, or French. You say to your [European] soldier, “Do this,” and he doeth it, but I am obliged to say, “This is the reason why you ought to do that,” and he does it.’

- Friedrich “Baron” Von Steuben

Tell people the **WHY** regarding our decisions, policies, practices, or procedures.

Aristotle’s Rhetorical Triangle



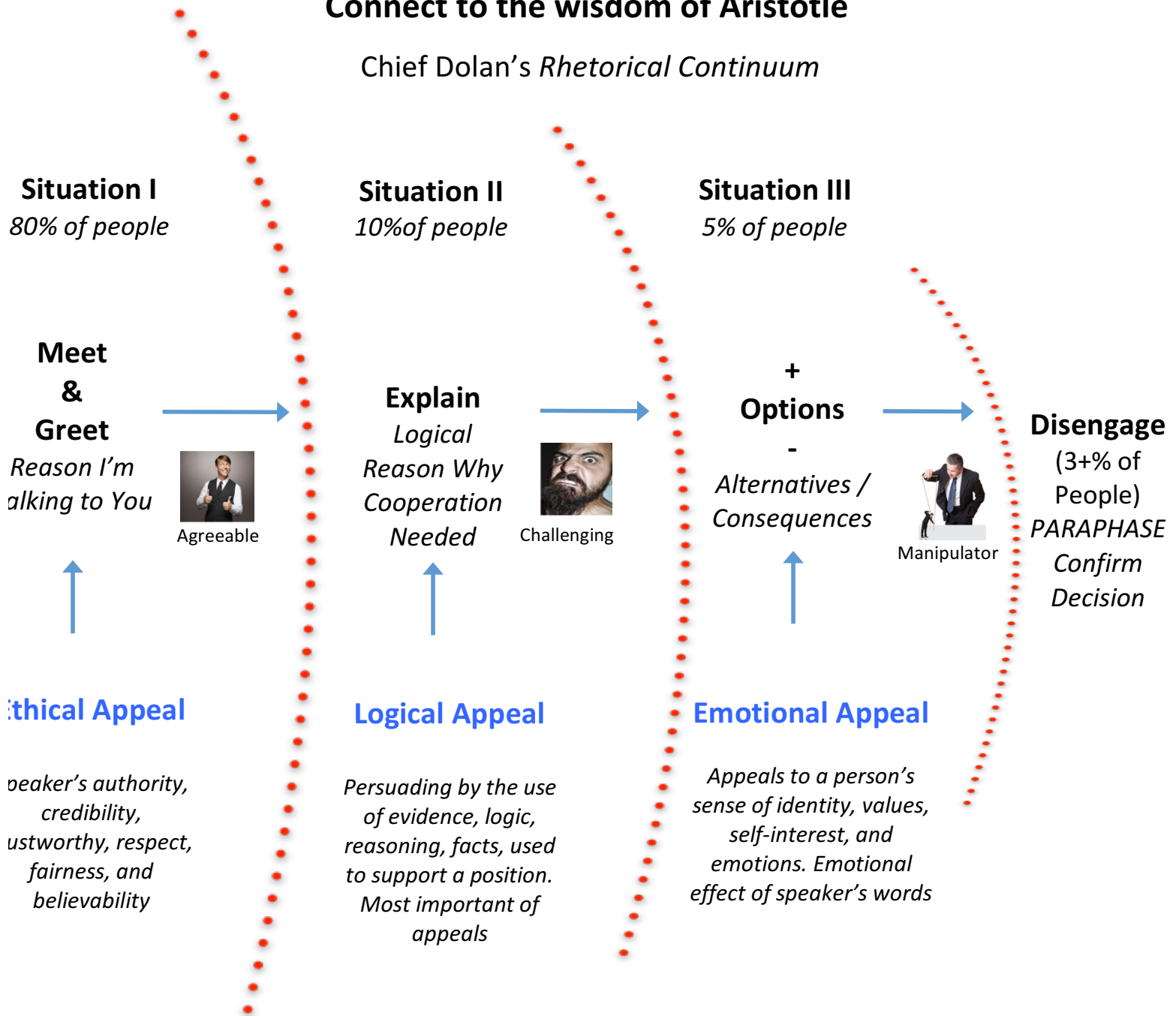
Adapt to your audience

“Audiences are made, not found”

– Aristotle

Connect to the wisdom of Aristotle

Chief Dolan's *Rhetorical Continuum*



IMPORTANT!

Public Service Provider & Citizen Safety FIRST!

Whenever your SAFETY, or the safety of another person is compromised, you need to disengage, call for assistance.

The Rhetorical Continuum

Safety first – Establish the ground rules

Situation I - Meet and Greet: Ethos – Ethical appeal- Reason for encounter

Credo (credibility) – Yes, your appearance and what you say matters – You're your credibility

- Manage your moment of truth
 - When a citizen first encounters our service
- Does What You Wear at Work Matter?⁴

"Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society."

– Mark Twain⁵

- Makes a **STATEMENT**
- A **MENTAL SHORTCUT** statement
- We all "**JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER**"
- We all like to be **RIGHT**
- **NANO SECOND** statement



⁴ Plecas, D. (2009). *Police Uniform Appearance*. Speech presented at the Raleigh Police Leadership Institute, Raleigh, NC.

⁵ Twain, M. (1998). *The Wit and Wisdom of Mark Train: A Book of Quotations*. Mineola, NY: Dover.

- **From the Receiver's Point of View⁶**

Content = 7-10 %

Voice = 33-40 %

O.N.V. = 50-60 % (Other Non-Verbal's)

93% = Delivery Style

Human Universals

What we all have in common as opposed to how we are different

"Human universals--of which hundreds have been identified--consist of those features of culture, society, language, behavior, and mind that, so far as the record has been examined, are found among all peoples known to ethnography and history."

"A few examples of human universals, those in the cultural realm include myths, legends, body adornment, daily routines, rules, concepts of luck and precedent, and the use and production of tools; in language there are grammar, phonemes, polysemy, metonymy, antonyms, and an inverse ratio between the frequency of use and the length of words; in the social realm there are a division of labor, social groups (including thinking of them as entities or agents), age grading, the family, kinship systems, ethnocentrism, play, exchange, cooperation, and reciprocity; in the behavioral realm there are aggression, gestures, gossip, and facial expressions; mentally there are emotions, dichotomous thinking, wariness around or fear of snakes, empathy, and psychological defense mechanisms." - Donald E. Brown

⁶ Mehrabian, A. (1981). *Silent Messages: implicit communication of emotions and attitudes*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

George Thompson's 5 Universal Truths

According to Dr. George Thompson, instead of focusing on how people are different, we should focus on how people are the same.⁷

1. All people want to be treated with **DIGNITY** and **RESPECT**.
 2. All people want to be **ASKED** rather than being **TOLD** to do something.
 3. All people want to be told **WHY** they are being asked to do something.
 4. All people want to be to be given **OPTIONS** rather than **THREATS**.
 5. All people want a **SECOND CHANCE**.
-
-
-
-

Chief Dolan's *Language of The Street Fallacy*

Street language vs. Professional Language

- Avoid inflating people with adrenaline
 - Beware of position courage
 - Chief Dan Savages' "G" Rated Communication Rule
-
-
-
-

⁷ Thompson, G. J., & Jenkins, J. B. (1993). *Verbal judo: the gentile art of persuasion*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Company.

Beware “Service Provider Schitz-storm” may be on Scene

“Swearing doesn’t make your argument valid; it just tells the other person you have lost your class and control.”

— Shannon L. Alder⁸



Situation II - *Explain*: Logos: Logical appeal - Explain the Why

- Commanders Intent - Raise organizational morale by telling people WHY and explaining the rationale for the decision, practice or policy.

Situation III - *Options*: Pathos - Emotional appeal

- What’s in this for me? - Greed motivates
- Alternatives/Consequences
- Confirm Choice: “So, what you’re saying is you would rather..... than.....with my request...”

⁸ Alder, S. L. (2011). “Sharon L. Alder Quotes” on Good Reads website:
http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/1391130.Shannon_L_Alder (accessed October 25, 2015).

Act / Closure –To comply or not comply the citizen’s choice

- Resolve the conflict
- Exhaustion of the Rhetorical Continuum Strategies
- Tactically disengage

The “Rhetorical Continuum” in action: (Examples)

Confronting angry consumers of service- Using “Meet and Greet Basics”

- Meet & Greet with *REASON*
- Identify Yourself
- Ask Relevant Questions and for Identification if Needed
- Close Professionally

Section 3

More Tools for Your Tool Box – What Works!

How the Veteran Communicator Survives Verbal Conflict – Read and Heed

Listen – Just don't wait to talk; gather intel



- *Body language* – “Your body language shapes who you are.” -Amy Cuddy
 - What message are you sending without saying a word?
 - What do others see when you arrive on scene?

Your body language shapes who you are - Amy Cuddy⁹
What does yours say?



Read the Signs

Our nonverbal communication governs how other people think and feel about us.

⁹ Cuddy, A. J. C. (2015). *Presence: bringing your boldest self to your biggest challenges*. New York, NY: Little, Brown, & Co.

Practice Chief Dolan's *Verbal Contact and Cover Principle*

- Overcoming the “Bystander Effect”¹⁰ & “Groupthink”¹¹

- Supervisor Coffee Wants to Talk with You!

- “Pluralistic Ignorance”¹² and Catherine Genovese¹³

Training Tip from Barney Fife¹⁴

“Nip it in the _____”



¹⁰ Darley, J. M., & Latane, B. (1968). Bystander intervention in emergencies: diffusion of responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8, 377-383.

¹¹ Turner, M. E., & Pratkanis, A. R. (1998). Twenty-five years of groupthink theory and research: lessons from the evaluation of a theory. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 73, 105-115.

¹² Prentice, D. A., & Miller, D. T. (1993). Pluralistic ignorance and alcohol use on campus: some consequences of misperceiving the social norm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64, 243-256.

¹³ Cook, K. (2014). *Kitty Genovese: the murder, the bystanders, the crime that changed America*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

¹⁴ Robinson, D, & Fernandez, D. (2004). *The definitive Andy Griffith Show reference guide*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company.

“People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other.” — Martin Luther King Jr.

Chief Dolan’s 24-Hour Rule

Leaders often find themselves in challenging emotional circumstances at work and at home. Although in some cases an immediate reaction is necessary, many situations provide the leader with the opportunity to delay a response. Over the course of my career, I have discovered the overwhelming benefits of delaying a response for 24 hours.

- Information first delivered in the midst of a crisis is rarely completely accurate, so be very careful responding with a “knee jerk” comment you will long regret!
- In 24 hours, you will always respond more professionally and effectively, absent emotion.
- We often find that with the clarity 24 hours brings, the matter didn’t warrant action at all; we simply allowed our anger to elevate the incident to a false level of importance.
- If you can’t delay 24 hours, try 2 hours 40 Minutes, 2 minutes 40 seconds, or as in the case of a live T.V. interview 2.4 seconds before responding to a question.

TUI

(Texting, typing, talking under the influence of anger, rage, grief, misinformation, substances etc.)

It's Time for Public Service Professionals to Consider "The Sterile Cockpit Rule"

("No flight crew member may engage in, nor may any pilot in command permit, any activity during a critical phase of flight which could distract any flight crew member from the performance of his or her duties or which could interfere in any way with the proper conduct of those duties." (FAA Sec. 121.542)

- While in public conducting official business, public service professionals should always use professional language and maintain a professional demeanor
- We are "*Contact Professionals*" living in a digital video world where a "*disciplined*" demeanor must be displayed with a "Professional Face".

Section 4

You Too Can Survive Verbal Conflict

Take-A-Ways & Closing Comments

"When the debate is lost, slander becomes the tool of the loser."

- Socrates

"Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can. Point out to them how the nominal winner is often a real loser -- in fees, expenses, and waste of time."

- Abraham Lincoln

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Thank You!

Chief Harry P. Dolan (Ret.)
harry@dolanconsultinggroup.com

Dolan Consulting Group, LLC
2840 Plaza Place Suite 325
Raleigh, NC 27612

Phone: (919)805-3020