

Talk Your Way to the Top: Communication Secrets to Change Your Life

Kevin Hogan

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This is a motivational speech spelled out in black and white that is as instructional as it is rousing. Even for the professional communicator, there is something to be learned from the insights offered by Hogan.

The necessity of this book is bluntly defined in the introduction by motivational speaker Richard Brodie: “Most of us just open our mouths (or keep them shut) out of habit, fear or any number of reasons that take us further from, not closer to, where we want to go in life.”

Hogan guides readers toward self-improvement with well developed scenarios, personal examples and multiple workbook style sections. In “Drawing Your Own Roadmap,” for instance, Hogan helps readers define personal goals and outline specific avenues to achieving them.

The book questions readers and asks them to question themselves. “How many times have you sabotaged your success in communicating by letting your thoughts bounce around in all of the negative situations?” Important points are highlighted in breakout boxes, such as “seventy-five percent of all people who were moved up the executive ladder in 1998 were being mentored on their way to the top.”

Hogan defines some communication jargon, such as outcome-based thinking and rapport, which might not be thoroughly understood by some readers. He offers chapters specifically aimed at improving personal relationships and becoming a better salesman.

Readers sometimes need to stomach a few cliches and some of Hogan’s personal politics. Also, the book sometimes wanders outside the professional realm and into the analysis of personality traits and the theory of intercommunication. Still, even well seasoned communicators can gain a few helpful pointers in this manual, such as how hand gestures can send the right and wrong signals to listeners or how to effectively avoid hostile discussions.

Of special interest to readers will be Hogan’s extensive examples of how a simple conversation can be improved and leave associates or bosses happier. One of many possible examples is the different impression portrayed with “Let’s look forward to a new start today,” instead of, “Let’s not make today another repeat of yesterday.”

The pep-talk format of this book is sure to appeal to some readers, especially those truly struggling to communicate effectively. The clear and concise outline of the book as well as the multiple discussion topics will help in locating the best advice for any situation, making it a handy desktop personal adviser.

MARJORY RAYMER (January / February 2000)

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