

# Three Point Communication

HOW2

PINPOINT



*When the content is volatile, the communicator wants to display the information visually — the third point.*

Michael Grinder

## Two Point Communication

Two Point Communication is when two people look at each other when talking. Pretty normal. Received wisdom dictates that the more eye contact during these conversations the better.

## Communication difficulties

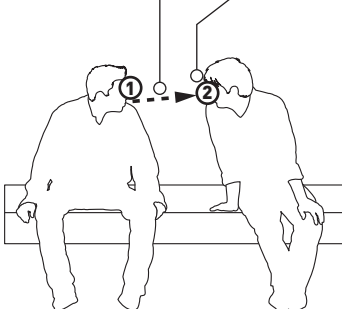
When communicating bad news, or dealing with awkward topics, normal two point communication can create difficulties in the relationship. However sincere the intent to communicate authentically, the difficult message can come across as a personal attack.

Because of the eye contact, the message is directed at the receiver's face — messages coming across like arrows attacking personal identity.

Any negative thoughts arising will be directed at the person sending the messages. The start of a good relationship turning sour.

The attempt to be both caring and professional has ended up being taken very personally.

Message given in good faith following notions of good communication. The message is directed to the face and taken very personally.



Strong possibility of the relationship turning sour



*When the subordinate looks at the piece of paper, the communication is known as three-point communication because there are three entities: two humans and the piece of paper.*

Michael Grinder

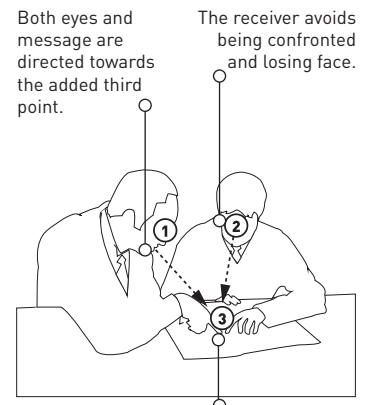
## Three Point Communication

With the addition of a third point the dynamics of the conversation alter for the better.

Now, if any message likely to upset the receiver has to be given, it can be directed not to the person's face.

Instead, it is directed to the third point — paper, screen or poster.

As a result, the receiver has a sense of not losing face, of not being the object of an attack, of not having to defend, of not having to hide strong feelings of upset.



Both eyes and message are directed towards the added third point.

The receiver avoids being confronted and losing face.

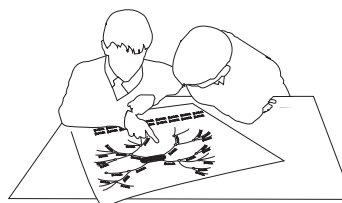
The third point deflects the personal component making the conversation more objective.

## Assessment for learning

Feedback is a core element of assessment for learning. And powerful learning comes from feedback about errors.

Yet, as we have seen, two point communication is less than optimal for conveying these messages.

As these two students show, peer assessment comes naturally and comfortably through the adoption of three point communication. Graphic organisers are very useful as the added third point.

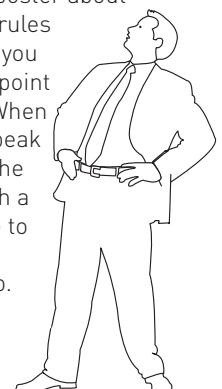


## Behaviour management

Students hate being told off with direct eye contact by the teacher. And the teacher considers such avasion is undermining. It needn't be that way.

Speak as sternly as needed but ensure you are looking at a third point.

Perhaps a poster about classroom rules would help you make your point positively. When it is over, speak directly to the student with a softer voice to cement the relationship.



*It is acceptable and effective to look at a paper and use a credible, even raised, voice but when looking back at the subordinate, make sure a soft voice accompanies the eye contact.*

Michael Grinder

## REFERENCES

Grinder, M. (2006) Charisma: The Art of Relationships Michael Grinder & Associates, USA

Grinder, M. (2002) The Power of Influence course, London