

In any walk of life effective communication relies on credibility, emotion, and logic. George Entwistle failed on each count.

The BBC's difficulties were compounded by a profound failure of communication on the part of George Entwistle. [Andrew S Crines](#) offers an analysis of these failings and argues that it now falls to his acting successor to restore the BBC's relationship with its audience.



When I first starting writing this, I was going to argue that business leaders need to be able to communicate as effectively as political leaders in order to maintain their credibility with their consumers. I was going to argue that the rhetorical devices used by politicians (credibility, emotion, logic) can have strong value when adopted by businesses of all varieties. However, I have changed tactics with this piece since the resignation of George Entwistle, which has thrown into even sharper focus the need for leaders of large and small organisations to be able to communicate effectively. Indeed, rhetorically Entwistle failed on each of these counts, undermining his argument and ability in the mind of the viewers to take charge of a situation which required strong leadership. Succinctly, a lack of communication skills cost him his position, business reputation, and also inflicted considerable damage onto the organisation he was there to lead.

It was his inability to convince the viewers and listeners on Saturday which undermined his position. Following on from the first Newsnight scandal, Entwistle performed badly in Parliament and in the media, appearing to have little control over the decisions of Newsnight editors. However, given his newness the Parliamentarians and public gave him the benefit of the doubt, despite his inability to convey a clear single message.

It certainly undermined his credibility. As any political communicator knows, credibility is a vital tool in the armoury of effective communication, however his credibility had not been destroyed. Rather, it was the second incident which ended his credibility, and damaged the profile of his business. For that inability to communicate cost him not only his job but reputation and left a legacy of indecision and apparent chaos.

I fully expect the reader to be aware of the above, and so I'm going to forgo any kind of detailed narrative of specific events, such as the BBC Breakfast interview or the subsequent radio interview. However, it was in these two arenas where Entwistle found his credibility exhausted. The purpose of this short piece is to ask why.

In any walk of life, especially in business and politics, effective communication relies on credibility, emotion, and logic. Entwistle failed on each count. His credibility had been undermined previously, the emotion he was sending out to the audience was one of desperation, and the logic of his argument appeared unconvincing. Granted, a single individual cannot be expected to oversee every aspect of a large business such as the BBC, however given the previous issue, it was expected that he would be closely scrutinise the output of Newsnight. The apparent absence of such checks appeared illogical to the viewer and listener. As such, rhetorically he had failed on each of the major devices.

Given these issues it falls to the acting Director General, Tim Davie, to restore each of these communicative devices to their proper role within the organization. He must demonstrate credibility by taking immediate control of the situation, he must show emotion by empathising with the victims, and logic by arguing for a stronger regime of editorial checks on Newsnight. Thankfully for the BBC, these issues are confined to Newsnight and are not a general issue across the board, such as was the case for News International. However, given the seriousness of the subject matter, Davie will confront the immediate need to show these signs of communication in order to demonstrate instant credibility with

the viewer.

Any communicator should develop their rhetorical skills in these three areas. Academics can do this by expanding their publication record, using humour when communicating, and demonstrating the locale of the material being taught. Managers can do this by showing capacity to govern with the trust of the employees, creating an open working environment with high morale, and setting out a clear business agenda for the organisation. Politicians can do this by identifying with the audience, using humour or anger to motivate their audience, and through legitimising rhetoric. These skills can mean the difference between success and failure, and in the current market-driven economy which cuts across industries, these skills will become more and more important in whichever field we operate.

Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the British Politics and Policy blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please read our [comments policy](#) before posting.

About the author

Andrew S Crines is a lecturer of politics at the University of Huddersfield, and is the Publicity Officer for the Political Studies Association [Specialist Group for the study of Conservatives and Conservatism](#). He is the co-editor of two volumes on *Oratory in the Labour Party* and *Oratory in the Conservative Party* with Richard Hayton. He is also a consultant on communication skills.

You may also be interested in the following posts (automatically generated):

1. [Book Review: The Media at War: Communication and Conflict in the Twentieth Century \(16.3\)](#)
2. [There is an immediate mess to be cleared up and then the BBC needs longer term restructuring \(6\)](#)
3. [The BBC, Savile, Panorama and Newsnight: closed system, closed minds? \(5.3\)](#)