

## How to \$ell to Executives

Michael Swanson  
President

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## Language shapes the way we Think

- There are about 7,000 languages in the world
- Your language influences your world view and how you interpret the world
  - Is the future in front or behind?
  - *"The best is ahead, the worst behind."*
- A picture of you giving a gift to a friend
  - Are they on your left or right?

➤ Learn to speak the language of Executives



"Human minds have invented not one cognitive universe, but 7,000." - Lera Boroditsky - Cognitive scientist

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## Identify the Problem (Executive Challenge)

- What is the Problem/Challenge?
  - Peel back the problem (onion)
  - Different problem
  - Are there other challenges or opportunities embedded?
- Who does the problem affect?
  - Financial
  - Customer Service
  - Operations
- Where did the problem come from?
  - Internal process gaps, external factors e.g. software audits
- Did the problem evolve or was it by choice?
  - Solution different based on origin of problem
- If by choice – have circumstances changed that would lead to a different solution if looked at in current environment?



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### The Story

- Build a story
  - Short and conceptual
    - What is the problem
    - Why does it affect customers, operational risk, budget, P&L, executive bonus etc.
- Sell the Story
  - Present the story to immediate manager
    - Why does your manager care?
  - Get support to proceed with developing a solution



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### Takeaway

- What **Every Executive** Wants
  - ✓ BONUS
    - Saving money
  - ✓ SOLUTIONS
    - Solving problems





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### Build a Team

- Identify team members who can help build a solution
  - Look for team members:
    - From various departments
      - you want diverse perspectives and skills
    - Have personal benefit from the acceptance and execution of a solution
    - Influential and respected
    - Can contribute to the solution
    - Can help execute the solution
  - Keep team between 3-5 people
    - Can have more supporting team members, but core team should be limited in size

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**Takeaway**

- What **Every Team Member** wants
  - ✓ RECOGNITION
  - Showing value as an employee
    - Contribution to the company
  - ✓ Saving money

"Make lots of friends"  
- Richard Schubert -



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**Design a Solution**

➤ Know your Audience (executive)

- What is their title ?
- What is their responsibility ?
- What is their concern ?
- What problem are they trying to solve ?

• Depending if they're the CFO, CIO, CTO, CISO, CPO –  
their concerns are different and they look at problems differently



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**Design a Solution**

➤ Do a Cost/Benefit Analysis

- Know costs of
  - Do nothing
    - Provide sufficient financial analysis
  - Proposed solution
    - List multiple alternatives (with **LOTS** of financial analysis)
      - » Show ROI of each alternative
      - » Show payback (how long to recover investment)
      - » Show Low/Medium/High probability alternatives
- Identify all possible risks
  - Operations
  - Financial
  - Legal
  - Human Resources

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### Design a Solution



➤ Do a Cost/Benefit Analysis

- Identify & Quantify Benefits
  - Who will benefit ?
  - How will they benefit ?
  - When will they benefit ?
  - How much will they benefit ?
- Identify Value of solution
  - Personal
  - Financial
  - Legal
  - Customer Service

Difference between Benefits and Value is knowing What & Why

Quantifying benefits of solution is key!  
Either in time ,money, etc. but a quantification of time is money

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### Takeaway



- Solutions need to be
  - ✓ Business driven
  - ✓ Financially justified

I believe that if you show people the problems and you show them the solutions they will be moved to act.

Bill Gates

www.thequotes.in

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### Present Solution to Executive

- Pointers
  - Executives have
    - Very short attention span
    - Don't like surprises
    - Always looking for
      - Financial return
        - » ROI / Payback
      - Risk
        - » Impact on customer service
        - » Potential disruption/impact on operations

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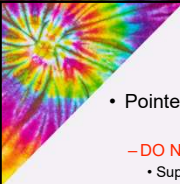
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### Present Solution to Executive

- Pointers
  - DO NOT**
    - Support your conclusion by blanket quote  
*"Industry says if we do XYZ we will save \$\$\$"*
    - Depend on outside consultant/vendor who:
      - Hasn't looked at your specific situation in detail
      - Has a financial gain on the success of your recommendation

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### Present Solution to Executive

- Pointers
  - Keep the message simple and high level  
*have all the details & back-up available should the executive request it*
  - Present yourself as the expert
    - Be prepared
    - Be confident of your recommendation
    - Let the executive believe you are qualified to give the recommendation



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### Takeaway


- "Need to think in terms of telling the story via slides that have a picture/graphic and one or two bullets that state what you want the individual to take away from the slide."
- "Short attention spans here. IF the slides are loaded with words and bullets, we will lose him in short order."
- "I would think in terms of the opportunity and the outcome..."



- Quotes from ISAM customer on how to present to their executives -



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**Case Studies**

**Airline Industry**



- Problem – airline wanted to leave Asia market
- Problem – revenue forecasting based on antiquated methodology
- Problem – didn't know profit margins on \$1 billion LOB

**Home Building Manufacturer**

- Problem – products were sold as cost plus, not value-based

**Health Insurer**

- Problem – software licenses were paid annually; NO ELAs


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**Questions**




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