

# Strategic Communication

Thomas Benson

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## **BORING PART:**

- Partner/lawyer Angell Advokatfirma.
- Lecturer of Employment Law, Nord University
- City Advocate for a number of councils
- Autor av Arbeidsrettsboka
- Member of the Norwegian Bar Association's Committee on Employment Law

## **FUN PART:**

- Board Member, Jurismus International, 2008-2012
- President, Jurismus International, 2012-2013
- Board Member of Eurojuris International, 2015-

## **SHOW PART:**

- Expert commentator of employment law on NRK News and Tv2 News.
- **They always call me when strikes and demonstrations goes out of control**
- Participated several times LIVE and RECORDED, regional and national NEWS, mainly TV but also Radio
- Also done several commentaries to national newspapers on the topics regarding employment law



# Strategic Communication

## SOME BULLET POINTS:

- Communication is **ART**.
- Lawyers: **Nerdy actresses that play in their act in the COURT?**



# Nerdy artists in court?

## So do you businesspersons want nerdy lawyers in court?

1. Sometimes. **IF THE CASE IS VERY IMPORTANT!**
2. But regularly the answer is **NO**.

## Why?

3. The court is seldom a place for *business development*
4. **REMEMBER: LAW IS BORING** if your not a **LAWYER**.
5. Court is "time consuming"





# What do businesspersons seek for?

## What do they want?

1. Successful businessmen and women – want to develop.
2. They don't **build barriers**.
3. They are **unfrighten, risky persons**, and usually good strategic communicators

## They look for lawyers with **same skills and values**

- That could help them **build and “repair” mistakes and failures** and then devolve new business in a legal frame



# What do businesspersons seek for?

## In my opinion:

1. If you look for **legal barriers** and are to “**law-orientated**” – it could be **scary** for your business
2. **Care** about your clients potential business
3. **Be part of** your clients successful business



# Strategic Communication

## There's seldom a **YES and NO** – that's correct

- It is an artistic long journey of **risk and potential failure** – but hopefully with the end of **success**.

## What do you need?

- A **flexible Communication plan** – that have to be regularly evaluated





# Strategic Communication PLAN

1. **WHOM?** (Active Entrepreneurs – NO PRIVATE)
2. **WHAT?** (Reorganize companies to be more profitable)
3. **WHERE?** (Media, Keynote-speaker, University)
4. **WHEN?** (Always looking for a potential opportunity)
5. **HOW?** (Looking for the right SPOT og PUNCHLINE)
6. **WHY?** (It's fun and profitable)



# Check out your client

- **Formal**
- **Laid back**



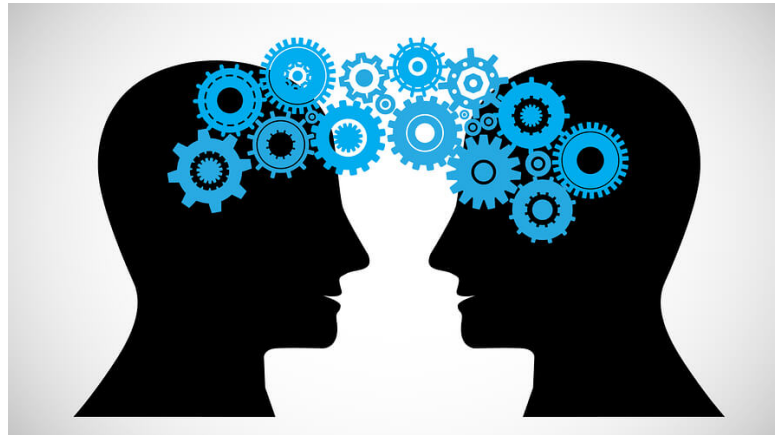
# Check out your client

- How long has he/she **worked** in the Company?
- What has the person **done** before?
- Do you have any **common** interests - hobbies?



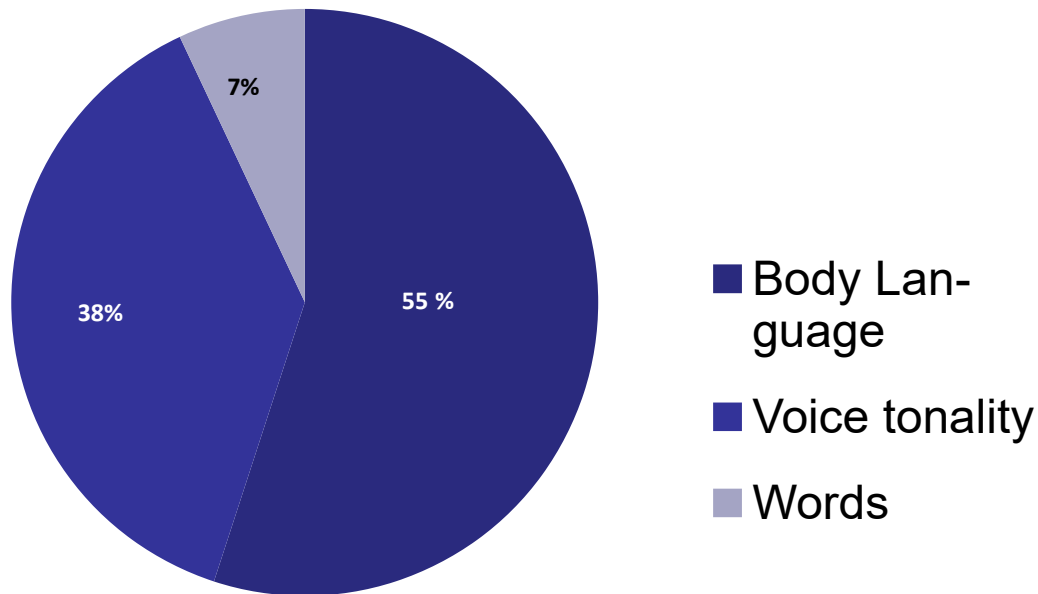
# Why is this so important?

- Clients **appreciate**; your **knowledge** about them
- You know **who** you are talking to
- The conversation will **flow easier**.
- **Prior knowledge**: will also solve the case **more quickly**
- And more important: you will **not make a fool of yourself** by not having basic knowledge of the case or the client

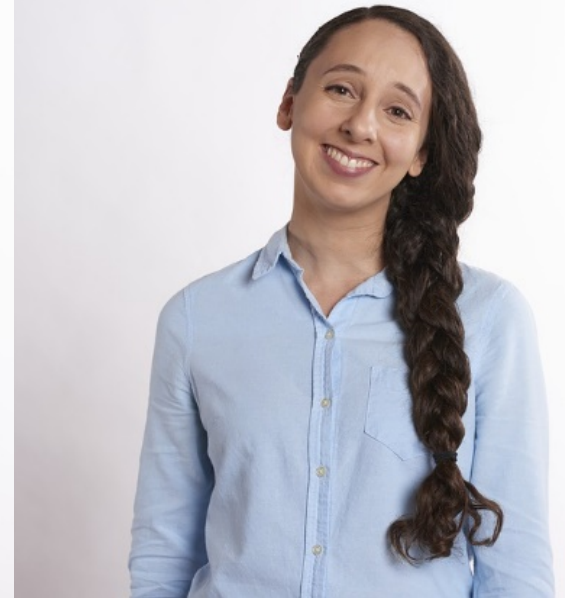


# First meeting - very important

- **Body** language and **voice** tonality is very important
- You must be positive and **smiling** 😊.
- People generally don't like people who are negative 😞.







# Let the client speak!

- Don't interrupt.
- Time to tell their “story”
- Very important part of the process – also if the case is nearly lost.
- And remember; **most leaders love their own voice.**





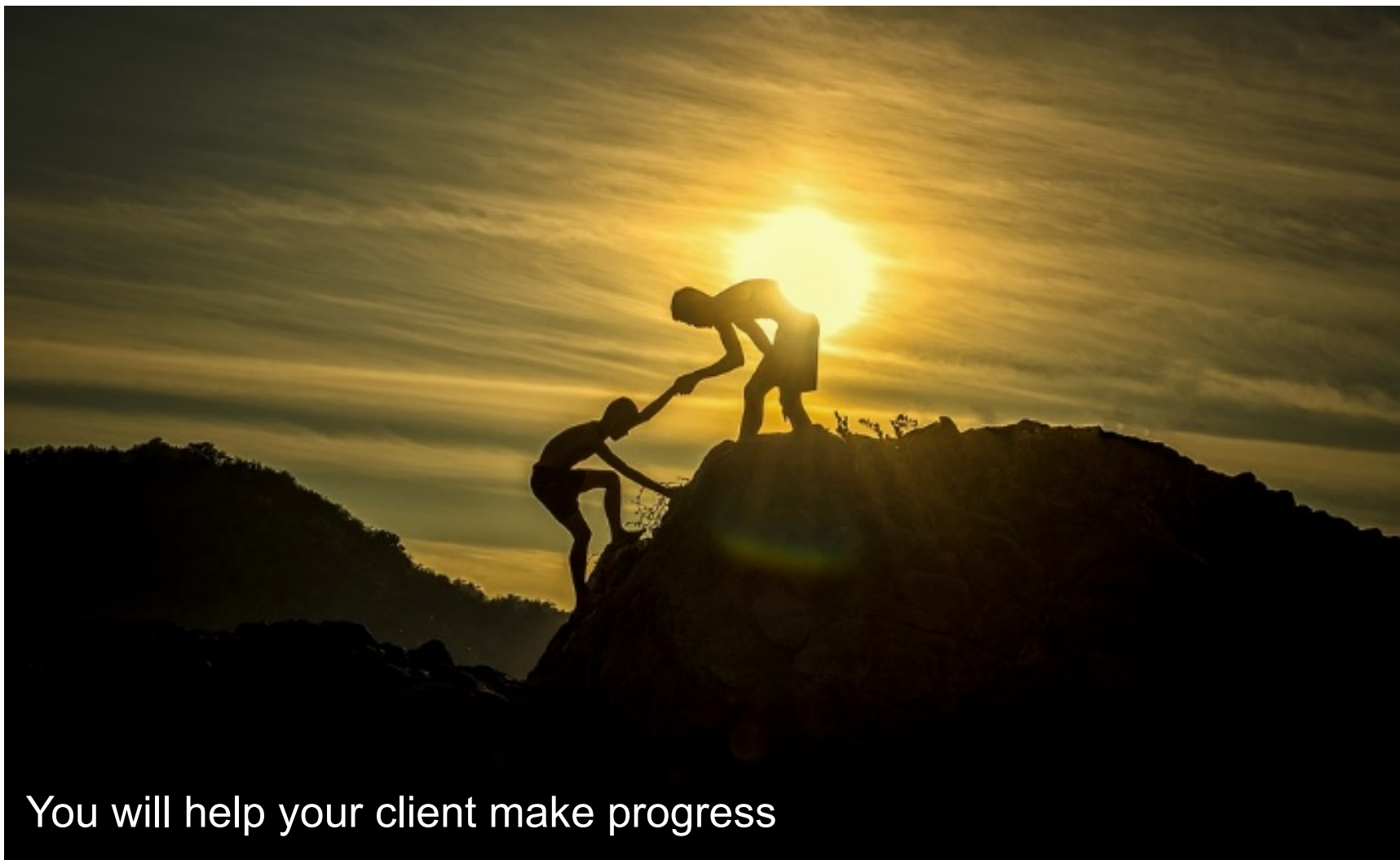
# Strategies for active listening

1. Stop. Focus on the other person
2. Look
3. Listen
4. Be empathic
5. Ask questions
6. NO HURRY (THINK LONGTERM!)

# Don't be too case-oriented

- Be **open** minded.
- Be **creative**.
- Bring **new ideas**.
- Short and long term?
- Present your **competence** and skills
- Convince the client that you are the right lawyer for their Company





You will help your client make progress

# Local knowledge is important!





# That's Eurojuris and Jurismus

## Always a firm next door

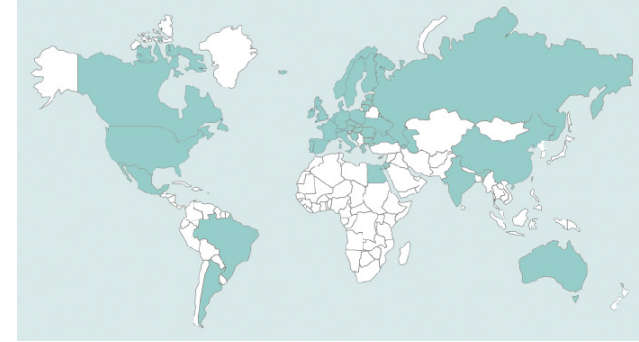
- The firms *local* knowledge

## Eurojuris National Chapters:

1. Belgium
2. Denmark
3. Finland
4. France
5. Germany
6. Netherlands
7. Norway
8. Spain
9. Switzerland
10. UK



# Benefits: Eurojuris



1. Welcoming
2. Family like
3. Not complex
4. Down to earth
5. Easy to make «Eurojuris/Jurismus friends and partner for business»

# Jurismus and Eurojuris: Meetings and congresses



1. **Networking** in Europe will help you being a better communicator
2. JURISMUS and Eurojuris is a fantastic opportunity to learn about EUROPE
3. You can improve your **communication skills**
4. **REMEMBER; EUROPEANs** are different
5. The potential of doing a **MISTAKE** and **INSULTING** a client if you don't understand his or her "language" is **BIG**.



# British – the stereotype

- **Politeness and respect** is greatly valued in the UK
- **Don't** greet strangers with a **hug or kiss**.
- Short conversations about a general topic like the weather is common.
- It might be smart to avoid topics like **Brexit and The European Union**.



# Germans – the stereotype

- Tend to be **quite direct but polite**.
- There is often very **little context** surrounding communication.
- **Tend to tell it like it is**.
- **Honesty** is appreciated and expected.



# Austrians – the stereotype

- Tend to be **conservative people**.
- Austrians are usually strongly **individualistic and respectful**.
- Work and personal life is divided.
- Only close friends and family are invited into the house.
- In return they expect **high standards** of its business partners.





# Swiss – the stereotype

- Communication style depends greatly on personality but the Swiss are generally **polite and direct** in their communication.
- The Swiss tend to be **private people** and asking personal questions is not that common.



# Czechs – the stereotype

- Mutual respect is important in business relations.
- **Avoid mixing business and pleasure.**
- Don't ask a lot of personal questions.
- The Czechs are known to **make jokes during business meetings.**



# Polish – the stereotype

- Polish people tend to be **pretty direct** in their communication style.
- Verbal **confrontations/disagreements** are commonplace and generally not taken personally.
- **Humor** plays a big role in communicating.
- **Sarcasm** is generally used and understood.





# Dutch – the stereotype

- Generally **very direct**, they tend to say exactly what they mean.
- They could be a bit **harsh** and even appear **rude**
- **Honesty** is appreciated and expected.
- However, when it comes to overt **displays of emotion**, the Dutch tend to be somewhat **reserved**.





# Belgians – the stereotype

- Belgians tend to be indirect.
- If they think something negative about someone, they usually keep it to themselves.
- They are usually **very diplomatic and polite**.



# French – the stereotype

- Usually **straightforward and questioning**.
- Often on **long-term business relationships**.
- The decision making tend to be **quite slow**.
- Decisions are usually **not** made in the **first meeting**.
- Patience is appreciated.
- **Aggressive selling techniques** will not generate a positive response.
- Focus on discussion and exchange of information.



# Italians – the stereotype

- Tend to be **direct** but in a **diplomatic way**.
- **Tell you the truth** but often in a polite manner.
- **Dramatic** during conversations.
- **Large displays of emotion** are very common and acceptable in public situations.
- May appear that people are **arguing** when in fact they are just having a **conversation**.





# Spanish – the stereotype

- Ask about **background** and **family life**.
- It's **unlikely** that a meeting will **stick closely** to the **agenda**.
- Negotiations in Spain tend to be **quite open**.
- Usually appreciate **good conversation**, but **avoid** stereotypical topics
- Never make a joke of the “**siesta**” – part of their way of survival



# Norwegians – the stereotype

- **Political correct terms**
- **They don't want to step on any toes** when expressing their opinions
- Talking about one's **accomplishments and achievements** tends to be **looked down upon**.
- However, in the **north**, people tend to be **more direct** and say exactly what they think **without worrying about offending**.
- *Periods of silence are common in conversation, it is best to not try and fill in the gaps.*



# Work efficiently: deliver on time

## Big case; make a date-plan

- E.g.: Reorganize companies to be more profitable

## Always deliver on time

- Never tell that you are pressed for time. We all are.
- The client won't be impressed
- If you are in a hurry, tell the client at **what date you can deliver – and deliver at that date.**

## Always set of some “extra time”

- There are always unforeseen events

# Don't sell a product you can't deliver

## Specialist?

- Don't take the case or start studying rapidly

## Not enough time?

- don't take the case
- you will anyway lose the client and lose other clients





# Easy language



- Don't talk too fast and use a simple language.
- Don't send clients letters they don't understand.
- Don't answer questions they haven't asked – if not strictly needed
- Why? Professionals don't like twisting language
- It's difficult to keep it simple – but do it

# Media = seconds and a punchline



## **IT'S FUN – IT'S SCARY!**

- You can test your heartbeat
- It's a GREAT COMPETION

## **SOME USEFUL TIP:**

1. Never show up more than **10-15 minutes** before you go *LIVE* (*I did less then 5 minutes – “they got a bit stressed”*)
2. Don't forget your “punchline”
3. You will be connected **2-3 minutes** before to you go LIVE.
4. Be aware of a lot of noise and messages in your earplug
5. You will be live for **maximum 20 seconds**
6. When its done it's DONE.
7. No time for change and regrets. It's out there in the Sky

## **VALUE:**

- It you didn't fail totally, you will gain some business.
- But more important: you will be a better communicator as you improve yourself to speak and think **easy and to the point.**

# Small talk

- Humor and a good punch line is always important
- It helps strengthen the bond to your client
- The client will consider you as a “normal person”, despite the fact that he knows you're a lawyer 😊
- Last sentence in the conversation: have a nice day, enjoy the weekend etc..



# Active or passive client?

- **Active client**
- Has a big problem of letting go
- Could be **very demanding clients**
- E.g.: former teachers or leaders who really wanted to study law.
- Inform them about **every** step in the case
- Explain them carefully **why each step** is taken
- **Discuss** the case with them **regularly**



# Passive client



## “I pay - you solve my case”

- Get as much information as soon as possible from the client
- **Don't** send them copies - they don't need – that's time-consuming

## They pay:

- as long as **don't feed** them with boring and useless “law-stuff”

## Be as effective as possible

- They want a quick solution
- They don't have time for a lawsuit

# Going to Court

## Dress code

### Sorry: it`s not as *fun or dangerous* as on Television

- Give an **excellent presentation** of the case
- Prepare the client: – for the his/her **statement**
- After the hearing; take time to **debrief** your client



# Do we win our loose?

- What's the percentage chance of winning?
- It's a bit dangerous
- **But** it helps the client - knowing the changes of winning or loosing the case





# Lost case?

- **Close the case rapidly**
- Handle the cases in the future for the client at a **earlier stage**
- **Care** about your clients potential business
- **Be part of** your clients successful business



# And have in mind: you never close a case without opening a new one

- E.g. Gas station: Do you need anything more?
- E.g. Employment law: are there other employers you want to fire?



Thank you!