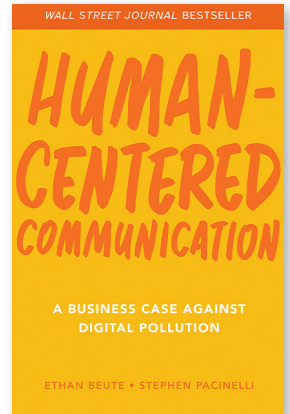


# Human-Centered Communication

A Business Case Against Digital Pollution

by **Ethan Beute and Stephen Pacinelli**



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## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

There is a problem invading society as a whole – it is nameless, and consequently we don't understand it or what it is costing us. Businesses feel it; individuals feel it; yet humans, not technology, are to blame for it. In *Human-Centered Communication: A Business Case Against Digital Pollution*, Ethan Beute and Stephen Pacinelli explore the scenarios that shape the argument of digital pollution and its effect on businesses, individuals, and society as a whole.

Across most virtual channels, we lose clarity in our interactions – with tone, intent, and meaning becoming more difficult to express and discern. Many people often find themselves misunderstanding others or even misunderstood themselves. All of this miscommunication leads to people becoming confused or frustrated. Through this book, the authors explore the problems and how we can move toward becoming more human-centric in our communication methods to bring about more meaningful interactions in everyday life.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- The problems currently plaguing our communication today.
- Real-life scenarios where digital pollution has hindered communication.
- How to move toward a more human-centric communication.
- How humans are to blame; not the technology.
- How to correct the error and miscommunication we face.

### Introduction

To cultivate a truly meaningful relationship, there needs to be as much time spent face-to-face as we build the connection. Once established, these connections can be sustained and deepened online, but it requires that initial foundation. Today, we aren't always afforded this sequence of events and people are not getting face-to-face interactions like they were once given. There is still a way to stay personal – and human – even when going virtual.

With all the annoyances found online – spam, bots, automation, robocalls, pop-up ads, spoofed accounts, phishing attempts, malware installs, data hacks, disinformation, and other forms of digital pollution – it is no wonder that we are continually being misinformed online due to their “human” features. It becomes impossible for us to decipher which is honest and safe from those that are misrepresented and dangerous. That is why most are finding that using video is the next best thing to being face-to-face – instilling trust once more in the interactions we have online, but it is not without its own flaws.

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### Part One: Digital Pollution

When you think about digital pollution, you may think of a family member who spent several months, thousands of dollars, and several sleepless nights recovering from identity theft. The same thing happens when you throw up caution at a new friend request online for fear of a fake account using the name and photo of someone you are already friends with. Much like environmental pollution, digital pollution's harms are real, even when they are subtle. This pollution costs us time and money, but it also threatens other things, which are immeasurable and priceless – trust, relationships, bonding, and connection.

There are three categories of digital pollution – innocent, consequential, and intentional. The lines between these classifications are neither hard nor clear, but intent is what differentiates them, but judgements of intent are made subjectively by the recipient. With human-centric communication as an antidote to digital pollution, there is still potential for videos to pollute our digital environment – with intentional deepfakes that masquerade as authentic.

### Human-Centered Communication

We all know The Golden Rule: Treat others as you would like to be treated. There is a step above The Golden Rule

that many people advocate for – The Platinum Rule. The Platinum Rule calls us to treat others as they would like to be treated, forcing us to shift our mindset from inside-out to outside-in. It makes us consider others' personal preferences rather than our own generalized rules, it calls us to form a general understanding of the individual.

These two rules provide insight into human-centric communication. You can approach every communication with the approach of The Golden Rule or The Platinum Rule. When you demonstrate warmth and competence, you show that you have their best interest at heart, which can earn you their precious attention. Human-centered design starts with empathy and understanding. But its success is in its compassion, acting to identify opportunities, improve processes, and solve problems.

### A More Human Funnel

There is a way to bridge digital pollution and human-centered communication as explained by Winning by Design founder, Jacco van der Kooij. He identifies that the wrong tool for the wrong job can exert too much force, producing negative consequences. There is a way to combat using too much force and in turn limit the consequences – it requires the proper order to design the process, and then select the best technology to support the process. Tools are levers that magnify power, so when we get turned around and put tools first, the likelihood and scope of negative consequences are magnified. When it comes to designing the process that focuses on your human-centered communication, it might be time to turn to a video face-to-face if you need to make a personal connection, manage emotion and tone, or need to break down detail or complexity.

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### Part Two: Allies & Exemplars

#### Emotion, Memory, and Motivation

Dan Hill, PhD shares what he considers to be the three distinct human qualities. These include speech/vocabulary, emotional flexibility, and sense of morality/need for vitality. Unlike rational thoughts, emotions are action oriented. If there is no emotion, there is no action – it is emotion that fuels us and if there is no fuel, things simply aren't going to happen. With the vast majority of our mental activity being visual, emotional, and subconscious, we must infuse messages and experiences we are creating with emotional components if we want something to happen from it.

### Noise, Attention, and Trust

When we ask better questions, we get better answers. Mathew Sweezey, researcher, marketer, and futurist, asked himself – why isn't our marketing working? This question would guide his work, learning that the journey doesn't necessarily call for new marketing to create a revolution, but rather a shift in ideas, activities, and outcomes. Like human-centered communication, Mathew's proposed context marketing revolution puts customers first – The Platinum Rule. This breaks through the noise and motivates people to act, while creating the messages and experiences to help achieve that goal in the moment. The best way to help others is to create an approach that starts from the inside, rethinks the way we communicate, and adds video for face-to-face value in our communication.

### The Art (and Science) of Helping

Managing teams remotely can be complicated. Mario Martinez Jr. learned a way to navigate the struggles and frustrations that can come from the lack of face-to-face interactions to cultivate a fully remote workplace by using a human-centered management approach. Although they have never met, Mario and his team are as tight knit as family – much to do with his videos and messages that incorporate a personal touch with emotion and clarity his employees can benefit from. His use of video has allowed him to show his employees that he's a real person and not just management on screen. He has been able to use his invitation into his life to convey warmth, build connections, maintain trust, and enhance understanding within his team.

### The Teacher's Take on Connection

Viveka von Rosen is an expert on LinkedIn. She has created courses and has taught and train for strategy and tactics in almost every content format for more than a decade. She uses video to help enhance customer journey, create more engagement on screen, and builds confidence on camera. The goal is for a human-first philosophy that is consistent with human-centered communication. While tools and tech stacks vary, so do teams and company sizes. We all face out share of differences in our respective industries, but one thing is consistent, we are all human beings. We can enable our success when we work with and for our fellow humans. Directing back to the Golden Rule, Viveka states that to be human is to think of others first, to do no harm, and to treat others with the same respect that you want to be treated with. This opens the doors to building truly authentic relationships, even when you aren't face-to-face.

### Always Be Amazing

According to Shep Hyken, to be consistently amazing, you need to be better than average all the time. Something that has helped him reach this level of amazing is his emotional connection with his clients and community through his human-centered video approach. Regardless of the video style or channel, Shep keeps the other person top of mind with sincerity and gratitude – which is why people call him amazing. In a technology driven world, people want to use shortcuts to speak to people – like with automation. You can't automate cultivating real relationships. That is why you must automate what you can but strive to create human-centered relationships with people – it isn't something that can be digitized.

### People-First Prospecting

As humans, we should be striving to add humanity to our prospecting outreach and stop being robots. Morgan J. Ingram is a part of an exclusive club – one that requires creating more than 10,000 videos for the purpose of building relationships and growing your business. As a part of his human-centered approach, Morgan consistently sends video messages and goes live across several social networks each day. His approach brings humanity to his sales process, making people feel more connected with him. He puts people first by sharing his story – but not through fancy developments – though real-life everyday situations from his webcam or smartphone. The video approach brings more connection than any blog or book could.

### The Year Of Video?

Dan Tyre predicted that people would start getting at least three video emails a day, but that still hasn't happened. An original HubSpot executive, Dan found out that when he incorporated human-centric video messages, his response rates rose from 50% to as much as 80%. He found that people don't need or want to be closed – they need to be helped. His method for this is to determine if they have a problem that needs solved, understand their decision-making process, engage early in that process, tailor your process to make it easy for the customer to buy, and focus on educating them. Using the extra layer of human-centered approach, even online, can help add thought and care to any digital format sent by using video. Success is about the tool or the technology, but about the personal touch you put with it.

### Part Three: Takeaways & Tomorrows

#### Takeaways: Strategies and Philosophies

Taking a human-centered communication approach isn't new – it isn't radical. Instead, it is a restoration. In terms of environmental pollution, we take steps that help our natural environment through cleaner and healthier approaches. The same can be applied to digital pollution – taking a human-centered approach to add the personal touch necessary to eliminate the distrust and miscommunications that arise from it. The idea is to see the need for the change – human-centered communication starts with people. You must align with the needs and the wants of those affected to create a deep understanding and reach them. We have lost a lot of human emotion when we communicate, which is why using video helps instill the confidence back in human-centered communication, even if it isn't perfect. The flaws are what bring about the level of trust needed to circumvent the digital pollution that has fogged our ability to communicate with one another online. The final strategy is to stop selling and start helping. Just because you are selling something doesn't mean that you have to push it – it can solve a need, you just have to be willing to offer the help.

#### Tomorrows: The Future of Human-Centered Communication

Implementing more human-centered communications in any area is a change for most – a movement away from dehumanization, disconnection, and digital pollution. This movement brings us closer to being more personal, create deeper connections, and implements more trust – which in

turn provides us with stronger relationships and less miscommunications. Authenticity goes a long way when making connections – but there is that worry about deepfake videos that allow you to not only personalize videos, but also automate. Technology should be an amplifier of human intention – not be the one determining the intention. To protect authenticity and trust in digital spaces, it requires vigilance to meet whatever attacks may come its way.

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### Conclusion

We have seen our share of miscommunication in the digital world, some of which we, as humans, can correct given the right opportunities. It doesn't take a full tech stack to create an impactful video, and even though we may stammer in front of the camera from time to time, it's the authenticity of our work that facilitate deeper relationships. Digital pollution doesn't have to drown out the efforts we make to remain digital when necessary, instead we can use digital advances to our advantage – working toward rehabilitating the relationships we once cultivated face-to-face. Throughout the case studies presented, one thing has been shown – being authentic, on video, and providing insight to those we share it with bring back the human-centered communications we all need.



Chief Evangelist at BombBomb and host of The Customer Experience Podcast, **Ethan Beute** helps business professionals be more personal and human through simple video messages.

A passionate storyteller by nature who measures his success by helping people reach their potential, **Steve Pacinelli** is Chief Marketing Officer at BombBomb.

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