



Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours



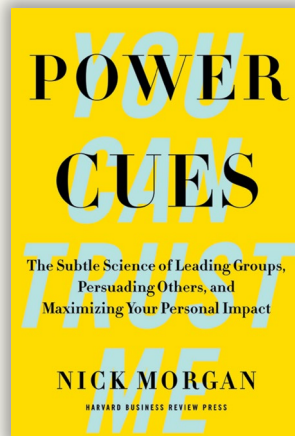
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Power Cues

The Subtle Science of Leading Groups, Persuading Others, and Maximizing Your Personal Impact

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Nick Morgan, the founder of Public Words, Inc., began studying nonverbal communication after a head injury left him temporarily unable to read facial cues and other kinds of nonverbal communication. His research, outlined in his book **Power Cues**, led him to develop an “integrated system” for improving communications. Morgan describes seven behaviors that you can learn to strengthen your power and effectiveness in communicating with others.

Key Quote

“What if you could learn the essential power cues that will enable you to master virtually any situation where you want or need to be in control?” (p. 8)
— Nick Morgan

KEY POINTS

Self-Awareness. Get to know how you present yourself. “How do you show up when you walk into a room?” Are you “powerful”? Are you “friendly and warm”? Do you inspire fear or trust? (p. 9).

Taking Charge. You must take charge of “your nonverbal communication in order to project the persona you want to project.” “What emotions you do convey through your body language for important moments, conversations, meetings, and presentations?” (p. 10).

Reading Others. Examine how people are responding to you. “What unconscious messages are you receiving from others?” (p. 10)

The Human Voice. Is your leadership voice “a commanding instrument for taking charge of a room?” (p. 11)

Your Success Rate. You can increase your success as a communicator by combining “your voice with a host of other social signals to greatly increase your success rate in pitches, meetings, and sales situations” (p. 12).

Using Your Unconscious. You can learn to understand – and adjust – your inner narrative. And you can use “your unconscious mind to make decisions, rid yourself of phobias and fears, and create a new, more successful persona” (p. 13).

Putting It All Together. Become “a master storyteller” who “synchronizes” with listeners to further improve your leadership (p. 13).

Key Concepts:

SELF-AWARENESS

First, take time to do some self-assessment of your mannerisms and presentation and think about what you project to others. Take a video of yourself or watch how others respond to you. “The first step in mastering communications and leading the people around you is to determine what your own posture, personal presence, and gestures are like” (p. 51).

When communicating with groups, the message is most effective if it is consistent. People can only receive so much “input” without being overloaded.

Hence, PowerPoint-type presentations are not effective. Sending information through the text of a slide as well as through the presenter results in two competing and “incomplete sets of information” – the listener’s attention is divided and the message is weakened and diluted. PowerPoint “adds to our information overload” (p. 26).

Our personal gestures do hidden work that many of us don’t quite realize. “Gesture establishes and regulates relationships and communications” (p. 23).

“Your hands are smarter than you think.” Even children who cannot yet articulate a concept can gesture an explanation. One study suggests that gesture is meaningful to speech and even precedes speech by a nanosecond or two. We can make and understand gestures faster than we can consciously understand. When a gesture does not match the story, it creates a confusing effect (p. 38).

TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

You express so much with your body language as well as your words.

“It is hard to think consciously about your body language. To control your body language, focus your emotions” (p. 81).

“That’s the secret of charisma: focused emotion. That’s how great actors turn it off and on at will. They’ve trained themselves to first feel an emotion and then to focus on it to the exclusion of just about everything else. The result is that you can’t take your eyes off them. It’s not magic, but it is a technique that takes practice and hard work to master” (pp. 60-61).



“What if you could learn the essential power cues that will enable you to master virtually any situation where you want or need to be in control?”



You can learn to understand – and adjust – your inner narrative.



“Be aligned in what you say and how you say it.” Increase your passion by focusing on “how you feel about the moment...the situation” (p. 67).

People tend to have four “zones” of space, and researchers give these zones names and parameters:

1. public zone – 12ft,
2. social zone – 12-4ft,
3. personal zone – 4-1.5ft,
4. intimate zone – 1.5-0ft.

If you are going to grab someone’s attention, you want to be in the “personal zone” space (p. 79).

Eye contact is a key factor in nonverbal communication. If you are going to make eye contact, your eyes have to be “wide open” (not squinting), and you have to make eye contact with individuals as you speak, not the overall crowd area (p. 80).

You also should be “monitoring the extent to which colleagues are making eye contact with you.” If 80% of the people in your audience are looking at you, you are doing fine (p. 81).



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READING THE UNCONSCIOUS SIGNALS OF OTHERS

Because people make gestures a nanosecond before they start to speak, “any given gesture is a physical embodiment of an intent” (p. 105).

You can study people to start to identify what they are unconsciously communicating. People, in general, are communicating one or more of four basic “intents,” and you can start to study the body language that accompanies these intents.

These four “basic body language constellations” are:

1. “power” (powerful people take up more space)
2. “friendship” (friends open their faces, while foes close their expressions)
3. “alignment” (mirroring and synchronization)
4. “lying” (unnatural movements or anxiety) (p. 113).

The human voice also communicates more than just through words. The voice is a combination of sound frequencies. Some frequencies are manipulated voluntarily, some change subconsciously, and some are constant. A study of Larry King interviews and segments found that the lower-status people in the room match the lower-frequency sounds of the higher-status people in the room.

“You might expect that everyone would meet in the middle, but that is not the case. When Larry King was interviewing someone of very high status, he matched the high-status individual’s tones. When the interviewee was low status, he or she would match Larry King” (p. 124).

Here's one fascinating illustration. In a study of U.S. Presidential debates, "the amount of dominant sounds made by one candidate over the other predicted accurately the outcome of the upcoming election" (p. 125).

To speak authoritatively, vocal pitch should rise and fall in an arc, so you begin with a lower sound, grow progressively higher, and bring the pitch back down. "Uptalk" is a sign of missing confidence (pp. 134-135).

COMMUNICATING AS A LEADER

MIT researchers have concluded that "people have a second channel of communication that revolves not around words but social relations. This social channel profoundly influences major decisions in our lives even though we are largely unaware of it" (pp. 145-146).

There are four "honest signals" that tend to show other people our true motivation, or patterns of behavior:

1. "Influence" (who is the one dominating the conversation),
2. mirroring or "mimicry,"
3. "activity" (or energy level), and
4. "consistency" ("how even-keeled a person is") (p. 147).

To influence people, leaders should seek to communicate with energy and passion. But there are some warnings and guidelines to recognize when doing this. Morgan shares the following "rules for emotional behavior in public":

1. "What's appropriate changes constantly; part of the test of a modern public figure is how well he or she reads the situation."
2. "Emotional outbursts are hot TV; they will get covered."
3. "When the emotion runs counter to the dominant story about you, it will make news." This can undermine your message. For example, if your primary message is that you are tough and can handle whatever you face, public tears could undermine your message. That said...
4. "An established public figure can push the boundaries of currently acceptable behavior." For example, if it is already well-established that you are understood to be tough and produce results, your audience might accept that you are also a known crier when moved, without your primary message being undermined.
5. "Even as the emotional boundaries change, what stays the same is the importance of tact" (pp. 160-161).



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In the world we live in now, much of communication is virtual. Morgan lists five challenges to virtual communication:

1. It “is very hard to remember anything we hear in this way”
2. “Attention spans are getting shorter”
3. Lack of “social cues”
4. “Misunderstandings easily develop”
5. Lack of “face-to-face” makes it difficult to build trust and undermines bonding (pp. 162-163).

However, Morgan also shares some solutions for these challenges.

1. “Accept the less-than-perfect nature of virtual meetings”
2. Have regular face-to-face meetings to reinvigorate the team
3. “Never go longer than ten minutes without some kind of break”
4. “Get regular group input”
5. “Identify your emotions verbally”
6. “Use video to bring the group together” (pp. 163-165).

USING YOUR INTUITION EFFECTIVELY

We can learn to steer our interior dialogue by “replacing negative self-talk with positive self-talk” (p. 200).

“Is your unconscious mind holding you back or propelling you forward?” (p. 176).

Morgan paints a picture to help understand what is happening when you train your communication style: “When you don’t bring your unconscious mind under control, you let the little cat-sized brain in your gut run the show. You let patterns and experiences from your past dictate your action in the present. It’s as if an athlete training for a big race occasionally found herself running sideways or failing her arms in random ways, just because she did that once as a kid to avoid something scary. If you’re just running in a friendly competition, your occasionally bizarre performance won’t matter much. But if you suddenly find yourself in the Olympics, the subtleties matter enormously. In that rare circle where hundredths of a second made the difference between the winning platform and a footnote, everything matters, especially your unconscious mind” (p. 185).

One aspect of using your intuition has to do with learning to read others. One of Morgan’s repeated mantras is “Focus on the audience, not on yourself” (p. 198).

“For leaders, the insight to take away from Maslow’s hierarchy [of needs] is that your potential followers’ internal monologues tend to live at the safety level. Sitting in their cubes, your people are thinking things like I wonder if my job is going to survive the economic downturn? I wonder if my boss hates me? I wonder if my teenage kid will survive getting her driver’s license? And so on. So if your message is higher up the pyramid, you won’t grab – and hold – people’s attention. You need to be somewhere near the bottom of the pyramid, talking about safety” (p. 210).

SYNCHRONIZING MINDS

Telling stories draws people in and “synchronizes” people’s thoughts, brings about effective communication, and increases the “likelihood that people will listen to you” (p. 228). Business leaders can use what we know about storytelling, in general, to identify a problem and bring the team together to work on resolving it.

Successful stories connect to one of five archetypes:

1. “Setting off on a quest”
2. “Stranger in the strange land”
3. “Love stories”
4. “Rags to Riches”
5. “Revenge” (p. 210).

...and these archetypal stories have “three acts”:

Act I: “Problem”

Act II: “Stakes raised”

Act III: “Solution” (pp. 214-215).

To help us construct a compelling story, Morgan describes some additional elements found in great stories:

1. Beginning “with a meeting or journey”
2. Having “turns or surprises”
3. Letting “audiences in on a secret before their characters know”
4. Having “detail in them, but not too much”
5. “Stories should be as simple as possible, but no simpler
6. “Stories should have morals, or reinforcement of a societally held belief”
7. Conflict (pp. 217-220).

Morgan then shifts to describe how this type of storytelling works in a business framework:

1. “Begin with a compelling framing story.” (For example, this could be a story about an unhappy customer.)
2. Discuss the problem the audience has. “It’s all about the audience.”
3. “Involve the audience in analyzing the problem.” They should be a part of the discussion.
4. Show the audience “how they can solve the problem.” “Set a broad outline” based on your expertise, but let them handle the details (pp. 226-227).



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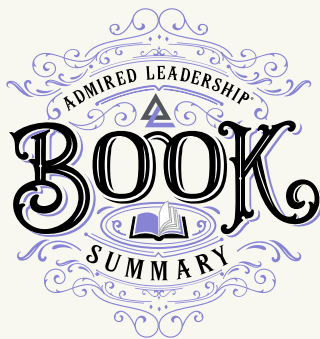


RADICAL AUTHENTICITY

Leaders need to master “radical authenticity,” including making what is staged look impromptu. It is an irony that the people who plan and rehearse connect well with their audiences. Radical authenticity helps you become conscious about using your instincts (pp. 238-239).

“It’s time to stop letting our unconscious minds decide our careers, our relationships, our lives. It’s time for us to take charge consciously of the human cues and connections that have evolved over millions of years, so that we can become fully conscious beings, in control of ourselves and our destinies” (p. 242).

Morgan, N. (2014). **Power Cues: The subtle science of leading groups, persuading others, and maximizing your personal impact.** Boston: Harvard Business Press.



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The Latest and Greatest Books for Leaders

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