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# From the Editor

Carlos Fuentes

Communication skills make a great difference in one's career. I don't remember ever meeting an actuary who disputed this assertion but I haven't seen a study that quantifies its effects on professional success. Good communications skills are praised but not taken as seriously as they should because, in the short- and mid-terms, their link with career advancement is weak, or so it appears. A poor communicator will seldom be fired for shortcomings in grammar or syntax, but a grade in an actuarial exam can only mean a pass or a fail in the here and now. In the long term, however, communication skills are a driving force in our professional progress. My guess is that those of us who by the middle of our careers did not put the effort in to become effective communicators have given up on it and console ourselves with the fact we are technically strong. Big mistake. The future can be, and generally is, brighter for those who can express their thoughts clearly and concisely.

Presentations is an area where we have the opportunity to be effective because we control content and timing. We also know the type of audience and the environment. But blunders happen when we take shortcuts.

Effective communication also involves subtleties like word selection in everyday interactions, things as trivial as the use of "but" or "and." Make the best selection of words one time and probably nothing will happen in your career. Make the proper selection all the time and chances are you'll be ahead of the game.

Another way of moving forward our careers and in the process achieving intellectual satisfaction is becoming acquainted with fields that are well established and misunderstood, or innovative and relatively unknown. Economics and artificial intelligence come to mind.

In four short articles, our current newsletter deals with communication, economics and artificial intelligence, areas that forward-looking actuaries should consider. Specifically:

- In "Three Simple Steps to Avoid Demo Disaster," Kevin Pledge lays out a plan to become a better presenter. Nothing beats the advice of an entrepreneur who has been at the front line and has seen how the real world works. This article is, among other things, a useful and succinct presentation manual.
- In "Transformational Vocabulary: One Word Can Make All the Difference," Mitchell Stephenson discusses the subtle aspects of communication that many of us ignore at our own peril. His quotation of Robin Sharman summarizes the thesis of this article: "Words can inspire. And words can destroy. Choose yours well."

- In “Artificial Intelligence within the Actuarial Space,” Sarah Abigail describes the content of the Society of Actuaries’ first webcast on artificial intelligence. There were four presenters with different perspectives on the role of AI in the actuarial profession. There can be different views on the role of AI in the profession but few can doubt its impact.
- In “The Case for Learning Economics History,” Carlos Fuentes argues that the study of the history of economics is a good approach to develop a strategic view of the subject, and that such a view can shed light on public policy issues as well as in areas where actuaries are active, like predictive modeling. We hope you take the time to read or listen to these short articles. If you have comments, questions or ideas, please contact us.

Carlos Fuentes, FSA, FCA, MAAA, MBA, MS, is president at Axiom Actuarial Consulting. He can be reached at [carlos-fuentes@axiom-actuarial.com](mailto:carlos-fuentes@axiom-actuarial.com).