

HOW TO
INFLUENCE
ANYONE
ANYWHERE
EVERY TIME

The Art and Science of
Communication at Work

From the creators of *The Colin James Method*[®]

COLIN JAMES + ERICA BAGSHAW

WILEY

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Once upon a time ...

On a humid, overcast day in March 1975, 24 school students sprawled at their desks awaiting the arrival of the new biology teacher. We hated biology. The previous teacher, who had left for personal reasons (fired), also hated the subject.

Then she arrived.

Miss Knight strode into the classroom with an energy and purpose that blew apart our complacent, wallowing disinterest.

She was carrying a battered leather briefcase. Old school. Belts and buckles. Second World War vibe. She chucked the thing onto a table, which landed with a meaty thud, before turning and glaring at all of us, smiling like Cruella and shouting, 'Right! Let's learn!'

I was 15 years old. The school was Thomas More College, near Durban in South Africa. I did not know it then, but this moment would change my life.

No surprise, biology became everyone's favourite subject. Miss Knight enthralled, challenged, provoked, engaged and immersed us in biological sciences with a relish and passion I can instantly recall decades later.

After she turned us and every other student in every class she taught around, I approached her after a lesson to thank her for making biology and learning so amazing.

‘Listen to me, young Colin’, she said, fixing her dark eyes on me, ‘it’s not about the subject. It’s always about the teacher. I want you to watch how I teach and what we are learning. Can you do that?’

We have all had an experience like this at some time in our lives. The curriculum is set at school, the textbooks or references are the same, and the lesson plans are prescribed. The content is identical. However, the difference is in the delivery of that content: the one variable that cannot be locked in a book, stuck on a slide, or listed on a design plan — the teacher — the communicator.

Thanks to Miss Knight, whose first name is Dawn, by the way (her parents had a cruel sense of humour), I started to become aware of methodology.

Miss Knight’s superpower was her ability to influence us. She changed the way we felt, what we thought, how we behaved and how we engaged with her teaching.

Miss Knight did not simply chalk and talk. We did not sit in neat rows and memorise textbooks. She got our hands dirty. We learnt from doing, exploring and asking questions. She did more than teach — she led. And her methodology worked. Her influence shapes me to this day.

So how does this apply to workplace communication?

My first ‘real’ job was working in broadcasting. For some years prior, like so many, I had done all sorts of jobs, such as fruit picking, catering, labouring, fishing on trawlers, working at a dairy ... the

backpacking-type jobs needed to survive. My journey from South Africa to where I live now in Australia is a story for another time.

I count my role as marketing manager at an FM radio station in Adelaide as the start of my career. Here, I learnt about the ebb and flow of meetings, memos, corridor conversations, politics, relationship dynamics and the usual human dynamics of working with other people, trying to do good stuff and, hopefully, to be of value.

As my career unfolded, I moved into retail, government work and, at the age of 30, established my current business. During this time, I experienced a lot of good, but mostly poor, communication. We have all sat through meetings that were a waste of everyone's time and energy. We have all sat through mind-numbing presentations where the purpose was unclear and the content incomprehensible.

At the same time, I was fortunate enough to experience powerful speakers, excellent managers and influential people who did make things happen, and inspired us along the way.

What Miss Knight had taught me played out in the workplace. It's not only what you say, it's *how* you say it. At first, I was unconsciously coding the effective techniques people employed. I imitated or copied good presenters, and it worked. The skills I was building had structure. There was methodology to be learnt and applied.

What I couldn't find was a book on methodology to guide me step-by-step in how to be an effective communicator.

As an educator, this became my life's work. Learning from many, the aim was to curate and create structure and method on how to shine in the workplace; how to be someone who people listen to and respect; and who can, simply through conscious application of method and technique, become a powerful communicator.

Thank you, Miss Knight.

Influence

We communicate all the time. But do we influence?

COVID. Everyone is working from home. The chief financial officer (CFO) for a major division in one of the big Australian banks, let's call her Angela, found herself in front of her laptop, managing her team, doing CFO stuff on her dining room table. Her two daughters, both under 10, watched their mother working with interest.

After a few weeks, her nine-year-old asked, 'Mummy, what do you do for work?'

Angela explained, in nine-year-old terms, what managing finances entails before the nine-year-old said, '...but all you seem to do all day is talk. Do you talk for a living, Mummy? Or is your work just meetings?'

When Angela shared this experience with me, she commented, 'My daughter made me realise that mostly what I do all day is communicate. My job is to influence people to my way of thinking, and I'm not sure if I'm any good at it.'

This one question from her daughter changed how Angela approached her work.

Rather than being fixated on the accuracy of the data, I became more interested in the effectiveness of my communication. I had to learn how to communicate with emotion, energy and authority. One thing I learnt immediately was to look at the camera in virtual meetings. So simple. This alone changed the quality of connection with my team, my colleagues, my stakeholders.

Angela has driven this message home to her executive leadership team colleagues: 'Remember, we all *talk* for a living. Let's get better at this.'

Influence is critical in the business world.

Every professional, especially those in the corporate realm, is in the business of influence through communication. A simple shift in your perspective about the role and impact of your influence could revolutionise your professional journey, allowing you to leave an indelible mark and drive substantial change.

Angela delved deep into the essence of influence. This book does the same, offering practical insights, methodologies and examples to enhance your influence in your professional life, to reshape your organisation and drive change effectively.

This is a must-have tool for individuals and organisations aiming for success.

In business, having influence means having the power to affect others' decisions, actions and opinions.

It is as simple and as challenging as that.

How do we learn to communicate?

As a child you simply *absorbed* language and developed your early communication skills. If you were brought up in a multilingual environment, you learnt those languages too. How?

There is a delightful YouTube video of a young Italian girl, maybe four years old, in full flight talking about something or other.¹ Show

anyone this video and ask them where she is from, the vast majority would say 'Italy' without hesitation. Her full gestural usage, that earnest facial expression and the tone of her voice all signal her roots. How did she learn to communicate like this?

It was another Italian, Giacomina Rizzolatti, who pioneered the research on the role mirror neurons play in how we learn.² Mirror neurons are a type of specialised brain cell, found in the premotor cortex and the inferior parietal cortex of the brain, to be specific. These neurons play a crucial role in understanding and *imitating* the actions and intentions of others.

The imitation mirror neurons enable is fundamental to language and communication development. When we see someone else speaking, using gestures and moving, mirror neurons fire in our brain, helping us mimic their actions. This imitation helps us learn the physical aspects of communication, such as how to form sounds, words and gestures.

Let's be clear, mirror neurons are not only responsible for language acquisition; they facilitate the learning process. When infants and young children observe and imitate the speech and gestures of their caregivers, mirror neurons play a role in helping them acquire language skills.

Why is this relevant? Because mirror neurons influence how you communicate at work.

Communication is a social process, and mirror neurons play a role in social learning. People imitate the behaviour of others for safety and to belong.

Cultural variances in the way people talk, move, dance, gesture, etc. are immediately recognisable. By observing and imitating the communication behaviours of others, we acquire language and

adopt social norms, as well as all the cultural practices that will define your identity for the rest of your life.

Influence in the workplace

When you first started in the workplace, it was most likely a daunting experience to understand the cultural and professional expectations. Your mirror neurons were tracking everything: how people spoke, their tone, language, style, volume, gestures, postures — everything. Your brain was scanning for the rules of the game. ‘How do I survive here?’ It is an existential question being asked at a subconscious level.

We are going to challenge the norms and ways we currently communicate at work. Think of yourself as setting a new standard. You will influence the mirror neurons of your colleagues, your leaders, your customers and your friends simply by setting an example of superb communication skills.

This is even more important today where a lot of communication is done virtually. Effective and impactful communication is more necessary than ever.

Consider this:

- ◆ When you speak, do people lean in?
- ◆ After a meeting, do attendees leave with your face and your words locked into their minds?
- ◆ Once you have spoken or presented, do people feel impressed, challenged, provoked or inspired?
- ◆ How do you know?

Apart from simply observing how people respond and react to your communication approach, you need to find people who will give you unfiltered feedback.

A recently appointed CEO client of ours, who we have been working with for six years, shared an insight he learnt on the first program he attended with us:

You said something about the meaning of your communication is the response that you get, and this stopped me in my tracks. How did I know if what I was saying was impactful, meaningful or even relevant? Like many execs, I suspect, I was complacent about my communication. I assumed they would listen to me because I was the boss. It was a lesson in humility to learn how dull and passionless I was when I found two trusted colleagues to give me the ruthless feedback I needed.

Influence doesn't just happen; it is earned through knowledge, strategy and effective communication. When utilised properly, you can shape company culture, drive change and create a lasting impact.

This book simplifies the concept of influence, and provides practical insights and guidance for those looking to enhance their influence to achieve greater success in their work. It's a guide for those wanting to be an effective member of the businesses and organisations they work within and to reshape and redefine them.

I have spent my life understanding the power and impact of excellent communication.

I met Erica Bagshaw 12 years ago, and since then, we have worked together and co-founded the Colin James Method® (which you will learn about next), formalising the research and methodology that is delivered globally by our organisation.

Erica is a masterful person of influence in her own right, bringing decades of corporate experience and knowledge to the book you are reading. She has been fundamental in contributing to and shaping our combined experience and research into a structured methodology you will learn in this book.

As mentioned in the introduction, this is a how-to book filled with practical approaches, techniques and methods to enable you to influence through conscious communication. There are links, templates, examples and loads of stories.

What is the Colin James Method®?

Based on my experience with Miss Knight, I realised that it was not the subject, but the method of teaching that is the secret sauce for successful influencing and engagement.

While studying law at the University of the Witwatersrand, I had the same experience, where some lecturers were academic rock stars in their ability to enthrall a lecture room of hundreds of students.

I began to analyse small things, like how a lecturer walked into a room, the first impression of confidence in some, and the evident non-caring torpor in others. What was interesting was the use of space, the significance of voice, and the power of storytelling.

The poor communicators were also interesting. How could someone put a room of people into a catatonic state in five minutes?

It wasn't the subject or the content: it was the management and delivery of the content that seemed key.

I was a student political activist in the anti-apartheid movement, and to me, it was obvious that some lecturers were so much more

influential in the way they spoke, while others were well intentioned but low in impact.

Fast forward to when I started my education consultancy business (it was just me) at the age of 30. I had lived in different cultures, different countries, worked in different industries, sat through many meetings and observed hundreds of presentations, but felt I was a constant student of human communication. I had read books on this stuff. Body language had become a huge thing, but most of it seemed gimmicky. I was constantly trying to unpick the underlying *how* of communication as well as the *what*.

The most significant influence on my life and work was Marvin Oka. I attended his Professional Trainers Track Program and was introduced to his insightful analysis of neuro-linguistic programming along with his on-stage mastery.³

As I started to teach what I had learnt, I was amazed by the demand for my program on communication skills. It took me all over the world. In 2000, I spent six weeks travelling to 12 countries to deliver our programs for one client. Along the way, I have learnt advanced facilitation techniques, explored the foundations of humour, worked with actors on performance and been supported by voice coaching.

Meeting Erica in 2013 was a game changer for me, it marked the end of a solo practice and the start of a scalable team effort. She is a globally respected C-Suite Executive Coach, an Educator and has deep experience in business growth, leadership and influence. We combined our businesses with the goal of building our combined experience into a methodology that is replicable, teachable and able to be delivered globally through our network of CJM Certified Faculty.

When we were contemplating what we would call the method, Erica recommended it be a recognisable name and suggested The Colin James Method. And the rest is history.

The Colin James Method codifies how to communicate *persuasively*. Like a recipe book, the method breaks down the essential steps in building connections, positioning and framing your message, delivering with authority, having presence and impact, and ensuring you will be able to influence anyone, anywhere, in any context, every time.

What is this influence thing?

We are, of course, constantly influenced by everything around us.

We are bombarded with thousands of advertising images and messages thrust into our faces from multiple sources. They all have one goal: to influence you.

I think we could all agree that influence does not operate in a vacuum, but is deeply intertwined with the surrounding environment, relationships and circumstances.

It emerges from various sources, including individual personalities, societal norms, cultural backgrounds and institutional structures, and can be exerted intentionally and unintentionally. We are the product of cultural, parental, educational and societal factors, which influence our world views, values, beliefs and behaviour.

The effectiveness of influence often depends on the perceptive and responsive abilities of those being influenced, as well as the strategies and tactics employed by the influencers.

In our work, we define influence as the ability to change how someone feels, thinks and behaves for mutual benefit.

We will also focus on one key channel of influence: human communication — the talking thing.

If you Google ‘how to influence’, you will find thousands of sites sharing tips, tools and techniques in any context you care to name — from

dating to debating, from selling to seduction, from magnanimity to manipulation.

Professor Robert Cialdini's book *Influence, the Psychology of Persuasion*⁴ shares six powerful principles of influence that are used to persuade individuals to comply with requests or adopt certain behaviours, attitudes or beliefs. We highly recommend Cialdini's work as it's practical and effective.

Our approach is to look at how to influence effectively at work using our methodology. We are often immersed in mundane, low-value, poor communication situations; for example, have you:

- ◆ been to a meeting that was a waste of time?
- ◆ had to endure a boring, irrelevant presentation?
- ◆ spoken up at a meeting and felt completely ignored?
- ◆ heard someone speak for a minute and had little or no understanding of what the hell they were talking about?

On the other hand:

- ◆ Have you felt out of place, lacking the confidence to say something for fear of being judged?
- ◆ Does the prospect of having to present something cause a storm of anxiety in your gut and mind?
- ◆ Have you said something in a meeting and then spent the rest of the meeting regretting it?
- ◆ Have you gone into a meeting unsure what it's about, and what role you are supposed to play, so you play neutral and safe?

- ◆ When you have to present to senior managers or leaders, do you feel super self-conscious and anxious about the impression you are making (or not)?
- ◆ Do you wish you could be as good a communicator as someone you know or work with?

What you are about to learn are the tools to turn you into a sophisticated, accomplished communicator, with the ability to influence anyone, anywhere, in every context, every time.

The skills you will learn, when practised and applied, will allow you to become a standout in how and what you communicate.

And it does take work.

You might be thinking: *I've never been comfortable with communicating in work environments. I always feel self-conscious and tongue-tied.* You are not alone, particularly when you are new to a job, early in your career and still learning the ropes. You will learn to let go of self-consciousness.

I don't mind meetings, but I hate presenting. As soon as I stand up, I feel stiff and awkward. This is something we hear frequently. Again, you will learn to look forward to opportunities to present.

It takes work though. These are not gimmicky techniques. This is skill development. The good news, though, is that we all communicate, all the time, every day. Every day is a practice day.

Let's start.

Thank you, Bernice McCarthy

A Canadian school teacher, Bernice McCarthy, published a book in 1980, on her research and application of a framework she called 4-Mat.⁵

It's elegance itself, and we would encourage you to read more about her work. We have applied her framework for the classroom to corporate communication. Figure 1 breaks it down.

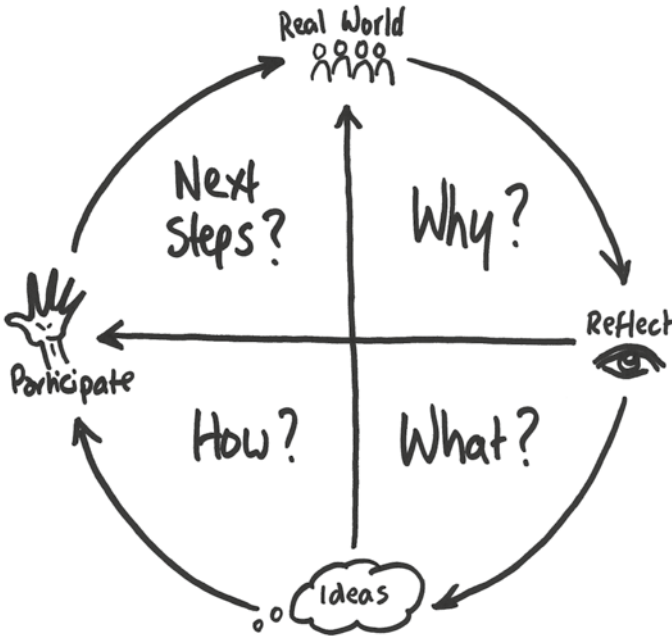


Figure 1: Bernice McCarthy's 4-Mat Model

Phase 1: The Why? Frame: The model starts with the people you are communicating with, be that a presentation audience, participants in a meeting or workshop, or a one-on-one conversation.

What is their 'real world' like? What are their concerns, challenges, issues, motivations, hopes and aspirations?

You can delve into this by starting with their backgrounds. LinkedIn and online searches usually provide a ton of stuff on people's background, career pathways, interests, associations and the like. In a work context, you may know some of this already, but diving a bit deeper also allows you to understand the person beyond the work persona.

For example, by doing a ‘real-world’ diagnosis of a chief revenue officer, we learnt from his LinkedIn profile that he had played professional football (the American version), could speak four languages and was a volunteer at a homeless shelter in New York City. From this, we could reasonably conclude that he had the discipline of a professional sportsperson, had a worldview wider than his own country and cared about social justice. We also noticed that he tended to change roles every two years, ascending the corporate ladder at speed. We guessed he was super competent, impressive in manner and decisive in how he managed himself and others. This was confirmed when we met him.

In our diagnose phase we ask questions like: What do you see as the biggest challenges currently facing your industry, and how is your company adapting to these challenges? This question helps us understand the external factors affecting the industry and the executive’s strategic response.

The more data and insight you can get on the individuals and the context they work in, the clearer you will be in appreciating and understanding their everyday reality.

From there we can design a compelling *Why? Frame* (relevance). The audience will see that the communication is relevant, meaningful and worthwhile, and will likely engage and move to be active participants in the conversation, meeting or presentation.

The *Why? Frame* is critical. We will go into much more detail in Chapter 3 when we explore the design and content of a compelling relevance story. Remember, you will only be interested in something if you have a reason, a ‘why’, to explore it further.

Phase 2: The What? Frame: The *Why? Frame* leads to the content or ideas you want to share, which we call the *What? Frame*.

Phase 3: The How? Frame: Once your audience understands the *What*, you can move to explore the implications and applications, which is the *How? Frame*. This turns your ideas into action.

Phase 4: The Next Steps? Frame: Finally, what happens next?

Have you ever left a meeting not knowing if you are supposed to do anything? Worse, have you left wondering what the purpose of the meeting was in the first place? This suggests that there was no agreement on next steps.

An effective *Next Steps? Frame* means everyone is crystal clear on personal and collective accountabilities and responsibilities. Again, we will plunge deeper into this in Part II when we look at design work.

Foundation: It's all about the Triple D

Eight years ago while Erica was designing a Masterclass on Pitching, she was drawing on her 30 years of sales experience to unpack the core method she used in her customer conversations. As she unpacked it, she realised the three core elements of Diagnose, Design and Deliver that she applied naturally in her sales process were true of all quality engagements and communication. The Triple D model has become the underpinning for all of the elements in our communication methodology The Colin James Method.

As you explore the following chapters and your own experience, you'll realise we need to include these steps in every communication context at work and in life. Miss one of the steps and you'll find people leave a meeting or conversation without full understanding and as a consequence re-work, multiple meetings, misunderstandings and all sorts of unproductive outcomes will be the result.

You are sitting in a meeting. You have something to say regarding the current conversation happening around the table or Zooming over the internet.

- ◆ Step 1: You assess what is being discussed and decide to add to the mix.

- ◆ Step 2: You think about what you'll say, not necessarily thoroughly, but you have an idea.
- ◆ Step 3: You find the chance to intervene and say your piece.

That's it.

To put it simply, you *diagnosed* the situation, *designed* a response in your head, and then spoke, or *delivered* your words

This is the Triple D process:

1. Diagnose
2. Design
3. Delivery

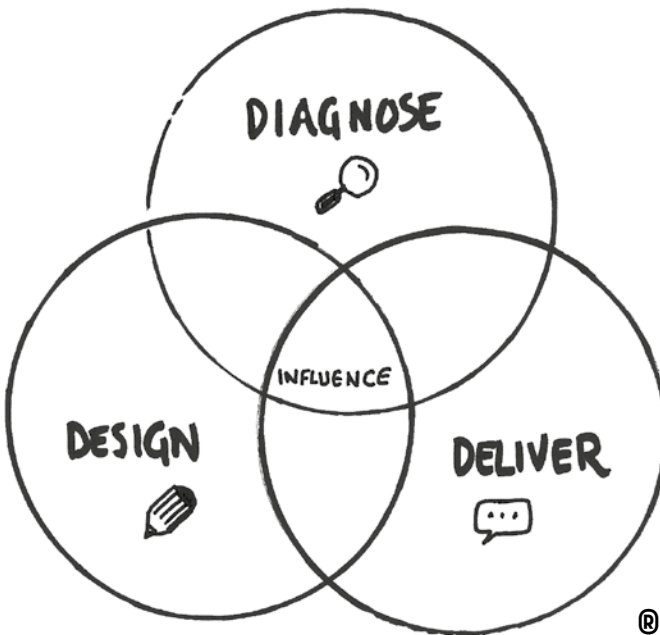


Figure 2: The Triple D process

The Diagnose Design Deliver model is a registered trademark of Altmore International Pty Ltd

While this looks so simple — it's just three words — each step requires deep work, disciplined structure and thoughtful consideration. In all our work, we bang the Triple D drum constantly. If your communication fails to achieve its outcome, you will find that you most likely miscalculated or missed key elements in one or more of the Triple D elements.

Influence will occur if you *diagnose* the context intelligently; *design* a response in a clear way; and then *deliver* with the right tone and technique to ensure you are heard and understood (see figure 2).

Diagnose

'I think you saved my career.' I was on a Zoom call with an executive general manager for one of the major banks in November 2022.

I applied what I had learnt about diagnosing your audience before my presentation to the executive leadership team and the board. What I learnt on your program about preparation and stakeholder management allowed me to rethink my whole approach. If I hadn't followed your structure, I would be in a world of pain right now.

In our experience, way too many people sabotage themselves through poor diagnoses of the context, the people and a lack of focus on the outcome in communication settings.

It's like someone arriving at a hospital emergency room without triage. It's just a superficial guess at what the patient might need. Sadly, this is the norm in corporate communication, but our method demands more rigour and prep before any communication event.

In the following chapters, we will deep dive into how to effectively diagnose a situation and determine what the audience's real world consists of.

Design

We were having a debrief meeting with a global technology leader after he delivered his keynote in Dubai. He has been an advocate of the Colin James Method for over 20 years.

What always astounds me is how your design methodology works. Seeing 500 delegates shift from sceptical to neutral to intrigued to convinced in 20 minutes is beautiful to behold. We must build true believers in the CJM 'nail the opening' methodology.

A home builder follows an architectural plan. The design of the house starts on the page. Excellent communication requires the same discipline. Too many times I've heard people say 'I'll just wing it', before delivering a low-quality, time-wasting presentation. Poor design leads to poor delivery.

Delivery

On a leadership offsite at a major insurance company in Brisbane, Australia, a speaker was invited onto the stage before lunch to share some views of the current quality of service being delivered through the company's call centres.

The morning sessions had been filled with the usual PowerPoint presentations, and the 50 or so people in the room were already jaded and numbed by the deluge of data that had been dumped during the day.

Maria walked onto the stage in a quiet and unassuming manner. No lectern. No slides. Just her in the middle of the stage.

Twelve minutes later, she thanked the audience and walked off. There was a weird silence as she descended the stairs before a clamour of applause filled the room, and everyone burst into loud conversations with colleagues about the insights they had heard from Maria.

Maria started with a story of tears. How, at the end of each shift, some of her call centre colleagues weep at the frustration and stress they face every day from customers, who are often at a very difficult time in their lives, and who find the experience of endless waiting on phones for people who cannot help them because of the confusion and complexity of the company's policies an awful and degrading experience. And the punching bags are the call centre operators.

Maria spoke with quiet authority. Her tone was balanced but shot through with steel and purpose. Her demand of the leadership team was simple: get your act together fast.

No PowerPoint slides, no notes, no carefully scripted corporate language. She spoke plainly. Her posture was strong. Her voice was convincing. No one doubted that this 23-year-old had every right to stand on the stage. Her impact was profound. She changed how call centre management, resourcing and support were done in her organisation. In 12 minutes.

You will learn the same.

PART I

DIAGNOSE

I realised how often I go into meetings and presentations without a clear idea of who is in the room. I'm embarrassed to say that I have gone into high-stakes meetings knowing little or nothing about the people I'm supposedly going to influence. My excuse was always time. I now see how essential the diagnose phase is, and the results have been spectacular.

**Email from a regional vice president, technology sector,
Florida, USA**

Using the triage analogy, a diagnosis implies a thorough analysis and understanding of the communication context you are preparing for, be it a conversation, a meeting or a presentation.

Influencing people starts with understanding who is in the room, the context, the outcome, and creating a compelling reason why they should listen to you.

Time to work

Think of an important or high-stakes conversation, meeting or presentation you have coming up. If there isn't one in the near future, think of a situation you are likely to face. The following chapters will guide you through the stages of diagnose, design and deliver step-by-step. Be prepared to brainstorm some ideas at each stage of the process. We will prompt you with ideas and questions to get your creativity flowing.