HOW TO INSPIRE PEOPLE TO LISTEN, CARE, AND TAKE ACTION

We live in a very noisy world.

It's difficult to cut through the noise and inspire people to listen to you, and it's getting tougher every year.

Here in the United States:

- A typical person receives around 120 emails per day. [Source: Harvard Business Review]

- A typical person spends 11 hours per day "interacting with media" (blogs, websites, podcasts, TV shows, etc.) using some type of digital device: computer, phone, tablet, or video game console. [Source: Nielsen Company audience report]

- A typical person is exposed to 5,000 advertising, marketing, and brand-related messages every day. (Back in the 1970s, it was only 500 per day.) [Source: LinkedIn blog]

- We've got 1,331 daily newspapers, over 550,000 podcasts in the iTunes directory, and 2,000,000 blog posts are published every day.

Point being, there's a lot of conversation out there. And, it's easy for your message to get lost in the shuffle.

Fortunately, there are specific ways you can become a stronger writer and communicator…so that your message breaks through the noise.

This workbook might help.

Thank you for being here.

I hope you gain at least one tiny piece of helpful info from this workbook.

-Alex

IS THIS FOR YOU?

Do any of these situations apply to you?

- You want to inspire a dream client to hire you.

- You want to inspire a school to give you a scholarship or grant.

- You want to inspire your friends to donate to an important cause.

- You want to inspire your teenager to stop playing so much Xbox and read a freakin' book.

- Overall, you are tired of writing things/saying things and feeling like "nobody cares" or "nobody is listening."

- You want to write an email, give a speech, or have a conversation that makes an impact—something that shifts people from apathy into action.

If any of those apply to you, then you're likely to gain something from this workbook. Keep reading. And thank you.

HOW TO INSPIRE PEOPLE TO LISTEN, CARE, AND TAKE ACTION

Three main things to remember:

1. Set a clear intention using the Feel - Know - Do approach.

What do you want your reader to Feel?
What do you want your reader to Know?
What do you want your reader to Do?

2. Tell a true story.

When you hear a story, it immediately changes your brain chemistry. Stories trigger oxytocin which promotes care, connection, empathy, and unexpected acts of generosity. One study found that a spike in oxytocin led people to donate 56% more money to charities.

3. Provide hope.

When people feel hopeless, they don't take action, because why bother…right? If it's going to be futile, then there's no reason to act. You need to give your reader a reason to feel hopeful. Without hope, there is no action.

Next, we will walk through each of those three things in more detail.

1. Set a clear intention using the Feel - Know - Do approach.

Before you write something (or say something), take a moment to organize your thoughts.

What is your intent? Why are you writing this, or saying this? What is the specific impact you wish to have? Set your intention before you start typing or speaking.

What do you want your reader to Feel?

- Do you want them to be curious, fascinated, intrigued, inspired, motivated, uplifted, understood, supported, cared for, excited, eager, welcomed, shocked, angry ("This is wrong, we gotta do something to fix this!"), or feel a sense of urgency ("We need to act now!"), or perhaps a combination of angry + hopeful?

- What are the main emotions you want them to feel?

What do you want your reader to Know?

- You might want your reader to know a big, important message.

Example: "We live in a society that teaches girls: You are never good enough. Between the ages of 8-14, a typical girl's confidence levels will drop by 30%. This confidence drop can impact her grades, her health, and her success in the future. But there's hope. There are specific things you can do, as a parent, to keep your daughter feeling strong and confident."

- You might also want your reader to know some logistical information.

Example: "This is a donation-based class. We're meeting on Zoom at 5 pm Eastern."

What do you want your reader to Do?

- What is the call to action?

This might be: donate, vote, purchase, enroll, tell a friend, share this link, pass it along, show up at the rally, write to your mayor, evaluate your actions, read this book, speak less and listen more, try this, test this out and see what happens, take a chance, take a risk, speak to your child about this, remember what I've said when you feel scared, or…another action.

. . .

If you like the Feel - Know - Do approach, I have a free workbook + audio lesson that dives into this more deeply. You'll find those here.

2. Tell a true story.

When you hear a story, it immediately changes your brain chemistry.

Stories trigger oxytocin which promotes care, connection, empathy, and unexpected acts of generosity.

Many researchers (including Paul Zak, Director of the Center for Neuroeconomics Studies at Claremont Graduate University) have conducted studies that confirm there's a direct connection between hearing a moving story and then doing something wonderfully generous.

One of Zak's lab studies found that a spike in oxytocin led people to donate 56% more money to charities.

He calls oxytocin "the moral molecule," because it brings strangers together and moves people to do the right thing, even when they don't have to.

Just a few types of stories you could tell:

- "Rock bottom moment" story.

"Once upon a time, I made a huge mistake. Here's what happened, how it felt, and the big lesson I learned from the experience…"

- "Compare A and B" story.

"School A decided to continue funding their theatre program. School B decided to cut funding for their theatre program. Here's what happened next for the kids at School A, versus the kids at School B…"

- "Walk a mile in my shoes" story.

"You might have no idea what it's like to be a woman working in a heavily male-dominated industry, or what kinds of things I experience every day at work. Let me walk you through a day in my life…"

- "Underdog / Unlikely success, against all the odds" story.

"In 2015, this high school had one of the highest drop-out rates in the country. By 2020, it had one of the lowest rates. You might be wondering, 'how did that happen? What changed in those 5 years?' Well, this is the story of how it happened…"

- "I've been on a quest" story.

"Three years ago, I became curious to find out why Black women are significantly more likely to die from breast cancer. I went on a quest to find the answers, and this journey took me to places I never expected. This is what happened…"

- "Your actions matter more than you think" story.

"Tonia had no idea that her tiny 'thank you' letter would change an entire community. Small gestures of love, connection, and caring matter more than you think. Here's the ripple effect that resulted from that one tiny letter…"

- "Defining moment" story.

"Once upon a time, there was one moment / challenge / choice / class / mentor that forever changed the trajectory of my life. Here's what happened…"

3. Provide hope.

When people feel hopeless, they don't take action, because why bother…right?

If it's going to be futile, then there's no reason to act.

You need to give your reader a reason to feel hopeful. Without hope, there is no action.

A few ways you can provide hope:

- Give some evidence: data, statistics, studies, percentages. Anything to convince your reader, "Change is possible." "Your efforts will make a difference." "If we do this, it's really going to work."

Example: 8 Can't Wait. Police forces that adopt these policies kill significantly fewer people. Police violence gets reduced by 72%.

- Harken back to victories from the past.

Example: Many small businesses survived the Great Depression and even found ways to pivot, reinvent, and thrive. It is possible to thrive even during rocky economic times. If they could do it then, we can do it now.

- Use a true story to reinforce the power of one choice, one deed, one person's ability to change the world.

Example: One rural Farmer had an extra COVID-19 face mask at home. He decided to donate it to healthcare workers because he knew there were mask shortages. His small deed inspired thousands of other people to donate masks, too. One action can cause a massive ripple effect.

SUMMARY + WORKSHEET

What's the piece you want to write, or conversation you want to have?

Example: I want to write an email to my mailing list about Black Lives Matter. / I want to have a conversation with my teenager about safe sex. / I want to have a chat with my boss about starting a mental health program in the workplace.

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With this piece of writing or conversation, what is your intention?

I want my reader / listener to Feel…

_____

I want my reader / listener to Know…

_____

I want my reader / listener to Do…

_____

Stories change people's brain chemistry. Are you going to include a story? Which story will you tell?

I will share a story about…

_____

_____

_____

How will you provide hope to your reader / listener? How will you convince them that taking action will actually make a positive difference?

I will provide hope by…

_____

_____

_____

Accountability! When will you publish this piece / have this conversation? Write a specific day and time.

I'm doing this on…

_____

Is there anything you're worried about?

Are you afraid of being ignored? Afraid of criticism? Afraid you'll be misunderstood? Mocked? Harassed? Afraid you'll "do it wrong"? Afraid of losing clients, losing friends, or some other consequence? What, if anything, feels like a block in your path?

I'm worried about / I feel blocked by…

_____

_____

_____

How could you clear this block out of your path?

Do you need a friend standing with you for moral support? Do you need a pep talk from a mentor? Do you need an editor to review your piece before it goes out?

To clear this block out of my way, I can…

_____

_____

_____

Your words matter. Your actions matter. You matter.

Whatever you feel called to write or say…Do it.

PLEASE KEEP LEARNING

If you're determined to strengthen your writing and communication skills, let this workbook be the very beginning of your education, not the end.

There are so many excellent resources out there. Please keep learning.

If you're an excellent blogger, take a poetry class. If you're a seasoned poet, take a public speaking lesson. Keep expanding.

Seek out classes and teachers who can bring fresh perspectives to you.

A few colleagues I'd like to recommend:

- Do you want to connect with the power of your voice? Check out Rachel Bagby. She's a singer, poet, public speaking coach, and an expert on helping you clear away whatever is blocking you from using your voice.

- Do you want to write exciting, personality-filled language for your website, newsletter, and other business/marketing materials? Learn from Shenee Howard.

- Would you like to take a course on writing creative nonfiction from an award-winning author and mental health activist? Check out Esme Weijun Wang.

- Want to learn all about the journey of writing and self-publishing a book? Take a course with Pixie Lighthorse.

- Writing is one form of self-expression, but it's not the only one. If you feel called to do some painting, and explore the visual arts, check out Malini Parker.

THANKS FOR DOWNLOADING THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook was created as part of fundraiser / donation-based class called How to Inspire People to Listen, Care, Take Action, and Change the World, a fundraiser for Black Lives Matter. To everyone who donated and who attended, thank you. Big thanks to Woz Flint and Lindsey Smith from the Tiny Book Course for helping to produce this fundraiser class.

If you'd like to publish any part of this workbook in a book, magazine, website, or any other platform, please email hello@alexandrafranzen.com to request permission first. Thank you.

ABOUT ALEXANDRA

Alexandra Franzen is a writer and entrepreneur based in Hawaii. Her writing has been published in places like *Time, Forbes, Newsweek, The Huffington Post,* and *Lifehacker*. She's been mentioned in places like *The New York Times Small Business Blog, The Atlantic, The Los Angeles Times*, and *Inc.*

She's the author of several books, including *The Checklist Book*, *You're Going to Survive*, and *So This Is the End: A Love Story*.

She teaches classes on writing, communication, creative marketing, productivity, setting intentions and goals, and simplifying life and work. She has led classes in 18 cities around the world—and online, too.

Alex's free newsletter with inspiring true stories, writing tips, music playlists, and more: http://www.alexandrafranzen.com/newsletter/