



Is Talking Too Much Costing You Productivity?

By Jendayi Harris, Consultant

Geez, Tony, can I get a word in? I should've taken the stairs. This conversation won't be completed today at this rate.

I gather my thoughts, and forcefully utter, "Tony, I've got to run."

What no one will dare to blurt to Tony or his lascivious cohort is the dreaded truth, "You talk too much!"

I'm sure you've been in a conversation where you've attempted to pull away. Only you can't, because the person you're talking to went into a long-winded story about what happened to them at their kids' soccer game.

We've all witnessed the verbose co-worker go crazy before deadlines and we wonder if they see, what we see, about this obvious time death via excess words. This is one of many, fascinating areas of how much our behavioral style impacts our productivity.

The "High I"* tends to be the behavioral communication style that talks the most. If you're a High I and a female, it gets even worse. Louann Brizendine, author of *The Female Brain*, insists that women tend to use on average 20,000 words per day, verses men who use an average of 7000 words per day.

Gender aside, this High I personality type is the least productive when it comes to longer-term analytical task as a result of talking too much. The blessing of this style, is that you are magnetic. People like talkers (for the most part!) and you're a people person. You're team oriented, collaborative, inspirational, and engaging. However, some may find you really difficult to interact with because of those excess words. Others may have to talk over you to get their point in, people may avoid you or cut you off constantly. You may also find that you never seem to have enough time to finish more analytical work, which gets procrastinated or pushed off into evenings and weekends, making you resentful.

As a person who enjoys accomplishment and conversation, I wanted to highlight this dilemma of the verbose and provide a few tips to support personal productivity for those who over-share.

7 Tips for Over-Talkers to Increase Productivity by Decreasing Words

1. *Observe what you're saying and why you're saying it.*

If you sense that you're like Tony, start using the simple technique of becoming aware of what you're saying and why you're saying it. Look for your motives and contemplate how many of your words are valuable versus empty chatter. Find your specific reasons for saying what you say, ideally before you say it. If what you're saying feels excess or unnecessary, and you're in the context of business, let the words go.

2. *Observe your listener's cues.*

Notice when the conversation seems lop-sided, where you do all the talking. Your listener may enjoy your stories, but make sure you look for cues that indicate if the conversation is going as well as you think. Look for cues indicating that your listener **heard you or is ready to share**. Cues such as mouth and lips open, head nodding, or verbal cues such as, "mmm", or sounds like they are trying to say something and can't because

you keep talking, indicates that he or she may be ready to share. Simple body language cues, such as when your listener checks out his or her phone or looks in other directions, can help you know if your listener is gripped by your vocal domination. Be very mindful about how long you've been talking, if you've talked for more than a couple minutes, without validating your listeners' listening, chances are they're wishing you'd stop talking, more than hearing about what you're saying.

3. **Reduce over-explanation.** Share one example or your point. Assume your listener understands, before you share the same exact story, phase, or situation again and again. Trust if your listener needed more information, they'd ask for clarification. Over-explaining stems more from trust issues of the talker, or the deep need to be understood, heard or validated. Acknowledge your needs, but the first cue you get that the listener has heard you, let it go. Belaboring a point can serve a purpose, but also can be unproductive.
4. **Clarify your bottom line with yourself first.** Think out loud, journal or talk to yourself in your car to find your key points. You want to figure out your bottom line prior to meeting with others. Record your thoughts and ideas so that when you talk to whomever in meetings or in conversations, you get to the bottom line of what you want to say. Now you'll bring more meaningful conversation to the meeting, wasting less time!
5. **Set limits on conversations.** Check the time the moment you start talking by glancing at the clock on the wall or on your cell. You can also use the handy-dandy cell phone timer for 2-5 minutes, so that you don't go off on tangents or drain your listeners. This is a serious action.
6. **Review over-sharing clues from your day.** How much of your working hours were spent in excess conversation and over explaining? Where were you redundant? How can you take a knife to those extra words?
7. **Make Conversation a Reward.** Your need to talk and connect with people, and the need to balance tasks, can work better with using talking as a reward in lieu of avoidance of a tough task. Reward yourself by completing the hardest task in the morning and planning a long lunch to catch up with your favorite colleague. You may want to schedule the same time every day for tasks or analytical work, and a couple days a week for longer lunches as your reward, so you can get some of that talking out.

I hope this article helps the over-talker gain valuable time back from wasted words.

* I for Influencer, or Insights Discovery's Sunshine Yellow, or Managing By Strengths Green Extroversion, or High Extroverts on the Myer's Briggs