Excuse Me While I Kiss This Guy

(What you said isn’t what they heard)

Matt Linton
Chaos Specialist
Google

Communicating

The Burden Of Communicating

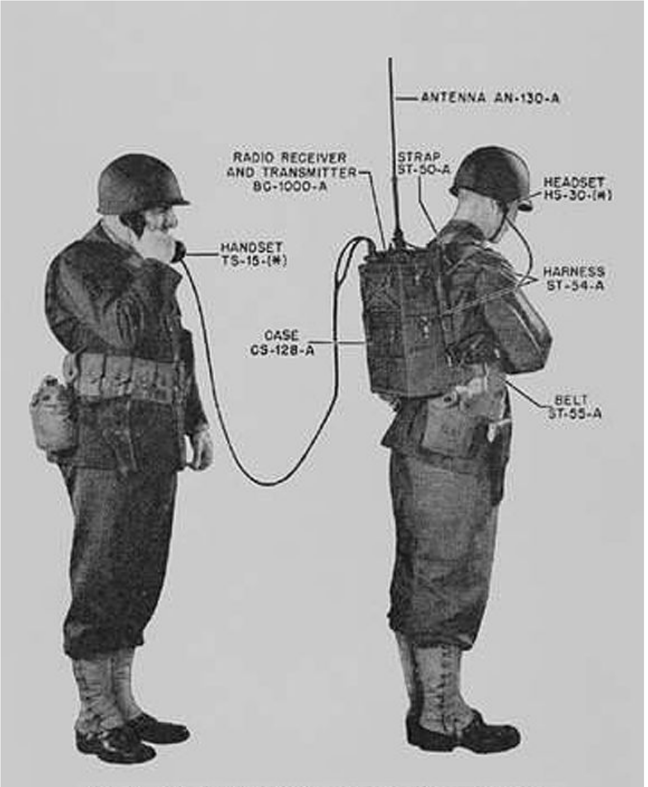
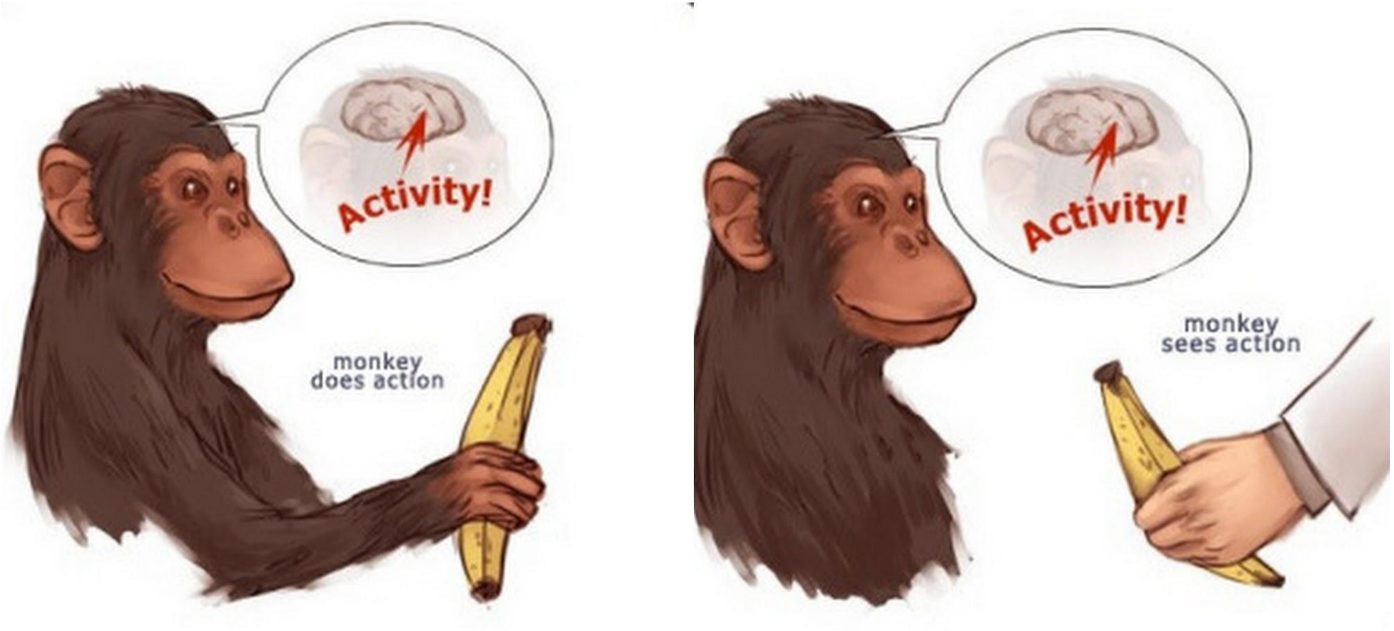


Figure 1. Radio Set SCR-300-A. In Use, Viewed From Right Side.

Mirror Neurons: You’re wired for the face-to-face

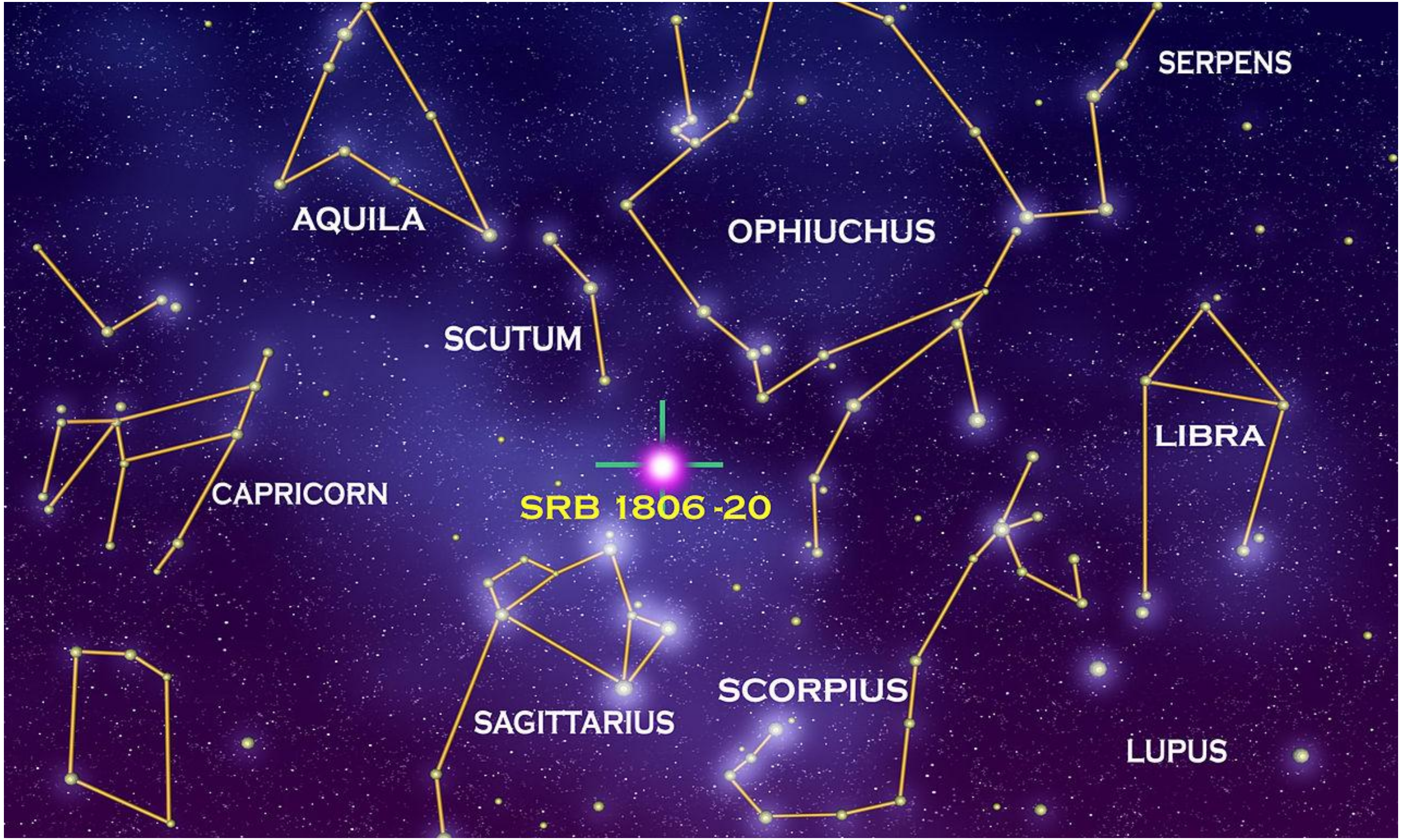


https://sites.psu.edu/psych256su16-2/2016/06/28/mirror-neurons/

Challenges & Tips

Gap Filling

Gap-Filling


SERPENS
AQUILA
OPHIUCHUS
SCUTUM
LIBRA
CAPRICORN
SRB 1806-20
SCORPIUS
SAGITTARIUS
LUPUS

Tips: Gap-Filling

- 🎸 People crave information.
  - 🥁 Provide it - as much as possible
  - 🥁 Tailor it when you can - exec audience, user audience, company audience
- 🎸 When you can - don’t forget the WHY.
  - 🥁 What’s our plan? Our goal? Our tactical objective?

Operational Security

“Get Smart” TV series: ~ 1965

Tips: OpSec

- Lay it out in writing.
  - What OpSec expectations do your teams have to follow?
  - Who gives permission to be “in the know” - how do you know people are in or out?
  - Brief on OpSec BEFORE incident details are known
    - Unless your team is *extremely* practiced

Stress

Fig 1. Twitter users (right) brief Security team on the latest product security concerns

Tips: Stress

- Communicate Respectfully
- Assume Good Intent
- You can ***state*** your feelings! It's OK!
  - "I'm frustrated by this lack of progress, because…"

Incident Tunnel Vision

Tips: Tunnel Vision

- Diversity in teams is key here
- Don’t let folks get talked-over; Make time specifically to solicit other views
- Incident Commander needs to *delegate* enough of the work to have breathing room

Lessons in Loose Linguistic Limits

Pursuant to best practices in incident communications, as defined by existing regulatory frameworks and evident in common techniques codified by industry bodies, it is optimally helpful to ensure that stakeholder communications be prepared in colloquially recognizable, non-obfuscated verbage. To ensure that all parties are syncronous in verbiage, it is best to establish agreed-upon commonalities.

It’s best to phrase things in ways everyone can understand

Linguistic Loperamide

“Perfection is achieved not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing more to take away.”

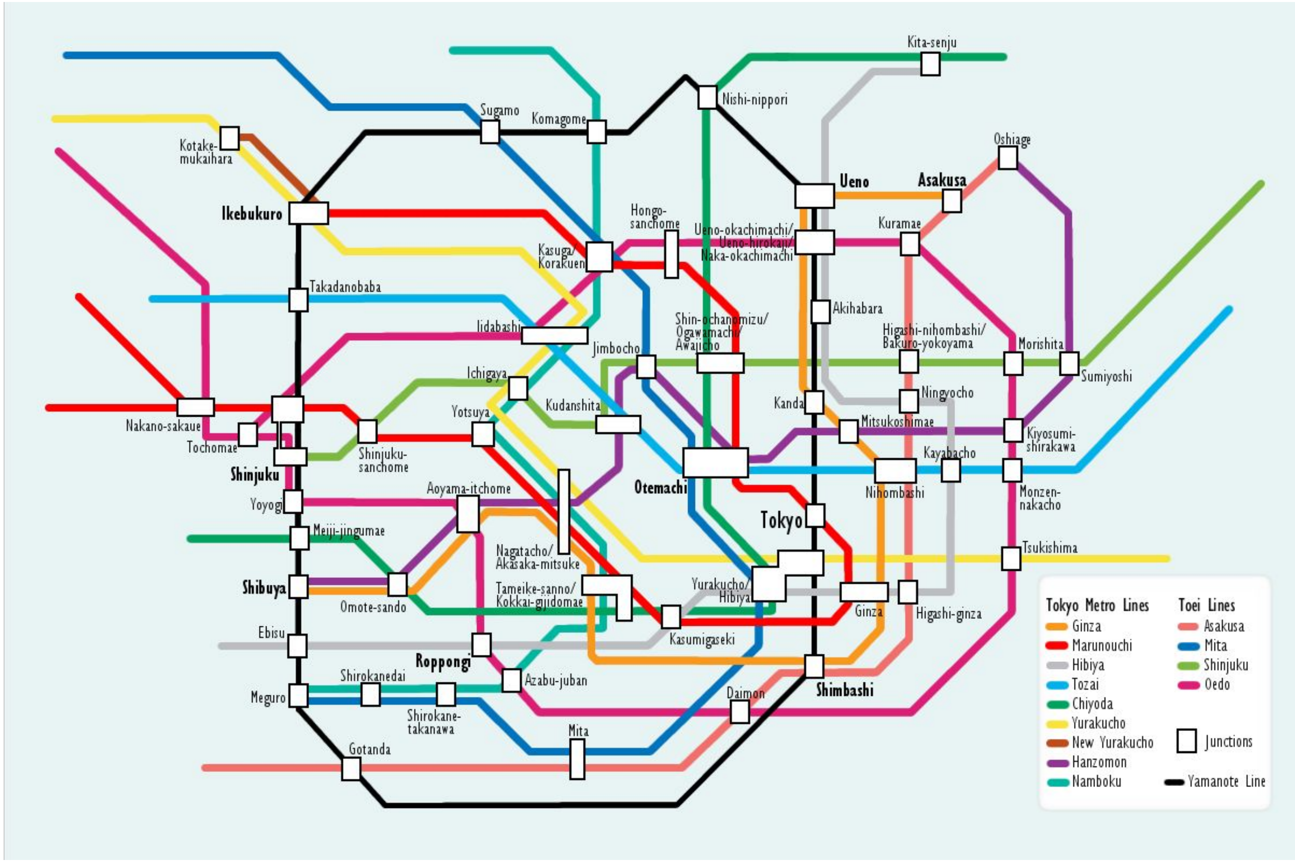
-- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Public comms: Avoid Emotion / Weasel Words & Phrases

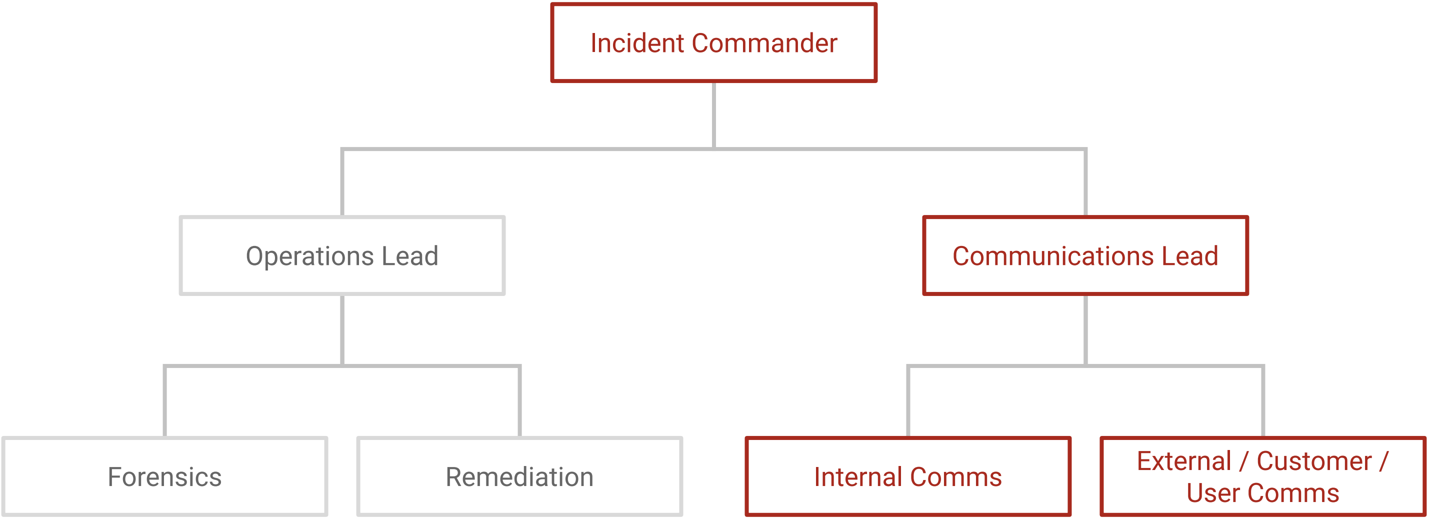
- ❌ “A dangerous bug in the kernel”
- ❌ “We take security seriously”
- ❌ “No evidence of...”
- ❌ Calling-out: “The use of this subroutine in such a dumb way…”

- ✔ “A kernel bug allowing potential bypass of permissions”
- ✔ “Here’s what we found, and how we’re fixing it”

Organizational Complexity



Complexity Tip: Parallelize the Work



Incident Commander

Operations Lead

Communications Lead

Forensics

Remediation

Internal Comms

External / Customer / User Comms

Google

Complexity Tip: Avoid Control Struggles

Focus on the Outcome

Anticipate

Have Objective Criteria In Advance

- 🎸 What exactly constitutes a break in embargo?
- 🎸 When is your incident ready to communicate to others?
- 🎸 Best to come up with objective criteria in advance

Know your Channels

- 🎸 What’s your goal? Conversational tone? Technical acuity?
- 🎸 Do people come to you, or you to them?
- 🎸 Is your communication accessible to all parties?

Are you ready to communicate publicly yet?

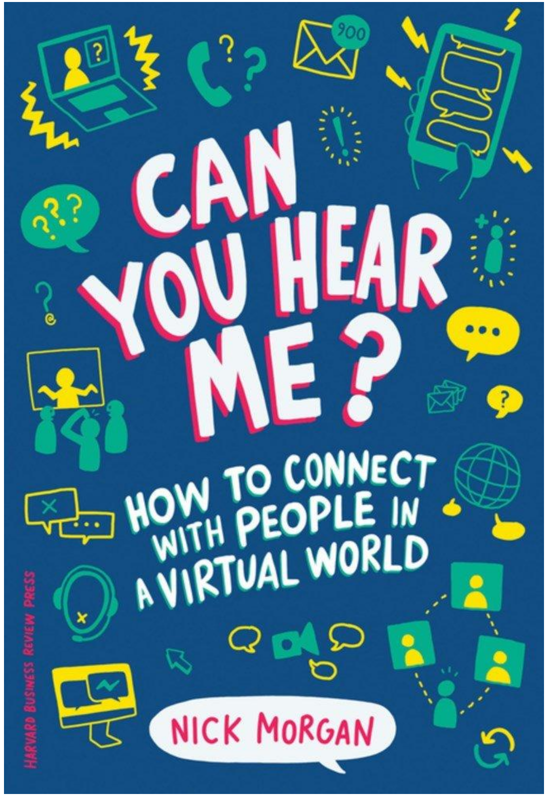
Maybe YES

- You fully know who/what is affected
- Your fixes are in place / the issue can’t be exploited
- There is something affected parties can do & they need to know to do it
- Some urgent risk overrides these other concerns

Maybe NO

- The issue is not known to attackers / others, and mitigation still needs to be done
- You haven’t got answers to easily predictable questions
- You haven’t put in place ways to field questions
- There’s nothing anyone can do with the information you currently have

(some) Further Reading

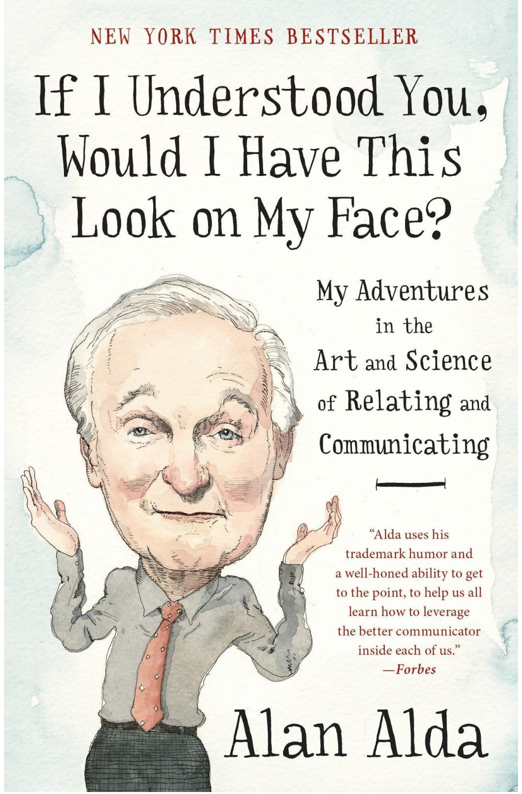


CAN YOU HEAR ME?

HOW TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

NICK MORGAN

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW PRESS



NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look on My Face?

My Adventures in the Art and Science of Relating and Communicating

"Alda uses his trademark humor and a well-honed ability to get to the point, to help us all learn how to leverage the better communicator inside each of us."
—*Forbes*

Alan Alda

Q&A