

7 Neuro-Strategies to Captivate, Influence and Engage Your Prospects and Clients



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If your clients and customers were to talk about you on social networks, what would they say? Perhaps, even more importantly, do you give them a reason to talk about you?

You may be wondering why you would want your customers to talk about you online. How can you control what they say? Isn't online communication a bit unpredictable? If your brain is skeptical about the benefits of social media for your business, you are not alone. However, you can probably agree that **the rules of communicating with customers are changing as more and more individuals and businesses participate in social media, ask their network friends for referrals and search for local businesses online instead of browsing Yellow pages.** The statistics are hard to ignore:

- There are 500 million Facebook users, meaning one in every 14 people on the planet has now signed up to the online social-networking service.
- Twitter boasts about 65 million tweets per day, and one of every five tweets mention a product or a brand.
- There are 550,000 groups on LinkedIn across 150 industries.
- 45% of small businesses participate in one or more social networks.

According to the April 2010 ROI research commissioned by Performics to study Twitter behavior around brands,

- 33% of Twitter users share opinions about companies or products at least once per week.
- 32% make recommendations
- 30% seek guidance and direction
- 53% state that they would recommend products/brands as a result of online connections.

According to another recent study conducted by Chadwick Martin Bailey along with iModerate Research Technologies,

- Individuals who follow brands on Facebook and Twitter are 51% and 67% respectively more likely to buy a product since becoming a fan or a follower.
- Facebook and Twitter users are 60% and 79% more likely to recommend a brand as a result of the engagement online.

Like it or not, social networks are here to stay. **Your potential customers are talking online, recommending services and following their favorite brands.** With the right strategy, social media can help you maximize your marketing efforts, build long-term, trusting relationships with your clients and prospects, boost your visibility and credibility, while you share your expertise and valuable experience with the growing audience. You can develop good friendships and business alliances and have fun in the process.

Without the right strategy, social networks can waste time and resources. They can also be annoying, distracting, boring and irrelevant. They can even damage your reputation and cost you business.

So, the real question is...

How will you stand out in this massive flow of information and do it with authenticity, integrity and benefit to your business?

No worries, The Brain Alchemist is here to ensure that your brilliance shines online and in person and to help you design messages that captivate, engage and persuade your clients, customers, business partners in these times of short attention span and information overwhelm.

And our attention spans are short. **When something distracts you, your brain will likely pay focused attention to the new information for just about 8 seconds.** This is our average short-term response to something that grabs our senses. How do you convey your uniqueness in 8 seconds? How do you persuade a prospect to pay sustained attention to what you have to share?

The brain is wired to conserve energy and resources, and it is very efficient when it comes to recognizing patterns and making snap judgments. For example, the moment you say to a prospect, "I am a coach..." the brain is quick to point out, "Ok, I know what a coach is, so I know who you are" as it files away your information into its brain map with the label "Coach." You may be unique and different, but it no longer matters to the brain because the moment it files "you" away, your prospect's attention shifted. We can only remember what we pay attention to. And we tend to forget memories that are similar to one another—remembering instead more novel events or information. So, how do you stay memorable and different from the rest of the pack?

This Report reveals 7 neuro-strategies for designing messages that captivate, engage and persuade in online and face-to-face conversations. These strategies take into account how our brains work when we connect, share, and interact.



Do you see what I see?

In a famous study done by Daniel Simons of the University of Illinois and Christopher Chabris at Harvard University, the participants were asked to watch a video tape of a basketball game and count the number of times one team took possession of the ball. During the film clip, which lasted for a few minutes, a person in a gorilla suit strolled onto the center of the court, turned and faced the audience and did a little jig. The gorilla then slowly walked off the court. The

remarkable fact was that the subjects who were busy counting the ball passes did not notice the gorilla.

However, people who were simply asked to view the tape without any additional task of counting the ball passes had no trouble noticing the gorilla. The effect was so striking that some of the participants who missed the gorilla refused to accept they were later looking at the same tape.

This ability of the brain to filter out irrelevant information, even when it is prominent, became known as inattention blindness.

This study offers an important lesson for anyone who competes for the public's attention. **Just because you think something is important and remarkable, doesn't mean that others will see it that way.** At any given moment, your audience is preoccupied with something to the point that their brains filter out anything else that does not relate to their current focus of attention. Unless you figure out how to position your message within the perimeter of their flashlight, which is their conscious awareness, you will stay in the dark and they won't notice you.

According to the Yankelovich Partners research on advertising and marketing, some 59 percent feel that most marketing and advertising has little relevance to them and about 65 percent feel constantly bombarded with too much marketing and advertising.

One of the biggest mistakes companies make in social media is constant pitching of their products or services. **Social networks are more like coffee shops where people gather to have conversations than highways with rows of billboards alongside.** What perceptions do you want to create with your messages and updates?



I know what you are thinking...

Influence in social media is about shaping and changing perceptions. **Influence and perception are two sides of the same coin.** Influence is about projecting messages out. Perception is about taking them in. The word "perception" comes from the Latin words *perceptio*, *percipio*, and means "receiving, collecting, action of taking possession,

apprehension with the mind or senses."

Messages often change as they travel from the source to the recipient. The context, environment and our own unique brain maps play a role in creating the perceptions we ultimately end up with. Those perceptions determine how we act. The intent to influence comes from your brain but the perceptions happen in your audience's brains. If you are able to sync your brain and theirs, you have a chance of engaging your friends and followers. To position your messages in the right way, you have to first figure out what already captivates your audience's brains. Here's a list of tactics and tools that can help you take a peek into the brains of your prospects and customers to better understand their perceptions.

- Listen to the conversations that are already happening in your area of business. Join in, comment, and share when appropriate.
- Use Twitter Search (<http://search.twitter.com>), FriendFeed (<http://friendfeed.com>), Google Alerts to monitor conversations around specific topics.
- Pay attention to the words people use to describe their needs when they complain, ask for help or advice.
- Ask people questions. Invite your friends and followers to participate in the polls and surveys you create.
- Follow and learn what your competition is doing in social media.

- Follow the experts in your field with an eye towards learning, collaborating, and forming strategic alliances and joint ventures.

What are the current common perceptions in your field? Is your business supporting these dominant perceptions or challenging them? If you do what everybody else is doing, you create the same perceptions. It makes it hard to stand out from the crowd. Hence, here's the first neuro-engagement strategy that can help you gain your customers' attention:



Strategy #1: Dare to be contrarian.

Be relevant, be contrarian, aim at changing perceptions.

But first, let me be clear. Being contrarian does NOT mean being argumentative, causing conflict and discord, disrespecting people with different opinions, or disparaging other views. This will create a perception that you are a jerk or a troll. You will annoy and antagonize most members of your social network and get yourself blocked or removed from the friends' and followers' lists. Your account may even be closed. Such behavior is antisocial, not contrarian.

Effective contrarians understand their audience and always start from the points of agreement. This is the basic principle of conflict resolution: find something you can all agree on and build from that. I like to call it "brain sync." Remember, it's all about perceptions that are formed in the heads of other people, not yours.

Second, **your contrarian positioning has to be honest and authentic.** You can't disagree just for the sake of being a contrarian. You have to discover something you really want to change in the way people currently view the world and your field.

Gary Vaynerchuk, the author of "Crush It! Why Now is the Time to Cash in on your Passion," whose brand is now worth millions, started off as a contrarian in the wine industry. He wanted to change the perception of stiffness and exclusivity surrounding wine conversations. After transforming and rebranding his immigrant family business of a local liquor store called "Shopper's Discount Liquors" into "Wine Library," Gary Vaynerchuk launched Wine Library TV, a daily video blog about wine. The tag line reflected his contrarian's approach - "changing the wine world" - as his video blog educated the viewers about the intricacies of wine in an informal, unpretentious, and entertaining way. He embraced social networks and online conversations as a way to connect with his customers, extending his brand even further as a business consultant, writer, and speaker.

Third, **being a contrarian means that some people won't like what you have to say, and that's OK.** In fact, it is a good sign. It means that you are stirring up some emotions, and that's much more brain-captivating than being conventional but boring. Conventional is forgettable. We don't pay attention to what we know well.

You may be wondering why you have to be "contrarian" and not simply "different" or "unique" as often taught in marketing and branding. The difference is where you place your focus. Unique begins with U, pardon the pun. But you can only be contrarian relative to other positions. Let me elaborate.

When you look for your uniqueness, your focus is likely to be on your expertise, training, or method. While it is all good and necessary, the method or process distinctions are often irrelevant to other people's brains. So, if you talk about your process in social media, people may not notice or care enough to engage.

The word "contrarian" by its meaning causes you to focus on others' perceptions. Contrarian to what? Your position is relative to what other people think or believe. There are other reasons why the role of a contrarian is so captivating to the brain. You will see for yourself as we continue with our strategies for attracting, engaging and persuading your clients and customers.



Strategy #2: Appeal to emotions, then follow up with facts.

You've probably heard that **people buy on emotions and then justify their decisions with logic.** We all know that our mood affects our decisions and behavior. People who receive a small surprise gift and shortly after that are asked about their opinions on home appliances, for example, are more likely to give a favorable opinion compared to those who did not receive a gift. Why are emotions so powerful when it comes to our perceptions and actions?

According to Dr. Jaak Panksepp, the author of "Affective Neuroscience: The Foundations of Human and Animal Emotions," both human and animal emotions begin in the subcortical circuits of the mammalian brain, which is the ancient part of the brain. Through brain stimulation, the researchers have been able to isolate seven emotional systems in animals so far: the seeking or searching for resources, rage, lust, fear, care (for the little ones), panic (the separation distress call when a little one gets lost from the parent), and play. Scientists may discover more in the future. Originating in the deep areas of the brain, "deep feelings" may be more than just an expression after all.

Don't ignore facts and statistics, however. **The brain likes to figure out patterns and make predictions.** All our human planning, reasoning, abstract thought and other complex executive functions happen in the cerebral cortex, which forms the largest part of the human brain and is situated above most other brain structures. The prefrontal cortex, the brain region implicated in planning complex cognitive tasks, decision making, and moderating correct social behavior, is easily overwhelmed. We can process just about seven pieces of information in our conscious mind at any given moment. The brain likes to rationalize, but **the more data we have to deal with, the harder it becomes to think clearly.** The analysis paralysis is real.

When we do grocery shopping and are trying to choose among many varieties of strawberry jam, for example, we are better off relying on our instinctive preferences than on the rational calculation. The emotional memories of our previous experiences with similar products may be outside the realm of our conscious mind but they are still stored in the brain and can guide us to choose the best product for us. The rational brain can interfere with this intuitive decision-making. It causes us to consider factors that don't reflect our personal preferences and tastes, they are just logically sound explanations for why a particular brand may be better. But in the end, we want to eat jam that tastes good.

Here's a list of tactics to help you create an emotional wrap for your online communication:

- Use stories to build human connections. As **Christina Baldwin said, "Words are how we think, stories are how we link."**
- Write and speak from the heart and show your passion.
- Be human. Be yourself. Avoid sounding like a faceless corporate entity in social media.
- Include pictures and videos for emotional appeal.
- Show vulnerability.
- Post inspirational and insightful quotes.
- Celebrate other people's achievements and important occasions.
- Smile on your profile pictures (according to a study, people who smile are likely to attract more friends and followers).
- Be thoughtful about how your language comes across online. Remember that people can't see your body language or hear the tone of your voice. An occasional emoticon, like a smiley face, can highlight the humorous or friendly nature of your update. But don't overuse emoticons as they may appear unprofessional.
- Avoid defensive and abrasive language. Think about your online reputation before you post anything questionable.
- Apologize when you make a mistake.
- Show gratitude and reciprocate when somebody does something nice for you, like retweeting or commenting on your article.
- Engage in discussions, answer questions.



Strategy #3: Dissolve alarm with pleasure

The brain is wired to be more sensitive to negative information.

The so called negativity bias can be a life saver in real danger, it helped our predecessors survive. But most of us are no longer threatened by tigers and other immediate disasters. And the negativity bias has its costs. When we experience strong negative emotions, as when we are angry or under stress, the glucose goes from the rational

prefrontal cortex to our emotional control center - the amygdala in the limbic system of the brain, triggering the "fight or flight" mode. That's how our mind "freezes." The brain sends a signal that we don't need to waste time and energy on thinking, we need to be prepared to act. When we are in the negative state of mind, we develop a tunnel vision that doesn't allow us to see opportunities.

We also may be more inclined to buy impulsively when we are in a bad mood. A shopping spree can feel especially good after a disappointing day. Studies show that willpower and self-control diminish when people are in a bad mood, while their search for pleasure and comfort increases. We are wired to avoid pain and maximize pleasure. Thus, we compensate for distress by overindulging. To make things worse, people have difficulty appreciating the power of temptation and overestimate their capacity to control their own impulses. In fact, those who are the most confident about their self-control are the most likely to act impulsively.

Blame your dopamine neurons for your search for instant gratification. When you think about a reward in the future, the prefrontal cortex associated with the rational planning becomes more active. It encourages you to wait for a future bigger pay-off. When you think about an immediate reward, the brain area associated with emotions, such as the

midbrain dopamine system, is turned on. This limbic part of the brain urges people to pay with a credit card for something they can't afford, for example. Whether you will be able to resist the temptation depends on which area of the brain shows greater activation in this neural tug of war.

What problems do you solve for your clients? What are the short-term benefits of using your products or services? Do they lead to a bigger pay off in the future? What are the negative consequences of ignoring the problem your business is meant to solve? Shaping your conversations and offerings in terms of short-term and long-term benefits and consequences can help your clients get clarity they need to make a decision and improve customer experience. Educating your customers is a good strategy to build long-term relationships and referrals. After all, your customers search the web for information. Informed customers can become your best fans and evangelists. With that in mind, here's my list of tips on how to dissolve alarm with pleasure:

- Follow up with customers who have just made a purchase to welcome them into your community of happy customers and fans, reaffirm that they made the right decision and encourage them to engage with your products or services right away to experience the benefits and counteract possible buyer's remorse.
- Use social networks to create smooth and pleasant customer experience.
- Promptly answer customers' questions.
- Educate your customers on the benefits of using your products and services.
- Highlight the negative consequences your customers may experience if they don't address the problem your business can solve.
- Respond to customers' feedback through social media.
- Distribute gifts, coupons, giveaways, VIP invitations to events through social media.
- Provide regular tips on how to make the best of your products or services.



Strategy #4: Pique curiosity

In 2009, *The New York Times* published an article titled "As Jurors Turn to Web, Mistrials Are Popping Up," reporting on the increased number of mistrials as jurors around the country used their BlackBerrys and iPhones to seek information about cases beyond the admissible evidence. Jurors are prohibited from gathering or sharing facts about the cases outside the courtroom, so judges had no choice but to declare mistrials. Months of work were wasted as the jurors' urge to search prevailed over common sense and direct instructions.

Our brains prefer stimulation over boredom. **The brain is motivated by curiosity and the search for patterns. That's how we learn.** The brain makes sense of the world around by predicting certain outcomes, comparing these predictions to what actually happens and detecting prediction errors. Based on this information, the brain adjusts the expectations, enabling us to learn from our past experiences.

When the brain is busy searching for patterns and making predictions, it produces more neuromodulator dopamine, which is responsible for more pleasurable experience, as neuroscientist Wolfram Schultz uncovered in his famous experiment with a monkey craving apple juice. The researcher played a loud tone, waited for a few seconds, and then squirted a few drops of apple juice into the monkey's mouth. While the monkey was waiting for the juice, the researcher monitored the response of the monkey's brain. First, the dopamine neurons didn't get excited until the juice was delivered. However, once

the monkey learned that the tone always preceded the arrival of juice, the same neurons began firing at the sound of the tone instead of the reward. Schultz called these cells "prediction neurons" since they were more excited making predictions than receiving the rewards themselves. Schultz also discovered that when the monkey received juice without warning, a surprise reward caused even more activation in the dopamine neurons. Consequently, we are curious by nature and love unexpected surprises as long as they are pleasant.

Here's how you can pique curiosity in social media:

- Post links to interesting articles and tips in your field.
- Ask open-ended questions: who, what, when, where, how, why, etc.
- Tease your readers with headlines that tempt them to know more. Hint: look for interesting headlines in magazines and use them as templates for your own creations.
- Use Digg, StumbleUpon, Del.icio.us to share great content with others.
- Add value to discussions through your comments and replies.
- Share something personal about yourself. People are curious about you and your story.
- Don't give away information all at once. Build curiosity by gradually releasing bits and pieces. This also ensures that you don't overwhelm the working memory with too much detail.



Strategy #5: Transform uncertainty into opportunity

Lack of autonomy and control over our environment is a threat to the brain. Remember that the brain is a prediction machine constantly searching for patterns and adjusting expectations. The main function of the brain is to make us secure and comfortable in our world. We want to know or be able to predict what happens next. Uncertainty can cause stress. How well we are able to cope with stress depends on our perception of control. When we feel out of

control, our prefrontal cortex function diminishes while our limbic system floods us with emotions. Uncontrollable stressors are harmful to our bodies and minds. When we experience long-term stress, high levels of cortisol and adrenaline in the blood can kill existing neurons in the brain and stop the growth of new neurons.

In these circumstances, refocusing the mind on a possibility of choice can tame the limbic system and give the reins back to the rational mind. When toddlers go through the "terrible twos" stage, they test out the boundaries of their autonomy. Offering them a choice of action makes it likelier that they comply with the request. Most of us eventually find better ways of negotiating our boundaries than kicking and screaming, but our striving for autonomy does not diminish.

Douglas MacArthur said, "There is no security on this earth. There is only opportunity." If you are able to help people see that opportunity in the face of uncertainty of our turbulent times, people will want to join your tribe.

Here's how your online communication can help transform uncertainty into opportunity:

- Ask people for advice and favors. People like to help. Helping others gives them a sense of autonomy and choice.
- When you make an offer, give your customers two to three options. Too many options will confuse them (Remember the analysis paralysis? The prefrontal cortex can hold only about seven pieces of information at a time). Lack of options undermines people's autonomy.
- Encourage people to take polls and surveys.
- Ask for feedback, listen to your customers, and thank them for their input.
- Engage and motivate your evangelists and advocates and acknowledge their contributions.
- Have a strategy for including user-generated content on your website, in your newsletters. For example, you can feature success stories or Q&As with your answers to the questions submitted by the readers through your website or social media.
- Don't simply tell people what to do, ask them questions, have a discussion, involve them in the decision-making process.
- Cultivate a safe and positive environment for interactions in your community.
- Make it easy for customers to voice their opinions.
- Give support and encouragement.



Strategy #6: Give a fair shake and a stamp of approval

Our brains are social. We have a special set of neurons, called "mirror" neurons, to help us with our human connections. When we interact with others, the mirror neurons in the brain help us understand other people's intentions, feelings, and emotions. They enable us to empathize with others.

Recent studies demonstrate that mirror neurons are located in more areas of the human brain than previously thought.

The researchers recorded them in motor regions of the brain and also in areas involved in vision and memory. Mirror neurons explain how we can get better at sports, for example, by watching others who are good at it. Our mirror neurons in motor regions are at work even when we sit still and observe. They also explain why we tend to mirror the body language of people who we like when we interact with them, which helps us build rapport.

When we are alone and bored, our brain tends to ruminate on the negative aspects of our lives because of the negativity bias. In contrast, social ties with like-minded individuals who share the same hopes and dreams positively correlate with success and well-being.

Pleasant social interactions open our own minds to possibilities and help us see the world in a more positive light.

James Fowler, a political scientist at the University of California, San Diego and Nicholas Christakis, a physician and sociologist at Harvard University, the authors of "Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives" study how emotions spread across social networks. Initially, they focused on social groups of friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors, and found that each additional happy friend increases a person's probability of being happy by about 9%. They also reveal that **positive networks built on cooperation and altruism tend to thrive, while negative ones tend to dissolve.**

Self-enhancement – the human tendency to oversell ourselves – and mutual admiration are characteristic of social networking. It's not surprising because the social brain is sensitive to hierarchy and status and is pained by social rejection.

To the brain, improving social standing is like winning a lottery. Studies show that both money and social values are processed in the same brain region, the striatum. In other words, our good reputation is a reward to the brain. In contrast, when people realize they might compare unfavorably to someone else, it triggers the release of cortisol and other stress-related hormones and activates the brain areas that process emotional pain, the amygdala and posterior cingulate.

The brain does not want to miss out on good things that bear the stamp of approval. In a consumer preference experiment, Stephen Worchel and colleagues offered subjects chocolate chip cookies in a jar and asked them to taste the cookies and rate their quality. One jar had ten cookies in it, and the other jar had just two. Subjects preferred the cookies from the jar of only two cookies, even though they were the same cookies. **Scarcity is a powerful motivator.** As a follow-up experiment demonstrated, the scarce cookies became even tastier when the participants watched the researcher replace a jar of ten cookies with a jar of two cookies after they were told that some of the cookies had to be given away to other participants. Seeing the cookies disappear as a result of built-up demand made them more desirable and delicious.

Fairness is another big trigger for the brain. **Fair treatment is a reward to the brain that activates dopamine cells while unfair treatment is perceived as a threat processed in the insula, the part of the brain also associated with the feeling of disgust.** We often see emotional and sometimes even violent outbursts triggered by the perceptions of unfairness.

According to Golnaz Tabibnia, an assistant professor at Carnegie Mellon University who studies fairness, fairness may be even more important to us than money. In the Ultimate Game experiments, two people need to split a pot of money. One person makes an offer, and the other person needs to decide whether to accept or reject it. If the offer is rejected, nobody gets any money. It turns out that people are willing to sacrifice their personal gain if they think that the offer unfairly benefits the other person. When the offer is fair, the reward system in the brain becomes more active than when it's unfair. Other studies show that people report higher levels of trust and cooperation when they experience fair exchanges. Interestingly, the sense of fairness increases the levels of dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin, making people more open and willing to connect with others. Therefore, businesses that want to increase engagement should pay attention to the perceptions of fairness.

What does it all mean for your online communication? Consider these ideas:

- Shine a spotlight on your social network friends and recommend them to others.
- Be a connector, introduce people if you think they should meet. This encourages referrals.
- Interview your network friends for your blog or podcast and post the link to the interview in social media.
- Host online chats and events.
- Organize a local meetup or tweetup for your online friends to meet in person.
- Encourage good tone and friendliness. Pay attention to the perceived safety of the social network.

- Reciprocate when somebody does something nice for you.
- Promptly resolve misunderstandings and conflicts.
- Consider when a direct private message to a person may be more appropriate than a public comment.
- Demonstrate the use of your product in videos to activate your customers' mirror neurons and aid in learning.



Strategy #7: Turn illusions into reality

The more you learn about the brain, the more you realize how wonderfully delusional our brains are. **As Anais Nin put it, "We don't see things as they are. We see things as we are."** Whatever seems real to us may turn out to be a fabrication of our subconscious mind and the senses. How we feel and think about the world influences how we actually see it. Our interactions can be shaped by the attributes of our environment. Here are some intriguing examples from several studies on perception and influence:

- In one experiment testing the effects of weight, metaphorically associated with seriousness and importance, subjects judged job candidates whose resumes were seen on a heavy clipboard as better qualified and more serious about the position.
- In an experiment testing texture's effects, participants had to arrange rough or smooth puzzle pieces before hearing a story about a social interaction. Those who worked with the rough puzzle were likelier to describe the interaction in the story as uncoordinated and harsh.
- In a test of hardness, subjects handled either a soft blanket or a hard wooden block before being told an ambiguous story about a workplace interaction between a supervisor and an employee. Those who touched the block judged the employee as more rigid and strict.
- Subjects seated in hard or soft chairs engaged in mock haggling over the price of a new car. Subjects in hard chairs were less flexible, showing less movement between successive offers. They also judged their adversary in the negotiations as more stable and less emotional.
- The difficulty of the task distorts our perception of distance. Researchers have found that hills appear steeper and distances longer when people are fatigued or carrying heavy loads.
- Just holding your body in a certain position means you'll have faster, more accurate access to certain memories. The subjects were able to remember certain events in their lives faster when they assumed the same positions that their bodies were in when those memories occurred.
- The objects that we want or like appear closer to us than they actually are. For example, participants who had just eaten pretzels perceived a water bottle as significantly closer to them relative to participants who had just drunk as much water as they wanted. A \$100 bill that participants had the possibility of winning appeared closer to participants than a \$100 bill that belonged to the experimenter.

- When we are in a positive mood, our visual cortex takes in more information, while negative moods result in tunnel vision.
- People are much more attuned to negative words and can perceive the emotional value of subliminal messages. A subliminal message is a signal or message embedded in another medium, designed to pass below the normal limits of the human mind's perception. These messages are unrecognizable by the conscious mind, but in certain situations can affect the subconscious mind and can negatively or positively influence subsequent thoughts, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs.

Obviously, in online communication you can't often control the environment in which people receive and respond to your messages. Are they more willing to trust you because they are sitting in soft, comfortable chairs? However, you can use multisensory language to convey a certain ambiance and make people see with their mind's eye. Consider metaphors and adjectives, such as "soft," "rough," "hard," "heavy." They all have multiple meanings that reflect the transfer from the physical attribute into the mental construct: "soft cushion" and "soft skills," "heavy load" and "heavy duty." **The choice of words matters, even more so online.**

The use of multimedia makes it easier to fine-tune the environment for your message. Pictures can aid in information processing and memory. It may take just one glance to convey a message through a picture, but try describing the same message in words and you will easily overwhelm the working memory.

Scientists had known for some time that attention to visual details increased the firing of neurons that responded to those details. What they didn't realize until recently is that attention also reduces background noise, improving the clarity of the signal. The old saying is true: We see what we want to see. The rest is noise. Consequently, when you present visual information, less is better if you want more control over what your audience notices.

There is still a lot to learn about the interplay of verbal cues and visuals. Here are a few interesting findings:

- An image displayed too quickly to be seen by an observer can be detected if the participant first hears the name of the object.
- Directing the audience's attention to a general location improves reaction times to target objects appearing in that location.
- Hearing words associated with directions of motion can interfere with an observer's ability to quickly recognize the next movement they see.
- Hearing a word that labels a target improves the speed and efficiency of the search. For instance, when searching for the number 2 among 5's, participants are faster to find the target when they actually hear "find the two" immediately prior to the search - even when 2 has been the target all along.
- Bizarre and grotesque ads engage the viewers by surprising their brains and fueling the brains' predictive mechanisms. In other words, people take time to figure out what is happening in the pictures.

Here are a few ideas to get you started thinking about the environment you want to create in your online community:

- Use varied sensory language that caters for individual styles of communication, such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.
- If you are in the business of creating public announcements that ask people to refrain from certain actions, the use of negative words is likely to grab attention. For example, "Kill your speed" should be more noticeable than "Slow down."
- If you do a presentation, avoid confusing your audience by mixing too much text and visuals. Less is often more.
- Use grotesque images if appropriate to sustain attention.
- Employ multimedia to fine-tune the context and environment for your message.
- Inspire and motivate. People in the positive mood are able to see and perceive more detail.

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ABOUT ANASTASIA PRYANIKOVA:



Anastasia Pryanikova, M.A., J.D. is a lawyer, linguist, coach, and the founder of E-Studio, LLC, a coaching and training company that fuses social neuroscience insights and social media capabilities to help business leaders develop communication and content strategies to captivate, engage & influence their prospects and clients.

From a linguist exploring the language of advertising, to a corporate lawyer working internationally, to a U.S. Small Business Administration legal adviser counseling small business leaders, Anastasia has been in the business of “changing people’s minds” to facilitate high-stake conversations and decisions across borders, cultures, and industries.

Now, she combines her passion for communication and technology to empower teams and individuals to develop compelling social media and client education content to maximize their marketing efforts, build long-term, trusting relationships with their clients and prospects, and boost influence and visibility.

You can learn more about Anastasia’s work, read her blog “The Brain Alchemist,” and subscribe to her brain-captivating newsletter at <http://brainalchemist.com>.



WHAT’S NEXT?

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If you want to use social media as a powerful and cost-effective way to extend your brand, attract clients, improve customer experience and loyalty, connect with your tribe of raving fans, you need to develop a strategy for that. You need to know how to communicate your brand effectively and to produce compelling online content on a consistent basis, measure its impact and make adjustments that support your business objectives. I hope this report gave you some ideas on how to design compelling content that captivates and engages your audience.

Leveraging Powerful Content:



1. If you are intrigued by what you have read and want to learn more, I invite you to visit my website <http://brainalchemist.com> and [subscribe](#) to my free blog "The Brain Alchemist."
2. If you have people in your organization responsible for developing online content or managing social media, feel free to share this report with them or anybody else for that matter, provided you share it free of charge. You can also refer people to my website where they can download their own copy.
3. I've shared a lot of information in this special report. But it's one thing to know WHAT to do as a strategy and another thing entirely to know HOW to do it as a consistent process. That's where I come in. If you'd like to explore the possibility of us working together, please **e-mail ana@brainalchemist.com** or call **(203) 354-9808** to schedule an exploratory session.

To Your Brilliance,

Anastasia

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