

# MESSAGE BUILDER

## Lesson 2: Six Word Stories

*“If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.” – Albert Einstein*

### **Do we know our subject well enough?**

We have all encountered that one individual in a meeting or in the hallway, when asked a question the rambling begins. Talking and talking and talking until finally you see in his/her face the idea or correct answer has been reached and finally delivered to you. You are left wondering, “Why didn’t you just say that at the beginning?” There was a whole lot of that that just wasn’t needed.

If we have a clear understanding of our topic, answer, presentation, or research, we can confidently convey our idea in the right amount of words and not any more. When we give the audience more than they asked for (the rambling) we lose them and miss the opportunity to connect. This clear understanding is know the essence or core of our message.

### **The Six-Word Story**

Legend has it that American author Ernest Hemingway was the first to start the six-word story movement when asked to write a short story for an advertisement. *“Baby shoes. For sale. Never worn.”*

This idea of a six-word story helps us as speakers first test ourselves to ensure we know the essence of our message. If we can create this short story about our presentation, than we know it well enough to expand upon in the right amount of words. This is benefit number 1.



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Benefit number two: it gives us guidance. Your six-word story will help keep you focused on what needs to be in your presentation and nothing more. As you begin to write your message, reflect back on your six-word story and ask, “Does what I’m adding to my message clearly link to my six-words?”

The last benefit: it makes for a great headline to a meeting agenda item or the subject of an email. Your audience will have a concise and complete idea of your subject.

This six-word story practice builds directly off of the purpose and audience analysis you did from the previous lesson sent last month. Our challenge to you, take your purpose and audience you completed from the previous lesson or create a new one, then make your six-word story. This all happens before you even start writing the words you’ll say, so you can make the best impact.

