

# Great Business Communication Lessons from Non-Business Sources

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*"Not all good communicators can lead, but all good leaders can communicate."*  
- Eli Amdur

In keeping with my practice of finding business leadership lessons from non-business leaders, there are great communication lessons to be learned from Ludwig van Beethoven, John F. Kennedy, The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Vincent van Gogh, Swami Vivekananda, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, and others.

There are also great communication lessons from business leaders, too, so we won't overlook them.

But first.....

.....a business communication lesson from Ludwig von Beethoven, as taught by Leonard Bernstein (whether he knew he was teaching business writing or not).....

**The lesson:**

**The most effective writing is simple, strong, and lasting.**

**The example:**

**Symphony No. 5 in C-minor, Ludwig von Beethoven**

**The teacher:**

**Leonard Bernstein**

Bernstein, one of the preeminent conductors of the twentieth century, and arguably the leading interpreter of Beethoven's music, explained why Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C-minor is such a powerful piece of music - and so significant - and so everlasting.

Familiar to all of us (I hope), it begins with one of the most famous musical phrases - if not the most - ever written - that four-note rhythmic motif:

Da-da-da-dum!!!

You can hear it, can't you? Dramatic, profound, emphatic, declarative, imposing, compelling, memorable.

That's just part of it.

## **"Blunt simple statements of the greatest possible force."**

According to Bernstein, it is blunt, simple, and forceful.

In fact, in a lecture Bernstein used to give about the first movement - the allegro con brio, the famous and timeless da-da-da-dum - he explained that Beethoven wrote in ***"blunt simple statements of the greatest possible force."***

And then, as you realize when you listen to the Fifth, Beethoven repeated that opening phrase over and over and over again.

And again. And again.

He repeated it, he varied it, he toyed with it, he imitated it, he sequenced it, and he left no doubt of its impact. It echoes and pulsates as it commands your attention for approximately eight minutes (depending on who's conducting).

By the time the first movement ends, there is no doubt of its message, as Beethoven himself expressed, "Thus fate knocks at the door."

One hundred ninety-nine years after the symphony's debut on December 22, 1808 in Vienna, it remains atop the world of music.

Wouldn't you love to do that? Wouldn't you love to get a message out that strongly? Wouldn't you love to know that what you had to say gets received and remembered?

Well, it's not as hard or as distantly impossible as you may think.

Before we apply this to us mere mortals, let's examine how another giant applied this lesson.

**"I have a dream."**