



Integrating Rhetorical Strategies For Effective Communication

By Anthony Taiti

Today's world is dominated by information overload, making rhetoric a valuable asset that lays the foundation for influence, leadership, and, ultimately, success. Through it, the sobering observation by George Bernard Shaw, that "the single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place," is addressed.

Simply put, rhetoric is the art of effective and persuasive communication, and rhetorical strategies are the approaches that communicators utilize to achieve this.

We are only as good as our communication skills. In other words, if your technical skills are 10/10 but your communication skills are 2/10, you will be perceived or evaluated unfavourably. This is corroborated by pumble.com's 2025 workplace communication statistics, which show that "57% of global employers identify communication as the most desirable skill in potential recruits."

The enlightenment of today's society may lead people to believe that the need to communicate effectively is a recent phenomenon, yet this couldn't be further from reality. This philosophy goes back to ancient Greece, where coherence was highly valued. Many Greek philosophers utilised their communication skills to rise to the highest echelons of societal leadership, where they had a major influence on people's way of life, especially communication. Rhetoric, for example, evolved during this period following the systematisation of public speaking through speech structures and standards that focused on communicating effectively and persuasively.

Aristotle laid out three fundamental rhetorical strategies: ethos, which is about establishing credibility; pathos, which is about creating an emotional connection with the audience; and logos, which is about appealing to the audience's logic by

using rational arguments to influence their reasoning and decisions.

Jesus Christ, widely regarded as one of the greatest and most effective communicators in history, applied these strategies aptly. For example, He established credibility (ethos) by authoritatively citing and interpreting scripture; connected emotionally with people (pathos) by telling relatable stories in the form of parables that stirred their emotions; and asked thought-provoking questions and provided cogent answers, demonstrating His rationality (logos). During His three-year ministry on earth, which involved a great deal of effective communication, He had a profound impact that changed the course of history forever.

Ethos demonstrates that you are knowledgeable about the subject matter and that you can be trusted. While most people nowadays try to achieve this by highlighting their academic credentials and professional experience, it is important to note that a communicator's credibility transcends their papers and titles. One must be able to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the topic or subject matter they are addressing by providing profound insights. To be trusted, you must maintain objectivity by focusing on the subject of your message. When faced with a situation in which your audience tries to distract your focus by introducing unrelated issues, seize the opportunity and redirect the conversation back to its original focus. Engaging in sideshows increases the risk of losing credibility since the audience may question your sincerity. Further, Ethos demands that one should only use credible sources while providing references to reinforce their message. People are less likely to believe or trust you if you cite questionable sources.

Pathos allows you to lead your audience into the realm of certain feelings you want them to experience. To achieve this, you need to understand their values and communicate

your message in a manner that appeals to their emotions, driving them to act.

You can also use vivid images or videos to support your presentation. Many charity NGOs leverage the power of pathos by using vivid images and videos when telling stories about their community programs. Often, the beneficiaries also share accounts of their experiences and the transformations in their lives, which evoke compassion and draw in donor support.

Logos enables you to win the audience's support by helping them develop objectivity and appreciate the issues addressed in your message. For logic to prevail among audiences, communication should fill any gaps that may exist by providing supporting evidence. For instance, you can provide research-founded data or an expert's opinion on the subject matter.

It is important to note that when communicating, you should employ the three strategies in a balanced manner, as overreliance on one is more likely to reduce your communication effectiveness. For example, a hotel manager who is preoccupied with explaining why it was not their fault that the food was contaminated while paying little attention to sympathizing with the affected customers may be perceived as selfish and arrogant. Similarly, speaking with a lot of emotions without a clear basis may lead people to believe you are being manipulative.

And as Richard M. Weaver aptly put, when all is said and done, remember that "rhetoric is the language of leadership."

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